

Updated
5/16/26



Cedar Hollow Forest School Family Handbook

Welcome!

Thank you families for choosing to enroll your child at Cedar Hollow Forest School. We are honored to share time with your child, watch them grow and learn, and explore the natural world by their side.

At Cedar Hollow Forest School we believe free play, especially in nature, is essential for young children to develop social emotional skills, build resiliency, gain self-confidence, and engage all their senses. We strive to create a strong nurturing community where all children feel cared for, loved, and appreciated for who they are. Children are naturally curious, imaginative, and free-spirited- at Cedar Hollow Forest School we honor childhood, support exploration, and encourage limitless imagination.

We hope this handbook provides you with the information you need leading into the school year. Please keep this handbook to reference throughout the school year, and of course questions are always welcome! We look forward to welcoming you all to the Cedar Hollow Forest School community.

Sincerely,

Jen Petry (founder & teacher) and Becca Bell (teacher)

If English is not your first/primary language, contact 1-888-291-9811 Please inquire if you need this document translated or the information presented in an alternate format (eg. audio recording or conversation). We will seek interpretation services to communicate with families if needed.

★ The School

- Cedar Hollow Forest School is licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services with a group family Special Family Child Care License. We are licensed for 14 students- of the total children under school age no more than four shall be younger than 24 months. Of those four no more than three may be under 12 months.
 - A copy of the licensing rule is available upon request
 - Cedar Hollow Forest School will make services available to families regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, public assistance, sexual orientation, or familial status
 - Cedar Hollow Forest School enrolls preschool aged students
- Cedar Hollow Forest School is located at Eastridge Community Church: **3727 W. Arrowhead Rd, Duluth, MN, 55811**
 - Cedar Hollow Forest School is located on Eastridge Community Church property, but is not affiliated with the church in any way
 - We are very grateful that Eastridge Community Church is open to being the host site of Cedar Hollow Forest School!
- Hours of operation are 8:00-3:30. Monday-Thursday, with two cohorts of students- a Monday/Wednesday cohort and Tuesday/Thursday cohort. **There is no option to enroll Monday-Thursday
- Cedar Hollow Forest School carries liability insurance
- Parent Aware: Cedar Hollow Forest School is part of a Parent Aware cohort and is pursuing a 2 star rating. This allows enrolled families to access Early Learning Scholarships. Please reach out if you have questions about Early Learning Scholarships.

★ Mission

- Our mission is to root children in their natural world and community by supporting growth in their exploration, play, and resiliency.

★ Teaching Philosophy

- At Cedar Hollow Forest School we believe free play, especially in nature, is essential for young children's development. With an emphasis on place-based curriculum, we follow the interests of the children as they engage in the forest through the seasons in all safe weather. In doing so,

we support their natural curiosities with hands-on, exploratory, play-based learnings. Additional guidance provided by teachers in a strong nurturing community helps students foster social emotional skills, build resiliency, and gain self-confidence

★ Teaching Staff

- Cedar Hollow Forest School teachers are dedicated to and experienced in nature-based early childhood education. Our teaching team includes Founder and Teacher Jen Petry and Teacher Becca Bell. Jen and Becca are honored to work with your children and guide them as they learn, grow, and explore.
- During the school day, we can be reached on-site at 320-226-1296. Otherwise, please email at cedarhollowforestschool@gmail.com or message us through Brightwheel.
- Detailed information about our teachers' qualifications can be viewed on our website www.cedarhollowforestschool.com
- All teachers and substitutes are current in their First Aid and CPR certification and have passed a criminal background check

★ Curriculum

- Cedar Hollow Forest School follows a place-based, seasonal curriculum based on the observations and interests of the students. A focus on our interconnectedness, empathy and respect will foster intrapersonal and community growth. As an emergent curriculum, lessons will be as ever-changing and responsive as our children are. Cedar Hollow recognizes the individual and intrinsic learning pace of every child.

