



Schlitz Audubon
Nature Center

**Schlitz Audubon Nature Preschool
Parent Handbook 2022-2023**



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SCHLITZ AUDUBON NATURE PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK 2022-2023

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. We can help 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 their 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 also strive to meet best practices in environmental education. At our preschool, nature-based activities happen outdoors and indoors; in whole groups, small groups, and individually; as planned teacher-facilitated activities, child-initiated interests, and spontaneous pursuits; in the preschool outdoor classrooms, 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 an understanding of themselves, as they relate to others and to the natural world
- Experiment
- Communicate about nature

Parents at Nature Preschool Must Understand and Agree that:

- We go outside rain or shine, and in temperatures as low as negative one degree Fahrenheit
- Children will get wet and muddy, often requiring changes of clothing
- While we always do our best to return your child in perfect condition, your child may occasionally experience small scrapes, scratches, bumps, and bruises
- Perpetual lateness disrupts your child's learning experience, impacts the entire class, and may interfere with the teacher's ability to plan and prepare for the next class
- Young children who are new to social situations may experience conflict. This can be stressful, but it is also an important part of learning how to interact with others

Expectations for Adults (including parents, caregivers, volunteers, teachers, and staff)

Our goal at Schlitz Audubon Nature Preschool is to create an environment in which everyone can 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 Nature Preschool Director and/or the Nature 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). Texts and emails may not be seen for several hours or may be sent to people who are not at school, in both cases prompting calls to parents
- 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
- Teachers are expected to use developmentally appropriate practice in their teaching and maintain their level of expertise through continuing education experiences
- Parents, teachers, and caregivers will work together to ensure that children have the proper clothing for 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

Our Nature Preschool Program:

Staffing

We maintain a ratio of 8-1 in our classrooms, with a class limit of 16 children and 2 teachers. Our teachers have a range of experiences, including degrees and/or teaching backgrounds in early childhood education, environmental sciences, emerging literacy, biology, and child brain

development. Teachers receive an additional 25 hours per year of professional development, both independently and through center-sponsored workshops and events.

We regularly attend conferences about Nature-Based Early Childhood Education; participate in team-building activities; and attend naturalist trainings. We are required by state licensing to be listed in the Wisconsin Registry, and to take Child Abuse and Neglect and Abusive Head Trauma training. We also maintain Infant and Child CPR and First Aid certification; and have undergone emergency armed intruder training with the Village of Bayside's Chief of Police.

Only those teachers, volunteers, student teachers, and subs who have undergone a thorough background check through the State of Wisconsin, including fingerprinting, as well as additional center and state-mandated training, are allowed to be alone with the children at any time.

The Nature 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.

Physical Spaces

We have four Outdoor Classrooms and three designated indoor preschool classrooms in addition to our Nature Preschool hallway and family lounge. Families are asked to keep our public areas safe *by not bringing any foods containing nuts or dairy products to any of our Nature Preschool classrooms, or hallways; by keeping bug repellents, essential oils, and sunscreens out of student's bags/backpacks, and cubbies. We ask that users tidy up the parent lounge after enjoying it, so that it is ready and welcoming to others.*

Our three indoor classrooms are the Cardinal Room, the Chickadee Room, and the Goldfinch Room. Each classroom features a child-sized bathroom and sink, as well as a building area, dress-up area, sensory area, art area, reading area, and manipulative area. We also have a fourth classroom, the Nuthatch Room, which we share with other programs in the Nature Center. This room is only used in the case of hazardous weather conditions, such as lightning, or below-zero temperatures.

Outdoor Classroom Safety Guidelines

Our Outdoor Classrooms are the Gardens, the Log Cabin, the Woods and the Secret Forest. Students in the Cardinal, Chickadee, and Goldfinch classes will rotate clockwise between our Woods, Gardens, and Log cabin classrooms. Students enrolled in the Nuthatch classes will use the Secret Forest classroom as their main classroom with opportunities to hike to other areas.

Our Outdoor Classrooms feature flower gardens, mud puddles, climbing structures, a seating area, and many loose parts. They may also contain rain barrels, buckets, shovels, and wheelbarrows. Because our outdoor classrooms are nature-based, they undergo changes year-to-year, season-to-season. We regularly address, plan, and change the features in our outdoor classrooms to make them fun, accessible, and welcoming to the children. They are not, however, without risk.

