



Nature School  
OF YORK

# PARENT & GUARDIAN HANDBOOK



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Welcome Letter</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Nature School of York</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Vision	
Mission	
Diversity and Inclusion Policy	
Child-Centered Learning	
<b>About Our Program</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Why nature-based curriculum?	
Why choose a nature-based school?	
<b>Student Assessment</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Enrollment</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Tuition and Fees</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Arrival and Departures</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Attendance Policy</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Clothing</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>School Calendar and Closings</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Communication</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Ticks, Bees, and Mud</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Adjustment Period</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Health and Illness</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Emergency and Safety</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Inclement Weather Policy</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Approach to Discipline</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Regulations</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Family Events and Involvement</b> .....	<b>19</b>



**Nature  
School**  
OF YORK



## Welcome to Nature School of York!

We are thrilled that your child will be joining us this year to explore the wonders that nature-based education provides! Our students develop while forming deep connections with nature and each other. What could be a more amazing way to enjoy school? We hope you will also feel a sense of joy as your child grows with us.

This handbook was created to help answer questions about our policies and procedures. Please feel free to contact us about your child's experience at any time.

Kind wishes,

**Melissa Klinger**

Principal and Educator, Nature School of York







## VISION

By connecting children with the earth and each other, we are creating a conscious generation committed to a sustainable future.

## MISSION

Nature School of York is a community dedicated to spirited learning, imagination, and outdoor adventures. Our approach is holistic as we focus on the growth of the whole child and foster a sense of belonging to and appreciation of the natural world.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

Nature School of York aims to provide an environment which is free from bias and prejudice in which children learn the principles of fairness and respect for the uniqueness of each person. Differences in backgrounds, culture and abilities are valued and families are actively encouraged to share their experiences with educators, staff, and other families. Nature School of York involves the community to assist educators and children understand and accept the range of cultures and abilities of members of the local community. Nature School of York will ensure that appropriate support services are accessed and referred to families in order to support children's well-being and inclusion into our program.

## CHILD-CENTERED LEARNING

Nature School of York is an independent, non-public, co-ed school. We follow the tenets of Sacred Earth Fellowship, an organization dedicated to fostering a sense of belonging to, and appreciation of, the natural world.

Our educational philosophy underscores our commitment to child-centered learning. Educators guide students to new learning as children ask questions, express curiosity or concern, and show enthusiasm toward discoveries.

Students experiment, problem-solve, and explore with their senses. They voice opinions and express ideas through language and arts. Students develop friendships and learn from one another in mixed-age classes. In other words, our students actively participate in all aspects of learning!

Our school tailors education to meet the needs of each individual student. Young minds are best suited to the small, outdoor, mixed age classes we provide. Our state certified educators follow a natural approach to learning. Our teachers meet students where they are, encouraging their individual interests to further develop their skills. As a result, students minds and bodies remain active and engaged, while their spirits are free to question and explore.



## ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

### WHY NATURE-BASED CURRICULUM?

There is a growing body of research that links nature-based learning with higher scores on standardized tests, improved physical fitness, a more developed understanding of science and math concepts, reduced effects of ADHD and better academic performance all around.\*

Nature-based curriculum encourages healthy minds and bodies. Being connected to nature is wired in the essence of every human being. Busy modern lives have left many people, including children, disconnected from this core. Through nature-based curriculum, children learn with all of their senses and build a lasting connection with nature.

Our program provides a complete framework of skills children need to be prepared for life. Physical, social, emotional, cognitive and creative skills blossom during childhood. We are always learning through the lens of nature.

*\*Sources: The Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv and the Children & Nature Network [www.childrenandnature.org](http://www.childrenandnature.org).*

### WHY CHOOSE A NATURE-BASED SCHOOL?

In contrast to traditional programs:

- We are outdoors as much as possible every day
- Children develop earth friendly habits
- Learning is child-led
- Mindfulness activities are part of our daily routine
- Children are seen for what they can do, rather than what they can't do
- Our mixed-age classes promote cooperation rather than competition, encourage friendship, and increase self-esteem
- Students feel comfortable making mistakes in a caring environment
- There is a sense of belonging to the group and the earth
- Teachers model listening skills, patience, empathy, and responsibility
- We acknowledge and respect each others perspective and feelings





## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Our student evaluation is rooted in authentic assessment. Learning styles, interests and skill levels become evident as teachers informally observe students daily.

