

EDGE HILL COUNTRY SCHOOL

est. 1986



Early Childhood Handbook 2025-2026

The School

Edge Hill School is located on Concession 6 WGR Durham, Ontario. With majestic hardwood and cedar trees that line the property and access to wild meadows and marshes along the quiet country roads that surround the school.

Vision & Mission & Core Values

The goal of our Waldorf Kindergarten is to enliven the imagination and support the wonderful and magical experiences of children. In essence, the aim is to preserve the innocence and joy of childhood until the child is truly ready for their next stage of development. The child's day is full of creative play – perhaps building forts and sand castles, discovering creatures and plants, or helping bake bread, singing and story time. The content and rhythm of the day has a simplicity that the child can understand, expect, and imitate whole-heartedly. Our kindergarten program includes woodworking, gardening, circle, storytelling, and nature walks that all capture the children's interest and enthusiasm for the world. Our work as Waldorf Early Childhood teachers is to nurture the physical development of the young child, while cultivating the positive human values of compassion, reverence for life, respect, cooperation, love of nature and other people, interest in the world and social conscience, as well as developing cognitive, artistic, and practical skills. We see the kindergarten as a warm and loving place where children are encouraged to develop a positive self-image and gain confidence and independence. Our Waldorf Kindergarten program is a member of WECAN (Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America) and is in alignment with the shared principles set out by WECAN.

Teachers

Edge Hill School faculty are hired for their experience and expertise. Our teachers hold (or are working towards) one or more professional designations including; Certified Waldorf Teacher, Ontario Certified Teachers (OCT), Forest School Practitioner certificate, Early Childhood Educators (ECE) with years of experience. All of our staff have first aid training and have cleared a vulnerable sector screening (in-depth criminal reference screening) with their local police department.

Stewardship and Acknowledgment

It is our intention to utilize the diverse habitats around the school as a learning environment to foster a connection with and develop an appreciation for the Natural Environment.

Edge Hill and the surrounding lands are the treaty lands and territory of the Saukiing Anishnaabekiing (1836 Saugeen Treaty No. 45 ½). We recognize this gathering place where we work, learn and grow is home to many past, present, and future First Nations people that include

the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, Chippewas of Saugeen, Ojibway, Metis, and Inuit peoples. Our acknowledgment of this land is our declaration to be responsible to this place and its

peoples' histories, rights, and presence. We support and add our collective voice to the "CALLS TO ACTION" from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee on Indian Residential School to never forget, to hold governments, religious institutions, and colonial forces to account, to seek redress and healing for injustice. We give thanks and appreciation to the Natural World and the peoples whose land we reside on.

The Rhythm of the Kindergarten Day

Life in the Kindergarten is very rhythmical and every day has its own special activity. As human beings we naturally live in a world of rhythm; the rhythm of our breathing and our heartbeat, the seasons that surround us, the continuous alternation of day and night, sleeping and waking, unconsciousness and consciousness. Rhythm is part of who we are. It is built into us and affects us physically, emotionally, and mentally. When we separate ourselves from it too dramatically we become ill (try holding your breath, or stopping your heartbeat, or not sleeping). Children are particularly sensitive to rhythm and the lack of it. By providing a rhythmical environment for children, we strengthen their physical, emotional, and mental constitutions. One of the many things that are unique and fascinating about Waldorf education is its conscious application of the principles of rhythm within the educational experience of the children, on a daily, weekly, and annual basis. At a time in human history when we have largely lost touch with the rhythmical nature of life, this aspect of Waldorf education can be of great benefit to children and their families.

***Children naturally live in the moment
and they allow that moment to be what it is;
magical and beautiful in every way!***

April Peerless

Our Daily Rhythm

Children arrive and walked to front door by parent

Inside Playtime & Tasks/Activities of the day (depending on season)

Snack

Circle

Outside Play and Walk

Lunch

Quiet Time and Gentle Handwork

Outside Play and Afternoon Tasks

Pick-up at Classroom Door

Our Weekly Rhythm

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Food of the Day	Oatmeal pancakes or muffins	Rice with fresh herbs	Bread with tahini/honey or butter, hummus and carrots	Stone vegetable soup & crackers
Examples of task/activity (may vary)	Making and sculpting play dough	Water colour painting	Handwork and chop vegetables for soup	Woodworking repairing any loose parts

An Explanation of the Activities of our Day

8:45 – 9:00 Children arrive with parents: We will begin our day inside. Parents (guardians), please walk your child up to the kindergarten boot room. Please share any communication that needs to be brought to a teacher's attention, such as change in pickup arrangements or a restless night for child, via text (519-313-0854) or e-mail courtney.carson@edgehillschool.org preferably before 8:15am. Teachers will check text and voicemail again before 3:00pm. Messages can also be left for teachers at the main office number 519-369-3195 (as teachers do not have cell phones on in class).

