



Nature's Schoolhouse Microschool

Parent Handbook

2022-2023

To our families, we extend a warm welcome for the 2022-23 school year. We are so happy you are a part of our family and we are honored to be partners with you in fostering the development of your child. This 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 children. 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 family!

Our mission at Nature's Schoolhouse is to foster individuality and bring children closer to nature, while at the same time inspiring them to express themselves and 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 Waldorf, Reggio Emilia, Forest School, Montessori, traditional schooling methods, and more 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 learner build the capacities to fulfill their destiny.

Communication and Parent Involvement:

While we don't require parent volunteerism, we do ask our parents to maintain close communication and work with us to create a sense of community in our school. We host regular Community Day events at our schoolhouse and encourage families to attend. We hope that most parents will consider joining our Parent Collaborative Group, and that those who have the time and expertise will even consider becoming a committed board member. After our first 9 week session is complete, we will actively seek parent volunteers to help out in our classrooms.

We utilize Remind and Email for most of our communication. Information on how to join our school-wide Remind group will be included in your Open House packet. It is also important to join your child's individual class Remind group. Your child's lead teacher will have that information for you.

We also have a Facebook group for our families to chat with each other, share photos, make plans, ask questions, etc. You can join by going here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1190579881690337>

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, 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 for our **Full Time** learners *loosely* follows this format:

- 9:00-10:00 Arrival
 - Morning Snack
 - Outdoor Chores (feeding the animals, watering the gardens, etc)
 - Free Play
- 10:00 - Morning Gathering // Announcements
- 10:30 - Language Arts
- 11:45 - Lunch and Free Play
- 12:30 - Story Time // Silent Reading
- 12:45 - Specials (Lower Elem) // Mathematics (Upper Elem)
- 1:30 - Mathematics (Lower Elem) // Science or Social Studies (Upper Elem)
- 2:15 - Science or Social Studies (Lower Elem) // Specials (Upper Elem)
- 3:15-3:30 - Outdoor Free Play & Dismissal

Our typical daily routine for our **Part Time** learners *loosely* follows this format:

- 9:00-10:00 Arrival
 - Morning Snack
 - Outdoor Chores (feeding the animals, watering the gardens, etc)
 - Free Play
- 10:00 - Morning Gathering // Announcements
- 10:30 - Academic Enrichment
- 11:45 - Lunch and Free Play
- 12:30 - Story Time // Silent Reading
- 12:45 - Academic Enrichment
- 1:45 - Specials
- 2:30-3:00 - Outdoor Free Play & Dismissal

Our typical daily routine for our **Fridays in the Park** program *loosely* follows this format:

- 9:00-10:00 Arrival
 - Morning Snack
 - Outdoor Free Play
- 10:00 - Morning Gathering // Announcements
- 10:30 - Parent Led Specials
- 11:15 - Lunch and Free Play
- 12:00 - Parent Led Specials
- 12:45 - Forest School
- 2:30 - Parent Led Specials
- 3:15-3:30 - Dismissal

Our school year runs on a 10 month schedule. The 2022/2023 school year will begin August 25, 2022 and end on June 2, 2023. We will be closed for the following holidays and Teacher Workdays:

- Labor Day Monday, Sept. 5
- Teacher Workday Monday, Sept. 26
- Indigenous Peoples' Day Monday, Oct. 10
- Teacher Workday Tuesday, Oct. 11
- Thanksgiving Break Monday, Nov. 21 - Friday, Nov. 25
- Winter Break Monday, Dec. 19 - Monday, Jan. 2
- Teacher Workday Tuesday, Jan. 3
- Martin Luther King Jr Day Monday, Jan. 16
- Presidents Day Monday, Feb. 20
- Teacher Workday Tuesday, Feb. 21
- Spring Break Monday, Mar. 13 - Friday, Mar. 17
- Easter Break Friday, April 7 & Monday, April 10
- Teacher Workday Tuesday, April 11
- Memorial Day Monday, May 29

In addition, we will be releasing early, at 12:45, on the following days:

- Election Day Tuesday, Nov. 8
 - Teacher Workday Friday, Nov 18
 - Teacher Workday Friday, Dec 16
 - Teacher Workday Friday, Mar 10
 - Teacher Workday Friday, May 12
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Forms & Records:

The following forms are required for enrollment:

- Completed Enrollment/Registration forms
 - Copy of Birth Certificate
 - Updated immunization record that states the child has been immunized; or
 - present an affidavit declining the immunization for reasons of conscience or health.
 - School Medication Authorization Form (if child will be receiving medication during the school day)
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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/covered in paint/etc. Be sure to dress your child appropriately for outdoor play as the weather changes. We will be outside regardless of rain, heat, cold, wind, etc. Every learner must have a pair of close-toed shoes at school in order to play outside. Crocs/Natives are ok and even preferred, as long as they stay snugly on your child's feet. Our yard is wild, and we don't want anyone getting hurt, so flip-flops are not allowed. Please send an extra set of clothing, including underwear and socks, to be kept in your child's backpack.

