

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

Nature Preschool's 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. Facemasks will also be required in our three afternoon K4 classes, and are strongly encouraged for all children outdoors. Facemasks will be required for all children during our outdoor circle time. The preschool has a limited number of child-sized disposable masks to hand out. Children are expected to come to school with 2 personal facemasks (labeled).

In addition:

- 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
- Anyone visiting our play spaces or coming in contact with our preschoolers should wear a facemask

Nature is Our Primary Classroom

We are following an all-outdoor, Forest Kindergarten model and will only go indoors if temperatures are dangerously cold (well below zero) or when there is lightning in the area.

- Our indoor classrooms will be reserved for bathroom visits and as a place to shelter from stormy weather
- We will provide outdoor warming stations in each play space when the weather cools
- If it becomes 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 each week. 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. Unless the weather outside is dangerous, 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 should take their child to the bathroom just prior to the start of class.

- To avoid over-crowding in our preschool bathrooms, adults should take their child to the larger public bathroom down the hall before class starts
- 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
- Children should wear face masks when using the nature center bathrooms

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

Essential Hand Washing

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, 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
- In cold weather, children should begin wearing mittens. We will lightly sanitize mittens when children arrive with an alcohol-based sanitizing spray.

Drop-off and Pick-up

- **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 will ask each adult-child pair a number of health-screening questions at the start of each week. These questions are subject to change.
- Please refer to the posted signs with the laminated birds on them to help find your child's outdoor classroom each week!

Guidelines for Keeping Children 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.
- 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 *unless that person has tested negative*
- Your child should remain home if you are awaiting results of a COVID-19 test
- 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.
- In the case of gastrointestinal ailments, children should be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school
- In the case of runny nose or cough, your child's symptoms should show *significant improvement*, which means a clear, infrequent cough and a clear, infrequent runny nose. Your child must wear a facemask while recovering from a runny nose or cough
- Under current guidelines, children must be fever-free for 72 hours (3 days) before returning to preschool

Actions Taken 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

In Case Someone in the Preschool Tests Positive

- 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 but will not identify the individual by name.
- We will follow the guidance of the North Shore Health Department, which currently requires that anyone directly exposed to someone who has tested positive remain home for 14 days before returning to Preschool.
- Siblings who are in other classes should remain home until the child who was in close contact receives a negative COVID-19 test result
- *Close contacts must complete the full two-week quarantine before returning to school even with a negative test result*
- A close contact is anyone who has been within 6 feet of someone who tested positive for COVID-19 for a cumulative time of fifteen minutes or more
- The health department does not consider facemasks when determining close contacts. However, many hospitals do not consider an exposure to have occurred when both parties are wearing facemasks. So, while we will still need to quarantine a class should someone in that class test positive for COVID, the chance of anyone else getting sick is extremely unlikely if everyone is outdoors, wearing facemasks.
- If a person in our program tests positive, but shows minimal to no symptoms, they may return once they have completed their at-home isolation period and received clearance from their local health department. A negative test result is no longer required.
- If a person in our program tests positive and *is symptomatic*, we will work with them on an individual basis, using input from medical professionals, to determine when they can return to our program.
- **We understand that no one gets sick on purpose. We ask for patience and understanding should anyone in our program test positive to COVID-19, just as we would any illness.**

Changes to 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 We are Managing 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 Parents and Caregivers Can Support our Program

- **Have your child use the bathroom before class starts!**
- **Make sure they have everything they need to remain warm and waterproof.**
- **Serve your child a healthy breakfast or lunch prior to class.**
- **Label everything!** This includes water bottles, mittens, boots, and facemasks!
- **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**
- **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.**

TUTION REFUNDS IN CASE OF SCHOOL CLOSURE:

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 curriculum materials, and teachers will continue to communicate with children and parents over a variety of platforms, until classes are able to resume in person.

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