

## SCHLITZ AUDUBON NATURE PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

### **Statement of Purpose:**

To provide a high quality early childhood environment that will meet young children's developmental needs while initiating them into a life-long, meaningful relationship with the natural world.

### **Statement of Educational Philosophy:**

We believe that children are intrinsically motivated to learn. Adults promote learning by:

- Providing an environment that encourages discovery, experimentation, and the opportunity to see the results of one's actions;
- Developing activities to take children to the next level of understanding based on the children's abilities and interests;
- Encouraging divergent thinking and reflection by asking open-ended questions and providing information in response to children's ideas, insights, and concerns;
- Assisting children in their interactions with each other and offering opportunities for cooperative learning;
- Teaming with families to understand children through the wisdom of their first teachers—their parents;
- Appreciating the individuality of children and celebrating their uniqueness.

### **What is a Nature-Based Preschool?**

To be considered a Nature-Based Preschool, nature must be at the heart of the program. While Nature Preschools have the same child development goals as any other high quality preschool, the curriculum and teachers achieve these developmental goals through nature-based experiences.

A nature-based preschool provides children with special opportunities to learn about the natural world, while also providing daily opportunities for personal growth and achievement. By connecting young children with the natural world, we hope to inspire a love of nature, foster an environmental ethic and encourage a caring attitude that will follow each child throughout his or her life.

We strive to meet best practices in all areas of early childhood learning and development. Children have opportunities to:

- Make discoveries and learn through play;
- Make choices and follow their own interests and agenda;
- Use their senses, as well as large and small muscles;
- Express themselves creatively and use language in its many forms;
- Make friends and learn about the social world;
- Problem-solve and find solutions.

Schlitz Audubon Nature Preschool provides many of these experiences through direct interactions with nature. Our program is designed to help children develop physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and spiritually in a dynamic and stimulating natural environment.

We are also determined to meet best practices in environmental education. At our preschool, nature-based activities happen indoors and outdoors; in whole groups, small groups, and individually; as planned teacher-facilitated activities, child-initiated interests, and spontaneous pursuits; in the preschool play areas, and throughout the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center grounds. Children can look at their experiences through the lens of a naturalist as they are given encouragement to:

- Make observations and discoveries;
- Satisfy their natural curiosity;
- Hike on trails and climb on logs;
- Appreciate the beauty of nature;
- Build understanding of themselves, as they relate to others, and to the natural world;
- Experiment;
- Communicate about nature.

Our school does not take field trips. We ARE the field trip: we offer 185 acres of ponds, prairies, woods as well as the beach along Lake Michigan to discover and explore. We don't have to leave the grounds to find adventure!

An Important note about Risk:

*What is the difference between a risk and a hazard?*

A risk is a situation that provides a challenge, in which the child has some control.

A hazard is a situation in which there is no control.

***Hazards Include:***

Dangerous Weather

Unstable Ice

A sharp branch at eye-level

***Risks Include:***

Climbing a log

Handling sticks

Boot skating on solid ice

At Nature Preschool, we strive to eliminate hazards. However, we do believe in the value of age-appropriate risk. Learning to take appropriate risks can help children develop confidence, and can even improve executive function as children learn to consider and assess different situations. Different children will often study the same scenario – such as climbing a tree - and reach different conclusions. We feel that learning to make these kinds of decisions is a valuable skill. We also believe taking sensible risks and being safe can exist side-by-side.

**Inclement Weather/School Closings**

We follow the lead of the Fox Point/Bayside school district in making the decision to close due to dangerous weather conditions. We also reserve the right to make our own determinations, as needed, in an emergency. We have set up a **text alert system** for parents or caregivers using **Remind**, a one-

way, private text alert system. An email or text will be sent to parents and other caregivers if the school is closed for inclement weather, or any other reason. (Please note that you must sign-up for Remind if you wish to receive these texts. We do not do this for you. There is no cost for Remind, and we provide instructions and passwords at the start of each school year. You can sign-up any time.)

When the Preschool closes due to inclement weather, an announcement will also be made on NBC, WISN, CBS, and FOX television stations. Announcements will also be posted on the television stations' websites. Closures for inclement weather are not refundable.

In the event a child does not attend on a regularly scheduled day for any reason, make-up or exchange of days is not allowed.

