Nurtured by Nature

Outdoor Elementary School

Parent Handbook

Summer 2025

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**About Outdoor School**

**Welcome Homeschool Families**

Nurtured by Nature is Myrtle Creek, Oregon’s first outdoor school for elementary and middle school age children, primarily for the nurture and encouragement of local homeschoolers. Choosing outdoor education as a part of your child’s education shows your commitment to the environment and nurturing your child’s relationship with nature and the outdoors. Science shows that the relationship between a child and the time spent in nature has a direct correlation to their overall well being. We hope you find a community of like minded, caring families who are here to support and encourage one another.

**Our Philosophy**

Children are intrinsically motivated to learn. They do so through play and exploring the world around them. At Nurtured by Nature Outdoor School, we foster a child’s natural sense of wonder as we gently move between instructor-led and child-driven play and activities. The concepts of numeracy, literacy, culture, and science, geography, writing, art and history are supported throughout our daily rhythms. We utilise the forest as our classroom because research shows that experiences in nature are essential for the healthy growth and development of children. The forest and parks provide a space where children can explore the natural world & learn to ask relevant questions, develop problem-solving skills & processes for thinking and searching for answers, & learn how to live, work, & communicate cooperatively. We create a setting where children can grow into citizens of the world; respecting all cultures, creatures, and environments.

**Mission**

Nurtured by Nature’s mission is to foster a deep connection to nature in young children by providing rich experiences and unstructured time in nature. Our teachers support children’s learning in nature by facilitating child-led curriculum. We are committed to creating an environment that fosters a culture of inclusion, diversity, equity and a sense of belonging for the families in our community.

**Our Curriculum**

At Nurtured by Nature, children are given theopportunity to explore, run, jump, climb, stomp, build, balance, dig, measure, record and play in nature at their own pace. Of course, this results in a great deal of physical fitness. Our curriculum is child-led and encourages the children to learn to slow down and observe which in turn, creates a respect for nature.

**Program Information/Schedule**

**Hours of Operation and Class Options**

**Hours: T, W, or Th 10am-12m or 2pm-4pm**

**Class Options: Summer Classes.**

1 Days/week T,W, or Th -morning currently enrolling

1 Days/week T,W, or TH -afternoon currently enrolling

**Tuition**

$30 per week/ 1 day per week/ 2 hours per session

Sibling Discounts: second child 5%/ third child 10%

**Tuition Policy**

Parents who choose to come on an irregular basis, may pay on a class by class basis. You may bring a check, cash or pay online the day of the class. Students will not be turned away if payment is late. Please talk to Vanessa directly to make arrangements.

WEEKLY STUDENTS: Payment due by the 1st day of the month. There is a $15 fee for payments more than 7 days late. Each family is responsible for tuition regardless of their child’s attendance. We are happy to arrange a payment plan for your family.

*NOTE: There is no reduction in tuition for missed days due to sickness or vacations.*

Refunds: Tuition refunds will be prorated to the end of the term. Refund does not include the cost of supplies purchased at the start of term. This is non-refundable.

**Fees**

A portion of your tuition in the amount of **$100** will be used for purchasing supplies including journals, books, art materials, science equipment, extra snacks and clothes etc. This portion of your tuition is considered a “fee” and is **NON-Refundable**.

**Staffing and Supervision**

Our teacher:student ratio is 1:6

Though students will have some autonomy throughout the day, they will be with the group within hearing distance and usually within eyesight of the teacher at all times. All teachers and staff are required to pass a background check and have first aid and CPR training. They will carry a first aid kit with them at all times.

**A Typical Day**

Morning Session:

9:30-9:45AM: Staff arrive

10:00 AM: Student arrival, drop off at Park

10:10 AM: Morning meeting

10:30-11:00AM Free play and exploration

11:00AM Bathroom and Snack Break

11:15-11:30AM Group Game/Activity

11:30-12 noon: Quiet Reflection, Art and Journaling Time

12:00 Noon: Morning session ends, pick-up at park

Afternoon Sessions

2:00PM: Drop Off at park (parents are welcome to stay and visit)

2:10 PM: Afternoon meeting

2:30-3:00PM Free play and exploration

3:00PM Bathroom and Snack Break

3:15PM- 3:30pm Group Game/Activity

3:30-4:00PM: Quiet Reflection, Art and Journaling Time

4:00PM: Afternoon session ends, pick-up at park

**Parent Information: What to Bring to Outdoor School**

**Backpacks, Clothing and Footwear:**

We are an outdoor school and children must be dressed appropriately for the environment and the weather. As such, good quality footwear is essential. Hiking boots or supportive shoes with a back strap and covered toes work great. NO OPEN TOED SHOES. For boots, pick something waterproof, warm and easy for the child to take on and off. We may recommend brands, but do not require any specific brands.

