

Nature Preschool at Ijams Nature Center



Table of Contents

About the Nature Preschool at Ijams Nature Center.....	2
Drop-Off and Pick-Up Policies.....	6
A Day at NPINC	8
Outdoor Play	13
Required Clothing	14
Additional Program Information	16
Holidays and Celebrations	16
Birthdays	16
Parent Communication	18
Visitors	19
Photography and Social Media.....	21
Withdrawal of Child Care Services	21
Behavior Guidance Policies and Procedures	22
Financial Policies.....	24
Health Policies and Procedures	26
Attendance and Health	27
Toileting Policies.....	31
Closures for Weather	32
Emergency Procedures Related to Child Pick-Up	32
Emergency Preparedness	33
Reporting Child Abuse	33
Grievances.....	33
Expectations for Adults.....	34

About the Nature Preschool at Ijams Nature Center

Educational Philosophy

Childhood should be joyful and wholesome. We believe that the earliest, most memorable kind of learning includes climbing trees, catching frogs and making mud pies. We believe that empathy, love, curiosity and respect are the truest foundation of learning. When thoughtful nature-based curriculum is combined with direct experiences in nature, a transformative change takes place. This connection is both powerful and empowering. And this basic human connection need not be sacrificed when a child begins school. We believe it is every child's right, as an integral part of the natural community, to develop a foundation of academic skills through encounters in the natural world.

Child-Centered Learning

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 towards discoveries. Students experiment, problem-solve and explore with their senses. Students voice opinions and express ideas through language and the arts. Students develop friendships and learn from one another through cooperative play. In other words, students actively participate in all aspects of learning! We integrate many approaches to support each child's learning path by:

- Providing a supportive, safe learning environment to encourage discovery, questioning and experimentation
- Offering sensory opportunities with live animals, natural objects, artifacts, trail games, outdoor interpretation and creative arts activities
- Engaging cognitive growth and problem-solving skills through hands-on games and activities
- Developing physical motor skills through active learning and play
- Promoting social skills and positive self-image through group play and cooperative learning
- Cultivating emotional literacy and empathy to develop self-esteem
- Nurturing self-expression, creativity and reflection
- Encouraging family involvement to help students appreciate the wisdom of their first teachers—their families
- Celebrating diversity of all living things and the individuality of children and families
- Instilling respect and appreciation for the natural world

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 the academic skills children need to prepare for kindergarten. Physical, social, emotional, cognitive and creative skills blossom in these formative years, and through a nature-based program, children 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)

About The Nature Preschool

In contrast to traditional preschool programs, the Nature Preschool at Ijams Nature Center (NPINC) allows children to:

- Have daily trail and garden experiences
- Interact with and care for live animals native to our local community
- Learn directly from biofacts and artifacts
- Develop earth-friendly habits such as recycling and composting
- Eat, grow and prepare healthy foods for snacks
- Create and reflect on learning through a variety of expressive art forms using natural and recycled materials

We develop language and literacy skills by:

- Exposing students to letters, letter combinations and words
- Modeling writing and offering writing opportunities each day
- Providing a print-rich classroom environment (i.e., magazines, books, field guides, poems)
- Storytelling
- Inviting students to dictate or imagine stories
- Encouraging dramatic play
- Singing, rhyming and experimenting with sounds
- Generating lists or reading to perform a task (i.e., recipes, game instructions)
- Identifying characters and storylines to promote comprehension
- Introducing new words, words from other languages, symbols and sign language

We explore math ideas by:

- Finding, following and repeating patterns
- Recognizing shapes
- Counting within context
- Classifying and grouping objects
- Figuring out what is missing among groups
- Sorting and matching objects
- Estimating
- Measuring and using scales
- Counting in songs, stories, and games
- Tracking seasonal and time progressions
- Using number and time words
- Counting with one-to-one correspondence
- Graphing and charting
- Examining series of objects
- Grouping (i.e., dozen, pair, many)

Curriculum Influences

The NPINC will take inspiration from a variety of approaches to early childhood education. Some of the strategies we employ will be pulled from Montessori tradition. The Montessori Method of education, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood. Dr. Montessori's Method has been time tested, with over 100 years of success in diverse cultures throughout the world.

