



Kindergarten at The Treehouse

The Treehouse offers a brilliant Kindergarten program for students that will be 5 by September 1st. While we understand the draw of receiving free kindergarten from the public school system, we do want to encourage families to consider the benefits from extending their child's childhood for 1 more year, while still preparing for 1st grade in the areas that matter.

Many early education experts are recommending a swift return to developmentally appropriate, play-based learning in early childhood. Numerous studies have been done regarding the academic, social and emotional benefits of Treehouse's form of education for Kindergarteners compared to what is being offered in mainstream schooling.¹

Pedagogy of Nature-Based Kindergarten:

Less choice, more testing. More sitting, less movement, art and music. This is what kindergarten is becoming in the United States. Many say that kindergarten has become the new first grade.² The Treehouse sees this, all the research being presented and is offering a more developmentally appropriate, nourishing educational experience for 5 and 6 year olds.

In Waldorf, Montessori and other alternative education pedagogies, kindergarten classes will often consist of a mixed age of 3-6 year olds.

School is the only place in society that humans are separated based on age. It's unnatural and often has more negative effects than positive, where children often feel bored and restless if they are "ahead" or struggle with confidence and feel "behind". With mixed age, children have the opportunity to learn from each other every day, not just their adult teachers.

¹ [4 Unique Aspects of a Waldorf Kindergarten](#)

² [Why Kindergarten Is The New First Grade](#)

Older students get the chance to be leaders when they explain a new concept to a younger student who is curious about it. This is exciting for younger students who innately look up to their older peers in the classroom. Younger children feel inspired, and older children can benefit by reinforcing the lesson and coming to master it themselves and learn the power of leadership and responsibility.³ keeping your child enrolled in kindergarten at The Treehouse provides stability, where children are in their mixed age class for 3 years, feeling seen, heard, understood by their peers and teachers. All of that is in addition to our students benefiting from a program where infants - kindergarteners interact with each other; which imitates and supports a strong family system and promotes secure attachment through these important foundational years

As Richard Louv, author of [“Last Child in the Woods”](#), says, “Time in nature is not leisure time; it’s an essential investment in our children’s health.”⁴

There are many issues that plague young children (and all humans!) in our modern day that Forest School is a direct antidote for. Anxiety, depression and stress - too much screen time - childhood obesity - lack of real life problem solving skills, risk assessment⁵ and teamwork are just to name a few⁶.

Attending a Forest School for Kindergarten is quite common in many other countries around the world, as their educational systems recognize the need for 5 and 6 year olds to gain skills only Mother Nature can teach, that set them up for immense success for the rest of their lives; in and out of school. While yes, our program has a play based approach, in Forest Schools, students are often unaware that they are learning academics, because it feels so natural and engages their curiosity vs. being formal and stagnant. “...educators might lead the children to find sticks of varying lengths and organize them from shortest to longest, form letters out of natural materials, or count mushrooms.”⁷ Our teachers are gifted in working on academic and pre-academic skills in our emergent curriculum that is truly tapped into our students interests and abilities and teaches ecological literacy. “To be nature literate, individuals must have an understanding of the scientific principles that govern the natural world and be able to apply this knowledge to make informed decisions about how to live in harmony with the environment. This includes understanding the impacts of human actions on the natural world, the importance of biodiversity, and the need for sustainable practices.”⁸ While living in the middle of a climate crisis, we need this form of education like never before!

Practical Application:

On top of our preschool curriculum of watercolor painting, a wide range of handwork, bread baking, vegetable chopping, yoga, breathwork, song, and music, our kindergarteners are invited into deeper, more complex work that meets both their developmental readiness and their growing sense of capability. This includes woodworking,

³ [Do Mixed-Age Classrooms Actually Benefit Your Child’s Social and Intellectual Growth?](#)

⁴ [4 Unique Aspects of a Waldorf Kindergarten](#)

⁵ [Why our kids need forests for true learning](#)

⁶ [14 Benefits Of Forest School](#)

⁷ [Kindergarten, Naturally](#)

⁸ [What is Nature Literacy?](#)

more advanced storytelling, and forest school games designed to build ecological literacy, problem-solving, and social awareness.