Inside Playtime & Tasks/Activities of the day: The children play while the teacher is engaged in the daily work. The children are free to help if they so choose. As always, the image of adults quietly involved in purposeful activities provides the children with the opportunity to enter into imaginative and creative play. In no time the room is filled with a happy buzz.

Snack: After a blessing we share a nutritious snack that we have prepared together. When possible we use either biodynamic or organic ingredients. Sometimes we will pack up our snack and go for a picnic! Our snacks are always enjoyed with a refreshing herbal tea. The children take turns to clean the dishes and sweep up any crumbs. Instilling such positive and healthy habits now usually last a lifetime!

Circle: During circle the children are led with songs, verses, and movements generally based on seasonal or festival themes. Sometimes the circles are stories unto themselves, slowly evolving and weaving into new themes after a period of time. But circles are so much more than this! Coordination, balance, right and left brain development, spatial dynamics, rhythm and imitation – they engage the children's will forces and feed their souls and imaginations!

Outside Play & Walk: While the children enjoy time out in the yard, the teacher will engage in outdoor tasks, all the while keeping a close eye. Nature walks encourage healthy, willful activity. How lucky we are to experience the rhythm of the seasons in such a beautiful area! Nature is healing

and our outdoor time will allow us to explore, play, and discover new and exciting things. Helping in the school community may include such things as sweeping the walkways, shoveling in the winter, or helping in the care of the yard and school grounds. There are gardens to be dug, bulbs to plant, and rocks to be moved! We will feed the birds and fetch the mail – we are only limited by our imaginations! This is a small way for our class ‘family’ to give back to our community, be of service, instil a sense of pride and accomplishment, and an exceptional opportunity for the children to develop the four lower senses (touch, life, movement, and balance), which is such an important experience for the children to have these days! *Note – only very extreme weather will keep us from our outings. It is very important that the children are well dressed.

Lunch: Lunch is eaten outside. We wash our hands and sing a song of thanks. Lunch is brought from home and we ask that you please send a healthy, nutritious lunch in reusable containers. At Edge Hill we strive to be litter-free and use this opportunity to model responsible practices in regard to our environment. Peelings from our vegetables and leftovers from snack will be put in the compost.

Quiet time: This is an opportunity for every child in the class to have some quiet time. Some require sleep and others just rest their busy bodies. The children are stimulated by the activities of the day and they need this time to replenish their physical and emotional energy. A short story will be told, music softly played on the kinder harp, and some gentle handwork if desired.

Story – From simple nature stories to fairy and folk tales, stories mark the seasons and nourish the soul-life of young and old alike. Stories provide the young child with inner pictures of goodness, truth, and beauty. The same stories are told for many days, often ending in a puppet play.

3:00-3:15 Pick-up Time: After we tidy up, we will gather around, give thanks for the day, and say our good-bye. Parents pick up kindergarten children at the kindergarten front door between 3:00pm and 3:15pm.

A note about rhythm: Please remember your child has been away from home at least 7 hours. It is nice for the child to return home to continue with this gentle flowing rhythm. The children can either play or help with preparing the meal. After dinner a consistent evening ritual of bath, snack, story, and bedtime at the same time every night will help establish a routine leading to more peaceful evenings and family time.

What to Bring

- Water bottle
- Litterless lunch
- A vegetable before Thursday each week that we will cut up and add to our Stone Soup
- Extra clothing (see ‘what to wear’ section)

What to Wear



Whether the weather be cold,
Or whether the weather be hot,
We'll weather the weather
Whatever the weather
Whether we like it or not!

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. The kindergarten teachers will assess whether children are dressed appropriately when they are dropped off.

****Hats are encouraged everyday; sun hat, rain hat, or toque (depending on the day)****

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
- Middle layer of insulation made of wool or fleece
- Outer shell of waterproof and windproof clothing, including a rain jacket and rain pants. For the feet, we recommend neoprene such as Bogs or Kamiks. Alternatively, your child can wear waterproof boots that are one size too large with two pairs of socks.
- Make sure that your child has a warm, waterproof hat that covers their ears.

