



NATURE'S NOOK

A CHILDREN'S LEARNING HOUSE

Nature's Nook Preschool

Family Handbook

Created and Updated August 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Nature's Nook Mission	Page 2
Core Educational Features	Page 2
Our Montessori Philosophy	Page 3
Goals and Objectives	Page 3
General Admission Philosophy	Page 4
A. Tours	
B. Supervision of Children	
C. Application and Enrollment	
D. Age Requirements	
E. Enrollment Agreement	
F. Waitlist Policy	
G. Dismissal Policy	
Tuition Payment Policy	Page 7
A. Tuition Collection & Non-Payment	
B. Returned Payments	
C. Tuition Credit Policy	
D. Divorce or Separation Policy	
Attendance	Page 8
Curriculum Overview	Page 8
Curriculum by Age Group	Page 9
Daily Schedule	Page 11
Illness Policy	Page 13
Medication Administration Policy	Page 14
Access to Records	Page 14
Transportation & Drop Off	Page 14
Holidays	Page 15
Conferences	Page 15
Toilet Training	Page 15
Dress Code Policy	Page 16
Screen Time Policy	Page 16
Outdoor Time	Page 17
Weather Guidelines	Page 18
Weather Exceptions	Page 18
Birthday Traditions	Page 19
Communication	Page 20
Lost & Found	Page 21
Field Trips	Page 21
Nutrition Program	Page 22
Non-Discrimination Statement	Page 24
Volunteers & Chaperones	Page 24
School Visitors	Page 25



Mission of Nature's Nook

Nature's Nook Preschool is a Wisconsin-based early childhood learning center rooted in a Montessori-inspired, nature-based philosophy. We serve children in their foundational years by cultivating a nurturing, exploratory, and developmentally rich environment that honors each child's natural curiosity and individual growth.

Our mission is to foster the whole child, cognitively, emotionally, socially, and physically, through hands-on experiences, outdoor exploration, and self-directed learning. Inspired by Montessori principles and grounded in nature, we provide a safe, eco-conscious space where children thrive through play, discovery, and meaningful connection.

Core Educational Features

- **Montessori-Inspired, Nature-Based Curriculum** Child-led learning with immersive outdoor experiences to spark curiosity and deepen understanding.
- **Prepared Environments & Passionate Educators** Classrooms and outdoor spaces are intentionally designed to support independence, creativity, and exploration, guided by nurturing, qualified staff.
- **Whole Child Health & Wellness** Emphasis on natural health practices, organic meals, and non-toxic materials to support physical and emotional well-being.
- **Hands-On, Experiential Learning** Children engage with tactile materials, nature-based manipulatives, and real-world activities that promote trial-and-error learning and problem-solving.
- **Individualized Development** Each child's unique interests and developmental pace are honored through personalized guidance and flexible learning pathways.
- **Environmental Stewardship** Children learn to care for the earth through daily practices and lessons that build ecological awareness and responsibility.
- **Community Engagement** Service learning and local partnerships help children understand their role in the broader community and foster empathy and collaboration.

Montessori-Inspired Philosophy at Nature's Nook

Nature's Nook embraces the foundational principles of Dr. Maria Montessori's educational philosophy, adapted to meet the developmental needs of preschool-aged children through a nature-based lens. Our approach honors the innate curiosity, creativity, and independence of young learners by providing a nurturing environment where exploration and discovery are central to growth.

Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator, revolutionized early childhood education by observing how children naturally learn through sensory experiences and self-directed activity. Her method emphasizes respect for the child, hands-on learning, and environments that support autonomy and holistic development.

At Nature's Nook, we build on these principles by integrating the natural world into every aspect of the learning experience. We encourage children to connect with their surroundings, engage in meaningful play, and develop lifelong skills through outdoor exploration and purposeful activity.

Core Montessori-Inspired Principles at Nature's Nook

- **Sensitive Periods & Natural Rhythms** Educators observe each child's developmental windows and align learning opportunities with their natural interests and abilities.
- **Planes of Development: Focus on the Absorbent Mind** Our preschool program is designed for the earliest stage of development, when children absorb knowledge through sensory exploration. Nature-based materials and experiences deepen understanding and connection.
- **Uninterrupted Work Cycles in Natural Settings** Children engage in extended periods of focused activity, both indoors and outdoors, choosing tasks that align with their interests. This fosters concentration, independence, and intrinsic motivation.
- **Freedom Within Limits & Environmental Responsibility** Children are empowered to make choices within a structured, respectful community. Outdoor play and nature stewardship teach responsibility, empathy, and care for the world around them.

