

# Natureplay Preschool

## 2019-2020 Family Handbook

*In all things of nature, there is something of the marvelous. ~Aristotle*



Dear Families,

Welcome to Natureplay Preschool! We are very excited to have you as part of our program this year. This guide is designed to provide you with information about our program. Please read the following information carefully and retain for future reference. By doing so, you can begin the new school year feeling fully informed.

Throughout the year, you will receive e-newsletters and e-updates. Please read everything that comes home from the preschool to avoid missing important information.

Keep your director informed of any changes to the original forms you submit, especially contact information for parents/guardians and emergency contacts. Our ability to respond appropriately to emergency situations partially rests on the accuracy of your child's records.

We want to establish a partnership with you based on open, honest and frequent face-to-face communication. We look forward to working with you to provide a safe, enjoyable and enriching program for your child. We have a fun-filled year of learning through play ahead of us, and we are very excited to get to know you and your family. Thank you for sharing your children with us and for giving us the opportunity to share our love of nature with them.

If at any time you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

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# **About Natureplay Preschool**

## **Mission Statement**

To provide young children with high-quality, developmentally appropriate educational experiences while inspiring them to grow their love, appreciation and understanding of the natural world.

## **Program Description**

Natureplay Preschool builds on children's natural curiosity about the world by using hands-on, nature-based activities to nurture social, emotional, physical, and academic skill development. Our indoor and outdoor classrooms serve as venues for development, scientific observation and discoveries. Our preschool teachers plan developmentally and age appropriate activities that integrate science, math, literacy and the arts while encouraging cooperative learning and social competence.

## **Purpose**

Our purpose in nature education is to inspire curiosity, foster deep connections with the natural world and develop the natural sense of wonder. We desire to develop inquiring minds rather than fill children with facts. Awareness, creativity and appreciation are emphasized at Natureplay Preschool. We take advantage of young children's inherent scientist-like tendencies to develop respect for the world around them and become future stewards of the environment.

## **Our Philosophy**

At Natureplay Preschool, we believe that every child is entitled to a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment in which to grow and develop cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically. Children learn best through hands-on experiences with their world. Nature serves as our learning environment, where children are free to explore and engage all of their senses. We strive to connect children with the outdoors and believe that having a strong connection to nature is essential for healthy childhood development. We believe that children's creativity, sense of wonder and desire to explore are enhanced when a strong relationship with nature exists.

We believe that early childhood is a beautiful time in life and that children should be free to be children. We provide preschoolers with abundant opportunities to play, practice social skills, gain self-confidence and self-manage behavior. We encourage children to cooperate, accept responsibility, embrace diversity and practice respect. Our atmosphere helps children feel confident, valued and accepted as individuals, which supports the development of a healthy self-image. We strive to meet children's needs as individuals as well as in group settings. We strongly believe that becoming socially competent is the best foundation for children's futures.

## **Goals**

At Natureplay Preschool, our goal is to facilitate the development of creativity, social and emotional skills and to stimulate physical and cognitive development through interactions with the natural world. Specifically, our goals are to:

- Provide an environment that encourages observation, discovery, experimentation, problem solving and reflection.
- Provide children with positive experiences in the outdoors and opportunities to be exposed to a variety of natural subjects and activities through hands-on participation.
- Support and enhance each child's inherent curiosity of nature and sense of wonder.

- Help children build social and emotional competencies that will allow them to develop into successful school-age children.
- Assist children in their interactions with one another and offer opportunities for cooperative learning.
- Create a sense of community between children, parents and staff that encourages open communication.
- Appreciate, recognize and nurture the uniqueness of each child and family.
- Be sensitive to each child's individual needs and encourage their development according to their age, abilities and interests.

### **Curriculum**

Children unravel the beauty of the natural world through a balance of self- and teacher- directed activities at Natureplay Preschool. We believe that children learn through play and construct their own knowledge through exploring their environment. We also believe that children learn through interactions with their peers and teachers. To meet the needs of the children enrolled in our program, we provide self-selected activity time as well as teacher-facilitated activities. Our play-based curriculum meets national standards set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children as well as Kansas Early Learning Standards. Throughout the day, children have hands-on, direct experiences with the world around them. Nature and environmental education are infused into all areas of our curriculum, not taught as separate subjects. The Desired Results Developmental Profile guides our planning of group and individual activities. We use these objectives to document children's growth and development over the school year and share this information with you at parent-teacher conferences.

### **Play-Based Learning**

Young children have a vital need to play, and there are many benefits gained through that play. Our play-based learning environment invites children to construct knowledge through their explorations. We carefully plan our environment and our activities to allow children to use all of their senses to gather and process information. We do not use worksheets, coloring pages, flashcards or "cookie cutter" art projects. We are able to help children prepare cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically for kindergarten through play.

- Play contributes to cognitive and physical development.
- Play teaches vital social and emotional skills that are linked with success in school and life.
- Play allows children to problem solve and reason.
- Play keeps the body and mind active.
- Play allows children to use all of their senses to learn about the world, which forms solid connections in young minds.
- Play allows children to experiment and explore in a safe environment.
- Play gives children opportunities to make choices.
- Play allows children to learn and teach at the same time.
- Play helps children to sort and classify ideas.
- Play allows children to self-regulate.