Some brands we like: Bogs, Kamik, Keens, Merrill, Keen and Western Chief\*

\*Western Chief are not warm by themselves and will need a liner.

Be aware that the children will be outdoors daily in all kinds of weather (cold/rain/snow/sunshine). They will get dirty, so make sure that the clothes they wear are OK to get wet, muddy and maybe even torn. Kids will play hard, and they need to be comfortable and worry free.

Winter:

All clothing needs to be able to get dirty or wet

* An extra change of clothes (including underwear)
* Extra pair of socks(wool or wool/silk blend) and shoes
* Long Underwear(wool, wool/silk or synthetic)
* Snow pants and boots
* Winter coat, gloves/mittens, hat -waterproof(gloves esp)
* Water bottle -leak-proof,at least 11oz reusable,

but light enough for the child to carry

* Sunblock

Spring/Fall:

 All clothing needs to be able to get dirty or wet

* An extra change of clothes (including underwear)
* Extra pair of socks(wool or wool/silk blend) and shoes
* A light jacket or sweater
* Rain jacket (with hood), rain pants and rain boots
* Water bottle -leak-proof,at least 11oz reusable,

but light enough for the child to carry

* Sunblock

Summer:

 All clothing needs to be able to get dirty or wet

* An extra change of clothes (including underwear)
* Hat -UPF rated
* Water bottle -leakproof,at least 11oz reusable,

but light enough for the child to carry

* Insect repellent
* Sunblock

Rain suits or rain bibs are very useful for staying dry while splashing in puddles and streams. For younger kids, we like Oakiwear, Tuffi and Polarn.

The school will have extra clothing on hand to supplement the wardrobe of the children in emergencies.

BE SURE TO LABEL all supplies/clothing/footwear with your child’s name. Children should NOT bring toys to school.

**What goes in the backpack:**

Children will need to carry their own backpack while at school. Backpack needs to be a day-pack that your child can comfortably carry. Their backpack will need to contain:

1. water bottle
2. journal\*
3. snack
4. writing/ drawing tools\*
5. magnifying glass\*
6. sunblock
7. insect repellent as needed

\*supplied by the school

Students will also need room in their backpack for their coat, hat or gloves when they get too hot.

**Snacks:**

Students burn a lot of calories playing hard outside. They will need healthy high protein snacks to keep them going through the day. We request 100% no waste, reusable packaging as we are a no/ low waste school. On cold days, a thermos of hot soup, tea, or hot chocolate is a good idea, too.

**Hazards:**

Our teachers set the following expectations for the children:

Climbing:

Children love to balance on logs and climb up trees! Children are permitted to climb as high as they are tall, and must be able to reach that height by themselves (teachers will not lift them up to a place that they cannot reach themselves).

Throwing:

Children are permitted to throw sticks, acorns, and other natural objects AWAY from the group, and away from trails or other places people might be walking. Teachers will help define throwing zones when needed.

Fire:

No fires at this time, due to the burn ban

Exploring:

Children are taught to stay within the boundaries set by teachers at all times. This typically means that children are directly in sight of a teacher, but occasionally the forest and park topography means a child is out of sight, but within boundaries and within voice range. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that students do not accidentally stray from the group. Children who deliberately run from or leave the group will be asked to withdraw for safety reasons.

Wildlife:

Children are taught to be gentle with living things and to ask a teacher before touching or picking up any wildlife they find in the woods or near the creek.

Wild Edibles:

Teachers will explore some basic, easily identifiable wild edibles with children (oregon grapes, and wood sorrel for example). As part of this exploration, children are taught to never eat anything from nature without permission from an adult.

Sticks:

Playing with sticks is part of childhood. We know that children will collect, carry, swing, dig, throw, and sword-fight with sticks. Children are taught that they must carry sticks with one end in their hand and the other end pointing down. Just like with throwing, children who wish to swing sticks are directed to find a safe space away from other people. Fantasy play, including sword-fighting, is generally acceptable as long as the play does not involve physical contact and the level of imaginary violence is not distressing to children who are not involved in the game. Teachers will redirect play that crosses physical or emotional safety boundaries.

Water:

Our explorations may take us to the South Umpqua River, or North Myrtle Creek or even to one of the many nearby reservoirs. Children are closely supervised at all times when playing in the water. Because streams may have sharp rocks or other debris, children are required to wear rain boots, water shoes, closed toed sandals, or old sneakers for wading.