We use a variety of authentic assessment tools that help us gain insight about children's cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical and self-help skills.

Because we utilize authentic assessment, it is informal and happens as a routine part of teacher observations. Student assessment is ongoing as teachers plan curriculum tailored to each child's needs. We track student progress and gather materials for student portfolios throughout the year. This information helps guide our curriculum and ensures that we are providing the right opportunities, specific to each child, for skill development.

Grade-school students are provided with a portfolio at the end of the year. The portfolio is a collection of a student's work that helps to illustrate the progress and skill development a child makes over the course of the school year. Work samples are included to demonstrate skill development in all areas

We invite parents to be part of the assessment process by sharing or suggesting areas of development where their child may need extra support. Please share your thoughts with staff at any time. We strive to be sensitive to family values, culture, identity and home language in all areas of our assessment.

This kind of on-going authentic assessment, combined with frequent parent dialogue, helps provide insight about progress made over the course of a school year. Unlike tightly structured standardized evaluations, authentic assessment highlights a child's progress in a dynamic, holistic way-- It provides a true vision of what skills a child has achieved and what s/he has yet to master (*National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2003; revised in 2009*).





## ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

Nature School of York is a non-public school owned and operated by Sacred Earth Fellowship, a religious organization dedicated to connecting people to nature. Nature School of York is an authorized K-8 school recognized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Enrollment is for the duration of the school year: September through June.

### APPLICATION

To enroll, fill out an application form online at [natureschoolofyork.org](http://natureschoolofyork.org) and submit it with the application fee. If space is available, we will send an enrollment contract. Within two weeks you must sign and return the contract, along with your non-refundable down payment of \$100, which is applied towards tuition.

### PRIORITY ENROLLMENT

Current students, and families with siblings returning to Nature School of York, receive priority enrollment. Applications and contracts are processed in the order that they are received.

### WAIT LIST

If we are at capacity and unable to enroll your child, we will place them on a wait list. If an opening arises, we will notify you.

### DIVERSITY ADMISSION POLICY

Nature School of York admits children without regard to race, culture, ethnicity, sex, religion, national origin, ancestry, special health needs, developmental or behavioral concerns, or disabilities. Program staff members try to communicate in the language best understood by the family. If that language is not spoken English or the family does not understand written English, the program will find a trusted adult who uses the family's language to translate for the family. Staff members will provide opportunities for the child to learn English.

## CONFIRMATION

Once enrollment is confirmed, you must complete and submit the following forms prior to the child's first day of attendance.

- 1. Application** - We should have this on file from your original date of application.
- 2. Health Appraisal** - All students must provide proof of age-appropriate immunizations or valid medical or religious exemptions upon school entry, in accordance with the Pennsylvania Department of Health's guidelines.
- 3. Consent Forms** - Photograph/Video, Application of topical creams/sunscreen/bug spray, Family Directory Inclusion, Medication Authorization, Authorization for Emergency Care for Children with Severe Allergies
- 4. Enrollment Contract with Fee Agreement Form**
- 5. Emergency Contact Form** - you must supply emergency contacts for your child. Parents are the first contact in the event of any emergency, but you are required to provide two additional contact persons with phone numbers and addresses, in the event that you cannot be reached.
- 6. Special Care Plan** - if applicable (IEP, IFSP, Behavior Plan)
- 7. Legal documentation:**
  - a. We must have documentation of any custody arrangements for children in divorce/separation arrangements in order to adhere to them.
  - b. We must have documentation of any protection from abuse orders in order to adhere to them.
  - c. All open children and youth cases must be reported at enrollment.

Throughout the year some paperwork will need updated/reviewed according to state mandates. These updates must be completed in a timely manner. Continued enrollment at Nature School of York is contingent upon the parent's, emergency contact persons' and child's adherence to the policies and procedures as outlined in this handbook including, but not limited to, timely payment of all fees and tuition.

## TUITION AND FEES

At Nature School of York we work hard to keep our tuition rates and fees affordable. Your monthly tuition payment is due on your child's first school day each month. Please contact the office if you are having difficulty meeting your financial obligations to school. If tuition is not paid, your child will not be allowed to attend until the financial obligation is met.