### **Dirt, Mud, Sand and Water**

Dirt, mud, sand and water are essential components of our learning environment. Research shows that children who play in dirt are happier and healthier. A friendly bacteria found in soil has been shown to activate a group of neurons that produce the brain chemical serotonin, enhancing feelings of well-being, much in the same manner as antidepressants and exercise. These earth elements allow children to

explore the world using their senses, express themselves creatively and just have fun. Children will come home dirty from Natureplay Preschool. We recommend that you allow yourself time to change and clean up before planning an activity after class. Wear clothes or a swimsuit that can (and will!) get muddy. We do splash in puddles, make mud pies, wallow in mud pits and dig in the sand. It is possible to get dirty from head to toe. Although we will hose down before going home, you may want to have a change of clothes in the car.

### **Benefits of Nature-Based Programming**

As a result of their participation in Natureplay Preschool, children will:

- Feel comfortable in nature and connected to the land.
- Respect all living things and seek to disturb as little as possible in the natural world.
- Have confidence and motivation to explore, learn and grow.
- Have stronger social skills that prepare them for the learning environment and abilities required in kindergarten, including getting along with peers, being helpful, showing compassion, following directions and cooperating.
- Ask questions and desire to investigate answers.
- Be creative and intellectually curious.
- Become future stewards of our environment.

### **Class Composition**

The classroom is composed of a mixed age group of children ages three-to-five years old. Children are viewed as unique individuals. Classroom teachers focus on teaching each child according to his or her own strengths. Advantages of mixed age groups are numerous.

- Children are able to spend more than one year with the same teacher, allowing the relationship between child and teacher to be strong and deep. Thus, teachers are better able to understand children's strengths/needs and support learning.
- Children develop a sense of family with their classmates. They become a family of learners who support and care for each other.
- Older children have the opportunity to serve as mentors and to take leadership roles.

# 2019-2020 School Year

## **Enrollment Options**

Natureplay Preschool offers multiple enrollment options. You may choose from morning or afternoon classes:

<u>Morning session</u>	8:30-11:30 am (M-W-F) (M-W-F) (T/TH)
<u>Afternoon session</u>	12:30-3:30 pm (T/W/TH) (T/TH)

## **Fees**

Fees are listed in Johnson County resident/non-resident format.

<u>Full-Time Program</u> (5 days/week):	\$86/\$95 weekly
<u>Part-Time Program</u> (3 days/week):	\$54/\$59 weekly
<u>Part-Time Program</u> (2 days/week):	\$48/\$53 weekly
<u>Enrollment Fee</u>	\$40 annually

## **Closure Schedule**

We will be closed the following days:

Labor Day	Monday, September 2, 2019
Veteran's Day	Monday, November 11, 2019
Thanksgiving	Thursday, November 28, 2019
Day after Thanksgiving	Friday, November 29, 2019
Winter Break	Monday, Dec. 23, 2019 – Friday, January 3, 2020
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Monday, January 20, 2020
President's Day	Monday, February 17, 2020

# Tuition

## **Registration Requirements**

Children attending the program must be pre-registered in advance of attendance by submitting the required forms and paying the \$40.00 registration fee. The registration fee is charged annually, nonrefundable and is not applied to the weekly tuition. A separate registration fee is required for summer enrollment.

## **Tuition**

Weekly fees are due on Fridays in advance of care according to the fee schedule printed on page 6. Fees must be paid in the form of automatic recurring payments or by DCF Vision Card (see [www.dcf.ks.gov](http://www.dcf.ks.gov) for more information). Credit/Debit cards in the form of MasterCard, Discover and Visa are accepted for both recurring payments and any fees not covered by DCF Vision Card. A \$30.00 fee will be assessed for declined credit/debit card payments. Late fees will be assessed at a rate of \$5.00 per day, with a maximum non-resolution period of 5 days, at which time child care will be terminated. All fees are nonrefundable and non-transferrable, with the exception of state and federal subsidies.

## **Prorating**

Natureplay will not prorate for days that we are closed due to holiday, inclement weather or emergency closure. Classes missed due to illness, vacation or other scheduling conflict are not prorated and cannot be made up or swapped for another day of attendance.

## **Changes in Enrollment**

Any changes in enrollment will result in a \$15 registration fee to adjust the account.

## **Payment Dates**

Fees will be automatically charged to your credit/debit card weekly on the following dates:

<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>Automatic Payment Pulled on the Following Days:</b>
August 2019	9, 16, 23, 30
September 2019	6, 13, 20, 27
October 2019	4, 11, 18, 25
November 2019	1, 8, 15, 22, 29
December 2019	6, 13
January 2020	3, 10, 17, 24, 31
February 2020	7, 14, 21, 28
March 2020	6, 13, 20, 27
April 2020	3, 10, 17, 24
May 2020	1, 8, 15

\*10% higher fee rates for non-resident families.

# **Natureplay Policy Statement**

## **Program Requirements**

Natureplay Preschool is licensed for children ages three- through five- years old. Children must be potty-trained to attend. Natureplay Preschool is licensed for children not yet age-eligible to attend kindergarten.

## **Equal Opportunity**

Johnson County Park and Recreation District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, ancestry, or handicapped status in the provision of service or employment.

## **Confidentiality Statement**

All contents of children's files are confidential documents. File contents cannot be duplicated, distributed, discussed, and/or viewed by anyone other than the custodial parent/ guardian, program staff, law enforcement officers, KDHE designee, and emergency medical personnel. The custodial parent/guardian reserves the right to make their children's records available to designated parties through signed permission. Documents can be released only to custodial parent/ guardian and DCF child protection agency representatives. Release under any other circumstances must be mandated by court order. Children's records will remain on file at the program until enrollment is terminated and the file is returned to the custodial parent/guardian.