Younger children require close supervision in these spaces, and older children may be too tall or too heavy for some of the equipment.

Our Outdoor Classrooms 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 use the outdoor classrooms before, between classes, or when a preschool class is in session there
- Please do not eat in our outdoor classrooms. The food crumbs attract rodents and many of our children have very serious contact allergies with certain foods
- No rock throwing is allowed
- Children must have an adult close by if they are climbing trees
- Trees must be strong enough to support a child's weight. (Some of our smaller trees cannot)
- Please supervise your children (especially younger siblings) in these areas at all times

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

Rolling down a grassy hill

At Nature Preschool, our goal is to eliminate hazards as much as we can. However, we do believe in the value of age-appropriate risk. Learning to take appropriate risks can help children develop confidence and improve executive function as they learn to consider and assess challenging situations.

Although we strive to keep our outdoor classrooms safe, we do intentionally provide age-appropriate risks, such as sledding down hills, playing in and around deep puddles, balancing on logs, climbing small trees, and even taking social risks, such as asking other people to play. We feel that learning to address these sorts of risks is a valuable skill that will serve children well, years after they leave our program.

Indoor Safety Guidelines

Children should not run or shout in the building nor should they be left to wander unsupervised into other areas of the Nature Center as this is a public building. When indoors, please keep children off the tops of cubbies and shelving units, as the glass panes behind these areas are very thin.

Due to sensitivities that some children and adults have to strong scents, please apply essential oils outdoors, along with sunscreen and insect repellents. Children and guests are asked to wash hands upon entering our classrooms, to keep allergies and illnesses at bay.

For safety and security reasons, classroom doors will be kept locked and closed when not in use. For this reason, we do not allow parents and younger siblings to play in the classrooms while the group is outside. In case of dangerous storms or tornado warnings, we will retreat to the lower level of the building.

Emergencies

Our Nature Preschool team, in addition to the Nature Center staff, have undergone emergency training with the Village of Bayside police department to address a range of possible scenarios involving dangerous intruders and emergency situations.

Although we do not provide the details of our emergency response plan to others, in any emergency our first priority is the safety and well-being of the children. There are security cameras placed on the grounds and throughout the building. We also practice fire and tornado drills with our classes. We ask parents and caregivers to stop at the Welcome Booth when they arrive so that we know who is entering the property and strive to recognize each person who enters our preschool areas.

In case of an emergency, a text will be sent through the REMIND app to all Nature Preschool families with as much information as possible, including instructions on how to reunite with your child.

- First aid equipment will be always on hand
- Teachers have walkie talkies to communicate emergencies to indoor staff
- Staff members are certified in First Aid and CPR

Inclement Weather/School Closings

We follow the lead of the Fox Point/Bayside school district when making the decision to close due to inclement weather conditions. *We also reserve the right to make our own determinations, as needed.*

When the Preschool closes due to inclement weather, an announcement will be made on local television news stations and websites. A message will also be sent to anyone signed up to receive texts with the REMIND app. Closures for inclement weather are not refundable.

Program Planning and Scheduling

Our curriculum is based on an emergent, child-centered approach, which means that 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 circle time, hikes, and other group experiences).

The following is an example of a possible classroom schedule. (Order of activities varies depending on the teachers, children, and specific classroom).

Arrival

We begin outdoors every day, rain or shine, unless the weather is truly prohibitive.

Parents/caregivers must bring the child to the appropriate outdoor classroom, dressed for the weather, after also making sure the child has used the toilet and washed hands prior to school beginning. *Parents and caregivers may not leave the child unattended, and should never depart without making verbal or visual contact with the teacher, who will greet each child and sign them in.*

An important note about toileting: Please do not skip taking your child to the toilet in an effort to meet the group outside sooner. Remember that if a child has a toileting accident outdoors, especially when dressed in rain pants or snow pants, not only is the child's personal dignity compromised, they also experience considerable discomfort.

There are potential health risks if the child does not announce the accident and remains in wet and soiled gear, especially in cold weather. There are also health issues for others who may come into contact with these bodily fluids. Because teachers need to maintain strict ratios for outdoor safety, it is not always possible to get a child back to the building quickly, especially when toileting needs arise on the trails.

