



# PARENT HANDBOOK

## 2020–2021

# Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>About Nature Together School</b>                                     | <b>3</b>  |
| Address and Contact Information   | 3         |
| Our Philosophy  | 3         |
| Teachers  | 3         |
| Seasonal Celebrations & Birthdays                                       | 4         |
| Commitment to your child's emotional well-being                         | 4         |
| Emergency and Injuries  | 4         |
| Dressing appropriately  | 5         |
| Parent-Teacher Communications   | 5         |
| Extreme weather closure   | 6         |
| Location of classes   | 6         |
| Sick child policy   | 6         |
| Absence policy  | 6         |
| Withdrawal Policy   | 6         |
| <b>Preschool Class Information</b>                                      | <b>8</b>  |
| Calendar  | 8         |
| Meet & Greet  | 8         |
| A Typical Day   | 8         |
| Lunch   | 9         |
| Toilet proficiency  | 9         |
| Drop off/pick up  | 9         |
| <b>Elementary Age Classes</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| Elementary Calendar   | 10        |
| Typical Day for Elementary Age Class                                    | 10        |
| Drop off/pick up  | 10        |
| <b>Nature Together's COVID-19 Policy and Procedures</b>                 | <b>11</b> |
| Drop off procedures   | 11        |
| Pick up procedures  | 11        |
| Preschool Lunch procedures  | 11        |
| When should I keep my child home?                                       | 12        |
| What happens if a student develops symptoms of Covid-19 while in class? | 12        |
| Cancelling of class due to COVID-19                                     | 12        |
| <b>Waiver of Liability Relating to Coronavirus/COVID-19</b>             | <b>13</b> |

## **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](mailto: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), teacher Theresa Costanzo (Miss Theresa). Our substitute teachers are Cara Mothersbaugh and Susan Mays.

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](mailto:kris@explorenaturetogether.com). Miss Theresa can be reached at [theresa@explorenaturetogether.com](mailto: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.

## **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. Because we are trying to avoid the spread of germs, we cannot allow the sharing of treats or other items in class. 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.

## **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.
- 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:

- Bogs boots
- Columbia Omnitech or Bugaboo winter jacket
- Rain suit or 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
- Mittens & 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.

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](http://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 for safety reasons and class will be canceled.
- 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.

### **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.

**Preschool:** If you choose to withdraw before the beginning of a school session then a refund will be issued minus the deposit/processing fee of \$125. If you choose to withdraw during the school session then the refund will be prorated minus the deposit/processing fee of \$125.

**Elementary Age Classes:** If you choose to withdraw before the beginning of a school session then a refund will be issued minus the deposit/processing fee of \$50. If you choose to withdraw during the school session then the refund will be prorated minus the deposit/processing fee of \$50.

# Preschool Class Information

## Calendar

### 2020-2021 School Year

The program will run for 2 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/Winter 2020 session:

17 week course

Tuesdays: September 8th - January 26

Wednesdays: September 9th - January 27th

Thursdays: September 10th - January 28th

Fridays: September 11th - January 29th

NO classes the week of November 23rd for Thanksgiving break

NO classes the weeks of December 14th, 21st, and 28th for winter break

#### Winter/Spring 2021 session:

17 week course

Tuesdays: February 2nd - June 8th

Wednesdays: February 3rd - June 9th

Thursdays: February 4th - June 10th

Fridays: February 5th - June 11th

NO classes the week of February 15th for mid-winter break

NO classes the week of April 5th for spring break

## Meet & Greet

On September 2nd we will have a “meet and greet” where you and your child can come to the garden to see the space and meet the teachers. This is an opportunity to get your child excited for the school year or to ease any anxiety they might be having about starting a new program. The Meet & Greet will run from 9:30-11:30, but we will assign a time for you to come to avoid crowds and prevent the spread of germs. You will get an email from Kris in August reminding you of this event with an allotted time slot.

## A Typical Day

### 9:30 - 9:45 **Welcome Circle**

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

### 9:45 - 11:45 **Nature Immersion**

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



## 11:45 - 12:30 **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.*

### **Lunch**

In each class we will hike back to the shelter around 11:45 to eat lunch. Eating lunch together 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. It helps students feel connected to the program, teachers and fellow students, just as it does at home with family meals.

Please pack a healthy lunch for your child in a reusable lunch box. Include water in a reusable bottle. **We ask that you please send your child with lunch items that they can open and unwrap *themselves* to avoid the teachers having to touch their lunch.**

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

*Thank you for the food before us  
Thank you for the friends beside us  
Thank you for the love inside us  
We give thanks.*

**Please see attached COVID-19 policy for safety procedures during lunch**

### **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.

### **Drop off/pick up**

*When you drop your child off, please park in the lot and walk your child to the teachers. Drop off is at 9:30. Please do not arrive more than 5 minutes early.*

*Pick up is at 12:30. Please do not appear sooner than 12:25 as it is distracting to the students.*

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**

## Elementary Age Classes

### Elementary Calendar

The program will run for 10 weeks and meets from 1:00 to 3:00.

#### 6-8 year olds

Mondays (September 14, 2020 through November 16, 2020)

Wednesdays (September 16, 2020 through November 18, 2020)

You can register for 1 or both days.

#### 8-10 year olds

Tuesdays (September 17, 2020 through November 17, 2020)

### Typical Day for Elementary Age Class

#### 1:00-1:15 Welcome Circle

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

#### 1:15-2:45 Nature Immersion

*Hiking into the forest for free exploration & unstructured play. Teachers will incorporate science, physics, math and will pose questions to get children thinking critically.*

#### 2:45-3:00 Reflections

*We'll gather and discuss what we saw/learned in the forest.*

### Drop off/pick up

When you drop your child off, please park in the lot and walk your child to the teachers. Drop off is at 1:00. Please do not arrive more than 5 minutes early.

Pick up is at 3:00. Please do not appear sooner than 2:55 as it is distracting to the students.

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**

## Nature Together's COVID-19 Policy and Procedures

One of the benefits of Nature Together's preschool is that we offer small class sizes (12 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.

### Drop off procedures

Please wear a mask when bringing your child to class. This is a Washington State requirement. Teachers will also wear masks when greeting you and your child. *Children are NOT required to wear masks. The chance of them mishandling or discarding the masks while they play increases, rather than decreases, the risk of spreading illness. If you want your child to wear a mask, we will do our best to make sure they keep it on during class.*

We are also asking to limit the amount of adults coming to class at one time. If possible, just have one guardian come to drop off.

1. When you arrive, park in the lot and walk your child to the garden gate where Miss Kris will greet you and your child.
2. She will take your child's temperature with a touchless thermometer and sign your child in for the day. Those with a fever above 100.4 will not be permitted entry.
3. Have your child set his/her lunch at the assigned spot at the tables.
4. Sanitize your child's hands (provided under shelter).
5. 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

Please wear your mask when picking up your child. 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 and keep distance from others.
2. Miss Kris will bring your child with their lunch and belongings to you and then sign your child out.

### Preschool Lunch procedures

- Every table will be sanitized at the start of the day, before and after lunch.
- We will thoroughly wash hands right before eating and will use paper towels for drying.
- Each student will have a preassigned seat with ample space from other students. Our tables are large and there will be only 4 students/table.

- Hands will be washed/sanitized after lunch is finished.
- Your responsibility is to make sure your child can open, unwrap, and close everything in his/her lunch box.

### **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.

***PLEASE READ, SIGN AND BRING THE FOLLOWING WAIVER ON THE NEXT PAGE  
TO THE MEET & GREET ON SEPTEMBER 2ND***

## **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):

Updated 8/22/2020