## **Required Forms**

Kansas State law requires all children to have a personal data sheet, health assessment, and authorization for emergency medical care on file at the center before attendance is permitted. Kansas Department of Health & Environment (KDHE) is stringently enforcing this regulation. Centers can be fined and even closed for non-compliance. Therefore, all forms must be submitted to the director at least one week prior to the first day of care. Children with incomplete records cannot attend the program. The health assessment must be fully completed on the attached KDHE form and signed by a doctor of medicine or other approved medical personnel.

## **Terms of Care**

Attendance days must be pre-selected and consistent. Weekly fees must be paid in order to retain space. One week advance notice is required if discontinuing care. All fees are nonrefundable. You will be assessed a \$15 fee to change program enrollment options or to re-enroll within the same school year.

## **Parent Conduct**

Parents must demonstrate civility, self-control, and socially-acceptable behavior when interacting with program employees, participants, and their families. Profanity, threats, insults, harassment, suggestive remarks, intimidation, physical crowding, and/or contact will not be tolerated. Kansas state law prohibits parents from disciplining and/or reprimanding program participants. Failure to observe appropriate conduct will result in immediate and permanent termination of childcare.

## **Snacks**

We provide a nutritious snack during each preschool class. Fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy proteins, and dairy are offered. Water is served daily with snacks. Our snack menu is posted in the classroom. Be sure to make us aware of any special dietary needs and/or food allergies. Please do not bring snacks from home unless a previous arrangement with the director is made.

**Personal Belongings**

Please label all personal belongings such as backpacks, water bottles, coats, hats and gloves. Toys, video games, cell phones, tablets, MP3 players and any other electronic devices are prohibited. The program is not responsible for loss, theft or breakage of personal belongings.

**Non-Violence Policy**

The program does not allow any form of violent play, including the use of toys as weapons. Possession of weapons, fashioned or real, is prohibited and grounds for immediate termination of care and could result in contact of law enforcement. Statements by anyone that threaten violent action will result in immediate contact of parents and/or law enforcement.

**Screen Policy**

We utilize a tablet in the classroom to view wildlife webcams, play music, and document growth in children's online portfolios. We do not watch TV, videos or movies in class.

**Photo Policy**

Unauthorized distribution or release of photos of children and/or staff engaged in Johnson County Park & Recreation District sponsored activities is expressly prohibited without written consent of all parties represented. The policy extends to traditional photo prints and negatives, CDs, digital memory cards, electronic transmittals via email or through the web, and images captured on camera phones. Photos of participants are strictly limited to program use or other JCPRD publications with a signed waiver. Failure to observe this policy may result in termination of childcare.

**Employee/Patron Relationships**

District policies prohibit JCPRD staff and teachers from entering into personal employment arrangements with program participants and their families. This includes, but is not limited to, babysitting and nannying.

**Mill Creek Activity Center Punch Card**

As a parent of a child enrolled at MCAC Natureplay Preschool, you are able to enjoy our fitness area which includes weights, track, and cardio equipment. You can purchase an eight-week, unlimited punch card for \$20.00. This offer is available for MCAC Natureplay Preschool parents and grandparents who participate in dropping off and picking up their preschooler.

## Parent Involvement

### **Parent Involvement**

At Natureplay Preschool, we believe that you are your child's most important teacher. Therefore, we encourage you to actively participate in your child's education. The following list offers some possible suggestions for parent involvement opportunities. However, we also encourage you to develop your own ideas for supporting and participating in your child's education.

- Volunteer in the classroom
- Be a guest reader in the classroom
- Participate on park days
- Participate in Nature Club
- Attend parent conferences and meetings
- Share personal knowledge, expertise, talents and hobbies
- Donate classroom materials (books, toys, paper items, art supplies, etc.)
- Communicate regularly with teachers about your children
- Provide feedback, suggestions and constructive criticism on how we can improve our program
- Participate in program surveys

### **Open Door Policy**

Our program has an open door policy on parent visitation. We invite you to drop in unannounced at any time.

### **Parent/Teacher Communication**

We are committed to providing the best possible learning environment for young children. We believe that this goal can only be accomplished by building strong partnerships with our families. Good parent/teacher communication will ensure that we are able to identify and meet the needs of our children and the expectations of the parents. In addition to ongoing dialogue, the following are some of the ways in which we will communicate with you:

- **Natureplay Newsletters:** These monthly e-newsletters will provide you information about the program activities for the month. We use [www.smores.com](http://www.smores.com) for our monthly newsletter.
- **Email:** Please check your email regularly for information about classroom events, needs and other important information. We will also share articles and nature news with you via email. You can email us at any time with questions or concerns. Email is not monitored over the weekends or after program hours.
- **Facebook:** Natureplay Preschools have closed Facebook groups for our preschool families. We share photos, articles and classroom updates in our group. It's also a great way to connect with other Natureplay families. Find us on Facebook at *Natureplay@JCPRD or MeadowbrookParkNatureplay*
- **Telephone:** Teachers are available to speak with parents by telephone when needed.
- **Conferences:** We hold conferences annually, typically in late fall, or as requested by parent or teacher.
- **Seesaw:** We use an online portfolio system called Seesaw. We upload pictures of children's work and make notes about their progress. You'll be able to see their growth and development on a regular basis when you log into their portfolio from your computer or the app.
- **Questions, suggestions and concerns:** We encourage you to discuss any questions or concerns you may have with the director. Your views are valued and appreciated as they guide our efforts

toward continuous improvement. We encourage you to share any relevant information concerning your child that will help teachers to better meet your child's needs.

- **Specialists:** Any specialist working with your child is strongly encouraged to become part of the preschool communication network.
- **Survey:** We send out a parent survey in the middle of the school year to seek your feedback on the program. Please take a few minutes to provide us with your comments.
- **Updates:** If your families experience any changes such as the loss of a pet, loss of a family member, moving, divorce or other change, we ask that you please inform teachers. This helps us to understand any sudden changes in your child's behavior and better equips us to help them through any stressful times.

