

Heritage Park Nature Preschool FAQs

The Heritage Park Nature Preschool provides a meaningful and immersive nature-based learning program for children ages 3-5. Children's time is spent outdoors connecting deeply with nature, while participating in research-based curriculum focused on play and discovery. While there are similar learning objectives to a traditional preschool, your child's experience will be far from conventional.

Is the Nature Preschool a licensed or certified childcare program?

The Nature Preschool is a Great Start to Quality star-rated, licensed childcare center by the State of Michigan (LARA). Preschool Leads are state certified teachers and/or meet all the state requirements to lead Early Education and are Forest School Certified. Directors, Lead Teachers and Assistants meet all the teaching requirements outlined by state childcare licensing (LARA).

What are the ages for Nature Preschool?

Children need to be at least three years old, but under the age of 6 by September 1st.

Does my child have to be potty-trained?

Yes. We understand accidents happen and potty-training is a journey. We do our best to support all children as they master this skill. Circumstances may require you to come pick-up your child from class. Due to state licensing requirements, diapers/pull-ups are not allowed. If accidents become frequent, then we will meet as a team and decide on next steps.

How do I register?

Register Online. There is limited space in the program. Registration secures your place in our program and is a required non-refundable payment of \$125 for residents and \$150 for non-residents. If you have trouble, call the Nature Center. Registration opens the last Thursday in January, every year.

Once registered, you can select your tuition payment option (quarterly/annually)

- Save 5% by paying the ONE-TIME annual tuition rate (Due Sept 1).
- ANNUAL TUITION: M/W/F=\$3,097 OR T/TH=\$2,303
- A quarterly payment plan (without the discount) is also available. Quarterly tuition payments are required online and are DUE Sept 1, Nov 1, Jan 1 and Mar 1

- M/W/F=\$815/quarter OR T/TH=\$606/quarter
- Contact the Nature Center for info on Sibling Discounts & Scholarships

Paying by Credit Card

- When paying tuition by credit card an Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) agreement form is required. The form is DUE at or before the mandatory parent meeting.
- The agreement enrolls you in autopay. The credit card on file is charged either once for the annual tuition option OR each quarter (Sept 1, Nov 1, Jan 1, Mar 1) for the quarterly option.

What happens if my tuition is late?

A \$10 late fee will be added for every day a tuition payment is past due. If tuition is more than 2 weeks late your registration will be canceled, and the open spot offered to the waitlist. The registration fee must be paid again before the next class. Admittance is based on availability.

What is your Withdrawal, Refund & Transfer Policy?

- If a child must miss class due to illness, vacation or other personal reason, no refund will be issued.
- Withdrawal/refund requests must be submitted in writing or via email to the Director or Lead Teacher.
- Annual or Quarterly tuition refund requests must be submitted at least 30 days in advance of student's last day to receive a full refund for future dates, minus a \$10 admin fee.
- Families notifying the school of unenrollment less than 30 days in advance will not receive a refund for classes within the initial 30 days. Credit due back to the family will be calculated beginning the 31st day after notification, minus a \$10 admin fee.
- No refunds are offered for class dates that have already passed, regardless of child's attendance.
- The Pre-enrollment Registration Fee (\$125/\$150) is non-refundable.
- If tuition is more than 2 weeks late, the student will be unenrolled from preschool. The registration fee will need to be paid again to re-enroll. A spot is not guaranteed.
- Transfers are not guaranteed and only available if there is a spot in the class.

What is the Nature Preschool Class Schedule?

The Nature Preschool class schedule Tuesday and Thursday (2-day option OR Monday, Wednesday and Friday (3-day option). Families must also choose between AM (9am-Noon) or PM (1-4pm). We do NOT offer a full day option.

The Nature Preschool runs a full school year from September (after Labor Day) to early June. There may be days off for Holidays, Staff Trainings and other closures. Planned closures are already accounted for in your tuition. A school calendar is available online.

What if there is a Wait List for Preschool?

Nature Preschool classes are popular and fill quickly! If there is a wait list for a Nature Preschool class, you're encouraged to join the list online. There is not charge. Registering for the wait list does NOT guarantee your spot. When a spot opens you will be notified by email or phone. The first family to respond with registration payment will receive the spot. Once the waitlist has been cleared, the spot will open back up to the public.

What forms do I need to complete & submit?

A complete list of forms will be available in the Family Handbook. The following are required:

- Child Information Record Form
- Health Appraisal Form and Physical
- Proof of Immunization (or signed waiver by the Dept. of Community Health)
- Signed Field Trip Waiver
- EPACT Account Information Online (Emergency Contact Information, Allergy Info, Special Instructions, Approved pick-up list, etc.)
- Electronic Fund Transfer Agreement (if paying tuition via credit card)

MANDATORY informational and paperwork meetings

At least one parent/guardian per student is REQUIRED to attend a mandatory informational meeting to go over what to expect in Nature Preschool. The meetings are scheduled for late winter through summer (before the start of the school year). An online sign-up will be available in late winter. Paperwork is also completed at or before the meeting.

What will drop-off and pick-up look like?

Most days, child drop-off and pick-up will be OUTSIDE at the Nature Center. There may be days where our adventures take us to other areas of the park for pick-up or drop off. You will be notified of these changes in advance.