Ticks:

Of course, a school with a focus on nature is going to spend time in wild, natural areas! Ticks transmit various disease-causing agents from animals to humans. Ticks are found in Myrtle Creek and surrounding areas. Teachers will conduct multiple tick checks throughout the day.

All embedded ticks will be removed by NbN personnel during the day and parents will be notified. Adopting a routine of tick awareness, being smartly dressed, using repellent and doing complete tick checks on a regular basis is our best defense against tick borne illnesses.

Before Going Outside:

Wear light colored clothing to spot ticks easily.

Wear enclosed shoes, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and shirt into pants. Check clothes, gear and any exposed skin frequently for ticks.

The CDC recommends repellent that contains 20 percent or more DEET, picaridin, or IR3535 on exposed skin for protection that lasts several hours and using products that contain permethrin on clothing. Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks and tents with products containing 0.5% permethrin. It remains protective through several hours.

Many outdoor school parents use essential oil blends and other natural insect repellents.

After Going Outside:

Check your clothing, gear, and pets for ticks. Tick Check. Conduct a full-body tick check upon return from potentially tick infested areas. This includes your backyard. Use a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body. Done properly, we believe that a thorough tick check after going outside is the most effective technique to protect our students from tick borne illnesses. We encourage all families that spend a great time in their backyards, walking in the woods, and playing outside, to adopt an every 12 hour tick check protocol.

Parents should consult with their health care professional if your camper develops any of these symptoms: fever, chills, headaches, restless sleep, muscle and joint aches, swollen lymph nodes, or a “bulls-eye” rash which occurs in approximately 70 to 80 percent of infected persons. The rash begins at the site of a tick bite after a delay of 3 to 30 days (average is about 7 days).

For more information please go to the following web sites

Center for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html

Oregon Health Authority: <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/pages/index.aspx>

**Temperature and Extreme Weather**: We will be outside in almost all weather! There is no standard guideline for when it is too hot or cold to be outside. A sunny, 20 degree February day with no wind can feel much warmer than a 50 degree April day with wind and rain! Teachers will be mindful of temperature, precipitation, and wind chill, as well as of the physical and emotional state of the children. The group will move to a covered area if extreme cold is impacting the group. Covered spaces will also be used in the event of thunderstorms or hail. Though, in the event of extreme weather lasting more than 30-40 minutes, parents will be asked to come pick up their children.

Weather Closures:

Nurtured by Nature is the only outdoor school in Douglas County, and we draw families from many surrounding areas. We use the South Umpqua School District’s weather related closings as our guide to unsafe weather for travel to Myrtle Creek. If local area public schools have canceled for the day, we will follow their lead and do the same. We will notify you in two ways: by email and by telephone (text or call).

Sun Safety:

Extended exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UV) from the sun can cause painful sunburn and over a long period of time can lead to skin cancer. The CDC recommends that individuals spending long periods of time outdoors wear a “broad spectrum” sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.

Please make sure your child wears sunscreen to school every day, even on cloudy days they are exposed to UV.

Teachers will make sure sunscreen is re-applied as needed throughout the day.

Other precautions to prevent overexposure include wearing a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and long pants and sleeves.

**Program Event Calendar**

**September 2024 -June 2025**

**September 12 -First Meet-up**

**9/22 -First Day of Autumn**

**10/14 -Indigenous People’s Day**

**10/31 -Halloween**

**11/3 -Daylight Savings Ends**

**11/5 -Election Day (no school)**

**11/11 -Veteran's Day (no school)**

**11/27-11/28 -Thanksgiving Break**

**12/21 -First Day of Winter**

**12/23-01/4- Winter Break (no school)**

**01/20 -MLK jr. Day (no school)**

**02/14 -Valentine’s Day**

**02/17 -President’s Day (no school)**

**03/09 -Daylight Savings Begins**

**03/20 -First Day of Spring**

**04/14 -04/18 -Spring Break**

**04/22 -Earth Day**

**05/11 -Mother’s Day**

**05/26 -Memorial Day (no school)**

**05/ 15 -Father’s Day**

**05/19 -Juneteenth**

**05/20 -First Day of Summer**

**05/20 -Last Day of School celebration!**

These dates are subject to change to meet specific needs. We will keep parents updated if we do have to change anything.

**Policies**

**Sick Policy/ Covid -19**

Not feeling well? A sick child, or a child coming down with an illness can have trouble maintaining their body temperature. If a child becomes ill at Nurtured by Nature Outdoor School, we will call for a parent or caregiver to come pick him or her up.

