



PARENT HANDBOOK
2022 - 2023

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About Nature Together School

Our school 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

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

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

School Registration:
info@explorenaturetogether.com

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 (Ms Kris), teacher Theresa Costanzo (Ms Theresa), and teacher Colby Biesheuvel (Mr Colby).

While school is in session we can be reached on-site at (425) 404-1985. Ms Kris can also be reached at kris@explorenaturetogether.com. Ms Theresa can be reached at theresa@explorenaturetogether.com. Mr Colby can be reached at colby@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. All of our teachers have current COVID-19 vaccinations.

Policies and Procedures

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. You may bring your child's favorite book for the teachers to read aloud that day and the class will sing happy birthday and make your child feel special. You may also bring a pre-packaged treat for your child to hand out at pickup for the children to take home with them.

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 your child's teacher'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 verbally reported to the parent or guardian at the end of the day. In the case of more significant injuries, staff will complete an Incident Report Form and provide a copy to the parent or guardian at the end of the day.
- 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 your child's teacher to arrange for early pick-up.

Medication and Allergy Management

- Parents must provide written permission and directives for Nature Together Staff to administer medication. Medication administration is limited to Epi-pens or asthma medication. You must complete a Snohomish County Health Department Medication Authorization form for each medication.
- All medication must be
 - In Original Container
 - Labeled with the child's name.
 - Have clear written instructions for dosage for the child's age.
 - Not past expiration date.
 - Medication must be left with teacher for the entire school year, and updated as prescribed by the doctor.

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.
- Clothing and footwear should be loose fitting and roomy to allow the body's own insulation layer to surround the skin.
- Always dress your child with socks and closed-toe shoes.
- We discourage shorts even in warm months due to stinging nettle, black berry thorns and the amount of climbing children do in the forest.

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

- Silk or smart wool socks
- Base layer: long underwear (Costco or other)
- Middle layer: cotton or fleece top and bottoms
- Top layer: Rain suit or rain pants and insulated waterproof jacket
- Waterproof, insulated boots
- Mittens and 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!

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. Please note that any questions about registration or tuition should be directed to info@explorenaturetogether.com.

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 Ms Kris's 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 typically follows the Mukilteo School District lead when it comes to extreme weather. We want to make sure your children are learning in a safe environment with us. The teachers of Nature Together will make the call on whether or not to cancel class by 7am the day of class. Classes may be cancelled due to the following inclement weather:

- If driving conditions are unsafe due to snow or ice.
- If there are high wind advisories and the forest becomes unsafe.
- If air quality index is above 100 (airnow.gov). This is possible during the wildfire season.

There will be no credit or refund for the days the preschool closes due to the weather.

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.

Sick child policy

In light of our current situation and possibility of Covid-19, we require all children to stay home if they show any signs of illness. If your child has a runny nose, fever, cough, diarrhea, vomiting, or any other signs of not feeling well, please keep them home. Please see our Covid policy for additional information.

Absence policy

- SICK DAYS: If your child is sick and cannot attend class, please text Ms Kris at (425) 404-1985.
- If you know in advance that you will miss a day (vacation days, etc.), please send an email to Ms 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.

Custodial Situations

Please notify us of any ongoing custody issues with your child. Nature Together will not be involved in custody disputes. If your family has a court order on file, please provide us with the most recent copy. Our teachers will follow a court order as it is written. The parent/guardian is responsible for providing any updated court orders. Please note: Per state law, in the absences of a court order, both parents have equal rights. If custody issues create a risk for our staff, or repeated disruptions in class, Nature Together has the right to remove a child from the program.

Mandated Reporters

All Nature Together Preschool staff are required by law to report and document any proved or suspected incidence of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, or endangerment of a child immediately upon suspicion.

Toilet proficiency

Although we can handle occasional accidents, all children MUST be 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. If your child has a messy potty accident we will call you to either come change your child's clothing or to take your child home.

Fees and Withdrawal Policy

Nature Together depends on tuition to operate, but we understand that unforeseen events can occur and withdrawal may be required.