It is a view of the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It is an approach that values the human spirit and the development of the whole child—physical, social, emotional, cognitive.

Similarly, we will also pull from Waldorf Education principles. Waldorf Education provides a developmentally appropriate and experiential approach to education. Founded in the early 20th century, Waldorf Education is based on the insights, teachings and principles outlined by the world renowned artist and scientist Rudolf Steiner. The principles of Waldorf Education evolve from an understanding of human development that addresses the needs of the growing child.

Waldorf Education is dedicated to generating an inner enthusiasm for learning within every child, encouraging the capacity for joyful life-long learning. The following principles will help NPINC achieve its early childhood education goals: Inspire Each Child, Connect with Nature, Encourage Play, Establish Routines, Make Room for Art, and Embrace Diversity

Enrollment Information

- Applications are accepted regardless of race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation, political persuasion, national origin or ancestry.
- Children must be three-years-old by September 1 and no older than five years old when entering in September. Children may turn six during the school year.
- Children must be toilet proficient in order to attend NPINC. Toilet proficient means that they are able to use the toilet for all bodily functions, as well as wipe themselves after. Pull-ups are not allowed.

A completed Enrollment Application Form and a non-refundable \$200 deposit are required to secure your child's space in the NPINC. Enrollment is for the duration of the school year (August—May). Placement is first-come, first-served. The enrollment process will begin by submitting an online enrollment form. Once we receive a request, the child will be placed in a session and we will send an enrollment package and invoice for your deposit. If we do not receive the completed paperwork and paid deposit within two weeks, we will offer the slot to another student. No exceptions or adjustment to tuition will be made unless the student is enrolled after October 31. In this case, a prorated tuition will be applied.

The following information must be supplied by the parent(s), legal guardian(s), or custodian(s) of the child and returned to the NPINC office before the child's first day of attendance:

- Enrollment Information Form
- Emergency Information Form
- Immunization Form (must be completed by physician within 90 days after the start of preschool)
- Medication Administration Form(s) (if necessary)
- Individual Child Care Plan (if necessary)

Priority Enrollment: Current members of Ijams Nature Center (at the family level or higher) receive priority enrollment. Applications and contracts are processed in the order that they are received.

Days and Hours of Operation

The NPINC is open Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:30-4:30. We will offer morning sessions from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, with drop off between 9-9:15 and afternoon sessions from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm, with drop off from 1-1:15. The NPINC is a 10-month program and requires a commitment for the entire year.

Two-day sessions will be offered for both morning and afternoon.

Two-day enrollment options for the upcoming school year are:

- Monday/Wednesday Morning
- Tuesday/Thursday Morning
- Monday/Wednesday Afternoon
- Tuesday/Thursday Afternoon

School Calendar

August 19	First Day of School
September 2	Labor Day Holiday
October 7-11	Fall Break
November 27-29	Thanksgiving Holiday
December 23-January 3	Winter Break
January 20	Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
February 17	Presidents Day Holiday
March 16-20	Spring Break
May 21	Last Day of School

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Policies

Children benefit from routine arrival and departure times and you are encouraged to keep to a regular schedule whenever possible. Arrival and departure times provide opportunities for you to have a short conversation with your child's teacher about his/her day and discuss any questions you may have. Please keep conversations brief, positive and focused on pertinent information regarding your child. This will allow teachers to help transition children easily into their daily routine. Any communication about negative events or concerns that take longer than a few minutes, a meeting will need to be scheduled with your child's teacher.

Ijams Nature Center is open to the public during the NPINC's program hours. The NPINC is housed in the Miller Education Building at Ijams Nature Center. The doors to the preschool office and the classroom are always locked. Please do not allow your child to open the classroom doors when arriving or departing. At the NPINC, children are taught that it is an adult's job to open the door. This policy helps us supervise the children and control access to the classroom. Your help with this policy is greatly appreciated.

