



PARENT HANDBOOK

About Nature Together Preschool

Our preschool is an early learning program taught completely outdoors in the Japanese Gulch of Mukilteo. We use an inquiry-based teaching style to spark children's curiosity and engage in active learning. The program's curriculum emerges from the children's interest as they move through the natural world and the seasons. In this program the children will develop a strong sense of place and belonging from their intimate connection with nature. We also encourage individual empowerment and promote group bonding.

Address and Contact Information

Director:
Kristin Hammer
(425) 404-1985
kris@explorenaturetogether.com

Program location:
Japanese Gulch South Trailhead
7609 44th Ave W, Mukilteo, WA 98275

Mail correspondence can be sent directly to:
Kristin Hammer
619 4th St, Ste C
Mukilteo, WA 98275

Our Philosophy

We believe that young children learn best through direct experience with the natural world. Our goal is to tap into their sense of wonder about nature while teaching basic environmental, natural science and preschool principles. We teach respect for all living beings and how to minimize our impact on the earth. Our lesson plans flow organically from what nature presents us with each day.

Teachers

Our Nature Together teaching team includes director/teacher Kristin Hammer (Miss Kris) and teacher Theresa Costanzo (Miss Theresa).

While school is in session we can be reached on-site at (425) 404-1985. Miss Kris can also be reached at kris@explorenaturetogether.com. Miss Theresa can be reached at theresa@explorenaturetogether.com.

Detailed information about our teachers qualifications can be viewed on our website. All Nature Together teachers are current in their First Aid and CPR certification and have passed a criminal background check.

Preschool Calendar

Remainder of 2019 School Year

Spring 2019 Session

10 week course

Tuesdays: April 16th - June 18th

Wednesdays: April 17th - June 19th

NO classes the week of April 8th for spring break

2019-2020 School Year

The program will run for 3 semesters.

Our class is offered on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays.

You can register for 1, 2, 3 or all 4 days at the start of each season.

Fall 2019 session:

13 week course offered

Tuesdays: September 10th - December 10th

Wednesdays: September 11th - December 11th

Thursdays: September 12th - December 12th

Fridays: September 13th - December 13th

NO classes the week of November 18th for Thanksgiving break

Winter 2019-20 session:

12 week course

Tuesdays: January 7th - March 31st

Wednesdays: January 8th - April 1st

Thursdays: January 9th - April 2nd

Fridays: January 10th - April 3rd

NO classes the week of February 17th for mid-winter break

Spring 2020 session:

10 week course

Tuesdays: April 14th - June 16th

Wednesdays: April 15th - June 17th

Thursdays: April 16th - June 19th

Fridays: April 17th - June 20th

NO classes the week of April 6th for spring break

Seasonal Celebrations & Birthdays

Our curriculum highlights natural and seasonal changes that take place during the course of the school year and will include the celebration of traditional holidays, while not espousing any particular religious teaching or political perspective. Examples include allowing children to wear their Halloween costumes to school and discussing thankfulness around Thanksgiving.

Birthdays are an exciting and special time for children. Some parents may wish to bring a special treat for the celebration; any foods shared with the group must be approved in advance and take into account any allergy sensitivities or other food-related concerns of the students and their families. Others may wish to bring a non-edible treat or have their child bring their favorite book to class for us to read to the students.

A Typical Day

9:45-10:00 **Welcome Circle**

Songs, drawing and conversation to start our morning.

10:00-12:00 **Nature Immersion**

Hiking into the forest for free exploration & unstructured play. Teachers will incorporate sorting, counting, colors, textures, shapes, and science principles.

12:00-12:45 **Lunch and Reflections**

While we eat our lunch we will reflect on what we saw/learned in the forest. This is also a time for stories or songs. When children are through eating they will have an opportunity to do project, craft or other fine motor activities.

Lunch

In each class we will hike back to the shelter to have lunch together around noon. It is an important time of our preschool day as it provides our children time to refresh and time to sit with friends while having pleasant conversation. Please pack a healthy lunch for your child in a reusable lunch box. Include water in a reusable bottle.

We will start our lunch time with a short blessing of gratitude,

*Thank you for the world so sweet
Thank you for the food we eat
Thank you for the birds that sing
Thank you God for everything.*

Commitment to your child's emotional well-being

As naturalists we are committed to inspiring and teaching respect for the earth and all its creatures. This includes modeling and fostering respect for self and for others at all times. We shun competitiveness in favor of cooperative activities, guiding children to co-creative adventures.

We have a zero tolerance policy for hitting, grabbing, pushing, name calling, aggressiveness or any other demeaning behavior. If any of these behaviors occur, one of our teachers will immediately remove the instigating child to a calm place where the child's concern can be heard one-on-one. We empower children in learning how to work with others while simultaneously enhancing their individuality. We will speak respectfully to your child and model appropriate responses to the range of your child's emotions. We will hold and carry your child if it is necessary to their feelings of safety. If your child ever reports any type of negative experience at Nature Together, we ask that you please bring it to Kristin's attention immediately, so we can all communicate and work as a team to support your child's concerns or feelings.