Over the years, we have learned that children who skip their visit to the bathroom at the start of the school day are more likely to have accidents than those who do not.

Outdoor Free Choice Time

At the beginning of their preschool day in the Outdoor Classrooms, the children will engage in free choice activities and play. Children are given time to choose an activity and spend as much time during free choice on that activity that they wish within the outdoor classroom. This allows children to lengthen attention spans, and to develop competency with an activity. Examples of activities for children to choose from during free choice time may include:

- Climbing and balancing
- Water, mud, sand, and snow play
- Digging and gardening
- Building with natural materials
- Art and music activities
- Science activities
- Reading and literacy activities
- Dramatic play activities
- Math and manipulative activities

Group Time

During our group “Circle Time” we gather at the log circles in each of the outdoor classrooms to sing our Hello Song, to recognize our special helpers of the day, and to connect as a class. One important aspect of group time is coming together to form a class community. To do this we take part in conversations to discuss similarities and differences, take turns listening and speaking as a group, listen to stories, sing songs, and go over class agreements.

Active Play

Throughout their Nature Preschool day, the children will engage in active play. They will explore and play in one of the Nature Preschool Outdoor Classrooms, and then take a hike on the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center grounds. Our exploration activities include hiking to and playing in the forest, prairies, boardwalks around the pond, the beach, and the tower trail.

Ending time

We will always gather for a short end-of-the-day group time to recap the day, give context for upcoming activities, and to say good-bye before children are picked up.

Pick Up

Parents and caregivers are asked to wait until class comes to an end, and for the teachers to formally dismiss the children, before leaving. Teachers will do their best to provide a brief verbal summary of the school day to the adults in attendance at pick-up time, but they do not use this time to have lengthy conferences with individual families, unless an issue arose during class time that requires immediate communication. Always check in with teachers as you leave with your child to make sure your child was signed out.

Indoor Time

On days when we go inside, children are given time to choose an activity within the indoor classroom.

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

- Blocks and building,
- Art activities
- Sensory activities
- Science activities
- Writing activities
- Reading activities
- Dramatic play activities
- Math and manipulative activities
- Music and movement activities

Transportation and Drop-Off

It is extremely important that all drivers entering the property maintain a speed limit of 15 mph, and that everyone stops at the Welcome Booth, as the booth staff will alert our facilities team if anyone drives past the booth without stopping to be identified.

We provide a limited number of entrance stickers for your cars, which makes it possible for the booth staff to identify you as a preschool family before waving you through. Anyone that will regularly pick up or drop off should receive a sticker to display on their vehicle.

The Nature Preschool has its own parking lot, and we stagger our class start and end times to cut down on congestion in the parking lot as much as possible. There may still be times when the center is full, and parking is difficult to find. We understand that it can take some time to find a place to park, and we will wait with your child in these instances until you are able to park safely.

The Nature Preschool's responsibility for each child begins when the child 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 in the outdoor classroom is not permitted without a teacher present to sign the child in.

We ask families to consider that before school, teachers are busy preparing for your child's school experiences. This could be cleaning up and taking notes regarding the previous session, preparing for the next session, or having a quick lunch. Please respect the teachers' time and allow them the necessary prep time by staying outside the classroom until class start time.

You may wish to carpool for your convenience. Anyone who picks up your child must be on your pickup authorization form, which we keep in our school files. 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 arises which prevents you or another authorized person from picking up your child, you must call the school to notify us of this situation.

Please be on time when picking up your child: 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.

Please do not leave young 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 Nature Preschool desk (352-2880 x154) to ask if a staff person can assist you.

Special Occasions

Holidays tend to be exciting and, at times, over-stimulating for young children. We downplay the commercial aspects of holidays and do not serve candy or other treats. We do, however, try to

acknowledge many holidays and cultural celebrations that are of significance to our families through simple experiences such as songs, stories, and cooking activities. Parents are always welcome to share their own cultural celebrations with the class in a way that is age-appropriate and if it 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 Day, receive greater programmatic emphasis than religious holidays.