★ Discipline

- We will encourage positive individual and group behavior through modeling gentle, positive, and friendly social interactions and constructive conversations
- Teachers model positive communication and guide children as they learn about communicating with each other
- It is important to remember that your children are learning how to navigate their environment and social interactions. Cedar Hollow staff will utilize positive behavior models and positive reinforcement discipline, with the ultimate goal being increased self-regulation skills
- **Unsafe behavior:** If any child is engaging in unsafe behavior, either unsafe to themselves or other children, the following steps will be taken...
 - Teachers will communicate with the family about the behavior, either in person and/or via email

- If the behavior continues Cedar Hollow teachers will continue communication with the family and will closely document the behavior
- In case of continuation a behavior plan will be put in place. Staff and the family will determine the amount of time the behavior plan will be implemented before a meeting between Cedar Hollow staff and the family takes place
- If after the implementation of a behavior plan the behavior continues Cedar Hollow teachers may determine that the child needs to withdraw.
 - It is important to remember that not every program is for every child and not every child is for every program. If Cedar Hollow Forest School does not work out for your child it is nothing against the child and Cedar Hollow teachers will work to support families in figuring out next steps

★ Enrollment Information

- Cedar Hollow Forest School enrolls preschool aged children
 - Children must be able to toilet independently
 - We are happy to make an exception to the independent toileting requirement in order to provide equal opportunities for children that are served by the Americans With Disabilities Act
- There is a **non-refundable \$50 application fee**
- **Enrollment Process:**
 1. Current students who are returning
 2. Siblings of a currently enrolled student
 3. Siblings of a families that were previously enrolled
 4. Families on the waiting list
- Families can choose to enroll their child in the Monday/Wednesday cohort or the Tuesday/Thursday cohort. There is no option to enroll Monday-Thursday
 - Each new child that is enrolled will undergo a **trial period** to adjust to the space. This trial period will last one month. If the trial period is unsatisfactory, we each have the right to terminate this agreement within that period, with no further obligations
- **Enrollment Requirements:**
 - Completed application and application fee
 - We are required to have records on file showing that each child has been immunized against or has a legal exemption for the following diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps,

rubella, Hib, and pneumococcal. Vaccines for Hep. B and chickenpox are recommended but not required by law. Children whose parents or legal guardians are conscientiously opposed to any or all immunizations must submit a signed and notarized statement to that effect.

- Medical packet (Immunization records, allergies, permission to administer medication/other products, medical history, insurance/doctors information)
- Signed Acknowledgement & Agreement Page and Tuition Contract
- Registration form (MN DHS form)
- Photo release form: all families will need to fill out the photo release form either granting use of photos of your child or opting out and asking that photos not be used in any social media, marketing, etc.
 - If you choose no to the photo release photos of your child will still be added to the album on Brightwheel so you can see them in their daily adventures and learning

★ Policies

○ Outdoor Air Quality

- As a nature school, outdoor air quality impacts our programming. We use the outdoor activity guidance for schools to support the health of the children in our care. Please monitor the AQI if you are concerned about air quality levels and your child's health. On days when the AQI is in orange and red, we will encourage the children to take it easy and offer lower-key activity options while playing outside. On orange and red level days, we'll take a break from the outdoor air with an inside rest. You are welcome to keep your child home on orange and red level days if you prefer. On purple level days, the Cedar Hollow Forest School will be closed. You can learn more about AQI and children at <https://www.airnow.gov/>

○ Termination Policy

- At any time we may choose to discharge your child from the school for reasons that include, but are not limited to:
 - Repeated failure to pick up your child/ren before the agreed-upon pick-up time
 - Failure to pay tuition on time
 - The inability for us to meet your child/ren's needs

If we must discharge your child because we cannot meet their needs we would have had conversations with the family prior to discharge and would first make reasonable

attempts to find or help the family find additional necessary supports for the child

** If you choose to unenroll your child from our school during the school year, tuition **will not** be returned for that month

○ **Drug and Alcohol Policy**

- Employees, volunteers or visitors in the school, will not use non-prescribed mood-altering medications, illegal drugs, or alcohol during the hours of operation. There is never any tobacco use at the school

○ **Transportation**

- Cedar Hollow Forest School does not provide transportation to students

○ **Child Care Emergency Plans**

- State law requires providers to create an emergency preparedness plan and share the plan with families. A detailed emergency action plan will be available in the classroom and can be accessed upon request
 - In the case of evacuation, parents will be notified of where to pick-up their child. Only parents/guardians and those listed as authorized pick-ups will be allowed to pick-up the child.
Everyone will need to present an I.D. during reunification after an evacuation event
- Fire drills and storm drills will be conducted on a monthly basis and logged, the log will be posted in the classroom. The fire exit plan and storm plans will be posted in the classroom as well