## Supplies

### **What to Bring to Preschool**

Natureplay Preschool provides all school supplies that your child will need in the classroom. There are, however, a few items that we ask you to send along with your child each day that they attend preschool:

- **A backpack:** The backpack should be child-sized, labeled with your child's name and easy for your child to open and close. It should be large enough to hold extra clothing and a water bottle. During winter months, it will need to hold snow boots and pants as well as other daily items.
- **A small, filled water bottle:** Please provide a no-spill, reusable water bottle filled with water daily.
- **A complete, seasonally-appropriate change of clothes** that can be left in your child's backpack. Be sure to include a shirt, pants, underpants and socks.
- **Appropriate weather-related clothing:** See next section

Please **do not** put the following items in backpacks, as they can be hazardous. If your child requires any of these items, please hand them to a teacher to be placed in locked storage:

- Hand sanitizer
- Medicines (OTC, prescription, homeopathic, essential oils, etc.)
- Bug spray and/or sunscreen

## What to Wear

“There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.” As a nature-based preschool, children will go outside every day in all safe weathers and temperatures and spend a large portion of time outside. We spend anywhere between 25-100% of our class outdoors, depending on weather conditions. Exceptions are during thunderstorms, threatening weather conditions and *extreme* heat or cold conditions (extreme could be defined as wind chills below 0\* F and heat indices above 100\* F). The following guidelines will help you ensure that your children come to school appropriately dressed for fun:

- **Dirt:** We expect our preschoolers to get dirty as a natural part of their explorations; therefore, your child should wear durable, washable, seasonally appropriate play clothes at all times. Please do not send your child to school in clothing that is for special occasions.
- **Rain and Water Play:** On rainy days, or days when rain is predicted, children should wear/bring rain boots or other waterproof shoes and a waterproof raincoat with a hood. Rain pants are recommended. For safety reasons, please leave umbrellas at home. When temperatures are fair, water will be provided for play and children will often get wet.
- **Winter:** Hats, mittens/gloves, a warm, padded coat and insulated boots are necessary in winter. On very cold days and snowy days, please bring snow pants and waterproof/insulated mittens/gloves. Long underwear or tights underneath clothes are recommended. Please label all hats and gloves.
- **Spring/Fall:** In these transition months, children should bring appropriate outerwear for the temperature range. We highly recommend layers. A sweater or jacket may be needed in the morning even if temperatures are predicted to be warmer later in the day.
- **Summer:** Children are welcome to bring hats and sunglasses. We recommend wearing a swimsuit to school and providing a change of clothes for indoor time.
- **Sunscreen and bug repellent:** Sunscreen and bug spray should be applied daily prior to arrival at school. If you would like us to reapply during class, please send a bottle to school labeled with your child’s name. Please do not send these items in backpacks, as we must keep them in locked storage. It is possible to get sunburned in the winter and on cloudy days; therefore we highly recommend you apply sunscreen year-round.
- **Shoes:** We recommend comfortable, sturdy shoes daily. Please do not have children wear good shoes to school, as they will get muddy.

## Outdoor Policy

For the safety of our children, a teacher will not be able to stay in the classroom with a child who is not properly dressed for going outdoors. If your child does not come to school with outdoor clothing that is appropriate for that day, you will have to return with the appropriate clothing. ***It is better to come prepared with the appropriate outdoor attire needed for the day and not need it than to be unprepared.***

## Clothing List

The following is a list of clothing and supplies you can expect to need throughout the year.

- Swimsuit
- Towel
- Water shoes
- Light jacket
- Heavy coat
- Snow pants
- Insulated snow boots
- Mittens/gloves
- Insulated mittens/gloves for snow/cold
- Hat
- Rain boots
- Rain coat
- Rain pants
- Bug spray and sunscreen

## **Birthdays**

Birthdays are an exciting and special time for children. When we celebrate a birthday in preschool, we ask you to send your child with their favorite book from home so that we can read it during class. A healthy snack from home is welcome. Please check with the director prior to sending a snack to check for food allergies in the classroom. Here are some healthy birthday snack suggestions:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Cheese and crackers
- Rice cakes
- Granola bar
- String cheese
- Pretzels
- Yogurt
- Small whole-grain bagels with cream cheese
- Mini wraps (cheese and lunchmeat rolled in a whole grain tortilla)
- Pita bread triangles with hummus or other bean dips
- Whole grain, low-sugar muffins
- We welcome other healthy snack ideas

## **Holidays**

We are committed to celebrating seasons instead of holidays at Natureplay. Any food served with seasonal celebrations will be of healthy nature.

# **Schedule and Attendance**

## **A Typical Day**

We follow a loose schedule with predictable events throughout the day to give the children the security of structure. The following is an example of a typical classroom schedule. This schedule is followed fall, winter, and spring. Due to hotter temperatures mid-day during the summer, we may reverse the schedule and start our classes outdoors, finishing our class indoors. Depending on temperatures, afternoon class may have limited outdoor time in the summer.