Emergency and Injuries

- Fully stocked first aid kits, emergency medical forms and staff with First Aid and CPR training and certification are always present with the children.
- Emergency medical forms include parent contact information, emergency contacts and authorization for the release of a child to other adults, and health and medical histories. In addition, these forms give preschool staff permission to seek emergency medical care should the child require such treatment.
- In the event of a minor injury, the child will be treated with first aid by the preschool staff. The incident will be reported to the parent or guardian at the end of the day, and staff will complete an **Incident Report Form** to keep in the child's file.
- In the event of an emergency, teachers will assess the situation and, if warranted, call 9-1-1. Teachers will respond as necessary until emergency help arrives. Parents or guardians will be contacted as soon as possible. In the event that we are unable to reach the child's parent or guardian, we will contact the individual(s) designated as emergency contacts for the child.
- If parents have a family emergency that requires their child to be picked up early from school, they may call Miss Kris to arrange for early pick-up.

Dressing appropriately

Dressing your child appropriately is **CRITICAL** to the success of our program. We adhere to the motto: There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing choices.

Here are a few simple guidelines for clothing:

- Please label all of your children's clothing - if you don't wish to permanently mark the clothing, you can tie a colored ribbon to the clothing.
- Dress your children in clothes they can get messy.
- Do not use one-piece clothing as it is difficult to remove when kids have to use the potty.

- Clothing and footwear should be loose fitting and roomy to allow the body's own insulation layer to surround the skin.

In the winter months, we strongly suggest children be dressed in the following:

- Bogs boots
- Columbia Omnitex or Bugaboo winter jacket
- Oakiwear, Lands End or REI rain pants
- Two-piece silk or wool long johns as a base layer and a middle layer
- Thick fleece top and bottoms as the top layer
- Silk or smart wool sox
- Gordoni or Outdoor Research side or top zip mittens or Oakiwear neoprene gloves
- Hat

Remember that this is an entirely-outdoor school. Make sure that you and your child are both okay with that. Remember too that your child may not experience cold in the same way that you do and to resist overdressing them. Send extra clothes and know that we will be very diligent about when to insist they put on more outer wear. Most important, keep YOUR attitude positive about blustery cold rainy days as some of our most fun days have been in this type of weather!

Toilet proficiency

Although we can handle occasional accidents, all children **MUST** be mostly toilet-proficient in order to attend our class. Children must be able to know when they have to go to the bathroom and be able to communicate that.

Parent-Teacher Communications

Good communication between parents and teachers is essential for the success of our students and our school. It ensures that we are able to identify and meet the needs of our students and the expectations of their parents.

We use a variety of methods to communicate with the parents:

- **Face to Face:** We encourage parents to discuss any questions or concerns they may have with their child's teachers. During school hours, teachers need to focus on the children, so we ask parents to reserve discussion of detailed matters with teachers until the end of the day or use e-mail and telephone as desired.
- **Email:** We will use email to relay most information to parents. All teachers have Nature Together email accounts and parents may email teachers with questions or concerns.
- **Telephone:** The school phone is Miss Kris' personal phone number (425) 404-1985. You are welcome to call her or text her with questions or concerns. If she is not available, please leave a message and she will get back to you as soon as possible.

Extreme weather closure

Nature Together follows the Mukilteo School District lead. You can find out whether the Mukilteo School District has cancelled classes by checking their website (mukilteo.wednet.edu).

- If Mukilteo schools are cancelled due to extreme weather, Nature Together is also cancelled.
- If Mukilteo School District has called for a late arrival day due to unsafe morning driving conditions, Nature Together classes are cancelled.
- In the case of high wind advisories, Nature Together will not be heading into the forest. Class will be held primarily at the shelter and in the open field next to the community garden.
- There will be no credit or refund for the days the preschool closes due to the weather.

Drop off/pick-up and location of classes

Children will be dropped off and picked up at the Mukilteo Community Garden at the Japanese Gulch south trailhead. The physical address is 7609 44th Ave W, Mukilteo, WA 98275. When you drop your child off, please park in the lot and walk your child to the garden entrance where one of our teachers will meet you and your child to bring your child to the shelter.

We will sing songs and have some drawing materials at the table for the drop off transition. We understand that separation of parent and child can be difficult for both, and we are ready and experienced to provide whatever support may be needed.

When you pick up, you are welcome to come into the garden and up to the shelter.

Children must be signed in and out by a parent, guardian, or authorized adult over the age of eighteen. **Please talk with a teacher if you will need to drop off late or pick up early as we are often on the trails and cannot guarantee we will be nearby.**

Sick child policy

We are fine with children coming to school with sniffles, sneezes, coughs or stuffy nose, since we are outdoors and there is less chance to pass germs than in an indoor setting. We do not allow children to attend if they have had a fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the previous 24 hours.

Absence policy

- SICK DAYS: If your child is sick and cannot attend class, please text Miss Kris at (425) 404-1985.
- If you know in advance that you will miss a day (vacation days, etc.), please send an email to Miss Kris.
- Please do not pass information to the teachers at pick-up or drop-off about upcoming absences, as it is a busy time and we may forget.

Withdrawal Policy

Nature Together depends on tuition to operate, but we understand that unforeseen events can occur and withdrawal may be required. Nature Together reserves the right to remove a child from the program if necessary due to behavioral issues but will work with parents or guardians to the greatest extent possible to address any concerns.

If you choose to withdraw your child from our program, we require that you give us a two week written notice to allow possible tuition refunds and also to open enrollment to others.

If you choose to withdraw before the beginning of a school session then a full refund will be issued minus the processing fees. If you choose to withdraw during the school session then the refund will be prorated minus the processing fee.