○ **Reporting Policy for Child Abuse and Neglect**

- All Cedar Hollow Forest School staff are mandated reporters and therefore are legally required to make a report (within 24hrs) to St. Louis County Child Protective Services if we know or have reason to believe a child is being or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years

○ **Health and Wellness**

- Any child or teacher that is experiencing symptoms of illness should stay home until 24 hours after symptoms subside.
 - Symptoms could include and are not limited to: cough, runny nose, fever, stomachache, chills, congestion, diarrhea, vomiting, headache, achiness, shortness of breath, etc.
- You will be notified immediately if your child has any of the following conditions: trouble breathing, an underarm temperature of 100 or

an oral or ear temperature of 101; is vomiting; has diarrhea, or has a rash other than a heat-related rash. Your child will be separated from the group and you are expected to make arrangements to come and take your child within 30 minutes- if that is not possible clearly communicate with Cedar Hollow staff

- We will be preventing the spread of COVID-19 by adhering to the policies in this section, as well as the Public Health Guidance from the DHS and CDC. Visit mn.gov/childcare for more information.
- Cedar Hollow Forest School is required to report any reportable diseases to the MN Department of Health. A list of reportable diseases can be found [here](#)
- Written permission and directions are required for us to administer any medications
- In the case of **staff illness** every attempt will be made to find substitute teachers. If for any reason we are not able to find staff to fill in we may need to close. Each calendar year the Cedar Hollow Forest School has the option of being closed for 5 teacher sick days. These days may or may not be consecutive. Families are given as much advance notice as possible when the preschool will be closed
- Should an ambulance be needed due to a medical emergency, families will be responsible for any cost. Families will be contacted as soon as possible after contacting 911
- **Sunscreen and Bug Spray**
 - Cedar Hollow Forest School will provide sunscreen (Native mineral sunscreen with zinc oxide) and bug spray (Babyganics natural insect repellent- Deet free). In the enrollment packet there will be a space where families can consent to Cedar Hollow staff applying the above listed sunscreen and bug spray- families can also request to send their own from home on the form. If sending your own sunscreen and/or bug spray it will need to be labeled with the child's first and last name
 - Sunscreen and bug spray will be applied based on the discretion of the teaching staff. If you have any specific requests regarding the application of sunscreen or bug spray please communicate those with Jen Petry
- **Pets**
 - Cedar Hollow Forest School staff will not have any pets present in the programming areas. If this were change for any reason families

would be notified in advance and proper licensing steps would be taken

★ Rest Time

- Preschoolers will be working very hard and expending a lot of energy daily, it is very important that they are given adequate time each day to rest their bodies and minds and recharge
 - Children are not required to sleep, but will be required to rest quietly on their rest mat
 - Cedar Hollow teachers will not keep students from falling asleep and will not wake children up if they have fallen asleep, until the end of rest time
- Each student will have their own rest mat. Rest mats will be provided by Cedar Hollow Forest School. Families will be responsible for providing a small sheet, small blanket, and small pillow for rest time. Children are welcome to also have a small stuffed animal- it is requested that the chosen stuffed animal stay at school rather than be sent home daily to avoid a loved stuffed animal be left at school and missed at home

★ Tuition and Payments

- Tuition is \$420/month
- Tuition for the days attended in June (number of days will change each year depending on the ISD 709 calendar) will be adjusted for
- Monthly rates for attending Cedar Hollow Forest School account for each month's number of school days throughout the year, (for example, December could have only 11 school days while January has 18) though the tuition is averaged out, so it is the same each month.
- Tuition for your child's planned days of attendance is due on the first of each month
 - Monthly tuition invoices will be sent via Brightwheel. Tuition can be paid through Brightwheel, or directly to Cedar Hollow Forest School by cash or check
 - Brightwheel charges a 2.95% processing fee for credit cards and a 0.6% processing fee for ACH (money transfer)
- You will not be reimbursed for any school days that your child misses for any reason or any school days that are canceled for any reason.
- You will be notified of any changes in the tuition rate when enrollment for the next session opens

