



EARTH NATIVE WILDERNESS SCHOOL

Youth Family Handbook

Updated July 2022

Table of Contents

Page 2	Welcome, Contact info for Earth Native School
Page 3	Wild Outside – Ringtails
Page 4	Wild Outside – Kit foxes
Pages 4-5	Wild Outside – Coyotes
Pages 5-6	Wild Outside – Red Wolves
Page 6	Forest Roots
Pages 6-7	Owl Eyes
Page 7	Parent Communications
Pages 8-11	Gear (What to send with your child each day)
Page 11	Lost and Found
Page 11	Health Policy
Pages 12-13	Student Code of Conduct and Dismissal Policy
Page 13	Tuition Policy
Page 13	Absences
Page 14	Class Cancellation Policy
Pages 15-16	Earth Native Wilderness School Culture
Page 16	Coyote Mentoring
Pages 16-18	The Eight Shields Teaching and Learning Model
Page 18	Youth Family Acknowledgment (To be signed and returned)



Welcome

Welcome to Earth Native Youth Programs! Our Weekly Intensive Mentoring Youth Programs, Wild Outside, Owl Eyes, and Forest Roots, serving children and teens ages 5-16.

To those families who have been with us for years and for those now joining us for their first year, I want to celebrate the growing community that we are so fortunate to be a part of, and to welcome you to it! It is because of each and every one of you that we are able to offer more opportunities for exploration of the natural world, of our community and of ourselves.

In this Youth Family Handbook, we will describe Youth Program essentials, the essence of Earth Native Wilderness School culture, information about Youth Programs, the expectations we have for youth families, and the benefits your children receive from mentoring with us, as well as policies that everyone needs to be familiar with. At the end you will be asked to sign and return an acknowledgment that you have read and understand the information, including policies on tuition, student dismissal, and program cancellation due to inclement weather.

This handbook is similar to a field guide in that it contains enough information to get everyone started on their journey ahead, as well as a few tidbits that you might not find elsewhere. Though there will be updates throughout the year, this is a good document to keep in a safe (and easy to remember) place to reference later. So, jump right in and explore some things familiar and others waiting to be discovered!

Dave Scott
Executive Director

Website: www.earthnativeschool.com | Phone: 512-299-8870

Earth Native Nature Campus – Bastrop, TX

Our 58 -acre property in Bastrop is about 20 minutes east of the Austin city limits. The property sits on the banks of Cedar Creek, which provides year-round water. The southern 10 acres of the property is mature pecan forest, which is the home to several exceptionally large old growth pecan trees. In addition to Cedar Creek the land also hosts several seasonal creeks. The seasonal creek banks are the primary home of many of our larger elm, oak, and ash trees. The Northern area of the property is home to eastern red cedar and mesquite woods with many other species mixed in. The property is home to an incredible amount of animal life and provides many opportunities for exploration and connection. Visit www.earthnativeschool.com for photos.

NEW Dropoff location for Wild Outside and Forest Roots for 2022/23 school year

The Earth Native Campus now has two entrances. All Wild Outside and Forest Roots program drop-off will now be at our Shiloh Campus entrance at **921 Shiloh Rd, Bastrop TX 78602**. We are excited about the change and it should save parents around 7 minutes of driving each program day and you'll no longer have to travel down the dirt roads that lead to our Woodview entrance. The new entrance is off Shiloh Rd. which is paved. Look out for the white and green Earth Native sign on Shiloh Rd. pointing down our new driveway.

Notes: For returning students, don't fret, program groups will still heavily utilize the older regular campus areas they are used to which are just a quick 10 minute walk through campus.

Campus entrance addresses:

Shiloh Entrance (Primary entrance for Wild Outside and Forest Roots and most youth programs moving forward.)
921 Shiloh Rd.
Bastrop, TX 78602

Woodview Campus Entrance (Wild Life Forest Preschool will continue to drop off at the Woodview Entrance.)
137 Woodview Ln.
Bastrop, TX 78602

Weekly Nature Programs

Earth Native's Weekly Nature Programs are about connecting with the natural world in an immersive way. We want your kids to feel fully alive and comfortable in nature and excited to embark on grand adventures in the woods. We aim for them to become joyous and mostly self-sufficient students of the natural world, and to find out a lot about themselves and the learning community they exist in along the way. Weekly Nature Programs include Wild Outside, Forest Roots, and Owl Eyes.

Wild Outside Ringtails – Ages 5-6

What it looks like...

This program will meet weekly on Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays. **The first class each month is held at our Bastrop Nature Campus**, the rest of the classes each month are held at McKinney Falls State Park in South Austin. The program will have a 10/1 student to instructor ratio.

We have several ways we will be organizing groups during the program school year:

- * **Clans** are groups based on age, ability and group dynamics, that stay consistent throughout the year.
- * **Choice-based groups** meet just for the day to study a particular topic.
- * **Guilds** are groups based on the student's interest and choice and meet several times over the course of a few weeks or months. Guilds focus on a specific aspect or skill of the natural world such as fire making, trees, tracking, etc. and are not age specific. Guild choices/groups will generally change each season.

Special Days

- **Parent Day** – Parents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their child once a year for Parent Day. There will also be a Parent Show & Share Day, when parents are invited to come out for a partial day to check out some of their child's favorite activities/places/creations, etc. More details will be emailed. Please check the class calendar on the [Weekly Programs Info page](#) for dates.
- **Grandparent Day** – Grandparents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their grandchild once a year for Grandparent Day. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **Bastrop Days** – Once a month the program will meet for class at our Bastrop Campus. This happens on the **first program day** of every month. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **Campout** – In the spring there will be a Ringtail/Kit fox family campout on a Saturday at the Bastrop Campus. All families of Ringtails and Kit foxes are invited to attend. More details will be emailed. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **End of Year Ceremony** – There will be a celebration/ceremony in May to celebrate the school year. More details will be emailed.
- **Community Night** – Earth Native will occasionally host a community night where we invite current students from our programs to join us for an evening of fun and community building. More information will be emailed closer to the event. Please check the class calendar for dates.