### **Registration Policies**

- Applications are accepted regardless of race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation, handicap, political persuasion, national origin or ancestry.
- Children must be three-years-old by the first day of school and no older than five years old when entering in September. Children may turn six during the school year.
- Children must be toilet trained in order to attend the Preschool. Toilet trained means- able to pee and poop on the toilet as well as wipe themselves after. Pull-ups are not allowed. Parents will be called to care for their child if he or she has a bowel accident while in attendance.
- No geographical boundaries are observed.

**The following information must be supplied by the parent(s), legal guardian(s), or custodian(s) of the child and returned to the Nature Preschool office before the child's first day of attendance:**

- Registration Form
- Registration Agreement
- Contact Information
- Health History and Emergency Care
- Child Health Report (must be completed by physician within 90 days after the start of preschool)
- Immunization Record (must be completed by parent within 30 days after the start of preschool)
- Child Information Form
- First semester tuition payment
- Expectations for Adults (signed)

### **Confidentiality**

The records of children enrolled in the Preschool are kept confidential and are only available to the child's parents upon request.

### **Photographs**

Please note that on the Registration Agreement you have signed and dated, it states that, "I give permission for my child to be interviewed/photographed/videoed for educational/news publicity

purposes for use in any and all media.” We have used photos from the Preschool in our member and preschool newsletter as well as for presentations to our Board, parents, and fellow educators to highlight our Preschool. More recently, we have begun using video images of some of our Preschool activities on our Schlitz Audubon website and You Tube channel, as well as on our Schlitz Audubon Facebook Page. In such scenarios, we never identify the children by name or by class, and request that others do not either.

### **Tuition Information and Fee Policies**

Payments are due one month in advance of the start of the session. Payment can be made by check (payable to the Schlitz Audubon Nature Preschool) or credit card. Tuition may be paid monthly, by semester or year.

A \$25.00 charge is assessed for each Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) check received. Tuition is non-refundable.

The parent is responsible for payment of all scheduled days, whether or not the days are used.

- Vacations: Credits will not be issued for vacations.
- Holidays: There will be no credit given for holiday closings.
- Inclement Weather Closings: There will be no credit given for days when the Preschool is closed due to inclement weather.

Families are asked to be members of the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center while their child is enrolled in the Preschool. The cost of a Family Membership (\$60.00) has been added to your full year, or 1<sup>st</sup> semester, tuition payment. If you are members prior to the year your child is enrolled, your membership will be extended by one year.

### **Responsibilities/Expectations Regarding Custody**

All people listed on the registration form under parent/guardian, emergency contact, and authorized pick-up will be allowed to pick up a child during or after class. If carpooling, please make sure each adult is listed on that document. Wisconsin State licensing requires that at least one other person besides parents be listed on this form.

In families where the parents are separated or divorced, the custodial parent must have a copy of the legal documents stipulating custody on file at the Preschool. Only parents having legal custody are authorized to pick up the child. Any person not listed as authorized to pick up the child on the child's most recent application form may not visit the Preschool unless s/he has made prior written arrangements with the custodial parent and the Preschool Director.

A court order must be on file at the Preschool office if the need arises to prohibit pick-up by a previously authorized parent or guardian. Nature Preschool staff members will not be involved in custody related litigation.

### **Security**

Only those teachers, volunteers and student teachers who have undergone a thorough background check through the State of Wisconsin are allowed to be alone with the children at any time. This is a State licensing requirement.

The Preschool does not endorse or recommend staff to parents or parents to staff for child care outside of Preschool hours (babysitting) and is not liable for the conduct of the parent or the staff who enter into a private care arrangement.

### **Food**

A snack will be provided by the Preschool during each of the sessions. Snacks will include water or juice, vegetable or fruit, and bread, crackers or cereal.

- All snacks provided by the Preschool will meet or exceed the nutritional requirements set forth by the Department of Social Services Day Care Licensing Regulations. Snacks will include items from at least two food groups. In keeping with our philosophy of caring for the earth as well as ourselves and each other, we strive to prepare and provide nutritious, minimally processed foods. No artificial sweeteners are used.
- Menus will be prepared on a weekly basis and posted for parents for each classroom. Any changes to the menu are noted on the posted menu for parents to view.
- Teachers eat with the children to promote community, sharing and safety.

### **Food Restrictions and/or Allergies**

Parents are expected to notify the Preschool staff of any food restrictions or food allergies. Depending on the nature of the allergy/restriction, parents may be asked to provide snack alternatives for their children. We are a **NUT FREE & PEANUT FREE SCHOOL (no nut, or nut products are served)**.