Drop-Off Policies

Please do not attempt to drop off your child earlier than 9:00 am (for the morning session) and 1:00 pm (for the afternoon session). The time before classes is set aside for teachers to set up activities and prepare for the day. Please have your child dressed for outdoor activity when they arrive in car line as we will begin each class outdoors. Also, make sure they have used the bathroom and have had a nice breakfast or lunch. Please apply bug spray or sunscreen as needed before arrival. WE WILL NOT BE APPLYING IT DURING SCHOOL.

Pick-Up Policies

Out of respect to children and staff, please be prompt in picking up your child at the end of the day. If you will be late for pick-up, please call or text (preferred) the teacher to let her know as soon as possible. This way we can let your child know that you will be late and we will not attempt to call you or contact alternate adults to pick up your child. In the case of car malfunction, traffic, weather, being stuck in an elevator, etc., it is expected that you would be in contact with the NPINC by the end of your child's session. Please see Emergency Procedures Related to Child Pick-Up for more information about what we do in the event that no one comes to pick up a child.

Late Pick-Up Fee

Ijams Nature Center reserves the right to assess a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute for each child being picked up 5 minutes or more after the official end time of the session. The fee is assessed as of 12:15 or 4:15 to allow for potential differences in clocks. Late pick-up penalty fees will be billed to you or may be paid on the spot. Families picking up their child late more than four times in three months may have their child care services terminated. If you are in car line by 12:15 or 4:15, you are counted as ON TIME and will not be assessed penalty.

Authorization to Pick-Up a Child

Children will only be released to parents/guardians or authorized people listed on the child's Emergency Information Form. The NPINC WILL NOT allow a child to leave with an unauthorized person. Any person who is listed on a child's Emergency Information Form is considered authorized to pick up a child from the NPINC. These adults may be asked to show an ID at any time when picking up a child. If a new person will be picking up a child from the NPINC, staff must be notified of the change by an authorized adult. Staff must check that person's photo ID when he/she arrives to pick up the child. If the person does not have a photo ID, they will not be allowed to pick up the child. The NPINC cannot release a child to an unauthorized person.

Any parent denying pick-up authorization to a non-custodial parent must submit a court order supporting that denial to the NPINC Director. Families involved in visitation schedules with children must have specific date and time information submitted to the NPINC Director by the child's legal guardian. Ijams Nature Center will make every effort to comply with these schedules.

Ijams Nature Center asks that families involved with special conditions regarding custody and visitation meet with the NPINC Director and teaching staff to ensure that all needed information and schedules are in place.

Parking Lot

Ijams Nature Center's parking lot is used by preschool families, nature center visitors and other Ijams Nature Center users. Please drive slowly as there may be children and families walking on the driveway and in the parking lot. For the safety of NPINC students, the circle drive in front of the Miller Building will be closed to public traffic during regular school hours. If you need to park in the lot and walk your child to/from the NPINC, for the safety of all children, please hold your child's hand at all times in the parking lot.

What to Bring Each Day

Please send the following items with your child each day that they attend preschool. Please label all items, with a sharpie. Label boots, backpack, extra clothes bag, water bottle, snack containers, and SOCKS if possible. More information about each of these items can be found in the relevant sections of this parent handbook.

- Hearty, healthy snack, no more than two items (snack, not lunch) (with no peanut or tree nut products) in containers your child is able to open independently.
- Water bottle (labeled) that is easy for your child to drink from without assistance. For example, your child can remove and replace the lid or flip up the nozzle on his/her own.
- Seasonally appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear(also able to take on and off independently)
- Child sized backpack
- 1-2 complete changes of clothes (place in large Ziploc bag labeled with their name and will be kept in their backpack)

A Day at the NPINC

Days flow naturally with our flexible, but routine schedule. We invite and embrace emergent curriculum as we follow students' interests. Our teachers are facilitators of learning; they are in tune with students' needs, skills and discoveries. The sample schedule provides the framework of a typical session.