Wild Outside Kit Foxes – Ages 7-8

What it looks like...

This program will meet weekly on Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays. **The first class each month is held at our Bastrop Nature Campus**, the rest of the classes each month are held at McKinney Falls State Park in South Austin. The program will have a 10/1 student to instructor ratio.

We have several ways we will be organizing groups during the program school year:

- * **Clans** are groups based on age, ability and group dynamics, that stay consistent throughout the year.
- * **Choice-based groups** meet just for the day to study a particular topic.
- * **Guilds** are groups based on the student's interest and choice and meet several times over the course of a few weeks or months. Guilds focus on a specific aspect or skill of the natural world such as fire making, trees, tracking, etc. and are not age specific. Guild choices/groups will generally change each season.

Special Days

- **Parent Day** – Parents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their child once a year for Parent Day. There will also be a Parent Show & Share Day, when parents are invited to come out for a partial day to check out some of their child's favorite activities/places/creations, etc. More details will be emailed. Please check the class calendar on the [Weekly Programs Info page](#) for dates.
- **Grandparent Day** – Grandparents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their grandchild once a year for Grandparent Day. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **Bastrop Days** – Once a month the program will meet for class at our Bastrop Campus. This happens on the **first program day** of every month. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **Campout** – In the spring there will be a Ringtail/Kit fox family campout on a Saturday at the Bastrop Campus. All families of Ringtails and Kit foxes are invited to attend. More details will be emailed. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **End of Year Ceremony** – There will be a celebration/ceremony in May to celebrate the school year. More details will be emailed.
- **Community Night** – Earth Native will occasionally host a community night where we invite current students from our programs to join us for an evening of fun and community building. More information will be emailed closer to the event. Please check the class calendar for dates.

Wild Outside Coyotes – Ages 9-11

What it looks like...

This program will meet weekly on Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays. **The first class each month is held at our Bastrop Nature Campus**, the rest of the classes each month are held at McKinney Falls State Park in South Austin. The program will have a 10/1 student to instructor ratio.

We have several ways we will be organizing groups during the program school year:

- * **Clans** are groups based on age, ability and group dynamics, that stay constant throughout the year.
- * **Choice-based groups** meet just for the day to study a particular topic.
- * **Guilds** are groups based on the student's interest and choice and meet several times over the course of a few weeks or months. Guilds focus on a specific aspect or skill of the natural world such as fire making, trees, tracking, etc. and are not age specific. Guild choices/groups will generally change each season.

Special Days

- **Parent Day** – Parents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their child once a year for Parent Day. There will also be a Parent Show & Share Day, when parents are invited to come out for a partial day to check out some of their child's favorite activities/places/creations, etc. More details will be emailed. Please check the class calendar on the [Weekly Programs Info page](#) for dates.
- **Grandparent Day** – Grandparents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their grandchild once a year for Grandparent Day. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **Bastrop Days** – Once a month the program will meet for class at our Bastrop Campus. This happens on the **first program day** of every month. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **Campouts** – The Coyote program will have 2 program overnights, one in the winter and one in the spring. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **End of Year Ceremony** – There will be a celebration/ceremony in May to celebrate the school year. More details will be emailed.
- **Community Night** – Earth Native will occasionally host a community night where we invite current students from our programs to join us for an evening of fun and community building. More information will be emailed closer to the event. Please check the class calendar for dates.

Wild Outside Red Wolves – Ages 12-16

The goal of this program is not only to help the participants build and maintain a strong bond with the outdoors, but to help them to establish themselves in a community that is both supportive of their passions and gifts and aid them on their journey toward becoming fully alive, happy, successful adults. This program will be full of adventure and inner/outer exploration of the world.

What it looks like...

This program will meet weekly on Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays. **The first class each month is held at our Bastrop Nature Campus**, the rest of the classes each month are held at McKinney Falls State Park in South Austin. The program will have a 10/1 student to instructor ratio.

We have several ways we will be organizing groups during the program school year:

- * **Clans** are groups based on age, ability and group dynamics, that stay consistent throughout the year.
- * **Choice-based groups** meet just for the day to study a particular topic.
- * **Guilds** are groups based on the student's interest and choice and meet several times over the course of a few weeks or months. Guilds focus on a specific aspect or skill of the natural world such as fire making, trees, tracking, etc. and are not age specific. Guild choices/groups will generally change each season.

Special Days

- **Parent Day** – Parents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their child once a year for Parent Day. There will also be a Parent Show & Share Day, when parents are invited to come out for a partial day to check out some of their child's favorite activities/places/creations, etc. More details will be emailed. Please check the class calendar on the [Weekly Programs Info page](#) for dates.
- **Grandparent Day** – Grandparents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their grandchild once a year for Grandparent Day. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **Bastrop Days** – Once a month the program will meet for class at our Bastrop Campus. This happens on the **first program day** of every month. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **Campouts** - The Red Wolves includes 3 program overnights. The overnights will occur on regularly scheduled class days in the Fall, Winter, and Spring. You can view these dates on the class calendar.
- **End of Year Ceremony** – There will be a celebration/ceremony in May to celebrate the school year. More details will be emailed.

- **Community Night** – Earth Native will occasionally host a community night where we invite current students from our programs to join us for an evening of fun and community building. More information will be emailed closer to the event. Please check the class calendar for dates.