We have many students with a wide range of severe, life threatening allergies. Although we are extremely diligent about monitoring the ingredients of the foods we provide, it is exceedingly difficult to verify the ingredients in snacks that others may bring to school. Children can **have life threatening allergic reactions** to food products that have been brought to school to share on special occasions, which is why we do not allow outside treats.

The most common foods that students are allergic to include peanuts, shellfish, fish, tree nuts, eggs, dairy, soy, and wheat. Currently there is no cure for food allergies and strict avoidance is the only way to prevent a reaction.

*Prevention:* Avoidance of exposure to allergens is the key to preventing a reaction. School can be a high-risk setting for accidental ingestion of a food allergen, due to such factors as the large number of students, increased exposure of the allergic student to food allergens, as well as cross-contamination of tables, desks, and other surfaces. Therefore, we take the following measures in reducing the risk of life-threatening anaphylaxis and other effects of food-related allergies:

- **Food in the Classroom:** Only classroom teachers and other trained personnel are allowed to bring food into the preschool or in the outdoor play areas. This reduces the risk of inadvertently exposing children to food-related allergens through overlooked information on food labels and cross-contamination in classroom areas. It also protects the privacy of

individual children and ensures that each child is treated fairly and equitably. If you need to supply special food from home because your child has a special dietary need, please check with the teacher to assure that all dietary requirements are being met.

- **Peanuts/tree nuts:** Peanuts/nuts and their products will not knowingly be used in the classroom. All known peanuts/nuts and their products are eliminated from the classroom curriculum. Food labels are read and consideration given to the possible presence of allergenic substances that must be eliminated from teacher-directed classroom activities.
- **Food Sharing:** Sharing food on the preschool premises is not allowed. Children are instructed to eat their own individual portions of snack and not allowed to trade or share food.
- **Hidden Ingredients in Project Materials:** Classroom teachers scrutinize art, science or other project ingredients that contain potential allergens and act according to classroom protocol.
- **Bake Sales and Other Food-related Fundraisers:** Special events involving baked goods and other food items shall be restricted to the public areas of the building.
- **Holiday and Birthday Celebrations:** Please do not bring in treats or snacks for these occasions. (See the Special Occasion section of the parent handbook for more information).

### **Clothing**

Children are involved in many types of activities while at the Preschool and should be dressed accordingly. Outdoor exploration requires freedom from restrictive clothing. This includes tight clothing, fancy dresses and costumes that get in the way during active play. For independence in toileting, children need clothing that is easy to remove and put on. Children need comfortable, protective shoes with gripping soles for running, jumping, and climbing. Waterproof outdoor boots are best. Sandals with closed toes and heel straps are acceptable for warm weather—flip flops though, are not safe on trails.

**Expect your child to go outside every day.** Children should be adequately dressed for outdoor play for all seasons of the year. Clothing needs for each season include:

Fall: Rain Boots with sturdy socks (not ankle socks)  
 Jacket/Sweatshirt  
 Rain pants and Rain Jacket with Hood (please provide these on any cool, windy day so that your child may sit on damp cold ground in comfort).  
 We do not carry umbrellas at Nature Preschool

Winter: Scarf/Neck Warmers  
 Hat  
 Waterproof Mittens  
 Insulated Boots  
 Wool/Fleece Socks  
 Snow Pants and Winter Coat

Spring: Rain Boots with sturdy socks (not ankle socks)  
 Rain jacket with Hood  
 Rain Pants  
 Waterproof Mittens

All children must also have a labeled change of clothes to be kept at the Preschool for emergencies. This should include underwear, pants, shirt, and socks. This extra set of clothes should be changed for each season.

**All clothing should be LABELED**, including boots, mittens, coats, etc. Although staff members will do their best to keep track of clothing, many items look the same and the Preschool is not responsible for lost articles of clothing. A lost and found table is kept in the preschool hall. There is also a lost and found for items found out on the trails at the nature center front desk.

All equipment and supplies are provided by the Preschool, including toys, games, art supplies, etc. Children should not bring toys from home unless specifically invited to by the child's teacher.

### **Health**

Children are to be kept home if they have symptoms of illness such as sore throat, inflammation of the eyes, lice, rash, vomiting, diarrhea or other illness or if they have a fever of 99.6 degrees F or more.

If a child will not be present, parents must notify the Preschool. The State of Wisconsin requires all Licensed Group Child Care centers and preschools to know the status of any children that do not show up as scheduled to their Center. **Please call to let us know when your child will not attend school. Student Absences should not be reported by email.** We will contact you in the event we do not hear from you.