If a student or staff member exhibits any of the potential symptoms of Covid-19 or is exposed to someone who is known Covid-19+, he/she will be asked to stay home until they a) have been tested and received a negative test and/or b) have been symptom free for 5 days. According to CDC.gov: Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

* Fever or chills
* Cough
* Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
* Fatigue
* Muscle or body aches
* Headache
* New loss of taste or smell
* Sore throat
* Congestion or runny nose
* Nausea or vomiting
* Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms. CDC will continue to update this list as we learn more about COVID-19. Please See Our Updated Emergency Procedures on pp.17-18.

If a child has had any of the following symptoms in the last 24 hours before the morning of class, please don’t bring them: fever, vomiting, upset stomach, stomach ache, sore throat, diarrhea, skin problems, body aches, sneezing, coughing, eye or nose drainage, sibling highly contagious or any other symptom you think might indicate they are just coming down with something. For your children’s & other’s health, please be OK with him/her having a full day of wellness before returning. If you have any questions or your child just tends to have a runny nose or a cough for days after an illness, talk to your teacher. If medication is necessary for your child,to make it through the day, or lower his/ her fever, DO NOT bring them. Please DO NOT give your child medicine to bring to school (including vitamins, herbs & homeopathic meds). If there were contagious illnesses recently in your household, please inform us (flu, etc.).

Parents will be asked to pick their children up from school if they come down with any of the above conditions while at school.

*Please note: Any outbreak of communicable disease will be communicated to all parents.*

Should your child become ill during the day, we will contact parents immediately. Please ensure that your phone number and other contact information is kept up-to-date. If parents cannot be reached, we will call an emergency contact. During this time, the child will be cared for in a quiet, calm area. In this case, the parents will be notified of the location for pick-up.

**Hand-washing**

We get into plenty of messes at NbN! Hand sanitizer is available outside all times. Staff remind children to wash their hands when leaving the bathroom and before eating. Soap and water will always be used when available, but sometimes when we are eating in the woods or on the trail we will use hand sanitizer instead.

**Allergies**

Allergic reactions can range from mild and uncomfortable to severe and potentially life threatening.

* If your child carries an epi-pen please notify the staff and we will prepare a health plan.

**Medication Administration**

All medications, sunscreen and bug spray should be administered by a parent or the child prior to drop off. By Oregon Health Authority regulations, all medications must be self-administered unless the child is unable to do so.

**Immunization Policy**

Children must have a current physical (within the last calendar year) and a record of required immunizations before he/she can attend school. You may submit a letter for religious exemption of immunizations.

**Discipline Policy**

We use positive reinforcement and acknowledge and validate each child’s emotions. We investigate conflict with the children to understand all perspectives. We see “conflict” as a normal part of childhood (and life!) and help the children navigate by offering choices and appropriate language. Teachers will often “hang back” if children are working through a conflict and only intercede if they appear to need assistance.

We use intentional language with the children. Instead of general praise (i.e. Good Job!) we are specific about a child’s work, i.e. “You used many colors in your painting,” or “You tried hard to work through that problem.” Instead of saying, “I love your painting!” which sets children up to seek out external praise, we might say “You added so many details to your picture.” We do not make children “say sorry” but instead request that children acknowledge what may have been inappropriate behavior and listen to others’ feelings and thoughts if other children were involved. If they choose to say sorry, we want it to be authentic.

For inspiration, our staff utilizes the principles of Conscious Discipline as outlined in Conscious Discipline by Dr. Becky Bailey and consciousdiscipline.com

Any form of corporal punishment, hitting, abusive language, ridicule, or harsh, humiliating, or frightening treatment is absolutely prohibited at NbN and is not tolerated. A child may be separated from the group if their actions pose a safety issue to other children or if their behavior is incredibly disruptive to the group. A child will then work with an adult to self-regulate before rejoining the group.

Children who are continually causing difficulties often need extra help. In these instances, we may:

* hold meetings with parents and teacher
* advise parents of available professional evaluation options
* help families connect to outside professionals

We will not allow children to strike, bite or kick each other or a teacher or to destroy property. In the natural world, this means we will not permit children to kill wildlife (including insects,) break branches off living trees, or pull up grass.

Nurtured by Nature reserves the right to request the removal of a child. Such a request will be made if it becomes apparent that the safety and well-being of children or staff members are in jeopardy. Nurtured by Nature may also make this request if it appears that our program is not a good match for the child or family.

To prevent discipline issues, we always provide adequate supervision, offer stimulating activities and ample time for free play and projects, distract, humor, offer notice when activities are close to ending, and meet as a team to decide on best practices for certain behaviors and situations. We require children to participate in clean up rituals and strive to make “chores” fun.