Forest Roots – Ages 6-10

What it looks like...

This program will meet weekly on Mondays at our Bastrop Nature Campus. The program will have a 10/1 student to instructor ratio.

We have several ways we will be organizing groups during the program school year:

- * **Clans** are groups based on age, ability and group dynamics, that stay consistent throughout the year.
- * **Choice-based groups** meet just for the day to study a particular topic.
- * **Guilds** are groups based on the student's interest and choice and meet several times over the course of a few weeks or months. Guilds focus on a specific aspect or skill of the natural world such as fire making, trees, tracking, etc. and are not age specific. Guild choices/groups will generally change each season.

Special Days

- **Parent Day** – Parents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their child once a year for Parent Day. There will also be a Parent Show & Share Day, when parents are invited to come out for a partial day to check out some of their child's favorite activities/places/creations, etc. More details will be emailed. Please check the class calendar on the [Weekly Programs Info page](#) for dates.
- **Grandparent Day** – Grandparents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their grandchild once a year for Grandparent Day. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **Campout** – In the spring there will be a Forest Roots family campout on a Saturday at the Bastrop Campus. All families are invited to attend. More details will be emailed. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **End of Year Ceremony** – There will be a celebration/ceremony in May to celebrate the school year. More details will be emailed.
- **Community Night** – Earth Native will occasionally host a community night where we invite current students from our programs to join us for an evening of fun and community building. More information will be emailed closer to the event. Please check the class calendar for dates.

Owl Eyes – Ages 6-12

What it looks like...

This program will meet weekly on Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays at Garey Park in Georgetown. The program will have a 10/1 student to instructor ratio.

We have several ways we will be organizing groups during the program school year:

- * **Clans** are groups based on age, ability and group dynamics, that stay consistent throughout the year.
- * **Choice-based groups** meet just for the day to study a particular topic.
- * **Guilds** are groups based on the student's interest and choice and meet several times over the course of a few weeks or months. Guilds focus on a specific aspect or skill of the natural world such as fire making, trees, tracking, etc. and are not age specific. Guild choices/groups will generally change each season.

Special Days

- **Parent Day** – Parents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their child once a year for Parent Day. There will also be a Parent Show & Share Day, when parents are invited to come out for a partial day to check out some of their child's favorite activities/places/creations, etc. More details will be emailed. Please check the class calendar on the [Weekly Programs Info page](#) for dates.
- **Grandparent Day** – Grandparents will be invited to come to class for a whole day with their grandchild once a year for Grandparent Day. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **Campout** – In the spring there will be a Owl Eyes family campout on a Saturday at the Bastrop Campus. All families are invited to attend. More details will be emailed. Please check the class calendar for dates.
- **End of Year Ceremony** – There will be a celebration/ceremony in May to celebrate the school year. More details will be emailed.
- **Community Night** – Earth Native will occasionally host a community night where we invite current students from our programs to join us for an evening of fun and community building. More information will be emailed closer to the event. Please check the class calendar for dates.

Parent Communication

Parents Contacting Instructors and Program Directors

During the school year, if you want to speak to an individual instructor the best time to reach them is in person immediately after class. While we find email to be an effective way to relay information or to schedule a conversation, experience tells us email is not as effective for addressing topics that are worthy of dialog (especially relating to any topic that is attached to emotions like frustration or anger). Staff are available for spontaneous conversation after class or potentially to have a pre-scheduled conversation in the 20 minutes after class ends. Staff members can be available for conversations to be scheduled at other times in person or via phone if the previous suggestions don't work.

If you have information to relay to the instructors that has to do with that day of class, please let the instructors know at drop-off. Also, be aware that at drop-off, instructors are taking on the responsibility for many children and trying to begin the program on time, thus they might not be as available to connect for an in depth conversation, as they would be after class. If you have an issue related to Youth Programs that you feel needs the attention of a director, please call the main Earth Native number at 512-299-8870.

Instructors Contacting Parents

You can expect regular emails from the instructors informing you of upcoming logistics as well as updates on the program. Each program has their own email group hosted by Google Groups where instructors contact parents about the program logistics, story of the day, upcoming special days or schedule changes etc. Although we try to communicate by email at least a week in advance, sometimes emails will go out with shorter notice. Please check your email regularly.

A [Facebook Group](#) (with optional participation) is set up for the Wild Outside/Forest Roots/Owl Eyes community, feel free to use this group to communicate with other parents about getting together outside of class, carpooling, etc. If you have an email for a specific parent you contact that person individually, using the Parent Directory. You can also use the Parent Directory to contact your whole program group.

Family Connections

When all students are confirmed for enrollment, we will publish a parent directory address list so that you may contact one another outside of class time. You can find the Parent Directory link on our [Weekly Programs Info Page](#).

Parent Involvement

During the year, we encourage parents to get together in order to get to know other families involved with Earth Native School. We will notify parents throughout the year of opportunities to support us in our programs.

Gear

There are a few essentials for each student to bring each day of class in order for them and everyone else to remain happy and healthy during our adventures:

Bring Daily **Please label all clothing and gear*

- Backpack (size appropriate to child)
- Water
- Lunch & healthy snacks
- Appropriate clothing and closed-toe shoes
- Journal/sketchbook
- Knife (for the following programs ONLY: Owl Eyes, Forest Roots, Red Wolves, Coyotes & Kit foxes) - Note the Ringtails program will introduce knife safety during the school year starting in 2022. More information about this will be emailed to you after the school year starts and all of the kids get settled in and oriented to the program.
- Bug Spray (highly recommended)
- Water shoes – In addition to their regular footwear (highly recommended if they are not wearing shoes that can comfortably get wet)

Clothing – weather appropriate

We definitely have a focus on immersing our students and ourselves in the natural world. In light of this, earth tones or camouflage are great choices. We have found that the students who don't need to worry about "getting dirty" because of their clothes, tend to allow themselves to have deeper experiences with the natural world that they otherwise might not. So, we recommend that you do not send your kids to class in clothing that they or you feel uncomfortable with them getting dirty and stained.

