

Schlitz Audubon Nature Preschool

COVID-19 Response Plan

We have been working hard over the last few months to ensure that our program is meeting the best possible health and safety practices in response to COVID-19. Our Response Plan includes updated licensing regulations set by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, as well as current guidelines and recommendations established by the North Shore Health Department and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Due to the changing nature of this virus and its impact on our local community, these policies are subject to change.

Goals for the 2020-2021 School Year:

- Keep all students and staff physically safe
- Care for the social-emotional needs of students and staff
- Design flexibility into the school schedule should we need to adjust our program in response to COVID-19
- Modify our spaces and protocols as needed, without losing the core values of our program

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has recommended that all K-12 schools in Wisconsin create plans based on the following assumptions:

The virus will remain in circulation until a vaccine is developed and widely used.

- A vaccine is not likely to be in broad use during the next 12-18 months
- Improvements in understanding the virus and in testing will allow public health officials to act with greater precision when taking steps to slow the rate of infection
- Short-term closures of schools will remain a possibility until a vaccine is widely used
- Children and staff with significant health conditions will continue to be especially vulnerable during this time
- Reinforcing prevention behaviors (hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette, face masks) will be essential strategies in slowing the spread of this and other infectious diseases
- Frequent cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces and materials are needed
- Children and staff showing symptoms of contagious respiratory illness should stay home

What is the Nature Preschool Policy on Facemasks?

Facemasks are currently required for all adults. This includes teachers, staff, volunteers, parents, and caregivers. Children over the age of 2 will be required to wear a mask indoors, but not outdoors.

- All staff members are required to wear a mask when not at their personal work-stations
- Parents and caregivers are required to wear a mask at drop-off and pick-up
- All visitors are instructed to wear a mask on the trails when unable to maintain a distance of at least six feet from other visitors
- Preschool-aged children are **not** required to wear a mask while participating in our program outdoors, but they should have one that can be worn indoors in the event of inclement weather, or when going inside to the bathroom

Nature will be our Primary Classroom

We are following an all-outdoor, Forest Kindergarten model until the weather gets cold.

- This means that we will be spending almost all of our time outside when school starts
- Until it gets cold, our indoor classrooms will be reserved for bathroom visits and as a place to shelter from stormy weather
- When it gets too cold to sustain an all-outside model, we will divide our time between outdoors and indoors in accordance with the temperature.
- **Your child's preschool class will have its own designated outdoor classroom** (the Gardens Play Space, the Woods Play Space, and the Log Cabin Play Space). **We will rotate through these areas so that the children may experience different kinds of outdoor play.**
- **Each class will have its own indoor classroom.** We will not rotate our indoor classrooms. Until the weather turns colder – or in the event of thunder or lightning – we will only use the indoor classrooms when we need to visit the bathroom.
- **Until such regulations are lifted, there will be no co-mingling between classes.** Children will learn their class birdcall and can sing their calls to one another from a safe distance on the trails.

Managing Bathroom Visits

Parents and caregivers are asked to take their child to the bathroom just prior to the start of class.

- To avoid over-crowding in our preschool bathrooms, adults are invited to take their child to the larger public bathroom down the hall before class starts if they wish
- Once our program begins, staff will escort children inside to the bathroom as needed. We do have to maintain teacher-child ratios, which means our outdoor experiences may be compromised if the entire class needs to come inside for bathroom visits
- Skipping a trip to the bathroom may result in a toileting accident, which compromises your child's confidence, makes them cold and uncomfortable, and creates a health risk
- Until further notice, children should wear face masks when using the nature center bathrooms (this includes the preschool bathrooms)
- There are no bathrooms available on the trails.

Our bathrooms will be deep cleaned each evening and sprayed with a sanitizing spray throughout the day.

Hand Washing is Essential

We have always encouraged hand washing in our program, as it is one of the simplest and most effective ways to keep everyone healthy.

- In response to COVID-19, we have installed special handwashing sinks in our outdoor play spaces.
- Upon arrival, children will be directed to wash their hands before playing
- We provide environmentally friendly liquid soap
- We also carry hand sanitizer on our hikes
- We will have children wash their hands at drop-off and pick-up, before and after eating, after sneezing and blowing noses, and after using the bathroom
- We add a few drops of biodegradable liquid soap to our water-play areas, and have the children assist with washing our teaching materials during clean-up time, which means they are cleaning their hands as they play and help care for their tools
- Once the weather turns colder, we will disconnect our outdoor sinks and children will wash their hands indoors
- In cold weather, children should begin wearing mittens
- **We suggest getting more than one pair of warm, waterproof mittens so that you can wash mittens (and give them time to dry, inside and out) between preschool days**

How will Drop-off and Pick-up work?

- **We are staggering our start times to avoid overcrowding in our shared spaces.** Children in our **8:45am** classes are welcome to join us anytime between **8:45-9:15am**. Children in our **9:00am** classes are welcome to join us anytime between **9:00-9:30am**. Children in our **12:30pm** class are welcome to join us anytime between **12:30-1:00pm**. Children in our **12:45pm** classes are welcome to join us between **12:45-1:15pm**. **Families may arrive at the Center earlier than this if you wish, but our teachers will not be available to check your child in until the start of class time.**
- We will make a point of remaining and playing in our outdoor spaces for longer periods before we go hiking, in order to accommodate the expanded arrival window.
- We are not adjusting our pick-up window at the end of class, as we need this time to clean our spaces and materials, making sure they are ready for the next group of children.
- We have traditionally ended each class with verbal announcements from the teachers, highlighting the days' activities. We are forgoing this tradition for now, as it requires adults crowding together in small spaces, and instead will provide regular emailed updates describing our activities.
- Parents and caregivers will drop-off and pick-up their child at their designated outdoor classroom and must remain with their child until teachers have checked them in. Teachers may need to ask adults a few health-screening questions at the start of each week.
- Adults should wear facemasks at drop-off and pick-up.
- Adults and children should wear facemasks in the building.