Goals & Objectives of Nature's Nook

- Inspire a lifelong love of learning through hands-on, nature-rich experiences and Montessori-inspired teaching
- Build self-confidence through nurturing environments that encourage persistence and resilience

- Promote kindness, manners, and values through real-world interactions and community engagement
- Establish a strong academic and developmental foundation through sensory-based exploration
- Cultivate independence and life skills through self-directed activity and natural routines
- Empower self-discipline and personal responsibility within a safe, respectful framework
- Encourage environmental stewardship and active participation in the local community

General Admissions Philosophy

At Nature's Nook, our admissions process is rooted in respect for the child, for the family, and for the unique rhythm of each learning community. We believe it is essential for families to find a school that aligns with their values and their child's developmental needs. While we welcome all who are interested, we acknowledge that Nature's Nook Preschool may not be the best fit for every family.

We encourage prospective families to tour our campus, observe our Montessori-inspired classrooms in action, and engage in thoughtful conversations with our team. Our goal is to present our program with honesty, integrity, and transparency so families can make informed decisions.

In keeping with our Montessori-inspired philosophy, we seek to thoughtfully accommodate children with unique needs whenever possible while upholding the integrity of the classroom community. In rare cases, Nature's Nook may determine that our program is not the right match for a child's needs. In such instances, we will work compassionately with families to support a transition to a more suitable program.

A. Tours

Tours are a vital part of the admissions process and provide a firsthand view of our nature-based learning in action. Tours are available by appointment only. A member of our leadership team will guide you through our school, introduce you to our preschool classrooms, and answer any questions you may have.

B. Supervision of Children

As recommended by DCF, the student-to-teacher ratios are as follows:

Age	Teacher	Children
0-2	1	4
2-3	1	7
3-4	1	10

C. Application & Enrollment

Enrollment is managed through the school's software program, where families can complete the application and enrollment process online.

- Current family enrollment opens Early Q1
- New family enrollment opens Late Q1

All program spaces are filled on a first-come, first-served basis and subject to availability at the time of application review.

Enrollment is not confirmed until:

- All enrollment forms are complete
- The non-refundable registration & field trip fee is paid
- A spot is officially offered and first month of enrollment is paid

If an application is declined, families will be notified promptly and respectfully.

D. Age Requirements:

- Emergent Toddler: 15 months and walking independently, and has moved past bottle feeding by September 1
- Toddler: 2 years old by September 1
- Emergent Primary 3K: 3 years old and fully toilet trained by September 1

E. Enrollment Agreement

A child is considered officially enrolled once the completed application and fees have been submitted and accepted.

- Enrollment is binding.
- Monthly tuition is due regardless of absences.

F. Waitlist Policy

When programs are full, families will be placed on a waitlist, which is active only for the current school year. Waitlist placement considers:

- Date of application
- Age and developmental needs of the child
- Classroom balance in line with Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) licensing regulations

Should a space become available, families will be notified and have one week to complete the enrollment process.

G. Termination of Care / Dismissal Policy

At Nature's Nook, we are committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment for all children. In rare circumstances, the center may determine that it is in the best interest of the child, the family, or the program to discontinue care. A child may be dismissed from the program for any of the following reasons:

1. Persistent Safety Concerns

- Behavior that places the child, other children, or staff at risk of harm and cannot be safely managed within the scope of our program.
- Repeated physical aggression (biting, hitting, kicking, etc.) that does not improve with appropriate intervention and communication with the family.

2. Unmet Developmental or Behavioral Needs

- If a child's needs exceed the scope of what we are licensed, trained, or equipped to support, we will refer them to a more suitable provider.
- If recommended outside evaluations or support services are declined by the family, the child's needs remain unaddressed.

3. Family Behavior or Noncompliance

- Repeated (max 3) disregard for center policies (late pickups, failure to pay tuition, inappropriate behavior toward staff, etc.).
- Failure to provide required documentation, such as emergency contacts or medical authorizations.