Birthdays are very important for most preschoolers. To share in the birthday child's special day, each class will come together for a Birthday celebration. Families are invited to join the class and bring in pictures of your child for each year of their life, along with your child's favorite book from home, to be read to the rest of the group.

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.

Because we have students with severe food allergies, please do not bring treats from home.

Parent Engagement

We cannot stress enough just how valuable parent engagement is to the success of our program. We value parent volunteers in the classroom and are happy when you can put aside time to spend a day with us. Over the years, parents have taught yoga, brought instruments, led art projects, showed off their fossil collections, or simply sat and read stories out loud. We are happy to invite you into our program.

There may, however, 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 they volunteer if we feel it is preventing the child from fully engaging with their 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 completed in advance.

You may wish to be a Room Parent in your child's class. Room parents aid the classroom teachers with special events and/or activities. Room parents may also be asked to call other parents in the class to volunteer when needed, or help teachers distribute artwork. Please let your child's teachers know if this is of interest to you.

Any parent is invited to assist with school fundraisers or to help plan and organize special events on behalf of the Nature Preschool with Nature Center approval. If you have an idea, or would like to be more involved, simply let us know!

Communication

Communication is extremely important to us. Regular communication between school and home can 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 home, the loss of a pet, or a serious family illness) as this will also impact on your child's learning at school. This could be a quick word before or after class, a written note passed to the teacher, or an email.

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. These will often include a link to our online Preschool Newsletter, which will contain information relevant to the entire school. If you choose not to read the newsletter, you may miss important announcements.

Teachers will also share photographs with you, highlighting your child's activities, as well as the activities of the entire class. We keep most of our photographs in the Cloud. Throughout the year, you will be sent links to our online photo platform, allowing you to view photos documenting your child's adventures at Nature Preschool. Teachers will give short verbal reports about each day's activities at pick-up time.

We currently provide one Fall conference opportunity and a Spring child-led event. We frequently check in with families about your child's growth and development during the school year, in addition to ongoing communication through emails about the class. These are:

- Our fall telephone conferences
- Spring Celebration of Learning that includes child-led hikes, and examples of student work

Teachers are always willing to discuss any issues, questions, or concerns you may have regarding your child. 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 your perusal. These are posted across from the Nature Preschool reception desk.

Other pertinent information will be posted outside each classroom, sent out via email from Nature Preschool teachers and administrators, or via REMIND classroom texts.

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 our outdoor 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 extended periods of outdoor play. This allows children to expend the wonderful energy of this age group in appropriate ways.

Adults will be available to help children solve social problems. For example, some children need encouragement to advocate for themselves with other 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 to prevent problems, encouragement, and the use of logical and natural consequences. We do not use physical punishment, bribery, threats, or 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 Nature 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.

In cases of special educational or behavioral needs, the health and safety of the individual child as well as the whole class will be assessed. Families may be asked to provide additional support if deemed necessary. In some situations, Nature Preschool staff may suggest a referral to a specialized 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.

Health

Children are to be kept home if they have symptoms of illness such as; persistent runny nose (especially with green or yellow mucus), a persistent or productive cough, sore throat, inflammation of the eyes, lice, rash, vomiting, diarrhea or other illness, or if they are running a fever. Children must be symptom free for a full 24 hours before returning to school. Children considered "close contacts" due to exposure to COVID-19 may not return to school until their medically mandated quarantine is over.

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 they can be supervised by a member of the Nature Preschool staff. The

parent or legal guardian will be notified immediately to pick up the child. If we are unable to contact the parent/guardian, then the designated 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 Nature Preschool. This permission shall be used only when the parent/ guardian cannot be reached.

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

- A State-provided "Authorization to Administer Medication Form" must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian. 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/guardian will be notified 30 days before the expiration date is reached. When medications reach the expiration date, they must be replaced
- All medications must include a prescription label with the child's name
- All medication must be given directly to a Nature Preschool staff member so it may be stored in a safe place

COVID-19 Response Plan

We have worked hard to ensure that our program is meeting the best possible health and safety practices in response to COVID-19. Our Response Plan includes the COVID-19 licensing regulations set by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, as well as guidelines and recommendations established by the North Shore Health Department and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. (Updated August 26, 2022)

Due to the evolving nature of this virus, all policies are subject to change.