### PAYMENT

Each family is responsible for tuition regardless of their child's attendance. Tuition can be paid monthly by cash or check for tuition payments.

### LATE PAYMENT FEE

After your child's fifth school day of the month, a late-fee of \$25 will be charged to your tuition account. Returned checks will incur a \$35 fee and the late fee.

### MATERIALS FEE

In addition to your monthly tuition rate there is an annual materials fee charged in September.

\$200 for elementary

### LATE PICK-UP FEES

We certainly understand that lateness is sometimes unavoidable. We reserve the right to charge a late fee if parents arrive for pick up later than 3:10 p.m.

If a pattern of lateness develops, the following fee will be applied:

After 15 minutes late, a \$15 fee is charged and then \$1 for each additional minute.

### DROP-OUT NOTICE

Our enrollment contract states that all families are committed to 30 days notice or 30 days tuition should they choose to leave our school before the end of the school year. This policy allows us the time to find a replacement for your space.

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURES

School begins promptly at 8:45 a.m. each day.

Classes dismiss at 3:00 p.m. Late charges accrue after 3:10 p.m.

Please be on time. If you have an emergency and will not be on time, please message us to let us know.

We know things happen that are out of your control and will be as flexible as possible in those situations. Chronic lateness will incur significant late fees. Please do your best to be on time. Make connections with other families in your child's class and exchange contact information. Help each other out during those unavoidable delays.

### WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL:

- Healthy lunch
- Full, refillable water bottle
- Change of clothes
- Seasonably appropriate outerwear

***\*All items must be clearly labeled with child's name***

### LUNCH

Please provide a healthy lunch for your child. Lunches are not refrigerated. Please pack lunch in reusable or recyclable containers. Do NOT pack candy or sugary snacks/treats in your child's lunch, including on birthdays. Pack a refillable water bottle that is full and clearly labeled with your child's name.

#### **Do not pack nut products.**

*Please note that our school is a nut sensitive school. However, the school cannot guarantee that a student will never experience a peanut allergy-related or other allergy-related event while at school, but we are committed to student safety. We will do our best to avoid serving foods with nuts, but cannot guarantee that products with nuts will never be present.*



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Attendance at Nature School of York is a fundamental aspect of a student's education and development. Regular attendance encourages responsibility, discipline, and active participation in our community.

## COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

In accordance with Pennsylvania state law, students at Nature School of York are required to attend school regularly and punctually. Attendance is not only a legal obligation but also a commitment to our educational mission.

## EXCUSED ABSENCES

Nature School of York recognizes that there may be valid reasons for a student's absence, such as illness, family emergencies, or religious observances. Parents/guardians are requested to provide written notification in advance for planned absences, and the school will make reasonable accommodations for makeup work or assignments.

## RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

We respect the diverse religious beliefs within our school community. Students are granted excused absences for religious observances and are encouraged to communicate with teachers in advance to ensure appropriate accommodations.

## REPORTING ABSENCES

Parents/guardians should notify the school as soon as possible on the day of the student's absence. Notification should include the student's name, grade, reason for absence, and an estimated date of return. This can be done by calling the school office or sending an email.

## MAKEUP WORK

Students are responsible for making up missed assignments and coursework due to absences. It is the student's responsibility to work with their teachers to obtain any missed materials and complete makeup work promptly.

## TRUANCY PREVENTION

Nature School of York takes truancy seriously and will work closely with parents/guardians to address chronic absenteeism. If truancy becomes a concern, the school may involve appropriate legal authorities as necessary, in compliance with state law.

## REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This Attendance Policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with Pennsylvania state law. Any necessary revisions will be made to address changing needs and circumstances.





# CLOTHING

We are committed to getting children outside every day with few exceptions. Children need to play outside. They need fresh air and room to move. Your child’s comfort and safety are very important to us, and we will always assess the weather conditions and do what is best for our students. Most of the time what’s best is going outside to play and learn. So please make sure that your children are prepared by sending boots, rain gear, hat, gloves, and extra layers to school.