4. Non-Payment of Tuition or Fees

- Tuition is not paid according to the agreed-upon schedule, and no resolution is made within a 2-3 month time frame.

5. Inability to Adapt to the Environment

- After reasonable transition support, if the child is unable to adjust to the group care setting in a way that is developmentally appropriate or sustainable for the child or staff.

6. Other Circumstances

- Any other circumstance in which the director determines continued enrollment to be not in the best interest of the child, other children, or the program.

H. Process and Communication

We will make every reasonable effort to work collaboratively with families to resolve concerns before dismissal is considered. Except in cases of immediate danger or serious misconduct, families will be given advance notice and a transition period whenever possible.

Tuition Payment Policy

Tuition must be paid:

- One month in advance (for example, October's tuition is due September 1

1. Tuition Collection & Non-Payment

Families are expected to stay current on tuition or communicate in writing if alternative arrangements are needed. Payment is assumed late after the 1st of the month.

- If tuition is unpaid and no agreement has been made after the 5th of the month, the child may not attend until payment is received.
- After 60 days of non-payment, enrollment may be terminated with written notice.

2. Returned Payments

A \$50 fee will be applied to any returned checks or failed electronic payments.

3. Tuition Credit Policy

We do not offer tuition credits for:

- Illness, travel, or family emergencies
- Weather-related school closures
- Scheduled closures for holidays, professional development, or conferences
- Missed days

4. Divorce or Separation Policy

In the event of separation or divorce, our focus remains on supporting the child. Nature's Nook will provide information, communications, and access to both parents equally unless a court order on file states otherwise.

Only those who have signed the financial agreement will receive billing statements.

Attendance

1. Attendance Policy

Regular and punctual attendance is essential to your child's success at Nature's Nook. Consistency and routine are critical to fostering independence, building confidence, and supporting a child's natural development.

To support your child's growth and well-being:

- Please make every effort to ensure daily, on-time attendance.
- Notify both your child's teacher and the front office of any planned or unexpected absences lasting more than two days.

We recognize that illness and family circumstances may occasionally require time away, and we appreciate your communication and partnership in minimizing disruptions to your child's learning journey.

Nature's Nook Curriculum Overview

At Nature's Nook we believe that children thrive in environments that nurture curiosity, independence, and a deep connection to the natural world. Our educators craft engaging, developmentally appropriate experiences inspired by the Montessori Method and enriched by nature exploration.

1. Thoughtfully Prepared Environments

Our classrooms are designed to foster independence and discovery. Children interact with a comprehensive array of Montessori manipulatives and materials that support hands-on learning across key developmental domains. These include:

- Sensorial Exploration
- Mathematics & Logical Thinking
- Practical Life Skills
- Science & Nature Studies
- Language Arts & Early Literacy
- Cultural Awareness & Geography
- Creative Arts & Expression

2. Nature-Based Learning

Outdoor experiences are woven into the daily rhythm of our program. Whether tending to the garden, exploring seasonal changes, or observing wildlife, children develop a sense of wonder and stewardship for the natural world.

3. Individualized Learning Journeys

We celebrate the unique pace and personality of each child. Through careful observation, our teachers tailor lessons and materials to match each child's interests and developmental stage. This personalized approach ensures that every child feels seen, supported, and challenged.

Nature's Nook Curriculum Overview by Age Group

1. Emergent Toddler (15–24 months)

Our Emergent Toddler program gently introduces children to the rhythms of group life while honoring their need for security, movement, and sensory exploration. The classroom is a calm, nurturing space where children begin to:

- Develop trust through consistent routines and responsive caregiving
- Explore materials that stimulate the senses and support motor development
- Engage in early language experiences through songs, stories, and conversation
- Build independence through simple practical life activities (e.g., hand washing, snack clean up)
- Enjoy nature walks and outdoor play that foster curiosity and connection to the environment

This stage is all about building relationships, discovering the world, and feeling safe to explore.

2. Toddler (24–36 months)

Toddlers are naturally driven to do things for themselves. Our Toddler program channels this energy into purposeful activity and joyful learning. The environment is rich with opportunities to:

- Practice self-care routines like dressing, toileting, and cleaning up
- Strengthen fine and gross motor skills through movement and manipulative work
- Expand vocabulary and communication through storytelling, conversation, and songs
- Explore early math and science concepts through sorting, matching, and nature-based activities
- Engage in imaginative play and social interaction with peers
- Experience daily outdoor adventures that support physical and emotional development

We support toddlers in becoming capable, confident explorers of their world.