When it is **cold**, please add:

- Warm and waterproof gloves that slip on and off easily.
- Long underwear
- 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 hemp long-sleeved shirt.
- Long, durable pants
- Long, light coloured socks that pants can be tucked into
- A sun hat • Running or hiking shoes
- Sun protection • Bug protection

****Extra clothing will be kept in a box above coat hooks, consisting of the following:**

- ~2 pairs of underwear
- ~1 pair of long johns
- ~ 3 pairs of socks (at least 1 wool /or thermal preferably)
- ~ 1 undershirt
- ~ 1 t-shirt
- ~ 1 long sleeve shirt or turtleneck
- ~ a button up sweater to hang on a hook if the weather turns cool during the day
- ~2 pairs of long pants

****Please check and make sure as the season and year progress that everything in the bag is replenished as needed.** The bags should go home at the winter break for washing and resizing and return the first day back at school. If you are missing any items, please check the spare clothes basket in the coat hook area.

~It is crucial that the children are dressed for any type of weather! We are outside every day and the only weather that will stop us will be high winds, thunder, or lightning storms.

***Please be sure that all items are clearly marked with your child's name.**

Festivals

Throughout human history, festivals have played an important part in culture. In all civilizations, there have been celebrations reflecting nature's rhythms, important transitions, and significant moments in the life of the culture. For people in the past, the rhythms of the seasons, of reaping and sowing, of dark and light, of birth and death were immediate and tangible experiences. For people today, we can easily become detached from these rhythms in our



climate-controlled homes and workplaces with the conveniences of electric light, heating, cooling, and 24-hour grocery stores that provide us food at any season of the year. But the urge for these markers still live in us and remnants can be seen in our modern rituals of Thanksgiving, Halloween, or the markers of the beginning and end of summer: Canada Day and Labor Day. The rhythm of the year also receives form through our school festivals and celebrations. We begin and end the year with the Rose Ceremony in which we honor our 8th graders who are about to complete their education at Edge Hill, and the 1st graders, who are beginning their journey. This is followed by The Courage Festival in September, Truth and Reconciliation Day, Lantern walks for the younger children in November, Winter Solstice/Advent assemblies in December, Earth Day, and our May Fair in the spring.

Birthday Celebrations

Thought and care are given to the preparation of the birthday celebration in the kindergarten. We choose to celebrate with the young child as, by definition, “to celebrate means to observe (a day or event) with ceremonies of respect, festivity and rejoicing”. Party, which by definition means “a social gathering for pleasure and amusement”, really doesn’t describe or capture the mood with which we wish to surround the young child. We will choose a day to celebrate your child’s birthday. The celebration will include the parent bringing in a snack in the morning which the class will share at snack time. We will also present the child with a crown and a small homemade gift. As parents of the birthday child, you will be asked to send a short story outlining an event (vacation, learned to walk, etc.) from each year of your child’s life for their birthday circle time story.

Communication

Good, open communication is a key element in the success of Waldorf education. We encourage close communication between parents and teachers. We are working together to allow the children to unfold and it is vital that we communicate with each other in a healthy way to ensure a happy, secure, and healthy child. To facilitate good communication, the program includes:

- Parent-teacher meetings scheduled throughout the year and telephone conversations by arrangement with the teacher whenever needed
- Parent evenings at the school (a calendar will be sent out)
- The school's weekly updates as well as a newsletter 3 times a year, which contains information about your child's class, is e-mailed, available online at our website: www.edgehillschool.org or is available by hardcopy at school.

Lengthy conversations at drop-off distract the teacher from necessary supervision.

Policies and Procedures

Behaviour Guidelines

Our goal is to ensure Edge Hill School is a positive experience for all of our students. Our staff are trained to deal with mild to moderate behaviour issues as they arise. If your child is severely misbehaving or is endangering themselves, another student or the staff, a phone call home will be made and a solution oriented discussion will be scheduled with the caregiver(s) to discuss how to best manage behaviour to maintain a safe learning environment. Following this phone meeting if there are ongoing behaviour issues that compromise safety, an in person meeting will be scheduled with the caregiver(s). If following this meeting improvements are not made, the child will be removed from school. This will only occur in extreme circumstances and no refund will be issued. Please inform staff ahead of time if your child has any special needs or considerations so that we can make your child's school experience a positive one.