Staff will be alert to symptoms of illness throughout the day. If a child's condition is suspected to be contagious or the child is not feeling well, the child is made comfortable in a location away from other children but where he or she can be supervised by a familiar caregiver. The parent or legal guardian will be notified immediately to pick up the child. If we are unable to contact the parent (at all phone numbers listed on the contact form) then an emergency contact will be notified.

Written permission from a parent to call the family physician or to refer the child for medical care in case of accident or emergency shall be on file at the Preschool. This permission shall be used only when the parent or guardian cannot be reached, and with this permission, Columbia - St. Mary's Hospital will administer medical care in a life-threatening situation.

Medication is dispensed at the Preschool only if the following conditions are met:

- A State provided "Authorization to Administer Medication Form" must be completed and signed by the parent. This form gives authorization and instructions for dispensing medication.

- All medications must be in their original containers and marked with an expiration date indicating that it is current. The parent will be notified 30 days before the expiration date is reached. When medications reach the expiration date, they need to be replaced.
- All medications must be labeled with the child's name.
- All medication must be given directly to a staff member so it may be stored in a safe place.

**Sunscreen & Bug Spray:** If you wish your child to have sunscreen or bug spray, the parent or caregiver should apply it before class, outdoors; or even at home before coming to school. The teachers do not apply these products to the children. ***Please be aware that the combination of several strong smelling oils can cause breathing difficulties and migraines among some of the children and staff. Please use these products sparingly.***

- First aid equipment will be on hand at all times.
- Staff members are certified in First Aid and CPR.

You will find we wash hands a lot! We always wash hands before preparing food, before and after snacks, after toileting, whenever we touch one of our classroom animals and sometimes at other points during the day. Teacher, children, volunteers and parents who stay with us are also required to wash their hands at the beginning of the school day. This not only helps control the spread of infectious diseases, but also helps to avoid reactions for our students with allergies.

In cases of special educational or behavioral needs, Preschool staff may suggest a referral to a medical or mental health professional. By consulting with an outside professional, staff will make efforts to continue to provide high quality care and education for each individual child. It is expected that any referral costs are the responsibility of the parent and that the process involves a strong, interactive partnership between home and school.

Childcare employees are legally mandated to report known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

### **Head Lice Policy:**

No parent wants to hear the word “lice” in connection to their child’s school classroom. We feel the same way! We take every precaution to prevent lice outbreaks at school, discouraging the sharing of clothing and hats, vacuuming our carpets daily, and removing all dress-ups and puppets from a room and bagging them for two weeks should a child in the classroom present with lice or nits.

That said, lice and nits spread through head-to-head contact, and cannot survive on surfaces such as countertops, sinks, wooden or plastic toys, etc. It is extremely unlikely that a child in another classroom or even a child who shares the same classroom on a different day would be at risk. And although lice and nits can be miserable for everyone, they do not spread illness.



The best way to prevent lice from spreading at school is to keep your child at home, and *to continue to keep your child at home until all traces of lice and nits have been removed*. Parents must notify us immediately if they discover that their child has head lice or nits. We are required by state licensing laws to notify the other families in the class, although we do not specify the child by name. *Before returning to school, we ask for a signed letter or form from a health professional stating that your child has been treated and is now free of both lice and nits.*

To prevent any chance of a second outbreak – and as a matter of courtesy to the teachers and other children in your child’s class - we ask that children do not return to school until siblings and other family members in the home have also been cleared.

There are several options if your child does present with lice or nits. The two most effective “cures” we know of come from parent recommendations. The first option is to visit the County Health Department, where nurses are trained and experienced in nit and lice removal. These services are generally inexpensive, and may even be free. A costlier approach, but one that is advocated by many schools and families, is to visit one of the Lice Treatment Centers in the area. These centers use heat and oils to treat lice; it is extremely important that the treatment also includes extensive combing of the hair to make sure any and all of the eggs have been removed. Thank you for working with us to help prevent lice and nit outbreaks at preschool!

### **Lyme Disease and Deer Ticks:**

Ticks are a part of nature, and until there is a hard frost, ticks are often found on our property. The most common tick is the Wood Tick, which is large enough to be easily spotted: it may resemble a small spider at first glance, although all ticks have six legs. Wood Ticks do not carry Lyme Disease. Deer Ticks are more difficult to spot. When not engorged, they may be the size of a poppy seed. A certain percentage of Deer Ticks carry Lyme.