In addition to outerwear, it is also important to send extra play clothes to school. We get messy every day. Making a mess taps into children’s innate curiosity about the world around them and their strong desire to explore and find out more. Messy play and learning is characterized by risk taking, trying things out, and experimenting. These are experiences that prepare children for learning right now and for the rest of their lives.

Your child’s clothes will get stained and dirty at school. We promise this. We believe a messy child is an engaged child. Messy play and learning is important, and that’s why we support it. Please do not send your children to school in clothes or shoes that can’t get really, really dirty. If your child’s clothes are stained at school, you have your first official school outfit. We don’t care if they wear it every day. We also don’t care if they wear PJs or a swimsuit or a costume, but it will get dirty and you might not be able to get it clean.

Please provide appropriate footwear for any weather to ensure your child can freely explore. Children need comfortable, protective shoes with gripping soles for running, jumping and climbing. Sneakers are best. Your child will need rain boots for wet and rainy days. There are also times when it is ok for kids to kick their shoes off while outside on warm sunny days and feel the earth under their feet.

When we return indoors, we will always take our shoes off leave them in our cubbies. We do not wear shoes in our classrooms.

## REQUIRED OUTERWEAR BY SEASON

FALL	WINTER	SPRING/SUMMER
<div><input type="checkbox"/> Rubber boots</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Rain jacket</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Rain pants or rain suit</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Hat</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Light gloves</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Play sneakers</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Snow boots</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Winter coat</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Snow pants or snow suit</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Scarf / neckwarmer</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Waterproof gloves</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Hat</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Second layer (sweatshirt or sweater, sweatpants)</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Warm socks</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Rubber boots</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Rain Jacket</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Rain pants or Rain suit</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Play sneakers</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Swimsuit</div>

**Pro tip: Keep a towel in your car!**



## SCHOOL CALENDAR AND CLOSINGS

When you enroll, you will receive a school calendar listing the exact days that we are closed, social opportunities and community building events.

**Nature School of York is always closed on the following days:**

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Break: Wednesday and Thursday
- Winter Break: Usually Christmas Eve to New Year's Day
- Spring Break: Daylight savings week (4 days)
- Spring Holiday: Easter Monday
- Memorial Day



## COMMUNICATION

Communication between staff and parents/guardians enriches the educational experience of our students and helps us maintain a supportive community. We regularly touch base with parents to provide feedback. If you have a concern or just want to share something with us, staff will always make time to chat with you via phone, email or in person during non-instruction times. Please keep the lines of communication open with us and let us know of any significant events or changes in your child's life. Visitors, moving, new babies, divorce, illness or death can affect children in class. When we are informed about these changes we are better equipped to offer support and encouragement for your child. If you notice any unexplained change in your child's behavior, feel free to discuss it with our staff.

*NOTE: The teachers' first priority is with students when they are present. If you have a concern that needs discussion, please request a meeting outside of class time.*

### PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION METHODS

- Direct email: For personal concerns you wish to address with your child's teacher, email them directly
- Office email: [info@natureschoolofyork.org](mailto:info@natureschoolofyork.org)

### PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

We hold parent-teacher conferences twice per year (fall and spring) to discuss your child's interests, needs and progress.

### GRIEVANCES

We welcome all feedback. If you would like to make a complaint, please share your concern with us in one of the following ways—whichever you find most comfortable:

- Speak directly with a teacher to share your concern (for more in-depth conversations, an appointment may be required so that we can give you the attention you deserve)
- Call your child's teacher after hours to discuss your concern
- Send an email to [info@natureschoolofyork.org](mailto:info@natureschoolofyork.org) with the Subject: URGENT CONCERN and how you would like a response (either via phone, in person, or email)
- Set-up an appointment to speak in person with a Nature School of York principal





## TICKS, BEES, AND MUD!

### TICKS...

Ticks are part of nature, unfortunately an unpleasant part. While ticks are not commonly found in our play area, being outside means there is always a risk. Ticks can carry diseases like Lyme and Anaplasmosis. To keep children as safe as possible from ticks, we do frequent "spot checks" during class and when we return indoors at the end of class. We will discuss a few key points about ticks with the students such as what they look like, and what to do if they see a tick. We have "tick kits" in our first aid kits to ensure safe removal of a tick if one is attached. You can find more information on ticks at: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov/ticks](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks)

*Please do tick checks after class every day!*

### BEES...

Bees are celebrated at Nature School of York! They are the unsung heroes of the food chain.