3. Emergent Primary (3K, ages 3–4)

Our Emergent Primary program lays the foundation for academic and social growth through a blend of Montessori materials and nature-based experiences. Children begin to:

- Develop sustained attention and concentration through purposeful work
- Engage in early literacy and numeracy activities using hands-on Montessori tools
- Practice grace and courtesy, learning to collaborate and resolve conflicts peacefully
- Explore cultural, scientific, and artistic themes through interdisciplinary projects
- Build practical life skills that foster independence and responsibility
- Connect with nature through gardening, seasonal studies, and outdoor exploration

This stage nurtures the child's love of learning, sense of community, and growing independence.

Nature's Nook Preschool Daily Schedule

At Nature's Nook, our daily rhythm is designed to support the natural developmental needs of young children through a balance of structure, freedom, and outdoor exploration. Rooted in Montessori principles, our schedule encourages independence, concentration, and joyful learning, while integrating nature into every part of the day.

1. **Before School Care – 6:30 AM to 8:00 AM** Early drop-off is available with quiet activities, nature-themed books, and gentle transitions to start the day peacefully. Breakfast is served at 7:00 AM.

Student Drop-Off – 7:40 AM to 7:55 AM Parents should escort their child into the building and to their classrooms.

Procedure:

- Upon arrival, parents should escort their child to their designated locker or cubby area.

- Help your child store personal items such as backpacks and outerwear.
- After items are put away, parents should walk their child to the classroom door for a quick and positive goodbye.
- Teachers will be ready to greet each child and help them transition into the day's activities.

Important Notes:

- Please keep the drop-off brief to support a smooth transition and minimize classroom disruption.
- If your child is feeling anxious or emotional, staff are available to assist with gentle separation strategies.
- Children arriving after 7:55 AM must be checked in at the office and escorted to class with a tardy pass.

This routine helps children build independence and confidence while maintaining a calm and respectful start to the day.

Free Play – 8:00 AM to 8:15 AM Time for child-led exploration, open-ended materials, and imaginative discovery.

Classes Begin – 8:15 to 9:00 AM Children begin their day with a morning circle, nature-inspired songs, and a preview of the day's activities.

Montessori Work Cycle – 9:00 AM to 9:30 AM Uninterrupted time for self-directed learning using Montessori materials and outdoor exploration. Teachers present individualized lessons and observe children's progress.

Morning Snack– 9:30 AM to 10:00 AM Children enjoy an organic snack in their classroom or outside.

Outdoor Play - 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM An intentional, child-led experience that fosters exploration, movement, and deep connection to the natural world.

Closing Meeting – 11:00 AM to 11:30 AM A calm and reflective gathering rooted in Montessori principles of community, mindfulness, and respect.

Lunch – 11:30 AM to 12:00 PM Healthy, organic meals served family-style to promote independence and social skills.

Rest & Quiet Time – 12:00 PM to 2:30 PM Children nap or engage in quiet activities such as reading or drawing.

Afternoon Work & Nature Exploration – 2:30 PM to 3:15 PM Children enjoy organic snacks followed by free play.

Student Dismissal & Pick-Up – 3:15 PM Children are picked up in their classrooms.

Note: If students are not picked up by 3:45 PM, they will go to after-school care, and a late pickup fee will be assessed.

2. Late Pickup Fee Policy

A late Fee will be applied per the following late pick up fee Policy:

- \$20 for every 10-minute increment after 3:45 PM
- Example 1: Picked up at 3:52 PM → \$20 fee
- Example 2: Picked up at 4:15 PM → \$60 fee

After School Care – 3:15 PM to 5:00 PM Extended care includes creative play, nature crafts, and outdoor time in a fun, nurturing environment.

Illness Policy

Nature's Nook Preschool LLC is not licensed or authorized to provide care for children who are mildly ill. To maintain a healthy environment for all students and staff, children who are ill should not be brought to school. This includes any child who has received fever-reducing medication within the past 24 hours, even if they appear symptom-free.