In cold or cold-wet weather, clothes should be wool and/or synthetic layers that will stay warm when wet. Cotton or cotton blends won't do when the weather turns cold. A warm hat is a must, as are a raincoat and rain pants, even if they only get used here and there. Synthetic or wool long underwear are used by nearly all of our students and staff. PLEASE NO COTTON UNDER-LAYERS ON COLD OR COLD WET WINTER DAYS!

In warm weather, cotton is OK, in fact it's the best because when cotton gets wet through rain, creek play or sweat, it pulls heat from our bodies, cooling us off. This is awesome in the warm/hot months when we need to cool off, but really dangerous in the winter when we need to stay warm.

Please send along sunscreen, sunhat, etc., as appropriate for the day and your child's needs. Shoes that can accommodate wading are recommended. Please have your child's sunscreen applied before they arrive. Bug spray is highly recommended during warm months.

~Our basic maxim is "There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing!" Please encourage your child to come well prepared to be outside ALL day. ~

Note on Chiggers-

Unfortunately, here in Texas (and pretty much all of the states to the east of us) chiggers are prevalent and a major bummer. They really are only an issue during the warmer months (late April – early November) with the spring generally being the worst time. We do our best to avoid areas with high chigger populations, but sometimes they take us by surprise or are unavoidable. Over the years we have learned quite a lot about these teeny tiny little creatures, and we would like to share with you what we know.

Here is some info on chiggers-

Chiggers are so small we can't easily see them. They like to climb up on high grasses, trees, and weeds and wait for a person or animal to pass by. Once on a person, they crawl around for a while until they find a spot that is cozy and secure (usually under the socks, in your underwear, or inside the waistband of your pants). This is because since they are so small, they are really not able to hold on very well and generally they need to be in tight places (or for you to be still) in order to bite you. Generally, it seems that they won't really create a bite until they have been on you for at least several hours. Once bitten, the bite can swell to up to the size of a nickel and can be really itchy for up to a week.

Tips on avoiding and treating chigger bites:

Deet bug spray is very effective at preventing chiggers from attaching themselves. It is most effective when applied around the socks, on the calves and legs as well as around the waistband of the pants or shorts. Unfortunately, we have not yet found an effective non-deet bug spray that works well to prevent chiggers. If you find one, let us know!

Sulfur powder – Sulfur can be very effective against chiggers and is an alternative to deet. Generally, it is put into a sock or similar cloth and “beat” around the ankles, legs, and waist to distribute the powder onto the skin and clothing. You can purchase powdered sulfur at Callahan's general store or online.

Showers/baths – Showers and or baths after class are really effective at preventing or minimizing chigger bites. A parent gave us this recommendation years ago and it is wonderful. We highly recommend that you give your kids a bath or shower right after class if you are concerned about chigger bites (also wash their clothes). Additionally, remember that since chiggers cannot hold on very well to your skin they are actually quite easily brushed off with the hands or by running your fingers through the waistband or under the tops of the socks and/or shaking out clothing.

Treatment for chigger bites:

Unfortunately, once a chigger has bitten you there isn't much that can be done. Hydrocortisone cream seems to work fairly well at preventing or lessening itching. Benadryl also can be effective and can help a chigger “victim” sleep better. Truly bad cases of chiggers are often treated with a prescription (or shot) of prednisone (steroid), but you would need a doctor to prescribe this. Generally, the more chigger bites are scratched the longer they last and the more they itch, so treating them with topical anti-itch is important. In the end though, no matter what you do, the chigger bites will go away on their own and the memories of itchy nights will slowly fade over time and morph into a rite of passage story...

Shoes

We require that all students have closed-toe shoes (no open-toe sandals/flip-flops etc.) for class. If weather and terrain permit, we do at times allow students (with instructor permission/supervision) to go barefoot. Boots or hiking shoes are the choice of many students. Boots should ideally have good traction. Closed-toe sandals like Keens are also a good choice as the kids can go in and out of the water without worrying about their shoes getting soaked. If you send your child in shoes that are not suited to get fully immersed in water, it is recommended that they have water shoes in their backpacks that they can change into when wading in the creeks. Unfortunately, creeks are major avenues for trash to flow and collect and it is not uncommon for us to encounter hazards like broken glass, fish hooks, or shards of rusted metal in the creek beds we frequent. Therefore, in almost all circumstances we require students to have some type of footwear on when walking or playing in the creeks.

Personal Journals

We suggest that each student bring a small notebook/sketchbook, as well as a pen or pencil (with eraser) to draw or write with. Please put it into a Ziplock bag labeled with their name.

Knives

The Owl Eyes, Kit foxes, Coyotes, Red Wolves & Forest Roots students will be utilizing knives in their program. Ringtails will introduce knife safety and knives with dulled points later in the school year. Folding knives are not permitted until a student has achieved a level 4 knife certification and has passed a folding knife safety test. Due to the great variance in usefulness and quality of knives, we require parents to purchase a specific brand/model of knife for use in our programs. We use either the Stainless-Steel Mora Clipper Companion Knife or the Stainless-Steel Mora basic knife in class. If you would like to purchase one of these knives on your own, they are readily available online.