Beyond the beauty of the curriculum itself, Treehouse kindergarten offers children something increasingly rare: the time and space to live into a slow, unhurried rhythm of childhood. This spaciousness allows their sense of wonder, reverence, and respect for the earth, themselves, and one another to truly take root. Within this rhythm, children are supported in growing not only academically, but as whole human beings whose curiosity, confidence, and young spirit are honored and allowed to thrive.

Our days are combined with preschoolers as one big Oak family. We follow a clear and intentional in-breath and out-breath rhythm. **Mornings begin with outdoor free play and a shared morning activity, where children of different ages work side by side.** During this time, lessons and tasks are naturally differentiated: preschoolers engage at a foundational level, while kindergarteners are offered more advanced responsibilities, longer attention demands, and leadership opportunities. This integrated approach allows kindergarteners to deepen skills within a familiar routine while remaining part of the greater community.

In the afternoons on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, the rhythm shifts toward focused kindergarten time. During this time, kindergarteners engage in intentional lessons that support state kindergarten benchmarks. Academic learning is woven into meaningful, hands-on experiences rather than isolated worksheets or rushed instruction, ensuring that learning remains alive, embodied, and developmentally appropriate.

Throughout the general daily routine, kindergarteners are consistently offered advanced work that builds both skill and confidence. In woodworking, they may measure, plan, and complete multi-step projects using real tools with care and intention. In painting, they explore more complex techniques, color mixing, and longer sustained work periods. Baking becomes an opportunity for reading recipes, measuring ingredients, tracking time, and understanding processes. Handwork expands into more intricate patterns, longer projects, and increased independence. Gardening invites observation, recording changes, understanding plant lifecycles, and caring for shared spaces. Clay work becomes more intentional and expressive, with an emphasis on form and structure through sculpture.

Treehouse kindergarten is designed to bridge the worlds of early childhood and formal academics without sacrificing joy, movement, creativity, or wonder. Children are met exactly where they are, gently guided forward, and given the time they need to grow into capable, grounded, and curious learners—ready not just for first grade, but for a lifelong love of learning.

Specific Curriculum

The Treehouse has a blending curriculum from the Waldorf approach and Oregon State Benchmarks. While we are a Waldorf inspired early education program, most of our families graduate The Treehouse and go into public schools. So, it is important to us that our students graduate Kindergarten at The Treehouse, ready for public 1st grade. The Waldorf curriculum does **not** teach formal math, reading, science, social studies, or health in Kindergarten, as does the public school system. Instead some of these subjects are embedded in the natural learning flow and many of them are held off until 1st grade and beyond. While **we are** going to be teaching the 5 main subjects here at The Treehouse, so your children will be prepared for public 1st grade, we will be

approaching it differently. Pressure will be removed from mastery, performance, or formal demonstration, which are often emphasized in traditional settings but may not align with the developmental needs of early childhood or Treehouse's ethos. Our approach will focus on experiential learning, where children can embody their knowledge, live it out and have a rich experience through story, intentional play and emergent curriculum.

In addition to the 4 subjects public school covers, we will also be including the following in our curriculum:

- Nature Journaling
 - Encourages writing and art
 - Encourages Science: observation, patterning, life science, earth science, inquiry, planning and carrying out investigations, obtaining and communicating information and beyond.
- [Woodworking](#)
- Seasonal, emergent curriculum
- [The Honorable Harvest](#)

Here are The Treehouses' [Kindergarten Benchmarks](#), fully outlined and detailed for curious parents!

See Treehouse's [☰ Recommended Booklist](#) if you wish to do any more reading on our outlook on education and parenting.