Examples of illness include, but are not limited to:

- Fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Persistent coughing or difficulty breathing
- Constant, thick, colored nasal discharge
- Undiagnosed rash or skin irritation
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) with discharge
- Lethargy or extreme irritability inconsistent with the child's normal behavior
- Any symptoms that prevent the child from participating comfortably in daily activities

Suppose a child becomes ill while at school, parents or guardians will be contacted and are expected to pick up the child promptly (within 30 minutes). A child may return to school once they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours without the use of

medication, or with a note from a licensed healthcare provider stating they are no longer contagious.

Medication Administration Policy

At Nature's Nook, the health and safety of your child are a top priority. We will administer prescription medications only with a completed Medication Authorization Form signed by a parent or guardian. We do not administer any over-the-counter (OTC) medications, including fever reducers.

To ensure the safe administration of medication, the following guidelines must be followed:

- All medications must be in their original container, clearly labeled with:
 - The child's full name
 - Dosage and specific administration instructions
 - The prescribing physician's name
 - The pharmacy name and contact information
- Medication will be stored in a locked or inaccessible medication box out of reach of children.
- Any medication requiring refrigeration will be stored in a clearly labeled, covered container in the refrigerator.
- We will not exceed the age-appropriate dosage stated on the medication label without written authorization from a licensed medical provider.
- We will not administer medication to reduce a fever under any circumstances.
- If a dose is missed, we will not double up on the next dose. Instead, you will be notified, and the missed dose will be documented in the medical log.

Please ensure all medications sent to school are up to date and that any changes to prescriptions are communicated promptly.

Access to Records

Parents have full access to review their child's records. If a parent requests access, they should be directed to the front office for assistance.

Transportation & Drop-Off

Nature's Nook Preschool does not provide bus transportation. All families are responsible for arranging transportation to and from school.

- **Morning Drop-Off & Afternoon Pick Up:**
 - The main parking lot is reserved for Nature's Nook families. Families may park in the designated Nature's Nook lot and must escort their child through the main entrance to their classrooms.

Holidays

Nature's Nook Preschool LLC observes major holidays and will be closed accordingly. Please refer to the current school calendar for specific dates.

Scheduled Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are held twice per school year:

- **Fall Conference** – A chance to discuss your child's transition into the classroom, early observations, and initial goals
- **Spring Conference** – A comprehensive review of your child's progress, growth, and readiness for the next stage

Attendance at both conferences is required for all families, as these meetings are vital for maintaining a collaborative and informed learning environment.

1. Additional Conferences

Parents are welcome to request a conference at any time throughout the year. Whether you have questions, concerns, or simply want to check in on your child's development, our teachers are happy to meet and share insights.

These conversations help us tailor our approach to each child's evolving needs and ensure that families feel supported and engaged every step of the way.

Toilet Training Process

We are excited to support your child on their journey toward independence and successful toilet use. This process is an important developmental milestone that requires readiness from both the child and the family. Every preschool studio is equipped with their own age appropriate fixtures.

Toilet learning is not a one-size-fits-all experience; it is a journey that unfolds gradually, and we aim to follow the child's cues to ensure that it progresses in a respectful and encouraging way. Throughout this process, there will be several milestones on the path to total independence in the restroom.

Our goal is to partner with you in creating a consistent, supportive environment both at school and at home that fosters confidence, self-awareness, and success for your child.

Dress Code Policy

Children should come to school dressed in comfortable clothing that allows for freedom of movement and significant motor activity. Our daily activities include hands-on experiences such as painting, gluing, and using markers, as well as extended time outdoors where children explore and interact with the natural environment. Please dress your child with the understanding that they may get messy as they engage fully in their work and play.

All clothing and personal belongings brought to school should be clearly labeled with your child's name. If you prefer not to write directly on the clothing tag, please use a piece of masking tape or a similar labeling method.

Teachers will routinely check your child's supply of extra clothes and will notify you if replacements are needed. If your child brings home clothing to be laundered, please be sure to send a clean replacement set the following day. Any soiled items will be placed in a plastic bag and sent home in your child's locker or cubby.

Our goal is to support your child's independence and confidence in caring for themselves, and appropriate, labeled clothing helps them do just that.

Screen Time Policy

At Nature's Nook Preschool we are committed to creating a low-technology learning environment that supports healthy brain development, imaginative play, and meaningful human connection. We believe that young children learn best through hands-on experiences, outdoor exploration, and face-to-face interactions.