★ Operations

- Hours of operation are 8:00-3:30. Monday-Thursday, with two cohorts of students- a Monday/Wednesday cohort and Tuesday/Thursday cohort.
**There is no option to enroll Monday-Thursday

- Cedar Hollow Forest School will follow the **ISD 709 school calendar**- including the first and last days of school.
 - Cedar Hollow Forest School will be closed when ISD 709 is closed for inclement weather and cold days
 - There **will be** preschool on the days ISD 709 is closed for professional development
- Cedar Hollow Forest School will host two weeks of summer camps in June, July and August
 - Summer camps run Monday-Thursday 8:00am-3:30pm. Unlike the school year students will attend summer camp Monday-Thursday.
 - Specific summer camp dates and tuition prices will be shared in early spring of the current school year
 - The \$50 application does not apply for summer camps

★ Daily Flow

8:00-9:00- Drop-off and free play

*Drop-off will take place in the garden or outdoor classroom, when weather allows. *We ask that students be **dropped off between 8:00 and 8:30** so they have time to play and get acclimated before community time.*

*In cold weather it is likely that drop-off will take place in the classroom, or that we will have moved into the classroom before 8:30 am

*Free play in the outdoor classroom. Name writing practice and optional activities, such as arts and crafts take place at this time

9:00-9:30- Community time

*This is when we introduce our theme, read a story that fits with the theme, make weather observations, and celebrate any special events like birthdays. When weather allows community time will take place outdoors

9:30-10:00- Morning snack

*This time will also include a bathroom break and handwashing

10:00-11:15- Outdoor exploration

*A hike to a playspot- we have countless spots that the kids choose from every day- maybe it's a walk to the creek, an adventure down to one of our favorite fort building spots, or a jaunt to a space which connects to our theme. We have freeplay once we

get to our spot, and optional natural explorations, such as looking at field guides, nature art, and more.

11:15-12:30- Lunch/transition to rest time

*Students will use the bathroom and wash hands prior to eating. When all students are seated we will begin eating and conversing with one another. We will make a list of things the children learned or enjoyed doing that day while they enjoy their lunch. After eating, students will look at books or draw in their journal. When everyone is finished eating we will transition to rest time

12:30-1:30- Rest time

*Children are not required to sleep during this time, but are asked to rest quietly on their mat to allow others to sleep and rest their bodies after a busy morning

1:30-2:00- Afternoon snack

*Students will use the bathroom and wash hands prior to afternoon snack.

2:00-3:30- Outdoor play and pick-up

*Students will gear up, then we will adventure to the outdoor classroom or garden for our last bit of outdoor play time. **Pick-up will take place from 3:00-3:30**, the pick up location will be shared in the daily communication

Important notes about pick-up:

*We need to be notified in advance if your child/ren will be picked up by someone not listed on your child/ren's forms. We will need the full name of the unlisted person and will **need to see a photo ID before the child can leave**

*To respect the teacher's time please be on time for pick-up. If you know you could be late, please try to make other arrangements and let us know as early as possible. If you are late more than once, you will be sent an invoice through Brightwheel for a late pick-up fee of \$1/minute that can be paid anytime before or with the next month's tuition.

★ Meals

- Throughout a preschool day students will enjoy two snacks and lunch. Your child/ren will be working hard and will need nutritious, filling foods to keep them happy and active

