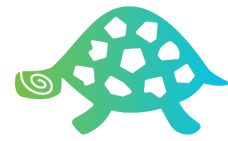


# After School @ ICG



Ithaca  
Children's  
Garden



Parent Handbook 2022-2023

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# Welcome to After School @ ICG!



Welcome to Ithaca Children's Garden's very own after-school program! Piloted in Spring 2018, After School @ ICG has been growing steadily ever since. In 2021-2022 we debuted our full academic year after school program, and it was a resounding success! Year 2 of the full academic year program promises to be EVEN BETTER! And we are so excited to be based in our newly installed YURT!!!!



# Our Mission, Values, & Curriculum



***It is our mission at Ithaca Children's Garden to connect children to nature, to create a more beautiful, resilient, and just world.***

After School @ ICG is uniquely play-based, following the interests of each individual child, as unique and vital parts of our After School community. Children form bonds of friendship while gaining valuable skills in communication, cooperation, respect for each other and for the beautiful gifts nature offers daily.

At ICG, children get the absolute best: opportunities for authentic, child-led free play, with expert mentorship and care. We understand that providing rich and numerous opportunities for play builds social and physical competency, aids in the development of problem-solving skills, fosters self-awareness, and sharpens academic success. We apply Playwork Principles (<http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/playworkprinciples>) in utilizing the microenvironments within the garden, where the interaction of children and nature blossom into activities, games, building projects, and whatever the imagination reaches for.

The seasons inform our daily activities. Digging in sand, exploring waterways,

building cool shelters in late summer; crunching leaves, gathering acorns, wondering at first snow flakes in fall; building snow forts and sledding in winter; and then the ardent search for new shoots, budding branches, glistening frog eggs, newly occupied nests, buzzing hives, and the welcome return of color and warmth in spring.

Research suggests that meaningful, child-led outdoor play leads to environmental stewardship. Through play, children develop a relationship with the natural world, and that relationship propels them toward a lifetime of care for the environment.



# Our Team



## **Grace Heath, ICG Educator/Playworker**

Grace has always had a deep love for the outdoors. Growing up, she was lucky enough to have access to many natural spaces to play and explore that have made a continuous impact on her throughout her life, and strives to make this experience accessible to all children. She is a strong believer in the positive effects being outside can have on mental health and works to create an environment where children feel seen, heard, and accepted. Grace first started with the Ithaca Children's Garden the summer of 2021, where she worked with preschool age campers as a Playworker/Mentor. After quickly falling in love with the Children's Garden, she was happy to be able to stay on and continue her work here as an Educator/Playworker for the After School Program.

[grace@ithacachildrensgarden.org](mailto:grace@ithacachildrensgarden.org)



## **Jessie Garmhausen, ICG Educator/Playworker**

Jessie (they/them) is a strong believer in the power of nature to instruct, center and heal; and in the dignity and importance of each and every child. They've worked with children for two decades, along with being a stay-at-home parent. Attunement, fostering a sense of belonging, and flat-out having fun, are her guiding principles with children. They are a passionate advocate for gender inclusivity, with a particular interest in the rights of transgender, non-binary

and gender non-conforming kids. In addition to parenting an amazing nine year old son, Jessie also has a long career as an artist, writes in their free time, and spends as much time as possible exploring Six Mile Creek near their home.

[Jessie@ithacachildrensgarden.org](mailto:Jessie@ithacachildrensgarden.org)





### **Jason McClevish, Nature Preschool Educator**

Jason strives to engage and revel in the blessings and growth that are at hand, and is excited to share his varied strengths and love of the outside to support a broader spectrum of fellow empowered beings.

There is nowhere better than Ithaca Children's Garden for our shared play and experience, so let's grow together there! [jason@ithacachildrengarden.org](mailto:jason@ithacachildrengarden.org)



### **Trey Ramsey, Program Administrator**

Public gardens are the perfect place for Trey (they/them) to combine their love of the outdoors with their passion for education and social justice. They have years of working with plants and insects, fighting for LGBTQ justice, and trying to make the world a greener, more welcoming place. Outside of work, Trey enjoys hiking, gardening, LEGOs, and Dungeons and Dragons. [trey@ithacachildrengarden.org](mailto:trey@ithacachildrengarden.org)



### **Lauren Salzman, Education Director**

Lauren (she/her) has more than 15 years of experience leading educational programming with nonprofits, nature centers, museums and community organizations and more than 7 years with ICG! As an avid naturalist, Lauren has always loved plants and studying the natural world. With her own roots growing deeply in Ithaca soil, Lauren is thrilled to be part of Ithaca Children's Garden team, making meaningful and magical connections between local youth and the natural world. [lauren@ithacachildrengarden.org](mailto:lauren@ithacachildrengarden.org)