Earth Native takes knife safety extremely seriously and we have a comprehensive certification system in place to train our students on safe knife handling and use. Our certification process is very effective overall at preventing injuries. That being said, mistakes do happen, students do occasionally forget to follow all of the knife safety rules they have been taught and cuts can result. The vast majority of the cuts are minor and simply require basic first-aid, band aid etc. however, each year a handful of students across our programs cut themselves a little worse and need some stitches.

Instructors will cover knife safety in the beginning of the year, and revisit it over and over again throughout the year. Instructors have the absolute say in when it is, or is not, appropriate for someone to possess a knife, have it out, and be able to utilize it.

Knife Safety Rules

T - Tool not toy

A - Always ask permission

B - Blood bubble

C - Carve off and away

D - Don't get distracted

E - End with a click and a zip

Stuck Knife STOP (and ask for help)

Knife Safety Levels

Level 1 - Beginner

Recommended for all age groups

Requirements- Student must pass an ENWS Knife safety certification

Privileges- Student permitted to carry a non-folding knife in backpack and may carve with instructor permission and direct instructor supervision

Student must be seated while using knife

Student may not Baton without permission from instructor

Level 1 students will be required to do a review of the knife certifications every year. The review will count as 20 minutes of safe carving

Level 2 - Advanced Beginner

Recommended for all age groups

Requirements- Student must have completed 5 hours of safe carving at 1st certification level recorded in 20 minute increments

Privileges- Student permitted to carry a non-folding knife in backpack and may carve with instructor permission in the close vicinity of an instructor with occasional instructor check-ins

Student must be seated while using knife

Students must ask permission to Baton from instructor

Eligible for:

Saw safety certification

Level 3 - Intermediate

Recommended for ages 9 and up

Requirements- Student must have completed 10 hours of safe carving at 2nd certification level recorded in 20 minute increments

Student must have demonstrated an ability to carve safely and successfully using all of the basic level techniques

Student must have completed saw safety certification

Privileges- Student permitted to carry a non-folding knife in backpack and may carve with instructor permission in the close vicinity (within sight) of an instructor

Student must be seated while using knife

Level 4 - Skilled

Recommended for ages 9 and up

Requirement- Student must have completed 11 hours of safe carving at 3rd certification level recorded in 20 minute increments

Student must have demonstrated an ability to carve safely and successfully using all of the intermediate level techniques

Privileges- Student may carve either sitting or standing

Student may carry a non-folding knife in backpack and may carve with instructor permission in the vicinity of an instructor

Student may possess a folding knife in their backpack after completing folding knife safety certification

Eligible for:

Folding knife safety certification

Level 5 - Expert

Recommended for ages 12 and up

Requirements- Student must complete a written paper about the importance of the knife to them and their own personal journey in working to master it including mistakes that they have made with a knife in the past and what they learned from those experiences

Student must have completed 11 hours of safe carving at 4th certification level recorded in 20 minute increments
Student must have demonstrated an ability to carve safely and successfully using all of the Advanced level techniques
Student must have completed saw and folding knife safety certifications
Student must have demonstrated that they can sharpen a knife correctly and effectively
Student must complete basic first aid for laceration and cutting injuries

Privileges - Students may bring and use a knife of their choice at programs (does not need to be a MoraKniv). Students are permitted to carry a personal saw in their backpack. Students may also keep a pocket knife in their pocket

Eligible for:

Hatchet safety certification

Machete safety certification

Level 6 - Independent Expert

Recommended for ages 14 and up

Requirements- Students must harvest and carve their own wild bow drill kit and successfully get a coal (paracord can be used for string all other materials must be natural and self-harvested)

Student must have completed ALL tool safety certifications (saw, hatchet, folding knife)

Student must be currently first aid and CPR certified through an accredited organization

Student must have demonstrated to the instructors that they have high integrity, are responsible, trustworthy and able to admit mistakes

Privileges- Student is permitted to carry a non-folding knife of their choice on their belt, a pocket knife in their pocket and use them independently.

Student is permitted to carry a personal saw and hatchet

If you would like to purchase a knife from us, and did not already do so during enrollment, you can email info@earthnativeschool.com to have that added onto your registration.

Note: If you do purchase a knife in advance, please use caution. These knives are extremely sharp, and we've heard stories of cuts at home (parents and kids) when unpacking or admiring new knives.

Lost and Found

We request that you write names on backpacks, clothing, lunch boxes, etc., as we have noticed that sometimes students don't recognize that these personal belongings have disappeared. We cannot be ultimately responsible for re-connecting unlabeled items to their owners. If a name is visible on the item, instructors will notify the owner. If you have lost an item, please notify the program instructors who will try to find your item. We will keep unclaimed Lost and Found items for no more than one month at our office. If you request us to hold something, we can hold it for up to one month. Unclaimed and unlabeled items will eventually either be donated to charity or be given away to other ENWS community members.

Health Policy

Medical Information and Emergency Response

Each Earth Native School family is responsible for completing the “Medical Conditions” section of your child’s profile in your account with us at the time of enrollment. Full disclosure of issues affecting your child is required and important to their safety and the well-being of the program. If you need to update this information, please [log into your account](#) with us and choose “My Account” from the menu bar. You will see a tab for each child in your account and can make any changes or updates.

Instructors have access to this information and in the case of an emergency, you or your Secondary Emergency Contact person, will be contacted following the School’s Emergency Response Plan.

Health / Illness Guidelines

Please follow these guidelines to help prevent the spread of communicable diseases at Earth Native School:

If a child or adult has had any of the following within 24 hours of class, he/she should not come to Earth Native School:

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- A communicable illness (e.g. chicken pox, COVID-19, Flu, etc.)