Ticks almost always crawl up from the ground, especially in wooded, brushy, areas. By walking in the center of the trails, your exposure to ticks generally goes down. To help prevent access to skin, shirts should be tucked into pants, and pants should be tucked into socks. Boots are always preferable to sandals. Hats are also a good idea. Adults and older children may wish to take a shower as soon as possible after hiking, with the strongest jet of water your shower has, directing it to all skin areas, especially if there are areas you can’t examine well.

Many of our naturalists toss their clothing into the dryer after a day of teaching and turn it to the hottest cycle. (Ticks thrive in damp, humid places and generally cannot withstand extremely dry conditions.)

If you do find a tick....

Remove the tick with tweezers, as close to the skin as possible to avoid pushing fluids from the tick into the body. The center also sells tick removal kits, which work well. Pull the tick straight out, rather than wiggling it from side to side– wiggling it may cause the head to break off and remain in the skin. Be patient with your pulling; you want to “tent” the skin but not break off mouthparts. It can easily take 5 minutes of constant pulling force to remove the tick, since the deer tick has longer mouthparts than most other ticks.

Wash the area with soap and water.

Do not flush the tick! This is an older practice that many of us grew up with, but the current recommendation is to place the tick in a sealed baggie in order to identify it and have it tested. Deer ticks are the only known vectors for Lyme disease, but other ticks may also carry other diseases. We have a number of people on staff who can help you to identify what kind of tick it may be, as well as tick identification cards that are free for the taking.

It is a good idea to have the tick tested. Most ticks don't carry the disease, but some do. One group that will test ticks free of charge is the Bay Area Lyme Foundation. There are also many non-profit groups listed online that will test ticks for a small fee (Some doctors will arrange to have the tick tested on your behalf, but not all do this, so you may wish to ask in advance).

Some people report the appearance of a bull's eye rash following a bite from a tick. Please know that not everyone will get a rash. For that reason, it is important to see a doctor even when no rash appears. This is another reason why tick checks are so important. Lyme is often misdiagnosed based on symptoms alone, and so knowing you have pulled a tick can help counter a misdiagnosis.

Lyme disease is serious, and we do not take the threat of it lightly. But by being aware and checking for ticks on a daily basis, it is possible to spend plenty of time outdoors, enjoying all the fun, warm-weather activities nature has to offer!

### **Insurance**

Schlitz Audubon Nature Center and the Preschool both carry Liability and Property Damage insurance and Non-Owned and Owned Vehicle insurance. We do not provide student medical or accident insurance.

### **Sample Schedule**

We value spontaneity in activity and take advantage of the "Teachable Moment." We also know that many people, especially young children first experiencing regular activity away from home, benefit from knowing what will happen next. We maintain a loose but structured schedule, with predictable events throughout the day (such as snack and group experiences). The following is an example of a possible classroom schedule. (Order of activities varies depending on the teacher and classroom). During the first few weeks of class, children begin the day inside. After that time, we begin outdoors every day, unless weather is prohibitive.

#### **Arrival**

Parents bring children into classroom for the first couple of weeks of class, help children take off coats, etc., and are greeted by the teacher. Teachers will notify parents of when they will be beginning the day in one of our three outside play areas. At this point, the parent or caregiver brings their child to the play area (dressed for the weather) after making sure the child has used the toilet and washed hands prior to school beginning.

#### **Active Play**

Children explore and play in one of the preschool outdoor play areas, and then take a hike on the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center grounds.

- Play area activities include climbing, water play, sand play, fort building, digging, gardening, and dramatic play.

- Schlitz Audubon Nature Center grounds activities include hiking to and playing in the forest, prairie/fields, trails around mystery pond, the beach/lake area, and the tower trail and play fields.
- Large motor activities might also include parachute and other structured play, as well as using balls, obstacle courses, movement experiences, and building equipment.

### **Group Time**

Children take part in conversation, listen to stories, sing songs, and explore movement. Special visits from the nature center naturalists, as well as a bi-weekly Spanish program are also offered.

### **Snack Time**

Teacher and children eat “family style,” serve food, converse, and enjoy each other’s company. Children clean up from snack as they finish eating and then go directly to free choice time activities.

### **Free Choice Time**

Children have a long block of uninterrupted time to choose an activity. This allows children to lengthen attention spans, and to develop competency with an activity.