### **Arrival to school**

*Put away backpacks, practice writing name at table, books and stories*

### **Centers Exploration**

*Self-selected activity time, teacher planned table activities, small group work*

### **Circle time**

*Daily discussion, books, songs, dances, yoga, finger plays, musical instruments*

### **Snack**

*Restroom break, handwashing, snack*

### **Outdoor exploration & play**

*Most days you will pick up outside*

*\*\*daily schedule will vary\*\**

## **Park Days**

There will be days when class meets directly at a park access point and we spend the entire day on the trails. You will be informed in advance of park days and locations. Because children will be outdoors the entire three-hour class duration, park days are planned when the weather and temperatures are

tolerable for a three-hour period. Due to weather conditions, there may only be one day notice for park events. Adversely, park days may need to be cancelled due to unfavorable weather. Make sure to check your email daily so that you are fully informed of class meeting location and park information. For group identification, T-shirts are provided with the JCPRD logo. Please wear your T-shirt on park days. Parent volunteers are welcome and encouraged to join us on park days. Parents help supervise children, serve snacks and keep the group together while hiking. Here is some important information regarding trail days:

- You will drop off and pick up at the park location
- Children will need a water bottle (full with water)
- Apply sunscreen and bug spray prior to class
- Wear comfortable walking shoes with socks
- Children should use the restroom at home prior to arrival
- You are welcome to attend

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

Natureplay Preschool will follow the De Soto Public School District schedule for all weather-related closings and Meadowbrook Park Natureplay follows the Shawnee Mission School District inclement weather closures. If the De Soto and/or Shawnee Mission Public Schools are closed, we will be closed as well. Please check local TV and internet for closure information. We will update you with any closure related information via email and our Facebook page. Our JCPRD School Age Programs can sometimes provide care on De Soto snow days, but Natureplay will be closed regardless.

### **Emergency Closures**

Natural disasters and utility outages can result in emergency closure of the program. No alternate care location will be available in the event of emergency closures. Your director will notify you of the closure and again when care can be resumed. Utility outages or any other emergency evacuation of children during the day will result in cancellation of class until the facility is reopened for regularly- scheduled programming.

### **Absences**

If your child is unable to attend class, please contact the preschool as soon as possible on the morning of the absence. Please let us know if your child will be late to school. You may also inform us via phone or email if you know in advance of an upcoming absence or vacation.

### **Arrival Time: 8:30am or 12:30pm**

Please respect the drop-off period by arriving at school on time. Arrival before class begins prevents teachers from preparing for the day. Arrival after the drop-off window disrupts the class flow. On park days, we may not be able to wait for late arrivals. In this situation, you need to phone the school cellular phone to determine our location on the trail and meet us to drop off your child.

### **Separation Anxiety**

Drop-off time can be a delicate issue for some children. For children that have some separation anxiety, the best plan is to let your child know exactly what will happen and stick to that plan. When you prolong a drop-off, your child doesn't know when you will leave, which builds anxiety. It leads to stress while they wait for that moment, and they will not be able to settle into class. Let them learn how to let go and find their rhythm here, make friends and find favorite activities, all whilst you let them know you have confidence that they will have a great day.

### **Sign-In and Sign-Out**

Natureplay Preschool is required to maintain a daily attendance record of all children under our care. Adults will be asked to sign in their child when arriving and sign out their child when departing. Accurate attendance records are vital in the event of an emergency, and therefore we will require families to comply with our sign-in and sign-out procedures.

### **Communication Log**

A notebook is located next to the sign-in clipboard in the classroom. Please use this notebook to communicate to staff any changes in your child's schedule. Examples include if your child will have a planned absence coming up, will be picked up early from school, or if someone other than a parent is picking up from school. Please list the adult's full name so that we may check their photo ID.

### **Arrival Location and Procedures**

Children will arrive in the classroom and must be accompanied every day by a parent, guardian or other authorized adult over the age of 16. Any adult dropping off must adhere to the sign-in procedures. Under no circumstances should children be dropped off at the entrance to the building and allowed to walk into the class by themselves.

### **Dismissal Time: 11:30am or 3:30pm**

Your child looks forward to your return; therefore, we ask that you pick up your child promptly at the end of class. Please let us know beforehand if you will need to pick up your child early. Most days, children will be picked up in the outdoor classroom. We ask that you come all the way into the outdoor classroom to sign your child out and escort them all the way to the car. As a safety precaution, children may not walk out of the outdoor classroom without an adult. When entering and exiting the playground gate, please latch the gate behind you and ensure no child other than your own has left the playground.

### **Late Pick-Up**

Due to after-class teacher responsibilities, a late pick-up fee of \$5.00 will be incurred for every five minutes that a child is picked up past the end of class. You will need to pay this fee separately from your regular fee payments. We realize that under some circumstances lateness cannot be avoided and we require parents to call us should such a situation occur. If your child has not been picked up within 10 minutes of the preschool's closing time, the teachers will call you at the phone numbers listed on your personal data sheet. If you cannot be reached, teachers will call the emergency contacts listed on your personal data sheet. If every effort to reach you and your emergency contacts has been made but no contact has been established, the police may be called for assistance.

### **Release of Children**

Your child will be released only to those adults, age 16 and above, authorized by you on your personal data sheet. Please update forms as necessary. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone other than those adults listed on the personal data sheet without your prior *written* approval. Until all authorized adults are known to the teachers, a valid photo ID must be shown for the child to be released. This will be cross-referenced with the information on the personal data sheet in order to ensure that this person is authorized to pick up your child. Please inform us if someone other than a parent is picking up your child. Any existing court orders barring parent contact, visitation and child release must be on file at the center to support law enforcement interventions.

### **Parking Lot Etiquette**

- Please do not utilize the loading zone in front of the main door as a parking space.
- Permits are required to park in the handicap accessible parking spots.
- For safety, siblings should not be left in the car during drop off and pick up times.
- Please do not leave valuables, including purses, in your car.
- Please exercise extreme caution when driving in the parking lot. There are many small children in the parking lot. It is essential to drive slow and not cut through the lot.