- **Snacks**
 - Two snacks (morning and afternoon) will be packed and sent daily by families. Please be sure to clearly label your child's snack containers with their name. Each snack should include at least two different healthy food items. If you have questions about nutritious snack options we are happy to help with ideas. Cedar Hollow staff will communicate with families if snack amounts or the types of food sent need to be adjusted
- **Lunch**
 - We ask that you send your child with a clearly labeled (with name), low-waste lunch, in reusable containers. So families can easily see what their children have or have not been eating in their lunches, we will ask children to leave any uneaten food in their lunch box rather than throwing it away. Lunches will not be able to be refrigerated, if you are packing cold items please include an ice pack
 - A healthy preschooler's lunch is recommended to contain 1 oz of grain, ½ cup of fruit, ½ cup of vegetable, ½ cup of dairy, and 1 oz of high protein foods such as nuts, meats, or beans
- **Water Bottles**
 - We ask that families send a clean (non glass) water bottle to school daily. It is important that children have access to water both indoors and outdoors
 - Water bottles need to be labeled with the child's first and last name
- **Garden Snacks and Tea**
 - As we explore and work in the garden, the children will be invited to learn about and sample harvested foods like berries, greens, and garden veggies. We teach children to always have a positive ID on a food before sampling and teachers ensure it is safe before children sample. On winter days, we may offer the children a caffeine-free herbal tea during warm-ups
- **Allergies and Food Restrictions**
 - Children who have known allergies need to have a completed Student Allergy Information Form on file. Additionally, prior to care, Jen will reach out to discuss the child's allergy(ies) and needs so that a safe environment can be provided
 - Some children have allergies that require a response from the whole Cedar Hollow community (e.g. a peanut allergy). If a child with such an allergy is enrolled in the program, families will be

informed of the requirements for lunches and snacks packed from home. We appreciate your cooperation with this

★ Parent Communication

- Teachers will connect with you everyday at drop-off and pick-up so we can chat about the day's happenings, while these conversations are quick they are very important to us
- We use a website/app called Brightwheel for parent communication, sign in/out, tuition payment, sharing photos, and more. We **require** that caregivers sign up for this app and have notifications for messages on
- We will communicate about our schedule, special events, closures, and non-urgent information via Brightwheel. In the "document hub" on Brightwheel- you can access calendars, the Family Handbook document, the mandated reporter policy information, MN Rule 2 summary, and many more helpful documents
- Parents can either reach teaching staff by calling 320-226-1296 (during the school day only), brightwheel messages (anytime), texting us (during the school day only) or emailing us (anytime). One of the great features of Brightwheel is that everyone who is signed up as a caregiver of your child will get notified for a message regarding your child. It's handy for keeping both teachers, both parents, etc. up to date.
- Conferences will be available two times a year in fall and spring. These are not mandatory, but it is highly encouraged that families attend
- **Concerns and Feedback:** If you have any concerns, feedback, or thoughts about our school, please let us know, and we can find a time to talk further. If you have any questions regarding child care rules and statutes you may call St. Louis County licensing at (218)726-2064. If you have any concerns of child maltreatment you can reach St. Louis County Child Protection at (218)726-2012
 - **Grievance Procedure:** If you have concerns about anything that occurs at Cedar Hollow Forest School, please let me know immediately and we will schedule a time when we can meet and discuss your concerns. I will consider your concerns, and let you know in writing how they will be addressed

★ Outdoor Play

- **Risky play:** It will always be our goal to make sure the children are practicing safety and assessing the risks in a given situation, but accidents still happen. With outdoor play, it's important that we give freedom to the children, and trust in their ability to know what is comfortable for them. There are guidelines in place and teachers are there to make sure the play is inclusive and safe, yet still wild and free.

- **Consent:** We require everyone to ask for consent to do anything to anyone else's body, and we require everyone to give consent before allowing others to do anything to themselves. This includes common things like: chasing, touching, hugging, holding hands, high 5s, pointing something at them, etc. It helps kids if they practice this at home and are familiar with the concept. There are many great books for kids on consent, check some out and talk about it with your child!
- **Stick play:** This is another type of play that is so important for children, for a stick can be anything! As long as the stick play stays positive and safe, and everyone who is playing is on the same page, we will support that kind of play.
- **Violent play:** If the children are engaging in this type of play (such as gun or sword play), we want to be able to support them through it and help them to understand why it may make others feel uncomfortable. Teachers will help the child brainstorm alternatives that are not violent in nature
- **Wet or dirty play:** The preschoolers will get wet and your child/ren will get muddy- this type of play will never be restricted unless the weather isn't suitable. When getting ready in the morning, please choose clothes that can get dirty. Please be ready to pick-up your child and have them be muddy. They will likely be very excited to show you how much fun they had!
- **Ice:** During the coldest months, we may walk or boot-skate on the ice of the creek. Children will wait on land until teachers have determined that the ice is safe
- **Going to the bathroom outdoors:** As a nature-based program your child will most likely have to go to the bathroom when we are outside at some point. We want to be able to support them in going to the bathroom outside and believe that even if they are uneasy with it at first, they will soon see it as an empowering experience
 - We will have a small foldable potty, wipes, and toilet paper with us at all times when outdoors and children will be able to clean their hands. When we are close enough to the classroom children will have the opportunity to use the indoor facilities
- **Campfires:** In colder seasons, we may spend time around a contained campfire (contained in a fire pit). Prior to lighting campfires, the children learn fire safety and the rules of the campfire. Campfires are closely managed by teachers to ensure the safety and enjoyment of the children
- **Barefoot:** Children get important input from their feet and going barefoot can help with balance and coordination. In safe conditions and