1. In the Classroom

Screen time is not used in our preschool classrooms.

2. At Home

To support your child's success at Nature's Nook Preschool LLC, we encourage families to practice limited and mindful screen time at home. This includes:

- Avoiding exposure to violent or overstimulating content
- Ensuring that screen time aligns with your family's values and the values of Nature's Nook
- Watching together and discussing what your child sees helps them process and understand the content

We view screen time as a tool, not a substitute for play, conversation, or exploration. With thoughtful use, it can support learning, but it should never replace the rich, real-world experiences that are essential in early childhood.

Outdoor Time at Nature's Nook

At Nature's Nook, we view the outdoor environment as an extension of the classroom, and you'll see an outdoor space off every studio. This is a vital space for learning, discovery, and whole-child development. Time spent outdoors supports physical health, emotional well-being, and cognitive growth, while nurturing a lifelong connection to the natural world.

1. Daily Outdoor Routine

- Children will spend at least 35–45 minutes outdoors each day, engaging in free play, exploration, and guided activities.
- Outdoor time includes access to developmentally appropriate play structures, portable gross-motor equipment, and natural sensory experiences that promote balance, coordination, and peer interaction.
- Teachers thoughtfully plan weekly nature-based activities that are developmentally appropriate and engaging for toddlers and preschoolers.

These activities may include:

- Helping in the garden — digging, planting seeds, watering plants
- Mini nature walks — collecting leaves, spotting bugs, or picking up litter with child-safe tools
- Simple outdoor science play — mixing water and dirt, observing shadows, or watching ice melt
- Storytime in the sunshine — reading books under a tree or using natural objects to learn new words and ideas

These experiences help children build curiosity, confidence, and care for the world around them, all while supporting physical, social, and cognitive development.

Weather Guidelines & Gear

As a nature-based preschool, we embrace outdoor learning in all seasons. We rarely consider weather severe enough to stay indoors. Children will go outside unless conditions are unsafe, so please ensure your child is dressed appropriately.

1. Required gear includes:

- **Rain boots** (kept onsite during wet months)
- **Yellow Muddy Buddy coveralls**
- **Seasonally appropriate outerwear** (coats, hats, mittens, sun hats, etc.)

Please check and update your child's gear regularly to ensure they are prepared for outdoor play.

2. Bug Spray & Sunscreen

At Nature's Nook Preschool LLC, we prioritize the health and comfort of our students while remaining mindful of natural and environmentally conscious practices. Sunscreen and bug spray may be applied to children on an as-needed basis, up to two times per day, with products supplied by parents.

As a naturally minded program, we do not permit the use of bug sprays containing DEET and strongly encourage the use of mineral-based sunscreens that are gentle on sensitive skin and better for the environment.

Inclement Weather Exceptions

Children may remain indoors during the following conditions:

- **Heavy rain** (light to moderate rain: 15 minutes outdoors is encouraged)
- **Temperatures above 90°F**
- **Wind chills of 0°F or below**

When outdoor play is not possible, indoor large-muscle activities and access to our sensory room will be provided to support physical development and movement needs.

1. Inclement Weather Policy

At Nature's Nook Preschool LLC, the safety of our children and staff is our top priority. In the event of extreme weather, school closures will be announced no later than 6:00 AM via:

- Our official Facebook page
- School Software Program
- Email notification
- WBAY television station

We encourage families to check these sources early on days when the weather may impact school operations.

The Birthday Walk Tradition

Each child is invited to participate in a Birthday Walk, a gentle ritual where they walk around a representational sun once for each year of life. This celebration helps children understand the passage of time and reflect on their growth. If you'd prefer your child not to participate in The Birthday Walk Tradition, please let us know.

- **ET (15–24 months):** Teachers guide the child with support, using simple language and visuals. A short walk with music and photos is shared with the class.
- **T (24–36 months):** Children walk independently or with light guidance, while teachers narrate milestones and display photos.
- **EP (36–48 months):** Children walk independently and may help share their own story with teacher support. They are encouraged to talk about their favorite memories and milestones.

1. Preparing for the Celebration

Families will be asked to:

- Select one photo per year of the child's life
- Help prepare a brief written account of milestones and joyful moments from each year

Pictures and stories will be shared with the classroom and displayed throughout the week to celebrate the child's journey.