### **Zero Tolerance Policy**

State law prohibits the release of children to parents and other authorized adults who appear to be impaired by drugs or alcohol. Individuals picking up children must be free of the odor of alcohol and/or visible signs of substance impairment. JCPRD staff are required to ask potentially impaired persons to contact a designated driver to assure the safe transportation of children. Failure to comply will result in immediate police contact and reporting to Social & Rehabilitation Services.

## **Health and Safety**

### **Medical Insurance**

During the course of normal participation, accidents can and do happen. Therefore, it is important that you carry medical insurance for expenses that result from injury. **The District does not carry medical insurance for program participants.** Make sure your health insurance policy name and number are recorded on the Authorization for Emergency Medical Care form. In urgent care situations, staff will attempt to contact parents for child pick-up and follow-up medical treatment. In emergency care situations, children will be transported by ambulance to the nearest hospital. Be sure all of your child's records are up to date to assist us in effectively responding to emergencies.

### **Health Policy**

In any preschool setting, illness is easily spread due to close personal contact and interactions between young children. To help prevent the spread of illness, we ask that you keep your child at home when he/she is ill. This will ensure a much healthier environment for the children, families and teachers. We also want to make you aware there may be children in our program without immunizations or on delayed schedules.

### **Exclusion Recommendations**

To help minimize exposure and prevent the spread of illness, we follow the Johnson County Health Department's exclusion recommendations. We reserve the right to send a child home upon arrival if they appear to be ill. The Johnson County Health department recommends that children shall be excluded from class when they have:

- **An acute change in behavior** including lethargy/lack of responsiveness, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, uncontrolled coughing, noticeable (spreading) rash, or other signs or symptoms of illness.
- **Fever** (temperature 99 degrees or higher taken auxiliary or 100 degrees or higher taken orally) Excluded until fever-free for 24 hours.
- **Diarrhea**, that is, increased number of stools, increased stool water, and/or decreased form; blood or mucus in the stools not explained by dietary change, medication, or hard stools. Excluded until diarrhea-free for 24 hours.

- **Vomiting** illness (one episode of vomiting in the previous 24 hours). Excluded until vomit-free for 24 hours.
- **Influenza A or B** excluded for 7 days of school from the day of diagnosis and/or on-set of symptoms.
- **Abdominal pain** that continues for more than two hours or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs or symptoms of illness. Excluded until fever-free for 24 hours and feels well enough to resume normal participation.
- **Mouth sores** with drooling. Excluded until a health care provider determines the condition is noninfectious.
- **Rash** with fever or behavior change. Excluded until a health care provider determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease.
- **Purulent conjunctivitis** (Pink Eye). Excluded until taking prescribed antibiotics for 24 hours and eye has cleared.
- **Presence of scabies, head lice and/or nits**, or other infestation. Excluded until signs of infestation are gone or health care provider has determined child is safe to resume normal care.
- **Untreated Tuberculosis**. Excluded until a health care provider or health official states that the child can attend child care.
- **Known contagious diseases** while still in the communicable stage (chicken pox, streptococcal pharyngitis, rubella, pertussis, mumps, measles, and hepatitis A). Excluded until a health care provider determines the child is safe to resume school.

### **Sick Child Readmission**

Any child taking a prescribed antibiotic may return to school within 24 hours, provided that a fever is no longer present, and the child feels rested enough to resume normal participation, including outdoor time. We reserve the right to determine when a child who has been sick may return to school. We reserve the right to request a doctor's note stating the child is safe to return to school.

### **Hand Washing**

We strongly believe in the value of hand washing. While washing hands at school, children will be required to lather hands with soap for a full ten-to-twenty seconds before rinsing. This is the recommended amount of time to help reduce the spread of disease and illness. In winter months, hands can become dry and irritated. You are welcome to provide a bottle of unscented lotion to be kept in locked storage at school.

### **Chronic Health/Special Care Needs**

Written physician orders, as well as a parent/teacher pre-attendance meeting, will be required to assure that chronic health conditions and any special care needs can be accommodated within the program.

### **Medication Policy**

Medications may only be given with written permission from the child's parent or guardian through the Medication Authorization Form. We are unable to administer medication without signed permission.

- **Non-prescription medications:** over-the-counter medication must be in its original container with label affixed (including directions for use), have the expiration date on the bottle and have your child's name written on it. Medication will be administered in accordance with the instructions on the manufacturer's label, unless alternate written instructions for its use are provided by a licensed physician.

- Prescription medications: must have the RX information affixed, including your child's name, name of the physician, date the prescription was filled, dosage, duration (start and stop dates), and expiration of the medicine.
- Emergency medications: Epi-pens, inhalers, breathing treatments and other emergency medications will be administered as needed. Medications must be given to teaching staff in advance and put in locked storage. For children diagnosed with life-threatening allergies, an Emergency Plan for Allergic Reactions form must be filled out by the child's physician to be kept on file at the preschool.

### **Ticks**

As a nature-based program, we will spend large portions of the day outdoors. We recommend that you check your child for ticks every day when you return home, especially after a day on the trail.

