



Parent Handbook

2021-2022

To our families, we extend a warm welcome for the 2021-22 school year. We are so happy you are a part of our new family and are honored to be partners with you in fostering the development of your child. This Parent Handbook contains information about our school policies, practices, and procedures. We look forward to a wonderful and productive year filled with joy and growth for your child. A nature-based education fosters a love for learning that lasts a lifetime. We welcome you to our school community and hope you are excited to be a Nature's Schoolhouse parent!

Our mission at Nature's Schoolhouse is to foster individuality and bring children closer to nature, while at the same time inspiring them to learn in ways that cannot be achieved by sitting at a desk all day.

Curriculum:

Our school is small and rooted in nature. We have unstructured and structured activities where kids will use their creativity to develop a liking for exploring and learning. The rhythm of our day offers a variety of both indoor and outdoor activities inspired by different educational philosophies such as Montessori, Waldorf, Project Based Learning, and TEKS to meet individual needs and interests that facilitate the children's interactions with each other and their environment. We focus on creative play and individually focused learning. We encourage our kids to use their creativity, to be independent and to learn from their living experiences.

As educators, we are concerned with the development of the whole child. In addition to core academics, we place emphasis on learning practical skills, developing good character and values, and helping each student build the capacities to fulfill their destiny.

We ask our parents to maintain close communication and work closely with us to create a sense of community in our school.

Schedule:

We trust our families to make mindful decisions with the highest good of their children in mind. Because of this, we allow parents to choose when to schedule drop-off and pick-up (we have an hour set aside in the morning, and two hours in the afternoon to accommodate all schedules), make doctor's appointments, schedule outside lessons, and even vacation according to their OWN needs. We do not have 'tardies' or 'unexcused absences'. We trust parents to make the best decisions for their families.

Our typical daily routine *loosely* follows this format:

- 9:00-10:00 Arrival
 - Snack
 - Outdoor Chores (feeding the animals, watering the gardens, etc)
 - Free Play

- 10:00 Morning Gathering // Announcements // Pledge of Allegiance
- 10:30 Language Arts
- 11:45 Lunch and Free Play
- 12:30 Nature Appreciation // Journaling
- 12:45 Specials (Art, Music, PE, Character Development)
- 1:30 Mathematics
- 2:15 Science or Social Studies
- 3:00-5:00 Parent Pickup
 - Snack
 - Hands-on Thematic Enrichment
 - Free Play

Our afternoon enrichment program begins at 3:30 and ends at 5:00. Students will be given time to eat their afternoon snack before our program facilitator leads them in educational activities such as scavenger hunts, crafts, dancing, games, etc. Students will also have ample opportunity for unstructured play during this time. You are welcome to pick your child up any time during this 3-5pm time block.

Our school year runs on a 10 month schedule. The 2021/2022 school year will begin August 23, 2021 and end on June 3, 2022. We will be closed for the following holidays:

- Labor Day Monday, Sept. 6
- Indigenous Peoples' Day Monday, Oct. 11
- Thanksgiving Break Monday, Nov. 22 - Friday, Nov. 26
- Winter Break Monday, Dec. 20 - Monday, Jan. 3
- MLK Day Monday, Jan. 17
- Presidents Day Monday, Feb. 21
- Spring Break Monday, Mar. 14 - Friday, Mar. 18
- Easter Break Friday, April 15 & Monday, April 18
- Memorial Day Monday, May 30

Forms & Records:

The following forms are required for enrollment:

- Enrollment/Registration forms
- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Updated immunization record that states the child has been immunized as required by the Texas Department of State Health Care Services; or

- present an affidavit or certificate signed by a physician stating the immunization would pose a significant risk to the health and well-being of the student or his family; or
 - present an affidavit declining the immunization for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief.
 - Recent hearing and vision screening.
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Communication:

We have an open door policy for parents. You may come any time to observe or spend time with your child. If you need to reach us during school hours, please call or text Nicole at 512-828-1854.