When should I keep my child home?

Parents are expected to assess the health of their child on a daily basis before coming to Preschool. You should keep your child at home if:

- Your child has a fever. Fever reducing medication may not be used when determining a child's health. Under current guidelines, children must be fever-free for 72 hours (3 days) before returning to preschool
- Your child is experiencing recognizable symptoms of COVID-19, including a cough, shortness of breath, intense headache, or difficulty breathing
- Your child has been exposed to someone who has had COVID-19 (by testing or medical diagnosis) within the past 14 days
- Your child has had sustained contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with a person showing symptoms of COVID-19 within the previous 14 days
- Anyone in your family is under a 14-day quarantine for COVID-19.
- We also request that you keep your child at home if they are experiencing a persistent runny nose, skin rash, stomach ailment, or **any symptoms of a contagious illness**. COVID-19 appears to affect children differently than adults. Our goal is to avoid spreading illness of any kind to the children and adults in our program, which means keeping sick children, and adults, at home.

What happens if a child develops symptoms of COVID-19 at Nature Preschool?

If a child develops symptoms of COVID-19, we will follow the same basic protocol we use with any contagious illness, but will take the additional step of informing the Executive Director of the Center, as well as the North Shore Health Department.

- Our protocols regarding sickness include the following:
- Remove the child from their group and relocate them to an isolated area with a member of staff. Both adult and child will wear facemasks
- Call the parent/guardian to pick the child up
- Report the event to the Preschool Director
- Report the event to the Executive Director and the North Shore Health Department
- If a child tests positive for COVID-19, we will follow the guidance of the North Shore Health Department. It is likely the entire class, including teachers, will need to remain home for 14 days before returning to Preschool.
- If anyone in our program tests positive for COVID-19, we will notify all the families in our Nature Preschool. We will share information regarding the individual's classroom, as well as the time and days they are in our program, but will not identify the individual by name.

Have you made any changes to the Preschool classrooms?

We have made a few small changes to our preschool classrooms in order to ensure the highest possible cleaning standards each day. These include:

- Replacing our classroom carpets with floor mats, which are easier to sanitize
- Replacing our fabric bathroom curtains with vinyl curtains
- Removing plush materials from the rooms
- Reducing the overall number of materials on the shelves.
- We have sorted certain art supplies (such as crayons and glue sticks) into individually labeled bags for each child, which we can also take outdoors if needed.

We have worked hard to minimize our rooms, while still ensuring that they are bright and engaging. We are sure you will continue to find the classrooms cheerful, inviting, and full of learning opportunities.

How will we manage snacks this year?

Until conditions surrounding COVID-19 change, we have made the decision not to serve snack on a daily basis.

- We have spent hours discussing how to safely manage snacks at preschool under the current COVID-19 guidelines. Unfortunately, the guidelines do not allow us to serve snacks family-style, instead requiring children to spread out at a distance of 6 feet or more from other people. While this is manageable outside, it is not something we can do indoors. We have concluded that there is no truly safe way to have groups of 16 children eating together in an enclosed indoor space, with different groups sharing the same space between mornings and afternoons, without spreading respiratory droplets throughout the rooms. Snack time is not a necessary part of our program, but has always been included due to the socialization skills it promotes.
- Instead of offering a daily snack, we will instead serve special treats on occasion. For instance, on days when we take long hikes, we will provide our own preschool trail mix, which we can eat outdoors.
- We will also have seasonal outdoor campfires, during which we will roast marshmallows and bake bread.
- We are removing snacks from our birthday celebrations, but will continue to make birthdays special by having children bring in favorite books and photos from home, and having the birthday child walk around a yellow sun while the class sings to them.

We will use the time normally reserved for snack for special community-building activities that promote friendship, kindness, and well-being. This might include writing letters, yoga, books, animal visits, music, and child-led conversations around the circle.

How can parents and caregivers support our program?

- **Have your child use the bathroom before class starts!**
- **Serve your child a healthy breakfast or lunch prior to class.**
- **Label everything!** This includes water bottles, mittens, boots, and facemasks! So many children come to preschool with identical-looking items, and we do not want to mix these items up.
- **Send a filled water bottle every day** Staying hydrated is important and we will not be using the drinking fountains for now. Wash the water bottle each evening. Water bottles can be refilled at preschool when necessary.
- **Dress your child for the weather.**
- **Apply sunscreen and insect repellent to your child before class begins.**
- **Keep your child home when sick.**
- **Please read our school emails and sign up for our REMIND texts to stay informed about calendar changes or changes to our COVID-19 Response Plan** (information about REMIND will be sent to families in September).
- **Call us at 414-352-2880 x 154 to report your child's absence.**
- **Let us know if your child needs additional support for any reason.**

Will there be refunds if the preschool closes due to COVID-19?

In the case of a mandatory school closure (by order of the Governor or the North Shore Health Department) preschool tuition for missed school weeks due to COVID-19 will be refunded. Parents will be given the option to donate some or all of their tuition back to the preschool in support of the classroom teachers. Additionally, families will be provided at-home activities and select virtual learning opportunities, and teachers will continue to communicate with children and parents over a variety of platforms, until classes are able to resume in person.

We understand that your children are attending preschool this year under unusual circumstances. We are here to support their learning, while doing our best to ensure a safe, happy, and healthy environment for all!

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