- **Before Class**  
Apply insect repellent to your child prior to the start of class. Always follow product instructions. Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding the hands, eyes, and mouth.
- **Upon Return Home**  
Check your child's clothing for ticks. Placing clothes into a dryer on high heat for at least an hour effectively kills ticks. Conduct a full body check and bathe soon after returning home. Showering within two hours of coming indoors has been shown to reduce your risk of getting tick-borne illnesses as it helps wash off unattached ticks. If you find a tick, use tweezers or a tick key to remove the tick by pulling the head directly up from the skin. Visit [http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing\\_a\\_tick.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing_a_tick.html) for more information about the proper way to remove ticks. Check all parts of your child's body, including:
  - Under the arms
  - In and around the ears
  - Inside belly button
  - Back of the knees
  - In and around the hair
  - Between the legs and toes
  - Around the waist

### **Restrooms**

Children are free to use the restroom at any time during the day without asking for permission. If a child needs assistance to use the restroom, teachers will be more than happy to help when asked by the child. However, we will first encourage them to try on their own. Potty accidents are common until the age of eight and should not be a major concern unless they are very frequent. Even if your child has been accident-free for months, being in a new environment can cause stress or disrupt the routine they have been used to in their previous care environment. We ask that all children use the restroom at home just prior to coming to school, especially on park days.

### **Mandated Reporters**

Natureplay Preschool teachers are required by law to immediately report any evidence of suspected child abuse or neglect to DCF or to local law enforcement agencies.

### **Wellness Plan**

Natureplay Preschools are dedicated to promoting health, fitness and nutrition for preschool-aged children. We developed a wellness policy for our program based on guidelines from the American Heart Association. Here is our wellness policy:

- Nutrition & Physical Activity Education
  - Nutrition lessons include fun, hands-on activities tailored to the children’s developmental stage and include taste tests, work in school garden and cooking activities.
  - Nutrition education is incorporated with other subjects such as sensory development, language, science, math, and dramatic play.
  - Lesson plans include learning experiences about healthy eating monthly.
  - Center staff are encouraged to attend professional development trainings each year related to nutrition education for children.
- Food & Beverage Practices and Behaviors
  - All snacks for children include a variety of fresh/frozen fruits and vegetables, especially deeply colored ones.
  - Children are gently encouraged to try fruits and vegetables.
  - Water is served with snacks.
- Physical Activity & Screen Time
  - Children will participate in at least 60 minutes of unstructured active play outdoors daily as weather permits.
  - Children will participate in at least 15 minutes of structured active physical activities daily.
  - Our center is a screen-free program.
- Other Activities
  - Celebrations that have food will include fruits, vegetables and other healthy snacks. Families are provided with a list of approved healthy foods and beverages as well as suggestions for non-food activities.
  - Foods and beverages served for family functions at the center will be of healthy options.
  - We will send home a monthly healthy recipe for families to make together at home.

## **Discipline**

Natureplay Preschool is committed to providing children with a healthy, safe, and enjoyable learning experience. Just as children need guidance to learn the ABCs, they need guidance to learn socially acceptable behaviors. Some children will need more guidance than others, and we ask that all families be understanding as we work to help children develop and manage their social and emotional skills. We provide positive direction and guidance through simple, realistic and understandable rules that are consistently observed.

The purpose of discipline is to teach children about self-control, acceptable social behavior, and respect for the rights of others. Our focus on discipline is preventive in nature and is built around constructive, developmentally appropriate behavior management strategies, such as reinforcement of positive behaviors, reminders, redirection, empathy and natural and logical consequences. Our goal is to create an environment that encourages self-discipline and self-regulation. Interventions and consequences focus on as little teacher intervention as possible. This allows children to be internally motivated in developing appropriate behaviors.

Discipline procedures shall be of positive nature and shall not include any form of corporal punishment, verbal abuse, physical restraint, confinement, threats, humiliation, forcing or withholding of food or fear tactics.

Occasionally, children will have a hard time controlling their own behavior in a busy classroom. If a child's behavior is disruptive to the program or to the experience of others, appropriate actions will be taken. Disruptive behavior is defined as behavior that adversely affects the activities of the classroom. Examples include hitting, pushing, biting, kicking, throwing objects, damaging school equipment, or forcefully taking an object from another child. When disruptive behavior occurs, the child will be guided to check on the well-being of the injured child and then a brief discussion will occur that addresses identifying emotions and positive alternative behavior choices. A verbal apology will not be required, rather, the child will need to show the injured child through actions that he/she is sorry. This could be a hug, drawing a picture, a pat on the back or any other appropriate action the injured child finds comforting. Time-outs are used as a method of last resort and are given to allow the child time to calm down and then come back and try again. Parents will be notified of any inappropriate behavior and will be advised of steps taken in eliminating the unacceptable behavior.

If frequent time-outs are needed, or if a child's behavior is consistently disruptive to the program or to others, a teacher will notify the child's parents or guardians and schedule a conference to discuss the child's needs and develop a plan for dealing with the problematic behavior. If a child is engaging in dangerous behaviors or is abusing other children, staff, or property, the parents will be called and the child will be sent home immediately.

Every effort will be made to work with children and their families in resolving problematic behaviors. However, in the rare instances that these problematic behaviors continue even after all possible corrective measures have been implemented, it may be determined that the Natureplay Preschool program cannot meet the needs of the child in question. For the best interests of that child, the preschool program, and the safety of other children, parents may be asked to withdraw their child from the program.

## **Kindergarten Readiness**

The De Soto and Shawnee Mission Public School Districts have provided Natureplay Preschools with information on kindergarten readiness. Social and emotional skills are vital to the success of your school-age, and Natureplay Preschools strongly focuses on these skills daily. Natureplay Preschools are able to address all of the math and literacy standards through hands-on, play-based learning. You can practice these skills at home, as well.