Examples of classroom activities for children to choose from during free choice time may include:

- Blocks and building, e.g., the use of unit blocks or hollow blocks
- Art activities, e.g., painting or collage;
- Sensory activities, e.g., water play or clay;
- Science activities, e.g., observing an animal or experimenting with color panels;
- Writing activities, e.g., creating a book or drawing a picture;
- Reading activities, e.g., listening to a story or playing with puppets;
- Dramatic play activities, e.g., playing house or pretending to be a veterinarian;
- Math and manipulative activities, e.g., completing a puzzle or playing a matching game;
- Music and movement activities, e.g., playing instruments or dancing to recorded music;
- Adult-directed activities, e.g., cooking applesauce or planting seeds.

### **Clean-up**

Children put away materials they have used and prepare for our end of-class routine.

### **Ending time**

We gather on the rug to say good-bye before parents pick up the children.

### **Parents pick up children**

This will look different depending on your class. Some teachers prefer to invite families into the room, others will ask you to wait in the hall and will send the children out to you.

## **Arrival and Departure**

All children are to be brought to either the classroom or outdoor play area specified by the teacher. The Preschool’s responsibility for the child begins when he/she is signed in by the teacher. Therefore,

the parent must make sure that the teacher signs their child in upon arrival and out at departure on the daily attendance forms. Dropping children off outdoors or in the reception area is not permitted without a teacher present to sign child in.

The classroom doors will be opened promptly at the class start time. Likewise, teachers should be outside in the specified play areas promptly at the class start time. (If the teachers have not arrived by the time class is scheduled to begin, please feel free to alert the preschool director. We understand that your time is valuable!) We ask families to consider that before school, teachers are busy preparing for your child's school experiences and between the morning and afternoon sessions, the teachers are cleaning up and taking notes regarding the morning session, preparing for the afternoon session and having a quick lunch. Although children enjoy coming early and remaining late to play in the classrooms, please respect the teacher's time in preparing to make your child's school day experience the best that it can be and allow them the necessary prep time.

You may wish to carpool for your convenience. Anyone who picks up your child must be on your authorization form. If your child is going to be picked up by someone not listed on your authorization form, you must send a note authorizing us to release the child into that person's care. If an emergency situation arises which prevents you or another authorized person from picking up your child, please call the school to notify us of this situation.

**Please be on time:**

If pick up time is a problem, please consider carpooling with another family in your child's class or asking another parent if they would be willing to wait in our lobby with your child until you arrive. If parents are habitually late, a \$2.00 per minute late pick up charge is assessed for each minute that a child stays past the end of class time.

We also offer an After-School Care option that leaves your child in our care until 4pm. This option is only available to those who have pre-registered. It runs on a semester-long basis and cannot be used as a drop-in option in an instance when someone is running late.

**Please do not leave siblings alone in the car:**

If you do feel it is necessary to leave your child/children in the car for whatever reason, please ask another parent to watch them while you are away from the car or call the preschool desk (352-2880 x154) to ask if a staff person can assist you.

**Please respect the speed limit:**

The posted speed limit is 15 mph. This protects your children, as well as the wildlife from being injured due to speeding cars. When entering the nature center driveway, **slow down**, and enjoy the drive while your child looks for animals along the way. You will both come to school relaxed and your child will have a good beginning to his/her school day.

**Outdoor Play Areas Safety Guidelines:**

Our outdoor play areas are natural areas designed for children ages 3-6. These areas are more challenging than typical playgrounds. If you plan to spend time in any of these areas before or after class, you should respect the following guidelines:

- Please do not eat in our play spaces. The food crumbs attract rodents.
- Children should always go down the slides feet first.
- Children should not walk on the outside perimeter of the walkway in the front garden play area.
- Children should not climb on the fence above the tunnel in the front garden play area.
- No rock throwing is allowed.
- An adult should be at the climbing rocks in the front garden area and near the climbing trees in the log cabin area when children are on the rocks or climbing the trees.
- Please supervise your children (especially younger siblings) in these areas at all times.
- Please clean up toys that have been brought out before leaving.
- Please do not use the play areas when classes are in session.

### **Indoor Safety Guidelines:**

Children should not run or shout in the building, and for safety reasons please keep children off the tops of cubbies and shelving units. Remember that we are a nut free school; this includes our hallways. Due to sensitivities that some children have to strong scents, please apply essential oils outdoors, along with sunscreen and insect repellants.

### **Discipline:**

Optimal learning occurs when there is freedom for discovery, enough structure to allow everyone to learn, and physical and emotional safety. To maintain this atmosphere, we have designed spacious classrooms to provide children with ample room and equipment. Conflicts are generally avoided when there is “enough to go around.” In addition, the daily program will be structured to provide enough time for children to feel satisfied in play.