predetermined locations, children are welcome to play barefoot- while on-trail, however, children always have their footwear on

**If you are interested in what the research says about the benefits of outdoor play we encourage you to read some of the research conducted by Dr. Julie Ernst

★ **Outdoor Gear**

- As a nature-based preschool we spend much of our day outdoors, in all seasons, and in all weather. It is imperative that the preschoolers have quality gear to keep them safe, dry, and comfortable. Packing the right gear for the weather in all seasons can be a challenge. Cedar Hollow staff will always be there to help.
 - In the classroom there will be images of what the preschoolers should be wearing that day. As we move through the seasons we will update parents via our newsletter about what gear and layers should be getting sent to school each day
 - If a piece of gear is forgotten on a given day, your child will be provided with gear from Cedar Hollow for the day
 - If you want any specific recommendations or have questions about outdoor gear please don't hesitate to ask! If you are looking for financial resources to help purchase outdoor gear we are happy to help find those as well
- Your child/ren will be responsible for getting themselves dressed, we will be there for help and encouragement. It will be a lot of practicing in the beginning, but all the practice and hard work will be totally worth it

★ **Cultural Enhancement and Birthday Celebrations**

- We strive to acknowledge, value, and elevate the wealth of knowledge found in communities that have been marginalized, especially our indigenous communities as there is a strong connection between the teachings of indigenous communities and our values as a nature-based preschool program
- We welcome each child's family and culture to enhance, enrich, diversify, and deepen the web of experiences we create together each year
- Birthdays are very important for most preschoolers, and we want to recognize this special day *in a non-competitive, non-commercialized, and pressure-free manner
 - On a birthday, the class celebrates by gathering around the birthday child. If the birthday child would like the class to sing the children then sing "Happy Birthday"

- We ask that you please **do not** bring treats or goody bags for the children due to differences in family customs, concerns about allergies, and differences in economic status
- If families are planning a birthday celebration for their child, we ask that you either include all the children in the class or not pass out birthday invitations at school in order to prevent hurt feelings among children

★ **Family Events**

- Families are a valued and integral part of the Cedar Hollow Forest School community! We strive to not only maintain communication with families, but celebrate with them throughout the school year. Cedar Hollow will host seasonal family events throughout the year, providing opportunities for deeper connections with other families, staff, and among the children.
- We will also host volunteer events periodically and encourage families to share special skills or important cultural backgrounds throughout the year if they choose
- We will celebrate all students with an end of the year celebration. For those moving on to kindergarten we will include a small graduation ceremony

Please view the academic calendar on the following page.

Thank you for your interest in Cedar Hollow Forest School!!

Cedar Hollow Forest School Academic Calendar

2026 to 2027

Sep 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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27	28	29	30			

Oct 2026						
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Nov 2026						
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Dec 2026						
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Jan 2027						
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Feb 2027						
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Mar 2027						
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Apr 2027						
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Jun 2027						
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Jul 2027						
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Aug 2027						
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Important dates:

September 8th: First Day of School

November 6th & 13th: Fall Conferences

March 19th & 26th: Spring Conferences

June 10th: Last Day of School

No School Dates:

September 7th: Labor Day

October 16th: MEA Break

November 26th: Thanksgiving Holiday

December 24th-Jan 1st: Holiday Break

January 18th: MLK Day

February 15th-19th: Winter Break

April 5th-9th: Spring Break

May 31st: Memorial Day