# Daily Schedule & Drop-Off / Pick-Up

Most kids arrive via ICSD bussing, some are dropped off by caregivers. Our day-to-day activities will be guided by the season, weather, and the interests of the children, while following familiar rhythm:

## Arrival 2:00pm- 3:00pm

*Busses and caregivers drop off ICG's purple gate by the Farmstand and will be met there by program staff. If you or another caregiver is dropping off, please contact a staff person through Brightwheel<sup>1</sup>. The Kids' Kitchen and Farm Stand serve as our home base. That area is where we'll be until everyone arrives. We'll hang out and decompress a bit while we wait. It's a good time to catch up, see how folks are doing and how their day has been. We'll get a sense of what folks are interested in doing or just lay down under a shady tree and breathe out the school day. We'll always have some loose parts set out like nets and containers for the Rice Paddy pond for those that need to move a bit.*

## Snack

*Once folks have arrived, we offer the opportunity to fuel up for the play and exploration ahead. We have a weekly repeating snack schedule, where we will have a snack prepared each day. We encourage them to try the snack provided, if they decide there is a snack they don't like, they are welcome to bring a snack from home if preferred. Please make sure you have shared any food allergies or dietary restrictions with the educators. This helps us keep participants with food allergies safe. We'll do our best to accommodate different needs in the snack menu. Sometimes there will be opportunities for kids to participate in snack harvesting and/or preparation. Snack time serves as an opportunity to chat, share, and build community.*

## Play, play, and more play!

*Authentic child-directed outdoor free play across our magical 3 acres.*

## Goodbyes 5-5:30 pm

*Parents/guardians pick up anywhere between 5-5:30pm each day. Should your schedule require pick up before 5:00 on an individual or consistent basis, please let us know.*

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<sup>1</sup> Brightwheel is our main form of communication, so we ask that parents and guardians have some way to access it.



# Is After School @ ICG the right fit for my child?

**Ithaca Children's Garden is for ALL children.** Ithaca Children's Garden welcomes all members of our community to participate in all programs and activities offered by Ithaca Children's Garden. We encourage all members and volunteers of Ithaca Children's Garden to support an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone. [Learn more about ICG's Inclusion Policy and/or submit an accommodations request here.](#)

After School @ ICG welcomes kids from Kindergarten to 5th grade. Homeschooled children are also welcome.

Because of our qualified staff, individualized attention and the nature of our child-centered curriculum, we are often - but not always- a terrific fit for children with a rainbow of temperaments and experiences. It is always in the best interest of your child to talk with our staff ahead of time about any concerns or accommodations that will help your child thrive.

We welcome both parents and children to visit Ithaca Children's Garden prior to beginning the program.

## What to Bring: Fall, Winter, Spring

***Set your child up for success!***

### **Each day your child will need:**

- 1 complete change of clothes (including socks and underwear) in labeled gallon-size ziploc bags
- a water bottle
- shoes or boots that can get muddy and wet
- seasonally appropriate outerwear

We will be outside in all seasons and virtually all weather. For children to enjoy their time, they must be appropriately dressed to stay warm and dry.

In spring and fall, please make sure your child has layers available as the temperature can change dramatically over the course of the day. Waterproof jacket, rain pants, and mud boots are recommended. A hat on sunny or chilly days is helpful.

In winter, all children need snow pants, a winter jacket, a hat, mittens, and waterproof snow boots. Scarves are also a good idea. We recommend you send 2-4 pairs of gloves/mittens each day so they can be changed when they get wet. We have a gear locker, with extra supplies, so if your child ever needs to borrow an item, we should be able to supply them.

We recommend dressing in layers to keep children warm and dry during outdoor play:

- a base layer to keep you dry (avoid cotton that absorbs perspiration)
- a mid-layer to keep you warm
- an outer layer to retain heat and protect against rain, snow, & wind.
  - snow pants, winter coat, waterproof snow boots
  - Hats & scarf
  - mittens/gloves (2-4 pair)

Please take a look at this complete [ICG Guide to Dressing for Success in all Seasons](#) to learn even more about dressing for the weather in our climate.

## Snack

Hearty, nutritious snacks will be prepared and shared as part of each day's program. Kids are invited to bring their own snacks, if they wish. We do our best to accommodate allergies, dietary sensitivities, and preferences.

## Restrooms & Hand Washing Stations

We use the public restrooms next to the large pavilion just north of Ithaca Children's Garden. We also maintain a porta-potty in the Garden<sup>2</sup>. We provide a stool and decor that makes it more comfortable than your average porta potty! We have hand washing stations set up in the garden for kids to use water and soap and promote safe hygiene practices.

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<sup>2</sup> When the Yurt construction is complete, we will have a bathroom for program use with full plumbing

# Healthy Child Guidelines/COVID safety

It's very hard to participate and enjoy your time at the Garden if you are not feeling well. If your child is unwell due to vomiting, fever, or diarrhea, or is experiencing any COVID symptoms, they will not be able to attend the program that day. If your child becomes sick during their time at After School @ ICG, you will be notified and asked to pick him or her up immediately.