Goals

- 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

Nature Preschool's Policy on Face Masks

Facemasks are optional outdoors and in the public spaces indoors at the Nature Center. The Nature Preschool will still require masks in the Nature Preschool indoor classrooms. With the recent COVID-19 vaccine roll out for children under the age of 5, it will take time for a majority of the students to receive the full course of the vaccine. We require that anyone sharing the indoor classrooms with Nature Preschool children wear a mask, including staff, volunteers, and parents.

- Face masks, when worn indoors, must cover the nose and mouth

- When coming to Nature Preschool, each child should have a face mask on their person (tucked in a pocket or attached to a lanyard) to order to make indoor bathroom visits and shortcuts through the building possible
- Your child's face mask should be labeled with the child's name, to avoid mix-ups
- Face masks are not required for children ages 2 and under in the building

Guidelines for Keeping Children Home

You should keep your child at home if:

- Your child has a fever. Fever reducing medication may not be used when determining your child's health. Children must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school
- Your child is experiencing any symptoms of illness. This includes a thick, runny nose, persistent cough, shortness of breath, headache, lethargy, sore throat, or upset stomach
- Your child is a Close Contact or tests positive for COVID. See below for details

Close Contact

- A preschool student who is a Close Contact does not need to quarantine if they are asymptomatic. We ask out of courtesy that any Nature Preschool child who has been identified as a close contact wear a face mask for the following 5 days at Nature Preschool, even outside

Because the details surrounding each Close Contact situation are so varied, we ask families to call us at 414-352-2880 x 154 to talk over your specific circumstances. That way, we can make the best possible decision about your child's safe return to school.

If a Child Tests Positive for COVID

Children who test positive for COVID must isolate themselves at home for 5 full days, regardless of vaccination status.

- The day symptoms first occurred is considered Day 0
- If no symptoms occurred, the day they took their COVID test is considered Day 0
- If, after 5 full days, no symptoms have developed, they may return to school on Day 6
- If they experience any symptoms of illness, in addition to their 5-day isolation period they must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to preschool
- They must wear a face mask while at preschool for an additional 5 days after their isolation ends, including outside

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. 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.
- Call the parent/guardian to pick the child up

- Report the event to the Preschool Director

In Case Someone in the Nature Preschool Tests Positive for COVID

If a teacher, staff, volunteer, or child in our program tests positive for COVID, we will notify all families in that class if we determine that anyone was at risk of exposure. We will share information regarding the individual's classroom but will not identify the individual by name.

- **We are required to notify the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families of any positive case in our school within 24 hours**
- Parents/guardians must inform us if their child tests positive for COVID-19 so that we may determine if anyone else at Nature Preschool was exposed
- The North Shore Health department will contact us if anyone in our school tests positive based on the information they receive through their database

We understand 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.

Food

Snacks are only served on occasion, either on long hikes or when they support our curriculum.

Food Restrictions and/or Allergies

Parents/guardians are expected to notify the Nature Preschool staff of any food restrictions or food allergies. We are a NUT FREE & PEANUT FREE SCHOOL (no peanuts or nut products are served).

We have many students in our program with a wide range of 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 families to bring in 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 outdoor classroom 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

- 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
- Sharing food on the Nature Preschool premises is not allowed.
- Classroom teachers scrutinize art, science or other project ingredients that contain potential allergens and act according to classroom protocol
- Special events involving baked goods and other food items shall be restricted to the public areas of the building away from Nature Preschool
- Please do not bring in treats or snacks for birthdays, cultural celebrations, or holidays. (See the Special Occasion section for more information)

Outdoor Gear/Clothing

Children are involved in many types of activities while at Nature Preschool and must 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 the trails.

Expect your child to be active in play and have the possibility of getting dirty every day in all seasons. Children should be appropriately 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 or play in water with comfort)
- For safety reasons, we do not carry umbrellas at Nature Preschool

Winter:

- Scarf/Neck Warmers
- Hat
- Waterproof Mittens
- Insulated Boots
- Longer Wool/Fleece Socks (not cotton!)
- Snow Pants and Winter Coat

- Multiple layers of clothes under outdoor gear

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 for emergencies in their outdoor backpack/bag. This should include underwear, pants, shirt, and multiple sets of socks. This extra set of clothes should be checked and swapped out for each season (replace shorts with long pants, etc. when the weather gets colder). Please check your child's bag regularly for wet/soiled gear.