Behaviour Principles

No Violence,
Respect all life,
Respect diversity,
Respect all people,
Respect the learning environment,
Use things with care,
Enjoy learning,
Help others learn,

Be prepared.

Conflict Resolution between Children*

Each day, students will participate in teacher-led and student-led activities and also have time for free play. Sometimes children will have interactions between them that are challenging for both the children involved and for the adults around them. If conflict resolution is necessary, a teacher may intervene and assist the children in resolving their conflict. Discipline methods used by teachers and volunteers will focus on gentle discipline.

Teachers will make every effort to do the following when challenging interactions occur:

- Be proactive. Take note of the social interactions between the children
- Be physically close to a child or children if concerned about a social or safety situation
- Remind the children to use gentle (kind, respectful) words when asking for what they need
- Remind the children that hands are for working and playing, not hitting
- Redirect the children to different activities or have them chat with an adult who will help them calm down
- When the children are calm, discuss the situation with the children involved. Encourage discussion of any differences so that the children can work on communicating their needs to each other and understanding the needs of another
- Acknowledge children's feelings and encourage them to express their feelings about a situation (i.e. "I felt sad when..."), help them to identify and name feelings if needed
- Encourage the children to consider alternative actions that they could take in the future

Safety

Teachers and volunteers are provided with and adhere to strict safety training, policies and procedures. These measures create an environment and culture that takes safety seriously and uses a proactive approach to risk management. Students and teachers actively play a role in personal and group safety. Our safety principles include:

- Constantly assess risk as conditions change (dynamic risk assessment)
- Set up a safe space with boundaries and safety guidelines
- Observe the children's interactions with each other and with nature
- Spot the children during more challenging physical activity
- Gently guide the children to safer activities if required
- Head counts will be carried out every 10 minutes and before and after transitions

- Two-way communication will be maintained by teachers and supervisory staff cell phone if off site.
- In depth monthly site checks- looking for dangerous conditions
- Weather and environmental safety including- teaching students about hydration, application of sunscreen and insect repellent, changing of wet clothes
- Teachers conducting daily site inspection surveys
- Educating students on safe water ways practices; such as safety equipment needed, and guidelines for safe water way play

If we feel that the children's play is becoming dangerous, we will redirect the children and remind them that it is important to stay safe outdoors. If your child gets a bump, scratch, or a bruise, we will provide necessary first aid and let you know at the end of the session.

Drop off and Pick up

Students may be dropped off at school no earlier than 8:45am. All students must be promptly picked up by a designated person between 3:00 – 3:15pm.

Student Attendance

Students must attend school punctually and regularly unless excused from attendance for illness, or for other reasons which may create a serious hardship. Parents must inform school of student absences, early dismissals or late arrivals by email or phone before the start of the school day.

Illness

A child will be unable to attend school, and need to be picked up if they are exhibiting any of the following symptoms listed below. Please ensure your child is symptom free for 24 hours before sending your child back to school.

- Fever AND a combination of other symptoms (e.g., nausea, vomiting)
- Fever AND a body rash
- Diarrhea – two or more liquid stools or a change in the normal pattern of bowel movement (e.g., runny, watery or bloody stools)
- Vomiting – two or more times in the last 24 hours
- Eye discharge – yellow or white
- Severe cough
- Yellowish skin or eyes, or jaundice
- Irritability, continuous crying or requires more attention than can be provided

Medication

Students are not to administer their own medications, unless previously approved by the school. Parents are to bring all medications to the administration office where it will be stored and administered by office staff or teachers.

Food Allergies

We are only a nut free facility when and if we have a child with an allergy. At present we do not have any allergies in the class that are life threatening. We can at times have children in various programs with life threatening food allergies, so we will notify you when not to pack any lunch or snack items for your children that contain nuts or nut products. Please inform us if your child has a medical condition, a health concern, is taking medication or has an allergy.

Nutrition

Snacks and lunches - Filtered water is available inside buildings at Edge Hill. Parents are encouraged to provide health-promoting foods for their children's lunches. Sharing of food is not permitted amongst students from different families because of potential allergies and dietary restrictions. Lunch should contain minimal waste. At Edge Hill we practise the "boomerang" lunch concept. That is, lunch and snack wastes that are not compostable will be sent home for recycling/disposal. If parents wish to bring in foods to share, the teachers must be consulted in advance and all intolerances taken into consideration. No child should feel left out. In an effort to maintain an inclusive environment and keep all children safe from food allergies, there may be times when the proposal to bring a particular food will be denied.