Illness

If a student becomes ill while at class, we will then contact the student’s parent or legal guardian to come pick them up. If we are unable to reach the parent or guardian, we will subsequently contact the secondary emergency contact person to come pick up the student.

For this reason and other urgent situations, it is important that parents make a concerted effort to be available by phone during class

Student Code of Conduct & Dismissal Policy

We must clearly state that there are certain behaviors that are unacceptable at Earth Native Youth Programs. Though we don’t expect that these behaviors will occur, we feel it’s necessary to be very clear about them.

- **Students will not display violent, harmful, or abusive behavior at school, whether it is directed at other students, staff, the public, or themselves.**
- **Students will not use or bring tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs. They will use prescription drugs or over-the-counter drugs only in ways prescribed and will communicate with staff when doing so.**
- **Students will listen to the requests of instructors and follow them. If students are unable to do this, it puts themselves and others at risk.**

At the beginning of each year, students and staff will create Community Agreements acknowledging the above and more specific guidelines. Once the agreements are made, all will be held accountable. Staff will mentor students in upholding the agreements. If students don’t follow the agreements, staff will determine what option best fits the circumstance. The following is a list of possible options that instructors will use. The first two options will always be incorporated – ranging from a gentle reminder like a hand on a shoulder, to a heart-to-heart conversation, or, if needed for safety, instructors may need to simply say, “Stop!” Instructors commonly strive to co-create solutions with students, but in some unusual cases (when

physical and/or emotional safety is at risk) a decision may not be open to negotiation (though we are always willing to hear the student's perspective afterward). Respect, understanding, and communication will be priorities in all situations.

Instructor responses to student behavior when it is not consistent with agreements (listed from gentlest response to most severe)

1. Remind the student of the agreement
2. Support the student in shifting their behavior or creating a new agreement.
3. Contact the parent after class. (Parents often can help staff and students understand each other more fully)

If needed for safety or to maintain a healthy learning environment for all, Earth Native School reserves the right to:

4. Call the parent during class to pick up the student.
5. Ask a child to "take a week off".
6. Dismiss the student from the program. – This will generally only occur only if the previous steps are not effective **or** if a very serious infraction occurs.

Though it is rare for Earth Native School to have serious behavior or discipline problems with a student, it is necessary for us to let families know about our dismissal policy in the unlikely event that we do encounter difficulties.

Tuition Policy

Earth Native School must ensure that our programs maintain financial integrity and success through carefully monitoring the flow of money and financial agreements. Our current system for supporting the school revolves around the following tuition policy:

- ◆ Enrollment requires a commitment to the entire school year and is accompanied by payment in full or a non-refundable registration fee.
- ◆ **Our installment payment option does not mean that enrollment is on a month-to-month basis!**
- ◆ If a student withdraws from, or is dismissed from, the school before the end of the year, please see our cancellation policy online: <https://www.earthnativeschool.com/cancellation-policy>
- ◆ A \$25 late fee will be applied to all payments that are more than 3 days overdue. Payments more than 5 days overdue will incur additional late fees of \$10 per day in addition to the \$25 initial fee. 2 weeks after that, the student may be barred from attending class until payment is made or an agreement has been reached between the school and student/family regarding payment.
- ◆ We expect that anyone who will be responsible for making tuition payments for your child will be given complete and accurate payment information about the financial agreement you have made with Earth Native Wilderness School.
- ◆ Please bring your acknowledgment of having read and understood this Handbook (last page) to the first day of class.

Absences

It is completely expected that your child/teen may miss some days of class. It is not necessary to inform us if your child/teen will not be at class. If you still wish to do so, please contact their Instructor directly via text/call instead of emailing anyone in the office, as it is likely that the message will not be received in time to notify instructors.

Class Cancellation Policy

Although over the last decade + we have rarely needed to do so, we reserve the right to cancel a program day or change a program duration, due to unforeseen events such as severe weather. Since these events are outside of our control, we are not able to issue refunds for individual class day cancellations. Please understand we must do this because our instructors' time is committed, our whole school schedule is set, and that cancellations involve a lot of behind-the-scenes work. If an individual class day is canceled due to severe weather, we will not have a "make up" day.

Class cancellations are rare, we will do everything we can to run a class and will always do so as long as we feel that conditions are safe for our students and staff. Cancellation of one program does NOT necessarily mean cancellation of others on the same day.

Inclement Weather Procedure: (in case of severe storms, snow, ice, flooding...)

- We will be for the most part following local school delays and closures for our programs that run on weekdays though sometimes we may deviate from this.
- We will post the closure or delay on our [Weekly Program Info Page](#) online.
- A staff member will send out a text message and email announcing the delay or closure as soon as the decision has been made. We will NOT be calling families on the phone unless the class cancellation occurs the same day as class (i.e. the morning of scheduled class, or while class is in progress if unexpected severe weather hits during the class day). We always strive to make cancellation decisions the day before class to give parents enough notice. Unfortunately, sometimes that isn't always possible given the sometimes unpredictable nature of our Central Texas weather.

Questions about potential class cancellation can be directed to the main Earth Native number at 512-299-8870.

Whew! Hopefully most of your questions about Wild Outside, Owl Eyes and Forest Roots have been answered here, though I invite you to please contact us with anything further you need to get the year started on the right foot. We are proud of the commitment of so many families to our programs and thank all of you for your continued support. We look forward to a great year ahead!

Best,

Dave Scott
Executive Director
dave@earthnativeschool.com
512-299-8870 ext. 4

NOTE: This document continues below. Please sign and return the last page of this Handbook that states that you have read and understand this document. Thank you!

More information about Earth Native School, our school culture and curriculum

Who Are We?