We will also provide an extended period of outdoor play. This allows children to expend the wonderful energy of this age group in appropriate ways. It is then easier to be less physically active indoors.

Adults will be available to help children solve social problems. For example, some children need encouragement to stand up for their rights with stronger children. Some children need to be taught the language and skills necessary for dealing with issues such as sharing. Adults will serve as models and facilitate the resolution of disputes.

When children are having a hard time controlling themselves, adults intervene in a manner that is educational, rather than punitive. We help children see the connection between their behavior and its consequences. Methods of discipline include clear rules, redirection, planning ahead to prevent problems, encouragement, and the use of logical and natural consequences. We do not use physical punishment, bribery, threats, and other methods that would hurt, frighten, or humiliate children.

It is expected that parents work with teachers in helping find solutions to persistent behavioral problems. In the rare event that a child’s ongoing disruptive behavior does not improve despite the best efforts of the staff and this behavior has a continuing negative effect on the classroom climate, the Preschool Director may determine that the preschool program cannot meet the child’s needs and the child may be dis-enrolled from the program. We do not dis-enroll children due to normal developmental struggles such as pushing or name-calling, unless they are associated with other issues we feel require additional support and resources that we cannot provide.

**Special Occasions:**

Holidays tend to be exciting and, at times, over-stimulating for young children. We downplay the commercial aspects of holidays and avoid duplicating experiences, such as class parties, that children will be more ready to enjoy in elementary school. We do not wear costumes or masks, as many preschoolers find this frightening.

We acknowledge many holidays that are of significance to our families through simple experiences such as songs, stories, and cooking experiences. This includes cultural events celebrated by our families. Parents are always welcome to share their own cultural celebrations with the class in a way that is age-appropriate and has been discussed with the teacher in advance.

At Nature Preschool, seasonal experiences, such as gathering pumpkins and celebrating the harvest, winter solstice and groundhog's day, receive greater programmatic emphasis than religious holidays.

Birthdays are very important for most preschoolers. Since we all still want to share in the birthday child's special day, each class will join together for a Birthday Picnic (indoors or out) enjoying our snack while sitting around a felted sun. The birthday child will walk around the sun while the children sing. Families are welcome to join us, and are invited to bring in pictures of your child for each year of his or her life, along with your child's favorite book from home, to be read to the rest of the group.

Because we want the emphasis to be on the event, and because we have students with severe food allergies, please do not bring treats from home. We do have a "wish list" of books we would love to add to our preschool library and over the years, families have sometimes opted to purchase a book for the school in honor of their child's birthday. We will paste a sticker in the book commemorating your child's name and age if this is something you would like to do. We recognize that we also have several summer birthdays. We can either celebrate these at the end of the year or we can celebrate half-birthdays. When the time comes, just let your child's teachers know how you would like them to handle this for your child.

**Parent Engagement:**

We cannot stress enough just how valuable parent engagement is to the success of our program. Parent volunteers are always welcome for special preschool events. In addition, you are always welcome in our preschool lounge area. We value parent volunteers in the classroom, but there may be times when we need to limit the number of parents who visit our class in one day. We may also suggest that a parent limit the number of days he or she volunteers if we feel it is preventing the child from fully engaging with his or her classmates. Please remember if you are volunteering that we cannot accommodate additional siblings, nor can anyone under the age of 18 volunteer in our preschool without a completed set of health and emergency contact forms, which we will provide in advance.

You may wish to be a Room Parent in your child's classroom. Room parents provide assistance to the classroom teachers for special events and/or activities that go on in the classroom. Room parents may also be asked to call other parents in the class to volunteer when needed. Please let your child's teachers know if this is of interest to you.

Any parent is invited to join our Parent Committee, which will meet four times a year for about forty-five minutes-to-one-hour, generally in the evening. The purpose of the Committee is to organize special events that are both fun and engaging for our preschool families, and to discuss fund-raising opportunities as well as how and where certain funds should be spent.

**Communication:**

Communication is extremely important to us here at Nature Preschool, and regular communication between school and home can only improve your child's preschool experience. We ask parents to keep staff notified of significant events and changes in their children's lives (such as moving to a new house, the loss of a pet, or a serious family illness) as this has a significant impact on your child both at home and at school.

The best way to stay informed about what is happening here at Nature Preschool is to **check your email**. Our emails will contain useful information about preschool activities and calendar reminders. You can expect to receive an email once or twice a month from your teachers (more if there are any last minute notifications). These emails will also include a link to an All Preschool Newsletter, which will contain information relevant to the entire school. If you choose not to read the newsletter, you may miss important announcements.

