



## Best Practices:

Staff Qualifications in a Forest School Setting  
Assistant Teacher, Teacher, and Director

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## Assistant Teacher Qualifications in a Forest School Setting

*All Assistant Teachers in a Forest School setting must have the following qualifications:*

### Education

*Assistant Teachers in a forest school setting must have **at least one** of the following educational requirements met:*

- 6 units of concurrent enrollment or completed in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or equivalent field courses
- Have completed a minimum of level one Forest School teacher training
- Comparable recognized teacher training<sup>1</sup>
- 1 or more years working with groups of children ages 2-6

### Additional Requirements

- Basic pediatric CPR & First Aid training
- Basic safety and hazards knowledge
  - poisonous plants
  - animals
  - site specific hazards
- Background check and fingerprint clearance
- Ability to lift 40lbs, navigate uneven terrain and sit comfortably on the ground

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<sup>1</sup> “Recognized teacher training” is meant to include programs such as Waldorf and Montessori teacher training that may not provide their students with ECE units, but do provide a foundation in child development.



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## Teacher Qualifications in a Forest School Setting

*In addition to all of the assistant teacher qualifications, all teachers in a Forest School setting must have the following qualifications:*

Forest School teachers without director qualifications, must be under the supervision of a master forest school teacher or qualified forest school director.

### Education

*Teachers in a forest school setting must have **at least one** of the following educational requirements met:*

- 12 units completed in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or equivalent field courses
- Completion of a minimum of level two Forest School teacher training
- Comparable recognized teacher training<sup>2</sup>

### Additional Requirements

- Minimum 2 years experience teaching with groups of 2-6 year olds, including one year of teaching experience in a forest school setting
- The ability to track and document children's development
- The ability to assess development of children in care
- The ability to recognize the need for outside intervention for children in care
- The ability to implement emergency response plans in unexpected events
- Uphold safety guidelines, rules, and land regulations
- Knowledge of local hazards
- Previously acquired naturalist / nature connection / local natural history
- Ability to continually assess land for hazards
- Ability to continually assess impact of program on natural environment
- Conduct ongoing risk assessment
- Basic orienteering / wayfinding skills

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### **Additional Requirements (continued)**

- Basic use of hand tools (knife, saw, rope, sewing needles, etc)
- Basic fire tending and safety skills
- Basic tracking skills
- Basic understanding of bird language
- Interpersonal communication skills
  - Children
  - Co-teachers
  - Families
  - Greater community
- Leadership ability
  - Group management
  - Hold boundaries for children and adults
  - Responsiveness
  - Integrity
  - Supervision & mentorship of assistant teachers
- An understanding of the family as the child's primary teacher
- Developing cultural competency
- Storytelling abilities
- Repertoire of songs & willingness to sing
- Preparedness
  - Internal
  - External
- Ongoing professional development, including mentoring by senior staff, director or outside mentors



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## Director Qualifications in a Forest School Setting

*In addition to all of the teacher qualifications, all directors in a Forest School setting must have the following qualifications:*

### Education

*Directors in a forest school setting must have **at least one** of the following educational requirements met:*

- Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or equivalent field
- Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or equivalent field
  - With a minimum of 12 core course units in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or equivalent field
- Completion and certification of Forest School teacher training
  - With a minimum of 9 core course units in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or equivalent field
- Comparable recognized teacher training<sup>3</sup>
- Verifiable equivalent experience

### Additional Requirements

- Minimum 5 years supervised teaching in the Forest School setting
- Minimum 8 years experience teaching groups of 2-6 year olds
- Direct experience in all teaching roles
- Ability to develop, maintain and effectively implement policies, procedures, and systems
  - legal
  - fiscal
  - staffing
  - programmatic
    - cultural
    - quality
    - development

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<sup>3</sup> "Recognized teacher training" is meant to include programs such as Waldorf, and Montessori teacher training that may not provide their students with ECE units, but do provide a foundation in child development.



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### Additional Requirements (continued)

- relational
  - land
  - teachers
  - children
  - families
  - community
- communications
- Leadership
  - supports high quality experiences for children, families and staff
  - reflective
  - transparent
  - knowledgeable in
    - early childhood development
    - naturalist
    - community resources
  - available as a resource for families, staff and community

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This document was created by the California Association of Forest Schools Board, and unanimously adopted at the annual Board of Directors in-person meeting February of 2020.

Please see [CAforestschools.org](http://CAforestschools.org) for more information.