Through dynamic programs that combine ancient and modern ecological wisdom, Earth Native School provides a variety of programs that inspire people of all ages to connect deeply with nature.

Vision

Earth Native School is a nature education leader in Austin and Central Texas. It is our goal to help children and adults of all backgrounds and means to establish strong connections to the natural world.

Mission

Earth Native is dedicated to fostering personal connection to the natural world and the systems that sustain life through appreciation, increased awareness, independence, and knowledge of where we have come from.

Values

Earth Native School conducts business and educates students rooted in these Core Values:

VITALITY (East)

Connecting with nature awakens a health and vitality that helps us discover our own gifts and talents. As mentors we cultivate this personal relationship with nature, appreciate and empower discovery of these gifts, and nurture their expression. When we use our gifts in service to the community, we are filled with passionate aliveness -- a sparkle in the eye that is visible to everyone.

NATURE MENTORING (South)

We use "Coyote Mentoring" and "The Eight Shields Model" to engage people in place-based education to deepen their relationship with nature. Our curriculum includes naturalist and survival skills, animal tracking, edible and medicinal plants, and interpreting bird language. Our students are immersed in nature, utilizing all of their senses in all seasons and weather. We maintain a low student to teacher ratio to facilitate individual mentoring. By asking skillful questions, we empower students to find their own answers. Nature Mentoring develops stewards, mentors, and leaders who will foster sustainability for both humanity and the earth.

COMMUNITY (West)

We nurture an ever-deepening awareness of the vital interdependence of nature, community, and self. With this awareness, we learn to honor and appreciate the richness that a diversity of life experiences, ideas, backgrounds, and gifts bring to the whole community. We encourage genuine relationships, work-life balance, service to community, and living in rhythm with nature.

PEACEMAKING (North)

In all our interactions, we strive to begin with thankfulness, to cultivate peace in ourselves, to appreciate what others share, and to communicate honestly and clearly. When we act through peace and appreciation, we can come together to make decisions with the strength of unity for the good of our communities. In this way, we steward the Earth and our children toward peace and well-being of body, mind, and spirit.

Principles of Peace and Good Communication

The Principles of Peace bind Earth Native School together. These teachings about communication and conflict resolution have been used by our school since the beginning and are commitments that our staff, volunteers, students, and parents make to each other as we interact and communicate.

They are an expression, developed by the Wilderness Awareness School of a very old idea, based on traditions of the Iroquois Confederacy, including their story of the Peacemaker and their Great Law of Peace. The subtleties of the Principles of Peace deserve a much longer treatment than what we can provide here, but we will summarize briefly the essential points of the Principles as we have come to understand them.

PEACE

The idea of this principle is that external peace (the absence of conflict or tension) rises from internal peace within each and every member of the group. To the best of your ability, we strive to come to a place of peace before communicating. Enter discussions with compassion for yourself and others, take ownership for your own part, and communicate needs and requests in a quiet, centered manner. When grounded in this peaceful state, all parties will be able to bring their minds together in decisions that are truly for the common good.

APPRECIATION, also known as Good Message

This is based on the idea that everyone, everything, has a wish to be appreciated. Come to discussions with awareness of, and openness to, all points of view, and with compassion and “soft eyes” for the shortcomings we all have, and with appreciation for the gifts and good intentions of all individuals. They are very likely a good person trying to do good things, who may have inadvertently crossed a boundary. Appreciation and kindness do wonders for the message actually being received.

This is especially true during conflicts, where the Principle reminds us that whatever communication we have needs to be intended to appreciate the person, and to improve the relationship we have with them. The Appreciation Principle calls for the courage to speak your disagreements or grievances honestly and openly with the intention of coming to a respectful mutual understanding.

UNITY, also known as Power of Unity of Mind.

The idea of this principle is that real power comes from cooperation. This is sometimes expressed as “power from” as opposed to “power over.” Unity of Mind means coming to an understanding -- hearing others' views, agreeing to a shared intention, and then choosing a course of action.

Coming to Unity of Mind on decisions that affect stakeholders is an ideal we strive toward. Unity does not always mean consensus. The business of education depends on a hierarchical structure to facilitate the many decisions that must occur in a timely way, but we are committed to including all who need to have a voice in each of our business decisions. The process involves consulting and information gathering, email conversation, and occasionally meeting.

We seek transparency and to the best of our judgment, inclusiveness, in these deliberations. Confidentiality sometimes trumps transparency. Time sometimes stumps our efforts. But in general, we want everyone to have input on issues that affect them. If you find yourself disagreeing with a decision made at Earth Native School, our program director and instructors are committed to hearing your dissent with a peaceful and compassionate ear and working toward an understanding.

Coyote Mentoring

Our Coyote Mentoring approach empowers students to become healthy individuals and to serve as stewards, mentors and leaders in the movement to reconnect our culture to nature. Coyote stretches comfort zones; Mentor steers the raft. The manual that we use, *Coyote's Guide*, developed by Jon Young and the Wilderness Awareness School, guides the Coyote Mentoring philosophy of education that makes our programs unique and vibrant. This approach honors individuality and encourages self-sufficiency in learning and awakens a kinship with nature. Our programs draw inspiration from human cultures world-wide, emphasizing nature as teacher, routines to enhance awareness, engaging “child passions” through playing, questioning, storytelling, and music making, using “tracking” as an interpretive tool and “bird language” as an awareness tool, and encouraging students to find their gifts and follow their passions.

The Eight Shields Teaching and Learning Model

Earth Native School utilizes a unique model for education and organization called the Eight Shields Model. The Eight Shields Model was designed by Jon Young and the Wilderness Awareness School and is most fully explained in [Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature](#).