**Open Door Policy**

Parents are always welcome! Parents may visit at any time but visits need to be pre arranged with the teacher. While visiting, we ask that parents observe and encourage their child(ren) to adhere to our rules and routines. In order to assure as smooth a transition as possible, we ask that you refrain from visiting during the first month of school. This is a special time, both for your child and the staff. We do ask that if you plan on bringing friends or other family members to visit that you pre-arrange.

**How to Get Involved**

We always appreciate parents who can help with projects, join us for a walk, read a story, or share something special about themselves with the class. Please discuss these possibilities with us.

Opportunities to be involved include:

* School Celebrations Photography
* Reading to students
* Marketing assistance
* Musical presentations
* Birthdays
* Collecting good quality used gear

**Non-Discrimination Policy**

Nurtured by Nature Outdoor Elementary School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, veteran status, marital status, or any other characteristic protected under federal or state law. Nurtured by Nature Outdoor Elementary School strives to be inclusive and welcomes children of all backgrounds and abilities. If children are able to follow instructions and be safe while at school, they are encouraged to join. If a child has behavioral issues which become a danger to themselves, staff or other students, they will be asked to leave. If a student is able to participate, but needs a full -time aid, we would love to work with you, aid or DSP must be provided by the family.

**Confidentiality**

Nurtured by Nature Outdoor Elementary School respects the privacy of every child and family and holds confidential all records regarding your child’s personal information. All records will be kept secure in the child’s file in the office. Only the teachers and staff have access to these records.Nurtured by Nature will always seek your permission to share information with other professionals.

**General Information**

**Facilities**

We are located in Myrtle Creek, Oregon “Where Nature is Your Neighbor,” and utilize the beautiful parks in and around the community. These parks include, but are not limited to:

* Millsite Park, plus the area along the river beyond the disc golf range
* Evergreen Park
* Creekside Park
* North Myrtle Park
* South Umpqua Skate Park/ Library/ Pool area
* Stanton Park, Canyonville, OR
* Pickett Park, Canyonville, OR
* Amacher Park, Winchester, OR
* Iverson Memorial Park, Roseburg, OR

**Contact Information**

Mailing Address: PO BOX 642, Myrtle Creek, OR 97457

Email:nurturedbynatureoutdoorschool@gmail.com

Website:nurturedbynatureschool.com

Cell phones:

Vanessa: 206-778-5819

Clint: 206-412-4664

**Updated Emergency Procedures** May 27, 2020, August 13, 2021, March 30, 2024

**Communicable Disease Plan**

This plan will be updated regularly according to OHA guidelines.

\*COVID-19 protocols are not in place at this current time.

Masks are No Longer Required, but are welcome!

ALL staff are required to be fully vaccinated for Covid-19 before returning to work.

Do NOT bring your child to school if they have or recently have had an illness with fever or cough. They should remain home for at least 10 days after illness onset and until 72 hours after fever is gone, without use of fever reducing medicine, and COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, and/or diarrhea) are improving.

Staff are NOT to work and families are NOT to bring children who have been exposed to a confirmed or presumptive case of COVID-19. The exposed individual needs to be quarantined for a minimum of 14 days after their last date of exposure to a known case. Staff or students who have a family member at home with symptoms of COVID-19 who have not been tested need to be monitored for symptoms carefully. The ill family or household member should be strongly encouraged to seek testing.

Hand-washing and cleanliness: All students and staff will wash hands frequently (e.g., before and after meals, after using the restroom, after sneezing, blowing our nose, or coughing) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (CDC guidance).

Please encourage your child to practice proper respiratory etiquette. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow; throw the tissue away immediately into a garbage receptacle; and clean hands after covering coughs and sneezes, and after throwing away used tissues.

Screening for Symptoms: If a student displays symptoms, we will evaluate the temperature. If a student has a temperature beyond 100.4 parents/guardians will be notified to immediately take the student home. Staff will check for a new cough and fever for anyone entering the school area or interacting with students and staff. Individuals with a fever over 100.4° F will not be allowed to come to school.

Individuals who have a cough that is not a new onset cough (e.g. asthma, allergies, etc.) will not be excluded from instruction.

Emergency Plan Policy

In the event of an emergency, we will shelter in place under the covered area at Millsite Park or the gazebo at Evergreen Park, by the restroom at North Myrtle Park, outside Tommy’s at Creekside park, at the covered area when at Maggie Steinbaugh park, the gazebo at Amacher Park, while at Stanton Park, we will shelter under the covered pavilion. At Pickett Park, we will meet at the parking lot opposite the boat launch. Finally, at Iverson Park, we will meet at the drop off area around the picnic table.