Sample Schedule*

AM		PM
9:00	Arrival	1:00
9:15	Greeting and Circle Time	1:15
9:30	Active Play	1:30
11:00	Snack	2:00
11:15	Classroom Lessons	2:15
12:00	Dismissal	4:00

*This schedule is subject to change depending on the weather and/or in response to staff or child needs.

Arrival

We will be using a carline arrival and dismissal which means pull your car to the ramp in front of the classroom. The teacher will walk to your child's side of the car, open the door, greet you and your child and help them out of their car seat. Then the teacher will close the door and walk your child up the ramp to the deck. At that time you can proceed slowly around the circle. Please be mindful of the other cars behind you to make arrival and dismissal as safe and quick as possible.

Circle Time

This is a time when children learn about the calendar and the days of the week; record the daily weather; participate in songs, finger plays and rhymes; and/or read a story. Children may play instruments, dance, or do stretches, an Ijams Nature Center naturalist may visit the classroom with an animal, or a special guest may visit during this time.

Active Play Time

Children explore, play and learn outdoors in the play area and/or in any of the several outdoor classrooms around the NPINC. Activities may include climbing and balancing on logs, playing with balls, sledding/rolling down hills, dirt/mud play, fort building, imaginary play, digging, building with rocks and tree branches, climbing trees and running. Activities may include a mix of child-directed and teacher-directed activities; individual, small group, and large group play; and active and/or quiet play. Children may also participate in a walking field trip to one of the other areas around Ijams Nature Center or to the Visitor Center.

Snack Time

After washing their hands, children eat the snack they brought from home while sitting at the tables. Children learn and practice good table manners in a calm, friendly setting while eating the healthy, hearty snack provided by their parents.

Classroom Lessons

Classroom lessons can take place either indoors or outdoors. Indoors, children can choose from the many possible activities offered in the preschool classroom's interest areas, including dramatic play, building blocks, art activities or sensory activities. Other possible activities include literacy activities such as listening to a story or playing with puppets, writing activities, math, and manipulative games and activities. Outdoors, children can choose to do art with natural materials, participate in songs and music, or engage in dramatic play. At the end of classroom lesson time, children clean up to prepare for dismissal.

Dismissal

Pick-up is generally done on the outside deck of the NPINC. In inclement weather, the children may be in the classroom. Same as arrival, pull your car around to the ramp. Wait for your teacher to walk your child to the car. The teacher will help your child get into their car seat and will buckle them in. Again, others will be waiting patiently behind you, so dismissal will need to be prompt.

Curriculum

NPINC teaches pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, science, social skills and environmental literacy through a seasonal, place-based, experiential and developmentally appropriate curriculum. The NPINC curriculum includes a mixture of inquiry-based and hands-on activities, group and individual activities, indoor and outdoor activities, and active and quiet activities. Independent and self-help skills also are emphasized as children learn to dress themselves for all seasons and play outside in the natural environment of Ijams Nature Center.

The curriculum is aligned with the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), which is the State of Tennessee's early learning standard for preschool children. The ECERS addresses issues regarding the learning space, personal care routines, language development, motor skills activities and group interactions.

Sample Developmental Goals for Preschoolers

Physical	Social	Emotional	Intellectual
Develops balancing skills	Balances needs and rights of self and others	Responds to emotional cues	Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking
Develops independence in dressing in outdoor clothes	Works with other children and adults to resolve problems	Regulates own emotions and behaviors by managing feelings	Uses symbols and images to represent something not present
Uses writing and drawing tools	Forms relationships with adults	Takes care of own needs appropriately	Connects numerals with their quantities

Sample Activities

At NPINC, preschoolers will participate in activities that promote their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. There will be a mixture of quiet and active activities as well as a mixture of child-directed and staff-directed activities. Sample activities to promote a child’s development may include the following:

Physical	Social	Emotional	Intellectual
Running in the forest	Cooperative group games such as using a parachute	Quietly watching and listening to birds	Playing math and critical thinking games
Balancing on logs	Playing house or other imaginative games with other children	Seeing adults model appreciation of the natural world	Listening to stories read and told aloud
Jumping in puddles	Practicing sharing tools and toys in pretend play, while digging or while building	Discussions of empathy with animals, such as when stepping on an insect	Practicing creating letters with sticks
Dancing	Playing games such as “Follow the Leader” or “Simon Says”	Practicing putting on boots and coats independently	Reflecting on the events of the day
Manipulating crayons, markers and paintbrushes	Watching out for each other on walks in the woods	Cultural cooking events with families	Counting during Circle Time

Activities also will require the use of varied equipment and materials both indoors and out. Indoors, teachers will change the materials in the classroom every three to four weeks to provide children with a variety of age-appropriate toys, books, dramatic play elements and other equipment to engage with during indoor playtime. Outdoors, activities may include the following:

- Using a magnifying glass
- Playing natural instruments or dancing to recorded music
- Stirring mud with a spoon or stick
- Catching insects with a net
- Counting natural objects
- Pretend cooking with utensils and measuring cups
- Using sticks to create letters on the ground
- Creating art projects with a variety of natural materials
- Using building blocks made of a variety of materials
- Using dramatic play materials such as dress-up clothes or a tent
- Using water and other ingredients to make “soup” or potions
- Using crayons, markers, pens and pencils to draw and write
- Reading books and listening to stories read or told aloud
- Playing in the sand/water table
- Using manipulatives such as puzzles or matching games

Student Assessment

Our student evaluation is rooted in authentic assessment. Differing learning styles, interests and skill levels become evident as teachers informally observe students daily. Assessment tools help us gain insight about children’s cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical and self-help skills. Evaluations are varied and are sensitive to family culture, experience, abilities and home language to ensure they are meaningful and relevant to each child.

Teacher journals and written anecdotes track developmental milestones and portfolios offer a collection of work that demonstrates how skills develop over time. 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 he/she has yet to master. You will be provided a progress report for your child during each parent teacher conference.

Outdoor Play

The NPINC is dedicated to spending a majority of each preschool session learning and playing outdoors. It is NPINC's policy that all children who are well enough to attend preschool are well enough to participate in outdoor activities and play. If children are dressed appropriately and are healthy enough to attend preschool, weather conditions should not pose an illness risk. Staff ensures that children are dressed in clothing that is appropriate for the weather conditions. Parents must cooperate when it comes to preparing children to spend time outdoors in all weather. If a child is not prepared with the appropriate clothing, parents will be called to drop off appropriate clothing or to pick up the child. It is not fair to expect that all children will remain indoors because one child is not prepared for the weather.

Playtime outdoors will be appropriately limited in severe or threatening weather, based on the weather forecast from the National Weather Service and the judgment of the preschool staff.

Nature Play

Time in nature is critical for a child's healthy development. Playing, learning and exploring in the woods, waters and fields of Ijams Nature Center provides a safe space for children to learn how to assess physical risk and build resilience, offers an environment to nurture good mental health, promotes overall physical health through vigorous activity and gives children ample opportunities to build relationships with other children and their teachers. At NPINC, nature play is a primary focus of time outside. Children will participate in nature play activities including climbing trees, running through the forest, balancing on and jumping from rocks and logs, playing with rocks and sticks, jumping in mud puddles, sledding, playing on ice, exploring in the woods and much more.

Stick Play

Nature play also includes stick play. Sticks are a common toy at NPINC because they are open-ended and can be anything the child can imagine such as a sword or a wand. Stick play of all types is an important form of expression for young children. Preschool staff carefully monitor the play and can adjust the boundaries of stick play depending on how the children are responding to one another. While playing with sticks, children are learning that their classmates need to feel safe in the play, no matter what the play scenario is. As a result, children are discouraged from using sticks as guns or other weapons. Staff coach children throughout the year to use and control their sticks in safe, kind ways, and may redirect children who are using sticks in less safe ways. Children may be encouraged to take a break from playing with sticks or to play with their sticks in a different way.