We encourage children to respect, but not touch, our buzzing friends. In the unlikely event of a sting, we will monitor the child's condition and notify parents.

*NOTE: If your child requires an EpiPen if stung, please give one to your child's teacher at the start of the school year, along with the required Medication Authorization Form.*

### ...AND MUD!

Have we mentioned yet that bodies and clothes get messy? There will be mud too! Shoes get muddy, pants may become grass-stained and shirts may drip with paint, clay or glue. Sometimes all this learning is even in our hair! Because we encourage this kind of whole-hearted, whole-bodied learning, we urge you to dress your child in clothes that are not restrictive and that can get dirty. Our classes exemplify what it means to learn by doing.



## ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

Nature school can be a big change for many kids. Some children are excited to participate and they easily acclimate to class. Other children are nervous at first but quickly 'warm up' as they get engaged in activities. Still others may have a longer adjustment period as they gradually become comfortable with a new environment and expectations. Occasionally a child who is eager at first may have difficulty later.

This adjustment is not necessarily related to a child's maturity level; every child handles new situations in his or her own way. We acknowledge these differences and provide support and encouragement to help each child adjust to our program.

As a parent/guardian, you have unique insight as to how your child reacts to new settings. If your child is experiencing a very difficult transition, please share your concerns with the teacher so that she can help provide a happy, smooth transition.

## ITEMS FROM HOME

We discourage bringing items from home. Please help your child understand the risks of loss and damage when items from home are brought to school.

*NOTE: Toys that encourage aggressive play, including weapons of any kind, are not permitted.*

## TRANSITION POLICY

Having mixed age classes means children are able to learn and grow with the same teacher many years in a row. However, when transitions do need to take place, we do so thoughtfully and with great care. For our students moving from our preschool to our elementary program, we begin that transition in the spring by having those preschool students spend time with the elementary classes. This prepares our preschoolers for the leap to kindergarten. For our students leaving Nature School of York for a different school, we provide students and families with as much information as possible so they leave feeling confident about their next step. Whatever the transition may be, we are here to support you!





## HEALTH AND ILLNESS

**Nature School of York follows the Mandated School Health Services Policy in Pennsylvania to create a healthy and supportive environment conducive to students' academic success while prioritizing their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.**

Nature School of York takes precautions to prevent the spread of illness by maintaining a clean environment, providing substitutes for staff and setting clear limits on the health of children in attendance. Frequent hand washing is also an important habit that prevents the spread of illness.

To keep all children and staff healthy, we need your cooperation! This means keeping your child home if you suspect he/she is sick. Recovering children are more likely to pick up a new illness. Keep in mind that we spend time outdoors daily, so if your child is not well enough to go outside, please keep him/her at home.

Should any student, staff or member of their household become infected with COVID-19, the school will follow common sense thinking along with current CDC guidelines to ensure the safety of our students and staff.

### **Please keep your child home when any of the following conditions are present:**

1. The equivalent of an oral fever of 100 accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness;
2. Green or yellow runny nose (*clear runny noses are okay*)
3. Cuts or wound with bleeding or oozing
4. Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness: Lethargy that is more than expected tiredness, Uncontrolled coughing, Inexplicable irritability or persistent crying; Difficult breathing, Wheezing, or Other unusual signs for the child;
5. Diarrhea, defined by more watery stools, decreased form of stool that is not associated with changes of diet, and increased frequency of passing stool, that is not contained by the child's ability to use the toilet.
6. Blood in stools not explainable by dietary change, medication, or hard stools.
7. Persistent abdominal pain (continues more than 2 hours) or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs or symptoms;
8. Vomiting illness (two or more episodes of vomiting in the previous 24 hours) until vomiting resolves or until a health care provider determines that the cause of the vomiting is not contagious and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
9. Mouth sores with drooling, unless a health care provider or health department official determines that the child is noninfectious.
10. Rash with fever or behavior change, until a physician determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease;
11. Purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge), until after treatment has been initiated. In epidemics of no purulent pink eye, exclusion shall be required only if the health authority recommends it
12. A severe rash or change in skin color, red eyes, and/or abdominal pain which are the symptoms of MIS-C, multi-system inflammatory syndrome, a complication of COVID-19 that presents in children.
13. A new or changed cough present in kids or if family members in the household are experiencing a new or changed cough (*unless cleared by a doctor*).
14. Your child requires one-on-one care OR more care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children in the class.