After School @ ICG will follow all New York State and Tompkins County recommendations for COVID safety. Our COVID protocol will follow the Ithaca City School District policies.



## Inclement Weather

While After School is based outdoors at Ithaca Children's Garden, the new, onsite ICG Yurt<sup>3</sup> will provide a safe, indoor program space in inclement weather once construction is complete. We will also have access to the Cass Park pavilion just outside the Garden's North gate and the Just BeCause Center, where ICG office is located..

## Weather Related Closures

If the Ithaca City School District cancels school, cancels after school activities, or has an early dismissal due to weather, After School @ ICG will also be canceled. Staff will contact the schools directly to confirm that ICG After School will not be happening.

Weather related closures are not refunded.

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<sup>3</sup> Round tent structure with wooden frame that will include electricity and plumbing



# Discipline Philosophy

At Ithaca Children's Garden we model and encourage our participants to:

***Take care of yourself \* Take care of others \* Take care of the environment***

With the guidance of our staff and their peers, children develop their understanding of these three principles and how they help shape our program community.

Our extensive knowledge and experience in child development allow us to meet children where they are. Staff respond to behavior as communication, and work for regulation and understanding first, then support each child in problem solving and practicing skills in a supportive environment. We align our program philosophy with the values of [Compassionate Communities](#).

## Financial Policies

In an effort to accommodate busy families' variable schedules, After School @ ICG offers flexible schedules. We also have a general scholarship program which provides robust, automatic scholarship for anyone qualifying for federal free or reduced lunch. Extenuating financial circumstances also qualify for scholarship - ICG's policy is to never turn anyone away due to limited ability to pay.

- A \$30 non-refundable enrollment fee is required at time of registration. This will be applied to your first month's tuition. Should Ithaca Children's Garden (ICG) not be able to enroll your child due to space and available schedules, the fee will be refunded.
- A deposit equal to the amount of half one month's tuition is due to confirm and reserve your space in the program. The deposit will be applied to your last month's tuition.
- Tuition for the month is due on the date indicated above. Payments exceeding 15 days overdue will be assessed a 1.5% late fee.
- Any non sufficient funds payments returned to us by the bank will incur a \$30 fee.
- We require 2 months' written notice if you wish to withdraw from the tuition agreement, during which time you are still responsible for any monthly payments even if your child no longer attends the program.
- ICG may be able to waive the notice requirement on a case-by-case basis, such as in cases of financial hardship or severe illness.
- No refunds or credit will be issued for absences or weather-related closures.

- Program fees, including the deposit, will be billed through the Brightwheel app. You are expected to sign up for and use the app. We also use Brightwheel for other program communications.

**Monthly Tuition:**

5-days = \$440/month

4-days = \$385/month

3-days = \$315/month

2-days = \$230/month

1-day = \$115/month

**Payment Options:**

Monthly invoices and other program fees, including for the program deposit, will be issued through Brightwheel (which you can access via an app or web browser). You will have the option to set up recurring billing on a credit/debit card, to make one-off payments via a card, or to pay offline via check . If paying with a check, you may submit it at drop-off or pick-up on or before the due date. When you receive a tuition agreement and a request for deposit, you will be able to choose from the payment options outlined below.

*Recurring Payment:* Set up a recurring payment with your credit or debit card via the Brightwheel app. Your monthly payment will be processed on the first day of the month.

*By Check:* You may submit a check at drop off/pick up on or before the due date.

## Scholarship

The scholarship application is now included in the registration form. If your financial situation changes after registering or enrolling, please reach out to us at [register@ithacachildrengarden.org](mailto:register@ithacachildrengarden.org) and we will be happy to work with you regarding scholarships.

# Cancellation & Refund Policy

Enrollment is for the 2022-2023 school year.

We require two months' written notice if you wish to withdraw from your tuition agreement, during which time you are still responsible for any monthly payments even if your child no longer attends the program. Your deposit will be applied to your last month within this time.

ICG may be able to waive the notice requirement on a case-by-case basis, such as in cases of financial hardship or severe illness.

No refunds or credit will be issued for absences or weather-related closures.

## 2022-2023 Program Calendar

**September 7, 2022 - June 16, 2023**

**2:00pm-5:30pm**

***Holidays & Breaks (following ICSD):***

9/26: Rosh Hashanah

10/5: Yom Kippur

10/10: Indigenous People's Day

10/21: ICSD District Conference Day

11/11: Veteran's Day

11/23-11/25: Thanksgiving

12/9: Elem Conference Day

12/26-1/2: Winter Recess

1/16: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

2/20-2/24: Mid-Winter Recess

3/16-17: Elem Conferences/District  
Conference Day

4/10-4/14: Spring Recess

5/29: Memorial Day