2. Birthday Treat Guidelines

Nature's Nook Preschool LLC values healthy, organic, and whole-food choices. Birthday treats are welcome but not required. If you choose to bring a treat, please follow these guidelines:

Treats must:

- Be free of corn syrup, artificial colors, and preservatives
- Use non-GMO ingredients
- Contains limited refined sugar
- Include organic apples and dairy, if applicable

Examples of approved treats:

- Ants on a Log (celery, peanut butter, raisins)
- Organic Apples with Nut Butter
- Chocolate-Dipped Bananas
- Fruit or Veggie Pinwheels
- Fruit Popsicles
- Trail Mix
- Chips & Hummus

Please notify the office at least one week in advance if you plan to bring a treat. A printed handout of our Birthday Treat Guidelines is available upon request.

3. Parent Permissions

Families will receive a link to a Google Document to indicate whether their child may participate in birthday treat sharing throughout the year, provided all treats meet Nature's Nook guidelines.

Communication with Families

At Nature's Nook, we believe that strong, consistent communication between families and educators is essential to supporting each child's growth and development. We are committed to keeping families informed, involved, and connected every step of the way.

1. Daily Communication

Nature's Nook will use secure and user-friendly apps, to share daily updates with families. Through these programs, you'll receive:

- Photos and notes from your child's day
- Meal and nap reports
- Activity highlights and learning moments
- Reminders and announcements from teachers and staff

The application will allow for two-way communication so that parents can message teachers directly with questions or updates. All staff members will respond to messages within 48 business hours. If your message is urgent, please follow up with a phone call to the front office.

2. Conferences & Additional Communication

- Parent-teacher conferences are held twice per year, in the fall and spring, to discuss your child's progress, development, and classroom adjustment. Attendance at both meetings is required.
- Families are welcome to request a meeting with their child's teacher at any time throughout the year.
- Additional communication may include monthly newsletters, classroom updates, and school-wide announcements.

We value your partnership and strive to create an open, respectful, and responsive communication culture that supports your child's learning journey.

Lost & Found

At Nature's Nook, our youngest learners are busy building independence and exploring their world. With all that movement and discovery, it's easy for a mitten, water bottle, or favorite sweater to go missing.

To help keep track of your child's belongings:

- Please label all items, including clothing, lunch containers, water bottles, blankets, and outdoor gear, with your child's first and last name
- A designated Lost & Found area is located in the main entrance vestibule
- Items not claimed after a reasonable time may be used in classrooms or donated to local organizations

We encourage families to check the Lost & Found regularly, especially during seasonal transitions when extra layers and gear are in use.

Field Trips

Nature's Nook offers at least two field trips to enrich our nature-based curriculum. Families will be notified in advance of:

- Any trip requiring bus transportation
- Opportunities to volunteer or chaperone

If a child is unable to attend a field trip, an alternative activity may be provided at school to ensure they continue learning and engaging with their peers.

Nutrition Program at Nature's Nook Preschool

At Nature's Nook, we believe that healthy, organic food is a vital part of early childhood development. Our Nutrition Program is designed to nourish the whole child physically, cognitively, and emotionally, while introducing lifelong habits of wellness and care for the body.

We serve made-from-scratch meals using high-quality, organic ingredients that reflect our commitment to natural living and holistic education. Meals are thoughtfully prepared to meet the needs of children, with age-appropriate portions and textures.

1. Daily Meal Schedule

- **Morning Snack** is provided to all students after mid-morning to help fuel their bodies and minds for the day ahead. Snacks are organic, simple, and balanced, and may include fresh fruit, whole grain crackers, or yogurt.
- **Lunch** is provided to all students at Nature's Nook, who receive a freshly prepared, organic meal each day.
 - Organic 2% milk is served with all hot lunches.
 - Lunch is served family-style to promote independence, manners, and social interaction.
- **Afternoon Snack** Offered to all students following rest time to support energy and focus. Snacks are organic, simple, and balanced and may include trail mix, veggie sticks, fruit slices, or other wholesome options.

2. Allergy Awareness

We take food allergies seriously and follow strict protocols to ensure the safety of all children.

- Families with allergy concerns should refer to our Allergy Policy and communicate directly with the office and classroom teacher.
- Substitutions and accommodations are available for children with dietary restrictions.