Environmental Hazards

Environmental hazards including mosquitoes, ticks, 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, or insect bites. Please dress your child in long sleeved clothing and review all documents sent home with your child.

Emergency Contact

In case of emergency, the emergency contact indicated on our Edge Hill School Registration Form will be contacted by the school in order of contact priority stated by parents/guardians. Parents are to contact the school promptly in writing with any changes to contact information, including changes in custody (that affects student release), contact priority, address or phone number changes and change in emergency contacts.

Inclement Weather

At Edge Hill, 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 is in the vicinity outdoor programs will proceed to our indoor facilities. Please ensure your child is prepared for all weather conditions by packing

appropriate clothing for them each day. Extra clothes may be stored, may be brought in at the start of the year and stored in the indoor education space, clearly label all clothing with your child's name. In the event of extreme weather that permits school closures parents will be notified by 7am of the closure by email and/or website notification.

Immunization

Edge Hill School follows the regulations set out by the Immunization of School Pupils Act (1990). All students attending Edge Hill School will require proof of immunization against meningococcal disease, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus, diphtheria, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox) (Note: varicella immunization is only a requirement for children born in 2010 or later.) Exemption is permitted to those students whose doctors deem it medically unsafe for the student to receive the above mentioned vaccines, or if it is against conscience or religious beliefs of the family. In these cases parents will need to submit a doctor's note or fill out a Statement of Conscience or Religious Beliefs form available through the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

Family Participation

Proverb: It Takes a Whole Village to Raise a Child

The school welcomes and wants all families to participate in the life of the school community! In fact, it is an important aspect of Waldorf Education and what makes our schools thrive. There are many ways to offer your time and energy. This is always appreciated. You could help with the organization of one of our fairs or special events, with fundraising, join in with making crafts, or come out to one of our "work bees". Please speak to your teachers. They will answer your questions and point you in the right direction. To learn more about the unique Waldorf approach, we encourage attending parent evenings.

Parent Meetings

Your child's teacher will inform you of scheduled parent meetings for the year. Please try to attend. It is very important that at least one parent per family is represented at our meetings so that you are fully informed about class activities and developments. These meetings are for adults only; nursing infants are welcome. We understand and appreciate how difficult it is to arrange childcare and reorganize your time in the evening or on the weekend to attend, but we strongly encourage you to come out and participate. It is during these times together that we learn the most about your children and share with you the environment that supports them.

Some books parents have found helpful include:

Work and Play in Early Childhood by Freja Jaffke

Heaven on Earth: A handbook for parents of young children by Sharifa

Oppenheimer

Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, by Jerry Mander

Last Child in the Woods, by Richard Louv

Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature: Jon Young

Balanced and Barefoot: How unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children by Angela Hanscom

Vitamin N: The Essential Guide to a Nature-rich Life by Richard Louv

Media

The Waldorf Early Childhood Program works with the development of the young child's physical body while providing an environment that enriches yet protects the child both mentally and emotionally. During the first seven years the child needs human interaction, imaginative play, and plenty of natural movement. There is substantial scientific research demonstrating the negative impact of electronic media on the child's developing neurological system. Stress, anxiety, the inability to play, overwhelming emotions, and sometimes a lack of comprehension all affect the child deeply. There is a direct link between physical movement and proper left and right brain development. Children need to move and explore. Therefore, we request that the children enrolled in the Early Childhood Program have limited media exposure. Instead, we encourage creative activities that engage the child's will, nurture their soul, and feed their imagination. Unrestricted outdoor play, drawing, puppetry, modeling (playdough), singing, music, dress up play, crafts, and good stories fill a child's life. Talk to other parents and teachers if you would like ideas.

Parents can support their child's kindergarten experience with the following:

- ~ Eliminating TV, video viewing, and computer activities
- ~ Having your child in bed at a reasonable time, so he or she is well rested
- ~ Being punctual at drop-off and pick-up times (Children often promptly enter play together. It can be difficult to join play once it has started if a child is late.)
- ~ Contacting the teacher if there is any concern or questions
- ~ Attend parent meetings
- ~ Finding ways to familiarize themselves with Waldorf and forest school education and the underlying pedagogy