All clothing should be LABELED with the child's name, including boots, mittens, coats, etc. A Lost and Found table is kept in the preschool hall. There is also a Lost and Found area 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.

Borrowed Gear

A limited amount of emergency outdoor gear is located in the Nature Preschool hallway near the North entrance. Families may borrow an item if they have forgotten something that day. Teachers may access these items if your child's gear becomes too wet or soiled for your child to be safe or comfortable. These items are marked with **orange** paint and must be returned to the Nature Preschool after use. We do not wash borrowed mittens, rain pants, or snow pants after each wearing, as too many washings can make them less waterproof.

For the safety and comfort of your child; please remember to bring their own outdoor gear to school every time!

Absences

If a child will not be at present at school, parents/guardians must notify the Nature Preschool by calling our attendance line at 414-352-2880 x 154.

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. **Student Absences should not be reported by text or email. Email is not checked until after attendance is taken and phones are not checked during class time.** We are required to contact you in the event we do not hear from you.

Sunscreen & Bug Spray

Teachers do not apply these products to the children. Parents or caregivers should apply these products prior to the start of class, either at home or outside the building and outdoor classroom. *Please be aware that the combination of several strong-smelling oils and repellents in the outdoor and indoor classrooms and hallways can cause breathing difficulties and headaches for children and staff. Essential oils can also cause skin reactions if applied in heavy doses. Please use these products sparingly.*

Due to State of Wisconsin licensing regulations, children cannot have access to sunscreens and insect repellents. Therefore, these items cannot be stored in a children's backpack/bag.

Handwashing

Teachers, children, volunteers, and parents/guardians who stay with us, are 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 weather when the outdoor sinks are not available, hand sanitizer will be available.

Head Lice Policy

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 if they present with lice or nits, and *to continue to keep your child at home until all traces of lice and nits have been removed.* Parents/guardians 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 identify the affected child by name.

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 first and best option is to visit your pediatrician. However, some doctors will refer you elsewhere or advise you to handle the removal process yourself. You can do this with a special shampoo and comb kit, available at most pharmacies. This approach takes time, and often requires repetition, but is effective. You can also 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 all of the eggs have been removed.

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 ticks have six legs, not eight).

Deer Ticks are more difficult to spot. When not engorged, they are typically the size of a poppy seed. A certain percentage of Deer Ticks carry Lyme Disease.

Ticks tend to crawl up from the ground, especially in wooded, brushy areas, but they can also fall from overhead branches and grasses. 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 and having longer hair secured are also a good idea. Have your preschooler take a bath after Nature Preschool and use this time to conduct a thorough tick check. 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 ticks will not actually imbed in the skin for 24 hours.

Many of our teachers 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 a "tick key" (often used for pets), as close to the skin as possible to avoid pushing fluids from the tick into the person's body. 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 steady pulling to remove the tick, since the deer tick has longer mouthparts than most other ticks.
- Wash the area with soap and water afterwards
- Do not flush the tick. 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 carry different diseases. We have a number of people on staff who can help you to identify what kind of tick it may be, or you can refer to one of the many new phone apps for tick identification.

Some people report the appearance of a bull's eye rash following a bite from a deer tick. Please know that not everyone will present 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 hard to diagnose.

Administration

Registration

- Applications are accepted regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, political persuasion, national origin, or ancestry
- No geographical boundaries are observed
- 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 to attend the Nature Preschool. Toilet trained means they can pee and poop on the toilet as well as wipe themselves after. Pull-ups are not allowed

The following information must be supplied by the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the child and submitted to the Nature Preschool office before the child's first day of attendance, The enrollment packet can be found on our website and includes:

- [Preschool Enrollment Contact Information](#)
- [Preschool Enrollment Agreement](#)
- [Health History and Emergency Care Plan](#)
- [Preschool Child Information Form](#)
- [Tuition Payment Plan Selection](#)

Additional required forms

- Child Health Report must be completed by physician for 3 and 4 year olds within 90 days after the start of Nature Preschool
- Immunization Record must be completed by parent within 30 days after the start of Nature Preschool

Confidentiality

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

Photography

Please note that the Enrollment Agreement includes permission to photograph your child for educational and marketing purposes. We have used photos of our Nature Preschoolers in the Schlitz Audubon member and Nature Preschool newsletter as well as for presentations to our Board, parents, and fellow educators. More recently, we have begun using video images of some of our Nature Preschool activities on our Schlitz Audubon website and Vimeo channel, as well as on our Schlitz Audubon social media.