At the end of each week we will send home our Weekly Folders. Please review the contents and return it to school Monday morning. The Weekly Folders will include the following:

- Weekly newsletter with a summary of what your child worked on during the week, as well as an overview of what they'll be working on the following week.
 - Any teacher communication regarding your individual student
 - Any work your child has done that can go home (worksheets, crafts, etc)
 - Spelling lists and/or easy readers for you to work on with your child for the following week.
 - Any other necessary information/communications (field trip permission slips, updates to our handbook, reminders, requests, etc.)
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Clothes:

Your child should come to school dressed in play clothes. Please be aware that your child WILL get dirty/wet. Be sure to dress your child appropriately for outdoor play as the weather changes. Every student must have a pair of rain boots at school in order to play outside during wet weather, and when we explore the forest. Please send an extra set of clothing, including underwear and socks, to be kept in their backpacks.

Snack:

Snack time is an opportunity for children to sit and relax and enjoy a quick snack. We will provide a healthy morning snack option for students to grab when they arrive in the morning. We ask that, in addition to sending a lunch and a water bottle every day, you also send your child with an afternoon snack. This can be anything from a pack of Goldfish crackers, to a granola bar, to an apple. Please do not send sugary snacks, such as candy, chocolate, etc.

Occasionally special snacks will be made during class. It is important that we know of any allergies or other medical conditions that restrict your child's diet.

Birthday celebrations are always welcome! If you want to bring a snack for the class, we encourage it to be a healthy one, but we don't turn down cake, either. :)

Illness Guidelines:

Students should remain home from school if they have the following conditions:

- A Fresh Cold - Continuous nasal discharge, cough, watery eyes which has developed within the past 24-48 hours and is considered contagious
- Fever - Must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school
- Vomiting/Diarrhea - Keep at home for 24 hours after symptoms have resolved and the child can keep food and fluids down
- Strep Throat - Must wait 24 hours after antibiotics have begun working.
- Contagious viruses such as Pink eye – Must wait 24 hours before returning to school.
- Head Lice - Until treated and has been checked by our school nurse
- In addition, if your child is only mildly ill but is irritable and cannot fully participate in the day's program, they should remain at home.

We do not dispense medication to our students under normal circumstances. If your child needs medication on a regular basis, please request a Medication Dispensing Form from us.

In case of a medical emergency we will call the emergency numbers in your child's file. Please be sure to keep those updated.

COVID Protocol:

Keeping our school open for in-person learning is important to us, given the many known and established benefits of in-person learning. In order for us to stay open, it is important to adopt and diligently implement actions to slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

While your children are in our care, we will:

- Require that all adults who work or volunteer in our school are fully vaccinated or masked.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible.
- Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect.
- Require students to wash hands or use hand sanitizer regularly throughout the day.
- Follow CDC-recommended enhanced safety procedures for cleaning and disinfecting

Drop-off & Pick-up:

- Drop-off and pick-up will occur outside or in the front room (library) to maximize safety.
- Parents are encouraged to come into the front room and remain with your child until we have brought them to the classroom.
- Hand sanitizer is located at the entrance of the school so that children can clean their hands before they enter.
- If a student shows symptoms during arrival check-in, he/she will not enter the building and will return home with parents.
- Pick-up of children will be completed outside of the building or in the front room, as well. Please ring the doorbell and allow us time to bring your child to you.

Students, staff, or volunteers with any new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19 will be sent home. If a child becomes sick while at school, we will move the student to a dedicated separate room until parents arrive. We will implement CDC recommendations for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces in the isolation room after the sick child has been picked up, as well as deep cleaning the building according to CDC recommendations. If COVID-19 is confirmed in a child, staff member, or person on site, we will contact all parents to report the presence of COVID-19 in our facility.

Quarantine Protocol:

- In the scenario that we get a positive COVID-19 case within our school, we ask that the person who tests positive quarantine for a period of 5 days from the date of the onset of symptoms or the positive test, whichever came first.
 - If a household member of a student or teacher tests positive for COVID-19, we ask that the student/teacher who was in contact with the infected person get tested and receive a negative result before returning to school.
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