We will temporarily exclude a child or send the child home as soon as possible if a combination of any of the above conditions exists. If any of these symptoms are present during drop off, or if your child is not feeling well, the teacher will request that the child go home to prevent the spread of illness. Nature School of York requires a child to remain at home during the first 24 hours of antibiotic treatment for any contagious illness (ear infections and tick bites are not contagious although they are treated with antibiotics).

## GETTING SICK AT SCHOOL

If your child becomes ill during class and requires more care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children; or if a child's condition is suspected to be contagious and requires exclusion, then s/he will be isolated from the group to rest comfortably with a familiar caregiver. You will be contacted immediately to pick him/her up. If we cannot reach you, we will call the other contacts listed with your emergency information.

## ABSENCE DUE TO ILLNESS

If your child must miss a class due to illness, send a message to the office. This enables our staff to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared confidentially and on a "need to know" basis.

## MEDICINE AT SCHOOL

Nature School of York will only dispense over-the-counter and/or prescription medication that is in original, labeled containers, and is accompanied by a Medicine Authorization Form and a doctor's note with explicit dosage and administration instructions. Nature School of York will only give medication to the child for whom the doctor's note is written and for whom the medication container is labeled. One doctor's note per course of treatment is required. If a child, for example, is to be given a course of antibiotics for 10 days, the doctor's note must identify the dates that the medication is to be given. Parents are required to complete a Medication Authorization Form for the days that medication is to be dispensed.

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

If your child has a communicable disease (lice, strep throat, chicken pox, etc) we ask that you share the diagnosis with Nature School of York's office, so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Only the communicable disease information will be shared and we will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality.

If children at Nature School of York have been exposed to a "highly contagious" illness, all parents will be notified and given an information fact sheet on the illness. The fact sheet includes information on symptoms, course of disease, treatment, etc.

## SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS

Nature School of York makes every effort to meet the dynamic needs of students. Information regarding your child's needs, interests and abilities is collected at the start of the school year. If you believe your child may have needs which require additional planning or preparation on the staff's behalf, please let us know when you enroll. Dietary restrictions and allergies are common. We do our best to accommodate each student's needs. If your child has a unique situation, please speak to the principal or your child's teacher before the start of the school year.

*NOTE: We are not equipped to accommodate certain acute health conditions or special needs so please discuss any specific concerns in advance.*

## SEVERE ALLERGIES

If your child has a severe allergy, parents are required to provide a signed copy of the "Authorization for Emergency Care for Children with Severe Allergies" form, detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which your child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be completely filled out by the child's physician and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated every twelve months, or more frequently, as needed. In addition to this form, parents must provide a copy of any additional physician's orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of your child's allergy.

The staff and parents will develop a "food allergy action plan" for children identified as having severe food allergies and will post the plan in the child's regular classroom.

Staff are trained in common emergency response such as administration of the EpiPen. You are encouraged to assist in training the staff to avoid and manage allergic reactions and emergencies related to your child's individual situation.

*Policies and Procedures are subject to change and will be updated as needed to best protect the health and safety of our students, staff and their families.*



## HEALTH AND ILLNESS

### ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES

Protecting the safety of the children in our facility is extremely important. The staff constantly monitors the facility to remedy unsafe conditions and parents are also asked to alert us to hazards or concerns that you may observe. In spite of all of our efforts, accidents do happen, in part because the curiosity and vigorous activity of young children make them injury prone.

Our teachers are trained in pediatric first-aid and rescue breathing/choking procedures. In case of a medical emergency, the child's teacher will call 9-1-1 immediately prior to any attempt to contact the parents or the office. Staff will then contact parents and the principal.

If the parents or guardians are unavailable, and the emergency requires emergency transport, the child's teacher will accompany the child in the ambulance to WellSpan York Hospital. Parents are responsible for any expenses that arise from accidents or medical emergencies that occur at Nature School of York. It is expected that children enrolled at Nature School of York will be covered by a family health insurance policy.