Rough-and-Tumble Play

Children at NPINC may engage in rough-and-tumble play. We believe in the value of exuberant, boisterous, rough-and-tumble play to a child's overall development. This vigorous, big-body play

allows children opportunities to use language—both verbal and nonverbal—and learn how to negotiate, take turns, wait, compromise, and make and follow rules. They are learning about cause and effect, and developing empathy. Big-body play also supports optimum physical development because it is so vigorous and because children, since they enjoy it so much, tend to engage in it for an extended period of time. There are many ways that we support safety in rough-and-tumble play including teaching children how to communicate that they want rough-and-tumble play to stop, constantly monitoring (and guiding, if needed) the rough-and-tumble play in progress, designating safe areas where rough-and-tumble play can occur and areas where it cannot occur, and working with children to help them learn their own boundaries and process the interactions occurring during rough-and-tumble play.

Required Clothing

Discovery-based learning can be messy. 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. Tight clothing, fancy dresses and costumes can get in the way during active play. For independence in toileting, children need clothing that is easy to take on and off. Please do not send your child in pull-ups. Also, please make sure your child can take their shoes on and off. For example, if your child cannot tie shoe laces, please do not send them in tie shoes.

Please dress your child in clothing that can be soiled so they will feel free to participate in messy projects and trail hikes. We provide smocks for art projects; however, we will not force any child to wear a smock. You should expect your child (and his/her clothing) to get dirty outdoors! If at any time your child's clothing becomes wet and uncomfortable, we will assist him/her in changing into his/her extra set of clothes.

Indoor Clothing

Your children will be wearing socks while working in the indoor classroom. If you would like your child to wear shoes indoors, please provide a clean pair of slippers or crocs for them to wear and leave at school. Flip-flops and open-toed sandals are not allowed as indoor shoes and closed heels are recommended. Each child must have at least one extra complete change of clothing including underwear, socks, pants, and at least one long-sleeved and one short-sleeved top with them every day. These clothes should be packed in the child's backpack. Parents will be responsible for checking each child's backpack daily to replace clothing as necessary.

Outdoor Clothing

Children will be outside every day in all seasons and all weather, and children engaged in nature play tend to get wet and dirty. Please send multiple pairs of mittens and other layers that tend to get wet quickly to ensure that children have warm, dry clothing to wear. NPINC staff will do their

best to dry wet gear in-between play sessions to ensure that children are warm. Children should be adequately dressed for outdoor play for all seasons and weather conditions. Children need comfortable, protective shoes with gripping soles for running, jumping, climbing and playing. Sneakers, rubber boots, winter boots or well-fitting hiking boots are recommended depending on the season. Closed-toed sandals with heel straps (i.e., Crocs) will be allowed during the warmest weather. Because children are encouraged to dress themselves independently, shoes should have closures that children can manipulate, such as Velcro and zippers. Flip-flops and open-toed sandals will not be allowed as outdoor shoes. In addition to appropriate shoes, children should be dressed in seasonally appropriate clothing. Suggested clothing for each season can be found below.

Fall	Winter	Spring	Early Summer
Rubber boots	Snow pants	Rubber boots	Rubber boots
Jacket or sweatshirt	Winter coat	Jacket or sweatshirt	One-piece rain suit OR rain jacket with hood/rain hat and rain pants
Rain jacket w/hood	Waterproof mittens (not gloves)	Rain jacket w/hood	Sun hat
Rain pants	Scarf/neck cover	Rain pants	Long-sleeved shirt
Warm sweater or sweatshirt	Hat	Warm sweater or sweatshirt	
Warm socks	Boots	Hat	
Cap/Stocking hat	Wool/fleece socks		

****Please label all items with child's name!****

Rain gear should be waterproof. Wind pants/jackets are not the same as rain pants/jackets. We recommend rain gear that is either one piece or overall-style pants with a rain coat. These one-piece suits or overalls plus a rain coat help keep children and their clothing clean and dry and avoid the gap between coat and pants that lets in water and snow. Please do not send umbrellas.