3. Free & Reduced Lunch

Nature's Nook offers our same high-quality lunches at no cost or at a reduced price for families who qualify. Please contact the office for eligibility information and application support.

4. Food Allergies & Special Dietary Needs

If your child has food allergies, you must notify the school in writing and provide a signed doctor's note indicating the allergy. Food allergies will be discreetly posted in the studio and the kitchen. If the school can not accommodate a child's food allergies, parents will need to provide snacks and meals. Snacks and meals must follow the Nutrition Program Guidelines. If meals and snacks are not following our nutrition guidelines, a conference with parents will be held.

5. Menu Requirements & Meal Schedule

Nature's Nook follows the USDA guidelines when preparing and planning our menus. Any changes or substitutions in the menu will be posted with the original menu. All food is prepared onsite. No child will go without nourishment for longer than 3 hours.

- A.M. snack- Served from 9:30 AM-10:00 AM
- Lunch - Served 11:30 AM-12:00 PM
- Afternoon Snack - Served from 2:30 PM-3:00 PM

6. Cleanliness

- Hands must be washed before handling food or utensils.
- If hands become dirty again (e.g., after nose wiping or floor work), students must rewash.
- Touching shared food items with bare hands is not permitted.

7. Food Handling

- Safe, sanitary food preparation is expected at all times.
- Shared items (e.g., dips or spreads) must be portioned with clean utensils before eating.
- Students use age-appropriate tools for cutting, scooping, or spreading.

8. Independence

- Teachers observe and support, allowing students to perform tasks independently.
- Assistance is only provided if a student cannot proceed safely or successfully.

9. Clean-Up

- Students are responsible for cleaning their area:
 - Dispose of trash properly.
 - Rinse and return containers.
 - Place dirty dishes in the designated bin.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Nature's Nook is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all children, families, staff, and volunteers. We do not discriminate based on race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status in any of our activities or operations.

Volunteers & Chaperones

We encourage parents and caregivers to volunteer and participate in classroom life and school events as often as their schedule allows. In our nature-based setting, volunteers may assist with:

- Outdoor nature walks and garden activities
- Classroom celebrations and seasonal events
- Reading stories or helping with sensory play
- Supporting transitions and routines in studios

1. Volunteer Requirements

To ensure a safe and cohesive experience for all children:

- Volunteers must read and sign the Nature's Nook Volunteer Policy
- Proof of identity is required for a background check
- Volunteers must wear a visitor badge while on campus or during school-sponsored activities

- Volunteers are asked to avoid using technology in our building while participating or visible to students

Note: Volunteers who do not follow the policies outlined in the handbook may be declined for future participation, both on and off campus.

School Visitors

To maintain a safe and peaceful learning environment for our students:

- All visitors must follow established procedures to ensure visits do not disrupt classroom routines or compromise student safety
- Visitors must check in at the front office, present a driver's license for RAPTOR screening, wear a visitor badge, and follow staff guidance during their time on campus

We welcome family involvement and appreciate your support in keeping our school secure and nurturing for all children.

1. Adult Guidelines and Expectations

At Nature's Nook, we believe that creating a safe, respectful, and peaceful environment begins with the adults in our community. This includes staff, parents, guardians, visitors, volunteers, and all others who enter our school environment. We ask that all adults model the values we hope to instill in our students: kindness, respect, responsibility, and community care.

Expectations for All Adults in Our School Community:

- All members of the school community are expected to model appropriate behavior and support the maintenance of a clean, safe, and orderly environment.
- Concerns, safety issues, or violations of school policies should be reported immediately to the Director or Assistant Director.
- Nature's Nook Preschool is a smoke-free and vape-free campus. The use of tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes, is not permitted anywhere on school property.

2. Zero Tolerance Policy for Unsafe or Inappropriate Behavior:

- Nature's Nook will not tolerate any irresponsible, dangerous, or disruptive behavior, including:
 - Acts or threats of violence

- Verbal abuse or intimidation
Harassment, including emotional or sexual
- Any verbal or written threats directed toward staff, children, or families will result in immediate action, which may include termination of the school relationship.

3. Weapons-Free Policy:

- Nature's Nook is a weapons-free environment, both inside the building and on the surrounding property.
- No weapons of any kind are permitted on school grounds, regardless of concealed carry permits or licensure.