In the event of an injury requiring hospitalization or medical attention by a professional such as a pediatrician or dentist for an injury that occurred at Nature School of York, additional information must be documented. Upon release from the hospital, or following an appointment with a doctor/specialist, a copy of the child's discharge papers need to be returned to Nature School of York for the child's file.

In the event of a minor injury requiring basic cleaning and first aid treatment, parents will be notified by an incident report form. Copies of this form are distributed to:

The parent (original copy)

The child's file (in locked filing cabinet)

### HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

Health assessments, including vision, hearing, and dental screenings, are mandated for specific grade levels as outlined in state regulations.

## EMERGENCIES & SAFETY

### EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

All staff members are trained in First Aid and CPR. In the event of an accident that requires medical attention, we will do one of the following:

Call parents/guardians and emergency contacts to collect the child immediately to seek medical attention; or If severe and immediate help is deemed necessary, we will call 9-1-1 and a staff member will accompany the child to the emergency room until parents/guardians arrive.

### SAFETY DRILLS

We conduct regular safety drills to help prepare students in case of an emergency. Fire and emergency drills are held at Nature School of York in accordance with state regulations. Every effort will be made to keep these activities straightforward. We do not want to frighten the children, but we do want them to feel prepared and calm in case of an emergency.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Weather related closings and delays are based on concern for safety of families and staff. If inclement conditions make driving dangerous, we will delay or cancel class.

The school system influences our decisions, however, Nature School of York determines its own closings and delays. Nature School of York reserves the right to make adjustments to weather related closings as we see fit. Safety will always be first in guiding our decision. As always, please do not come to school if your location is not yet safe for travel.

If school days are missed due to inclement weather, the administration will determine whether these days need to be made up to meet state-mandated instructional hours or days.

## APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE

Every child will be made to feel safe and protected while in our care. We cultivate a calm, empathetic atmosphere with clear expectations for all participants. Children sit at the center of this policy and we are always working to be sure that their freedom, ideas, and best interests are the focus of our policy and practice.

We help students problem solve and find ways to address the situation. We practice conflict resolution that encourages children to identify and express what they are feeling to become more emotionally literate and empathetic. We help children understand the connection between their behavior and consequences.

Our discipline and behavior management is centered around positive reinforcement. Other methods of discipline include setting clear rules, redirection, reminders of expectations and encouragement.

Techniques that are NOT used include physical punishments, behavior charts/tracking, withholding of snacks, exclusion, bribery, psychological abuse, derogatory remarks, coercion, threats or any other methods that may frighten or humiliate children.

We communicate regularly with parents. If a student is not responding to disciplinary efforts, we will meet with with parents/guardians and work together to address behaviors of concern and implement an education support plan designed to meet the child's unique needs. We balance the needs of the entire class with the supports necessary for individual children to be successful.

## NON-DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

The Nature School of York provides equal opportunity for all students to achieve their maximum potential through the programs and activities offered in the school without discrimination. We prohibit all forms of harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or any protected status. Harassment includes unwelcome conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. We encourage reporting of harassment and promise confidentiality and conduct prompt investigations with corrective actions as needed. Education and prevention efforts are ongoing to promote respect and inclusivity. We are dedicated to compliance with all applicable laws and will regularly review and update this policy.

## BULLYING POLICY

Nature School of York is dedicated to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment where all individuals, including students, staff, and community members, are treated with dignity and free from bullying, harassment, or intimidation. Bullying, defined as repeated, deliberate actions intended to harm, intimidate, or demean, whether in person or online, will not be tolerated. We commit to preventing bullying through education, promoting a positive school climate, and establishing clear expectations. Reports will be promptly and confidentially investigated, with support for victims and appropriate consequences for bullies. We engage parents and the community in our efforts, and this policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for all.

## EXPULSION POLICY

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to expel a child from our program. We want you to know that we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. The following are reasons we may have to expel or suspend a child from our program:

- The child is at risk of causing serious harm to other children or themselves
- Child, parent or guardian exhibits verbal abuse, acts physically threatening or intimidating toward staff
- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments
- Failure to complete required forms including the child's immunization records
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child

Before an expulsion takes place for child-related issues, staff will redirect and document behavior, a parent/guardian will be notified of the behavior, and solutions will be discussed (a specialist may be required for additional support).



## REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children. It was enacted to protect children from abuse, allow the opportunity for healthy growth and development and, whenever possible, preserve and stabilize the family.

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect.

All of the staff and volunteers at Nature School of York are considered mandated reporters and are required to report suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse. The employees of Nature School of York are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition prior to making a report.

Mandated reporters must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis) or by calling 1-800-932-0313.

In complying with the mandate to report, the person so reporting is given immunity from criminal or civil penalties or liability when that person, in good faith, makes a report. Such reports are confidential.

## INSPECTION POLICY

The school reserves the right to inspect and conduct a search of any place or item on school campus or at a school-related event including, but not limited to, a student's book bag, backpack, computer, or personal electronic devices. Inspections and searches may be conducted on a routine or random basis or as deemed necessary. Students must provide any passwords or other access required to inspect such places or items upon request by a school administrator. Further, the school has the right to seize and permanently retain property disclosed by an inspection or search which is considered potentially harmful, dangerous, illegal, inappropriate, or the possession of which is a violation of the school rules, community standards, and/or local, state, or federal law.





# FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND EVENTS

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

We encourage you to play an active role in our program! Your child counts on you for support and encouragement outside of their new world of learning.

The school reserves the right to place restrictions on parents' or other family members' involvement or activity at school, on school property, or at school-related events if the parent or other family member engages in behavior or has a status (such as a criminal conviction) that would reasonably suggest that such restrictions may be appropriate for the community.

## FAMILY TRADITIONS

Join us during class to share a special seasonal tradition that your family celebrates. This may be in the form of a story, cooking, creative arts project or other engaging activity. We welcome all traditions and hope you will consider what you can share with your child's class!

## CELEBRATIONS

Celebrations are exciting for our little ones! Our biggest celebrations center around the equinoxes and solstices as we celebrate the seasons. We also celebrate the start and end of the school year. Please check the Calendar of Events for more information.

At Nature School of York, we downplay commercial aspects of holidays and focus on seasonal and family tradition aspects of holiday celebrations. We acknowledge holidays and cultural events through wholesome activities such as songs, stories and food tasting. Please let us know how we can celebrate a holiday or event that is special to you.

## VISITS

We invite you to join us for a nature walk, lead an art project or other activity, read or tell a story to the class or teach us a song or dance during circle time, whatever your creativity allows! Please discuss your ideas with the teacher, as we love parent involvement during class! All volunteers and visitors must have required clearances on file.

## BIRTHDAYS

In honor of your child's birthday, we encourage you to donate a book to The Nature School of York library. This book may be a new or used book donated anytime during the year. We will place a bookplate inside the cover with your child's name and date of birth. Each time we read your book, we will fondly remember your child. Thank you for helping our library grow!

*NOTE: Since we promote healthy eating habits and try to alleviate potential allergy complications, we do not celebrate birthdays with sugary foods. You are welcome to bring in a special healthy treat or join the class to make one of your favorite recipes.*

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Nature School of York has many partnerships with like-minded, local businesses and organizations. We often invite guests from the community to our school and to events. In this way we can offer enrichment experiences without having to travel. We always give children the option to participate when guest speakers visit.

## DONATING ITEMS

We are always looking for new materials for our outdoor play space and welcome donations. If you clean out your basement or garage or if you get a new appliance and have a great big box, please think of us! We love to reuse and repurpose items. Possible ideas: row boat, planks of wood, ropes, little bikes, bricks, blocks of wood, large cardboard boxes, kitchen sink, gutters, pulleys, large bins, paint brushes, etc. Just please check with us first!

## PARENT VOLUNTEERS

We love parent volunteers! All volunteers and visitors must have required clearances on file. If you are interested in spending more time at Nature School of York, please contact the office for more information on required clearances.

This handbook is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all policies and procedures but is intended to provide general information that parents and students need to know about the school. The school reserves the right to amend this handbook, modify curriculum, change programming, change policies, or otherwise make changes in the best interests of the school and at the school's discretion.





Nature  
School  
OF YORK

**K-8th Grade**

[natureschoolofyork.org](http://natureschoolofyork.org)



**Preschool**

[7tribeplayground.org](http://7tribeplayground.org)