### **Math Readiness for Preschoolers**

- Counting – counting aloud past 10; counting up to 10 objects; using fingers to show a certain number
- Numeral recognition – recognizing most written numbers up to 10
- Writing numbers – practice writing numbers starting at the top of the number
- Number sense – Basic addition and subtraction and estimating
- Sequencing – practice with sequencing written numbers from 0-10/left to right; ordering objects by size from smallest to largest
- Patterning – recognizing and creating patterns

- Comparing – noticing similarities and differences, using math vocab such as larger/smaller, taller/shorter, etc.
- Classifying/sorting – classifying objects by similar characteristics such as size, color, height, shape
- Spatial relationships – geometric shapes and relationships of objects in the environment
  - Square, rectangle, etc.
  - Under, over, on, beside, next to, in front of, behind, in, out, on top of, etc.
- Measuring – non-standard units, such as using paper clips to see how long an object is; classifying based on weight, capacity, length
- Time – morning, afternoon, night, before, after, next, memorizing order of days of weeks, months
- Predicting – What will happen next?
- Problem solving – simple math problems such as “There are 10 grapes and 2 children. How can we make sure that each of you gets the same number of grapes?”

### **Reading Readiness for Preschoolers**

- Recognize his/her written name
- Recite the alphabet
- Recognize many letters of the alphabet
- Match many letters of the alphabet with their most common sound
- Recognize rhymes
- Model the correct way to hold a book
- Understand that text is read left to right, top to bottom
- Echo read simple text
- Understand that text holds meaning
- Re-tell a favorite story
- Have a love of reading

## **Play is Learning**

### **When your child works in the block area, he/she:**

- Uses imagination to create something from his/her own thinking
- Feels proud about making something with his/her own hands
- Learns about size and shape, weight, height and depth, and balance
- Exercises his/her body
- Plays cooperatively with others and learns to compromise
- Communicates ideas through language
- Problem solves and makes decisions
- Creates patterns and discovers symmetry
- Represents personal experiences through role play and pretending
- Compares sizes and measures objects

### **When your child works in the art area, he/she:**

- Enjoys the process of creating art, not the product
- Learns about colors and how to use them
- Uses imagination to transfer ideas onto paper

- Gets emotional satisfaction from being able to express him/herself
- Develops small muscle coordination
- Makes choices and decisions
- Increases language ability while discussing his/her creations
- Develops symbolic representation – the ability to put an idea into symbols
- Learns about shapes, sizes, colors and textures

**When your child plays in the dramatic play area, he/she:**

- Learns about different roles, including mother, father, child, boy, girl and various careers
- Begins to understand what it feels like to be someone else – develops a sense of empathy
- Uses imagination
- Cooperates with other children
- Increases ability to communicate with others about personally meaningful experiences
- Pantomimes actions such as cooking and vacuuming – develops life skills
- Recreates significant events in his/her life
- Learns how to care for others while playing with baby dolls

**When your child works with manipulatives, he/she:**

- Builds self-confidence through accomplishments (completing a puzzle, finishing a game)
- Improves eye-hand coordination and fine muscle strength
- Distinguishes and describes shapes
- Fits things together and takes them apart
- Develops an awareness of symmetry
- Compares and sorts objects
- Uses and describes objects in many different ways
- Recognizes and creates patterns
- Compares numbers and amounts
- Uses addition and subtraction
- Practices counting objects and recognizing numerals

**When your child works in the science center, he/she:**

- Explores cause and effect
- Notices the attributes of natural objects – develops observation skills
- Plays alone or with a small group of peers
- Learns about the world around him/her
- Sorts and classifies objects
- Understands differences between types of animals (mammals, birds, fish)
- Learns about the characteristic of living things
- Learns about physical properties of objects

**When your child works in the sensory tub, he/she:**

- Finds it soothing to bury his/her hands in the sand or pour water in and out of cups
- Learns about size and measuring while experimenting with measuring cups and spoons and different size containers
- Develops a sense of conservation – the ability to recognize that one cup is one cup, regardless of the size of the container

- Discovers that some objects sink while others float; learns about density
- Develops vocabulary, such as empty/full, wet/dry, etc.
- Explores the attributes and functions of materials
- Transforms and combines materials
- Compares quantities

**When your child listens to stories or looks at books, he/she:**

- Develops listening skills
- Increases vocabulary
- Learns about people, places and concepts
- Develops a lifelong love of books and reading
- Visualizes the things he/she is hearing about
- Begins telling stories from pictures and books, in an orderly sequence
- Distinguishes like and different sounds in words (alliteration)
- Recalls information that is seen and heard
- Develops book awareness concepts, such as reading print from top to bottom, left to right
- Realizes that language can be written as well as spoken
- Recognizes letters and words
- Connects letters to their sounds
- Uses emergent reading skills to make sense of books from illustrations
- Learns about people and how they live
- Practices rhyming

**When your child works in music, he/she:**

- Learns about different instruments and their sounds
- Creates melody, rhythm and harmony
- Hears sounds from around the world
- Participates in creative movement
- Builds muscle strength
- Expresses self creatively
- Recreates familiar songs

**When your child plays outside, he/she:**

- Develops gross motor coordination and strength
- Begins to understand his/her abilities
- Learns about safety and caution
- Uses vocabulary to discuss spatial relationships (over/under, next to, above/below)
- Represents experiences through dramatic play
- Experiences the direction of movement of things and people
- Observes and describes weather changes
- Explores the natural environment
- Develops observation skills
- Plays cooperatively in groups
- Learns to take turns and share

**When your child works in the garden, he/she:**

- Learn about proper health and nutrition
- Discovers the origins of food
- Understands the life cycle of plants
- Achieves satisfaction from growing food
- Improves focus and concentration
- Is more willing to taste new foods, especially vegetables
- Learns about seasons and seasonal changes
- Practices counting and measuring skills
- Uses emergent reading skills to read seed packets

*Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.*

*~Albert Einstein*