The Eight Shields Model is based on the idea of the flow of the "Natural Cycle" or "Wheel of Life." A “shield” is like a coat of arms on a medieval shield. Each is named after a direction on the compass, the four cardinal directions and four ordinal

ones. When you associate the 8 compass directions with the sequential stages of the Natural Cycle, you get the 'feeling' for the symbolic or archetypal energy of each "shield" or direction:

Natural Learning Cycle

Based on the flow of the stages of the Natural Cycle, this is the dynamic sequence we try to follow in designing the sequence of our lesson plans. We might design an hour, a day, or even a school year to roughly follow this natural sequence in the learning journey.

EAST - Excitement and Inspiration. Getting fired up! Excited energy in the body! Want to start immediately!

SOUTHEAST - Orientation and Motivation. Gathering tools, directions, resources so one can move forward

SOUTH - Focus and Perspiration. Doing the work. Focus supported by inspiration and motivation.

SOUTHWEST - Relaxation and Internalization. Putting the project down for a bit. Futzing around. Pleasure. Allowing for integration of learning in the nervous system.

WEST - Celebration. Fruition of project, sharing/presentation, honoring and celebration.

NORTHWEST - Reflection and Release. Letting the active phase of the learning/project go. Fermentation and digestion of learning.

NORTH - Distillation and Integration. Ability to see overview of one's process and what one has learned. Gain insight that would allow one to teach others.

NORTHEAST - End and Beginning, Imagination. Enough space has been created to dream, to imagine, and to become inspired again... So, the next "lesson" begins again in the East.

8 Shields Curriculum

EAST - The Skills of the Naturalist: Knowing your place. In this component of the program students get to know the flora, fauna, and ecology of Central Texas, and develop a rich understanding of plants, trees, mammals, and birds, as well as the identification, taxonomy, and natural history of North American species, coming away with the background necessary to succeed as a well-rounded naturalist.

SOUTH - The Science of Tracking: Unraveling the mysteries of tracks and sign left behind by wildlife. This part of the course is designed to give students a holistic grounding in the art and science of animal tracking. Emphasis is placed on the development of accurate track and sign identification and interpretation skills, as well as applications of tracking in biological research.

SOUTHWEST - Working with Native Plants: Gathering and preparing wild plants to use for food, medicine, and tools. This aspect of the program is a hands-on study of the diverse uses of native plants and trees. Students learn field identification, edible/medicinal preparations, and plant technologies. The course also covers basic principles of forest stewardship, permaculture, and habitat restoration.

WEST - Natural Mentoring (Adult Programs): This part of the course teaches students the principles of our nature-based approach to education and community development. Students come away with the knowledge and experience necessary for being an effective instructor, leader, and mentor for youth and adults.

NORTH - Wilderness Survival: Technologies of the Hunter-Gatherer. This component of the program engages students in the practice of indigenous wilderness living skills, including the key elements needed to survive in the outdoors unaided by modern tools. Students learn to build shelters from natural materials, locate and purify water, create fire from friction, and master wilderness crafts.

NORTHEAST - Nature Observation: Bird Language and Awareness. This aspect of the course focuses on nature awareness skills. Students practice activities that build greater sensory acuity, train the body to move gracefully and silently in the forest, and cultivate the ability to interpret predator disturbance patterns displayed in bird behaviors and vocalizations.

Indicators of Awareness

What are we really teaching? The school's dedication to fostering appreciation not only of nature but also of self and community, has given rise to a bold statement of what we are really teaching. We are teaching nature connection; we are encouraging the blossoming of each student's gifts; and we are guiding students toward service, leadership, and stewardship in the community. Following are the qualities or character traits that are our standards for success. These are based on Gilbert Walking Bull's information about the Lakota people's "7 Sacred Attributes."

EAST - Common Sense. Experience-taught good judgment about how to respond to situations efficiently.

SOUTHEAST - Aliveness and Agility. Putting one's whole self into something, awakened bodies channeled into meaningful connections (i.e. animal forms), quick reflexes, deep health of the body.

SOUTH - Inquisitive Focus. Brightened curiosity, gathering facts, using reason and intuition to make theories and test them. Discerning patterns. Inspired ability to pursue learning and to listen.

SOUTHWEST - Caring and Tending. Consciousness of physical, emotional, and community well-being. Offering help as need is observed or anticipated. Care for the natural world.

WEST - Service to Community. Desire to play a meaningful role in service to the community. Figuring out how one's gifts can contribute. Seeking out what one can do to be truly helpful.

NORTHWEST - Awe and Reverence. Slowing to be awestruck by something. Eventually generates "a sense of the sacred" and "reverence for life" and an ethic to leave it better than you found it.

NORTH - Self-Sufficiency. Using one's resources to create what needs to happen instead of complaining or wishing things were different. Having a store of technical knowledge. Internal strength and resilience turned toward protection of the whole community.

NORTHEAST - Quiet Mind. Able to sit still in a natural way. Naturally choosing to take Sit Spot time. Being peaceful with stillness.

Youth Family Acknowledgment

I have received a copy of the Earth Native School Youth Family Handbook. I have read the Handbook in its entirety, understood it, and discussed any questions or concerns I may have with my child's instructors, or the Program Director.

Since the information and policies described here are necessarily subject to change with or without notice, I acknowledge that revisions to the manual may occur and I understand that these revisions supersede existing policies.

Enrollment with Earth Native Wilderness School is subject to the policies stated in this handbook regarding dismissal, tuition, and class cancellation.

Please sign and **bring to the first day of class** of the school year for inclusion in our files or sign online [here](#).

Parent or Guardian's Printed Name

Date

Parent or Guardian's Signature