Weather:

There are very few instances when we decide outdoor play is not possible. Please be careful to dress your child appropriately for ALL types of weather and explain to them that part of our mission is to foster a love of the outdoors. If your child has an aversion to a certain type of weather (heat, cold, rain, wind, etc), please consider keeping them home on those days.

In the instance that the weather is forecasted to be so bad that outdoor play and learning will not be possible, we may need to delay, release early from, or even cancel our school day. Please be sure to join our Remind group so that you receive any weather related updates.

Snacks and Lunch:

Snack and lunch time are an opportunity for children to sit and relax and enjoy time together. We will provide a small snack for learners to grab when they arrive in the morning. These snacks may include things such as Graham Crackers, Cheez-its, Animal Crackers, Yogurt, Apple Sauce, and Fresh Fruit. We do ask that, if your child is on a special diet of any kind, you send a snack with your child daily, in addition to their lunch and a full water bottle. All learners must pack a lunch daily. We have a refrigerator and microwave that learners may use. Please do not send sugary snacks, such as candy, chocolate, soda, etc. Children will not be allowed to consume these items during the school day.

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. If a teacher has a culinary lesson planned, we will communicate the ingredients with you beforehand and give you the opportunity to opt your child out.

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. :) Please do not send Piñatas to school to celebrate your child's birthday, regardless of what it's filled with.

Screen Policy:

Although we acknowledge that technology and many electronic devices can be used as learning tools, we prohibit our learners from bringing these tools to school with them. During school hours, learners may need to use technology and digital devices for learning purposes. We will provide the necessary devices for our learners and guide students as to how to use them properly and safely. Electronic devices, including computers, will never be used without teacher supervision. Generally speaking, as learners progress into higher grades, technology will be more available to them.

On occasion, we may schedule a movie day for our learners. If the movie or TV show is rated higher than PG or Y, we will communicate details with parents beforehand.

Conflict Resolution:

We understand that conflict between learners is part of the character building process. Most incidents between learners will be minor disagreements which are best handled by the learners themselves. Learners are guided through the use of conflict resolution tools such as removing themselves from a heated situation, taking breaths to calm down, the use of “I feel” statements, etc. We utilize the “Character Counts” curriculum and walk our learners through the “Six Pillars of Character:” trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship as a foundational strategy during our weekly Character Development class, and reiterate these ideas in our everyday lessons to emphasize the importance of creating a kind, caring, and fair school environment.

While learners are encouraged to advocate for themselves and we give them the space and time needed to resolve conflicts on their own, there are some specific infractions that will result in immediate consequences. They are as follows:

- Unwanted physical contact
- Lying
- Stealing
- Destruction or disregard for the value of school property
- Bullying (Intentionally negative and repeated harassment of another learner)
- Any type of violent outburst, whether physical or verbal
- Consistent negative behavior that distracts other students from learning

In the instance that one of the above behaviors is displayed by a learner, we will immediately call the parents and require that they pick their child up. The child will not be allowed back into the schoolhouse until a team meeting is held, which will include parents, lead teacher, school director, and in the last 15 minutes - the learner. If a second opportunity to attend is granted, a probationary contract will be created and implemented.

Items from Home:

We kindly ask that you refrain from sending your child to school with items from home such as toys, stuffed animals, electronic devices, or any other items that may create a distraction in the classroom. We do schedule regular “show & tell” days so that learners have a chance to bring these items to share with their friends.

Illness Guidelines:

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

- A positive Covid test result
- 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.

If your child is not feeling well in the morning, please observe them carefully before sending them to school and risking the health of others. If you decide to keep them home due to illness, please email the school (naturesschoolhouse@gmail.com) or send a text directly to Nicole (512-828-1854) and give us a brief description of their symptoms. Children must be free of symptoms for 24 hours before returning to school. If your child develops any of these symptoms while at school, we will call you immediately to come pick up your child.

We do not dispense medication to our learners 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 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:

- 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 learners to wash hands or use hand sanitizer regularly throughout the day.
- Follow CDC-recommended enhanced safety procedures for cleaning and disinfecting

Learners, 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 them to a dedicated separate room until parents arrive. We will implement CDC recommendations for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces in the school after the child has been picked up.

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 learner or teacher tests positive for COVID-19, we ask that the learner/teacher who was in contact with the infected person get tested and receive a negative result before returning to school.
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Nature's Schoolhouse Pledge

I promise to be good to the earth

And all life on this planet -

All growing things,

All kinds of animals,

And all races of people.

I promise to protect all life on our planet,

To live in harmony with nature,

And to share everything fairly,

So that all people can live with one another

In good health and in peace.

(Aline D. Wolf)

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the Nature's Schoolhouse Microschool Parent Handbook and all of its contents and that you agree to abide by all the rules and regulations contained therein:

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Printed Name of Parent