Please email any class change or withdrawal requests to info@explorenaturetogether.com. There are multiple staff involved in managing registration, and this info@ address is the best way to reach us.

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 Nature Together removes your child from the program you will receive a refund as detailed below.

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.

Preschool: Please note that the \$125 deposit placed (for each day of class) is non-refundable. If you choose to withdraw before the beginning of the school year, and you have not made any tuition payments, then no refunds will be given. If you choose to withdraw before the school year begins, and you have made tuition payments, then the standard refund procedure will apply. Once the school year begins all tuition refunds will be prorated, minus a \$20 processing fee.

Schedule Change Fee: Nature Together classes are usually full, and there are people waiting for spots to open. We will do our best to accommodate any schedule change requests, but it is not often possible. If the school session has begun and we are able to change classes for you, there will be a \$20 processing fee.

Late Tuition Payments: A \$30 late fee will be added to your tuition if paid after the 10th of the month. If tuition has not been paid by the last day of the month then the child will not be able to attend class until the account has been made current. If you know your payment will be late please let us know.

Late Pickup Policy/Fee: Please be prompt in picking up your child(ren). A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged if chronic tardiness occurs in pick-up. You will receive a late fee invoice.

Student Profile Forms/Medical Authorizations

Student Profile Forms must be completed for each student 2 days BEFORE the first day of class. These forms help our teachers get to know your child, and have emergency contacts set up. These forms also contain waivers we are required to have signed before your child is in our care. Students who do not have completed forms will not be allowed to attend class.

Class Information

Drop off/pick up *

When you drop your child off, please park in the lot and walk your child to the teachers.

Drop off: *Please do not arrive more than 5 minutes early for your scheduled class start time.*

Pick Up: *Please do not appear more than 5 minutes early, as it is distracting to the students.*

Morning Preschool Drop off is at 9:30am. Pick up is at 12:00pm.

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.

*Please see attached COVID-19 policy for detailed drop off/pick up procedures

Holidays and Breaks

Nature Together school is not in session for any classes on the following days:

Veteran's Day: November 11, 2022

Thanksgiving Break: November 21 - 25, 2022

Winter Break: December 19 - 30, 2022

Martin Luther King Jr Day: January 16, 2023

Mid-Winter Break: February 20 - 24, 2023

Spring Break: April 10 - 14, 2023

Memorial Day: May 29, 2023

Preschool Class Information

A Typical Day for Preschool Classes

15 Minutes

Welcome Circle

We'll sing our hello song and discuss the day before heading into the woods.

2 Hours (1 hour and 15 minutes for afternoon classes)

Nature Immersion

We will hike into the forest for free exploration and unstructured play. Teachers will incorporate learning standards while in the woods. Topics include, but are not limited to, sorting, counting, textures, shapes, science, art and literature.

15 minutes

Reflections

We will end our time at the Mukilteo community garden shelter with a story and discussion/journaling of what we discovered that day.

2022 - 2023 School Year

Classes are offered Monday through Friday. You can register for 1, 2, 3, 4 or all 5 days.

Morning Classes:

Mondays: September 12, 2022 - June 12, 2023

Tuesdays: September 13, 2022 - June 13, 2023

Wednesdays: September 14, 2022 - June 14, 2023

Thursdays: September 15, 2022 - June 15, 2023

Fridays: September 16, 2022 - June 16, 2023

Nature Together's COVID-19 Policy and Procedures

One of the benefits of Nature Together's preschool is that we offer small class sizes (10 students) and easier social distancing because we take advantage of outdoor space the entire time for learning. Children are spread out and breathing fresh air while in nature. They are not sharing toys, touching desks, or sitting on the same carpet risking the spread of germs. Learning outdoors also boosts your child's natural immunity to illnesses. With that said, Nature Together will still be taking extra precautions to protect your child and our teachers while in class during the pandemic. We are following the Washington state guidelines for child care programs. Updates will be made to this policy as needed based on current local and state requirements.

Mask Requirements

Masks are not *currently* required in school or childcare settings, and are not required at Nature Together classes.