In such scenarios, we never identify the children by name or by class and require that others do not either. You have the option of declining the use of your child's image for education and marketing purposes or declining the use of your child's image on social media, or both.

Tuition Information and Fee Policies

Payments are due one month in advance of the start of the session. Payment can be made through our online credit card tuition payment system and you will receive an emailed invoice with detailed instructions and links for payment. Tuition can be paid monthly, by trimester or year. A \$25.00 charge is assessed for each Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) received. A \$25 fee is assessed for anyone changing their tuition payment plan during the school year.

Please Note: Tuition is non-refundable.

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

- Credits will not be issued for voluntary days missed or vacations
- There will be no credit given for holiday closings
- Inclement Weather Closings: There will be no credit given for days when the Nature Preschool is closed due to inclement weather. We have build into our school calendar 5 additional days to cover weather related closures

Schlitz Audubon Family Membership (\$65.00) is included in your tuition payment. If you are members prior to the year your child is enrolled, your membership will be extended by one year.

Authorized Adult Caregivers

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. Wisconsin State licensing requires that at least one other person besides parents/guardian be listed as an emergency contact on the students Contact Information form. If carpooling, make sure each adult is listed on that document.

In families where the parents are separated or divorced, the custodial parent/guardian must have a copy of the legal documents stipulating custody on file at the Nature Preschool. Only parents/guardians 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 Contact Information form may not visit the Nature Preschool unless they have made prior written arrangements with the custodial parent/guardian and the Nature Preschool Director.

A court order must be on file at the Nature 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.

Student Discharge Policy

The Nature 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/guardian
- Failure of the parent/guardian to observe the rules and policies of the Nature Preschool
- Failure of the parent/guardian to complete and return all required forms
- Upon the discretion of the Nature Preschool Director and after reasonable efforts on the part of the staff and the child's parents to integrate the child into the Nature Preschool, the child's participation may be terminated if there are behavioral or developmental concerns beyond the scope of what the program is able to manage.

Insurance

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

Days of Operation:

The Nature Preschool will operate several different sessions:

Two Days a Week

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

Three Days a Week

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

Four Days a Week

Monday thru Thursday mornings	8:45 am to 11:30 am
Monday thru Thursday afternoons	12:45 pm to 3:30 pm

A Note About our Curriculum

A nature-based preschool provides children with special opportunities to learn about themselves, others, and the world around them. 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 we hope will follow them throughout their lives.

At Nature Preschool, children have opportunities to:

- Make discoveries and learn through play
- Make choices and follow their own interests and agenda
- Use their senses, and 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 to what puzzles them

Nature permeates our entire curriculum. 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

Classroom Pets and Animal Interactions

Each of our indoor classrooms have a selection of classroom pets. These include a variety of reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates. These animals may be brought out to the outdoor classrooms for supervised interaction with the children weather permitting. During indoor programming, children may assist with feeding of the animals in addition to regular interactions. Children are required to wash their hands after touching any of our pets.

The Nature Center also has a group of Animal Ambassadors that may also visit the classes periodically. These include reptiles and amphibians as well as birds from our Raptor Program. Children do not interact with the raptors, but view them at a distance. All of our animals go through yearly wellness checks by a veterinarian.

Final Words

Entering preschool is a milestone for children. Our goal is to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which every child is valued and is considered an integral part of our community. We strive to provide experiences in which children can develop confidence, build their critical thinking and social skills, and develop a deeper connection to nature.

This is also a milestone for parents. You are as much a part of our preschool program as your child is, and your preschooler will benefit from your support and understanding as she or he begins to grow outside the home.

**We welcome you to our Nature Preschool community.
We are sure it is going to be a wonderful year!**