Will Snacks be provided?

Parents are responsible for sending their child with a healthy, **nut-free** snack. Children should also bring a refillable water bottle. Please make sure their items are labeled with their name. In an emergency or on occasion, the Nature Preschool has snacks available. A family member will be notified before food is given to the child. Snacks will not be provided on a regular basis.

How are you encouraging children and staff to have healthy hygiene?

Each class will be given instructions on what healthy hygiene looks like. Reminders include...

- Wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer throughout the day, before snack and after blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing.
- Sneeze or cough in the crease of their elbow.
- Avoid touching their face, especially their eyes, nose and mouth.
- If we eat our snack inside, staff are required to clean and sanitize tables before and after snack.

Will children or staff have to wear masks?

Currently, masks are optional for children and staff. If this policy changes a notification will be shared with parents in advance.

Will health checks be completed at drop off?

Preschool Staff will not conduct daily health checks at drop-off. Families should do their own health check before each class and keep children home if they have experienced any of the following:

1. Has your child had a fever (temperature over 100.4) in the last 24 hours?
2. Does your child have any of the following symptoms?
 - Nausea/Vomiting or Diarrhea (excluding diarrhea from a known condition)

- At least two of the following symptoms: cough, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell and/or extreme fatigue.

If your child begins to experience any symptoms during the day, you will be notified and asked to pick them up within 30 minutes of our call. The child and other members of the household participating are to remain home until confirmation of diagnosis can be made. **Your child should be free of fever, diarrhea & vomiting for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication to return to class.** If a child has COVID-19 a minimum 5-day quarantine is required after symptoms begin or when they receive positive test. Children can return to class after the 5-day period, if symptoms have improved.

Will the Teachers be certified? Who are the Teachers?

Our Preschool Director and Lead Teachers are certified teachers or have met all state licensing requirements to fill the lead teaching role. The Preschool Director and Lead Teacher are also Forest School Certified. The Assistant Teachers are trained in Early Childhood Programming, Interpretation and Environmental Education. Staff are also trained in CPR/First Aid and are Certified Interpretive Guides. On occasion, experienced and approved volunteers and/or Nature Center Staff may assist with the program.

What curriculum will you be using?

The use of emergent curriculum in nature allows children to experience a sense of happiness and empowerment while they learn. Lessons are tailored to meet the skill-level of each student and the interests of the class. Research shows that by using this child-led approach, the chance of creating a lifelong learner improves. Activities that take place outdoors in the natural world stimulate all the senses, bringing each lesson to life. Nature also gives children the opportunity to practice handling success and failure, leading to real-world problem solving. There is constant communication and teamwork between children in this setting, which builds social and emotional skills. In a learning environment that is safe but allows for risk taking, a sense of personal confidence is developed. Trust between the students and the teachers is central.

At Heritage Park Nature Preschool “nature comes alive” and offers a variety of learning opportunities. These opportunities provide the teachable moments for the following areas of focus: Social and Emotional Connections

• Physical and Mental Wellness	• Mathematics
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and Literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Studies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Arts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing and Reflection

From our Forest School philosophy, children will also gain 21st century skills like:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive functions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem Solving and Decision Making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation and Collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills and Communication

What if my child has disabilities, allergies or special instructions?

We welcome all children (ages 3-5) into our program. Please communicate any special instructions regarding your child with the Preschool Director or Lead Teacher.

While we cannot guarantee that our facility is 100% nut-free, we discourage families from sending snacks containing nuts.

We will do everything possible to accommodate & include children with disabilities. If a documented disability requires additional/outside assistance, we will work with parents to request these services.

What are the class sizes and ratios?

Nature Preschool follows all state requirements for student to teacher ratios. We strive to keep our ratios as low as possible, using the Forest School guidelines of 1:6. Class sizes vary, but are between 8-18 children per class, depending on enrollment and the needs of the group.

Are scholarships available?

Limited need-based scholarships are available. Please inquire with the Preschool Director or Nature Center Supervisor at (248) 473-1870 for more information.

What is the Daily Schedule or Routine?

An example of the daily schedule will be provided in the Family Handbook available upon registration. Communication about our nature experiences will be shared weekly with parents via email. The general routine is Arrival, Outdoor Play & Choice time, Community

Circle, Hike-Exploration & Discovery, Snack & Literacy, Sit Spot and Community Circle

Will students be outside year-round?

YES! We will be spending class time OUTDOORS, experiencing meaningful and research-based curriculum while we connect with & explore the natural world. If unsafe weather occurs, class activities will be moved into our licensed classroom at the Nature Center. Children should come prepared for the weather every day. A packing and preparedness list will be provided in the Family Handbook. On extremely cold or wet days, students may be indoors for a portion of the class for a warming activity. It is rare that students are indoors for more than 1 hour. Expect your child to get wet and/or dirty during class.

Will there be a family informational meeting or open house before classes begin?

Yes, our annual Open House to meet our Staff and your fellow preschool families is usually the 3rd Tuesday in August. If you would like to meet with the Preschool Director or Lead Teacher(s) please request an appointment by calling the Nature Center (248) 473-1870. We will do our best to accommodate your request. We also host optional parent/teacher conferences in May to review your child's assessment