Drop off procedures

1. Parents are required to screen their child for COVID-19 symptoms before dropping them off. This includes taking their child's temperature before class. If a child has a fever above 100.4 they should not attend class.
2. When you arrive, park in the lot and walk your child to the garden gate where your teacher will greet you and your child.
3. Once your child is checked in, you may leave and your child joins the class.

In past classes we have had table activities upon arrival, but we will go straight to exploring outside to avoid sharing of materials and the spread of germs.

Pick up procedures

Students will be with the teachers outside the garden in the mulch area exploring and learning while waiting for parents to pick them up.

1. When you arrive, wait outside the garden area.
2. The teacher will bring your child with their belongings to you and then sign your child out.

When should I keep my child home?

Parents are expected to assess the health of their child, including taking their temperature, on a daily basis before coming to class.

You should keep your child at home if:

- Your child has a fever. Fever reducing medication may not be used when determining a child's health. Students must be fever-free for 72 hours (3 days) before returning to class, per the recommendations of the CDC.
- Your child is experiencing recognizable symptoms of COVID-19, including a fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing.
- Your child has been exposed to someone who has had COVID-19 (by testing or medical diagnosis) within the past 14 days.
- Your child has had sustained contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with a person showing symptoms of COVID-19 within the previous 14 days.
- Your child is under a 14-day self-quarantine/self-monitoring guidance for any reason.

What happens if a student develops symptoms of Covid-19 while in class?

- The student will be removed from class and relocated to an isolated area with one of the teachers.
- A parent/guardian will be called to pick the student up immediately.
- We will report the event to Washington Health Department and will follow their recommendations which may necessitate class being canceled.
- Families of other students in class will be notified immediately without identifying student by name.

Cancelling of class due to COVID-19

If Nature Together classes are required to stop by the State of Washington or City of Mukilteo due to COVID-19 or other unforeseen circumstances we will contact you immediately.

Refunds will be handled accordingly:

- If we must cancel before classes begin in September, then a full refund will be returned minus a 2.9% processing fee.
- If classes are canceled during the school session, then a prorated refund will be returned minus a 2.9% processing fee.

Waiver of Liability Relating to Coronavirus/COVID-19

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization. COVID-19 is reported to be extremely contagious. The state of medical knowledge is evolving, but the virus is believed to spread from person-to-person contact and/or by contact with contaminated surfaces and objects, and even possibly in the air. People reportedly can be infected and show no symptoms and therefore spread the disease. The exact methods of spread and contraction are unknown, and there is no known treatment, cure, or vaccine for COVID-19. Evidence has shown that COVID-19 can cause serious and potentially life threatening illness and even death.

Nature Together cannot prevent you [or your child(ren)] from becoming exposed to, contracting, or spreading COVID-19 while utilizing Nature Together's services or premises. It is not possible to prevent against the presence of the disease. Therefore, if you choose to utilize Nature Together's services and/or enter onto Nature Together's premises you may be exposing yourself to and/or increasing your risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK: I have read and understood the above warning concerning COVID-19. I hereby choose to accept the risk of contracting COVID-19 for myself and/or my children in order to utilize Nature Together's services and enter Nature Together's premises. These services are of such value to me [and/or to my children,] that I accept the risk of being exposed to, contracting, and/or spreading COVID-19 in order to utilize Nature Together's services and premises in person.

WAIVER OF LAWSUIT/LIABILITY: I hereby forever release and waive my right to bring suit against Nature Together and its owners, officers, directors, managers, officials, trustees, agents, employees, or other representatives in connection with exposure, infection, and/or spread of COVID-19 related to utilizing Nature Together's services and premises. I understand that this waiver means I give up my right to bring any claims including for personal injuries, death, disease or property losses, or any other loss, including but not limited to claims of negligence and give up any claim I may have to seek damages, whether known or unknown, foreseen or unforeseen.

I understand and agree that the law of the State of Washington will apply to this contract.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND ALL PROVISIONS OF THIS RELEASE, AND FREELY AND KNOWINGLY ASSUME THE RISK AND WAIVE MY RIGHTS CONCERNING LIABILITY AS DESCRIBED ABOVE:

Signature:

Date:

Name (printed):