Beginning in September, teachers will set up password-protected pages using the photo site, Shutterfly. Teachers will post monthly photographs of their classes on this site, along with summaries of each class's activities. You will have the option of downloading or printing any photographs you may want to keep. Teachers will also post daily highlights outside the classroom, and will give short verbal reports about each day's activities at pick-up time. Please try to be on time so that you can hear the daily announcements!

We also provide three different opportunities for parents to receive formal updates about their child's growth and development during the school year:

- Our fall telephone conferences
- Our winter in-person conferences
- A spring email from teachers to parents summarizing your child's year at Nature Preschool

Between conference times, teachers are more than happy to discuss with you any issues, questions, or concerns you may have regarding your child. Likewise, the Preschool Director is always available either in person, by phone, or through email. Please keep in mind that we may not be available to meet until after school hours. Preschool policies and the Wisconsin licensing rules are available for perusal by parents. These are posted between the bulletin boards across from the preschool reception desk. A variety of information interesting to parents will be posted on these bulletin boards so check them often.

Other pertinent information such as classroom messages, menus, schedules, etc. will be posted on the classroom bulletin board next to the entrance of each classroom.

## **Expectations for Adults**

Our goal at Schlitz Audubon Nature Preschool is to create an environment in which everyone is able to achieve their best in an atmosphere of kindness, understanding and respect. The following is an outline of expectations for the adults in our school who work together in support of the children.

### We expect everyone to:

- Treat one another with courtesy
- Set good examples for children in terms of speech and behavior
- Go through the proper channels of communication when problems arise (this includes talking first with teachers regarding any classroom concerns, then with the Preschool Director and/or the Preschool Coordinator, and finally, if need be, the Executive Director of the Center)
- Maintain confidentiality
- Follow school rules, deadlines, and calendars
- Report all student absences by calling our Attendance line at 414-352-2880 x 154 (This is a mandated state licensing requirement)
- Read all school communications, including emails, calendars, and handbooks
- Arrive and pick-up children on time / start and end class on time
- Parents and caregivers are expected to supervise their children in the building and while playing on school grounds both before drop-off and after pick-up
- Ensure that children have the proper clothing for both indoor and outdoor exploration

### Social Media Policy:

*Please remember that online posts and social media conversations are not private. Even with the strictest privacy settings, you should consider any post you make to be a part of the public domain. We expect our entire preschool community to abide by the following rules regarding social media.*

- Do not share confidential information, internal school discussions, or personal and specific information about students, parents, teachers, or staff on social media sites.
- Do not post photos that identify any of our preschool children by name, or that show individual child faces, without prior permission from that child's parents or guardians.
- Please strive to keep any criticisms you may have of the school or its members respectful. Comments should be constructive rather than hurtful.
- We recognize that some of our teachers and parents are very comfortable maintaining friendships on social media, while others may choose to decline friendship requests on sites such as Facebook while your child is enrolled in the school. This is a professional choice and should not be taken personally.



### **Discharge Policy**

The Preschool reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child for any of the following reasons:

- Physical or verbal abuse of children or staff by a parent;
- Failure of the parent to observe the rules of the Preschool, particularly those outlined in the Expectations for Adults.
- Failure of the parent to complete and return all required forms; and
- Upon the discretion of the Preschool Director and after reasonable efforts on the part of the Preschool staff and the child's parents to integrate the child into the Preschool, the child's participation may be terminated (see last paragraph in section on discipline).

### **Days of Operation**

The Preschool will operate several different sessions:

Monday/Wednesday/Friday mornings	8:45am to 11:30 am
Monday/Wednesday/Friday mornings	9:00am to 11:45 am
Tuesday/Thursday mornings	8:45am to 11:30am
Tuesday/Thursday mornings	9:00am to 11:45 am
Monday/Wednesday afternoons	12:30pm to 3:15pm
Tuesday/Thursday afternoons	12:30pm to 3:15pm
Tuesday/Thursday afternoons	12:45pm to 3:30pm
Monday thru Thursday afternoons	12:45pm to 3:30pm

### **Final Words:**

Entering preschool is a milestone for youngsters. This marks the expansion of your son or daughter's experiences outside the home. To ease the transition from home to school, it is a great help to talk regularly with your preschoolers about his or her new experiences. It is an opportunity to share the excitement of meeting new people and sharing new ideas. Your preschooler will benefit from your support and understanding as she or he begins to grow outside the home. Thank you for being such an integral part of our Nature Preschool Community.