For winter, we recommend buying a winter jacket and snow pants that are a bit too big in order to keep children's limbs covered when they bend, stretch, and slide in the snow. If you are going with the two piece snow gear, we recommend that the coat has a hood and that the snow pants are the overall style with grippy/rubber cuffs to help them stick to boots. For boots, we recommend those that come up to a child's calf and that have Velcro or a bungee-like tightening system. Rubber boots do not count as winter boots. Mittens with a longer cuff that can be securely tucked into or up and over coat sleeves work the best for keeping hands warm and snow out of the mittens. Please do not send your child with gloves.

Additional Program Information

Holidays and Celebrations

NPINC does not celebrate religious holidays, does not attempt to provide religious education to children and does not use religious symbols in the classroom. Children will have ample experiences for class parties and holiday related activities when they attend elementary school. However, children are welcome to share their special holiday experiences with teachers and other children without censure. When children take the initiative to share their special memories and traditions, they learn to respect and appreciate cultural differences. Families also are welcome to come into the classroom to share special songs, stories and cooking experiences with the children. Families may schedule such an event with their child's teachers.

NPINC will celebrate special seasonal events such as harvest time in the fall, solstices and equinoxes, and new growth in spring. We also may incorporate new traditions into the classroom, such as having a Kindness Day or Friendship Celebration. These events allow children to enjoy the fun of having celebrations, while also providing opportunities for artistic expression and writing practice.

Birthdays

Birthdays are very important for most preschoolers and NPINC wants to recognize this special day* in a noncompetitive, non-commercialized, and pressure-free manner. On a birthday, the class will gather around the birthday sun (a candle). The child will hold a model earth and walk around the sun one time for each year, while all the children count, and then sing the birthday song. You can send a picture of your child for each year to share with the children. Summer birthdays can be celebrated at the half-birthday or at the end of the preschool year. Please do not send treats or goody bags for the children due to differences in family customs, concerns about allergies and differences in economic status. Please do not pass out birthday invitations at NPINC unless you plan to invite every child in the class.

*NPINC will respect the parent's wishes in the event that customs or religious beliefs prohibit birthday celebrations.

Toys From Home

The preschool classroom is prepared to meet the needs of NPINC children and to complement the NPINC curriculum. Though we may provide some extra play items when outdoors, the natural world generally doesn't need extra toys to make it engaging and educational for preschoolers. Children are asked not to bring toys from home to preschool. Toys brought from home present potential problems for children and staff in that they are difficult to share and may get broken. There may occasionally be a Special Book Day, Toy Day or Stuffed Animal Day when children can bring something special from home to share with the other children and play with

during the school day. Toys that resemble weapons and computer/video games are not allowed at NPINC at any time.

Please speak with preschool staff if you feel your child needs to have a security item, such as a blanket or stuffed toy, at preschool.

Plants and Animals

Nontoxic plants may be included in the preschool classroom. Ijams Nature Center is the home to a variety of animals including owls, mammals, turtles, snakes and fish. Children may have daily interactions with animals. These interactions can take the form of enjoying a classroom animal, visiting resident animals in the nature center, attending outreach programs with an Ijams Nature Center naturalist or observing animals in their natural habitats around the trails. These animals may include wild birds, pet dogs, and a wide variety of other animals. Children also may have encounters with animal feces at Ijams Nature Center as we have no control where wild animals or Ijams Nature Center's visitors' dogs go to the bathroom or whether these visitors pick up after their pets. After any encounter with animals or animal feces, all staff and children will wash their hands with soap and warm water. If a child's clothing is soiled with animal feces, the child will change into his/her spare clothing and the soiled clothing will be bagged and sent home to be laundered.

NPINC may also choose to have a small, easy-to-care for classroom animal such as a turtle, frog or fish. Any classroom pet will be kept away from any food items in a covered, easy-to-clean cage that is appropriate for the animal. Cages will be cleaned daily or as necessary. Both staff and children will wash hands after handling classroom animals, cleaning the cage or coming into contact with the animal's feces. Staff will supervise all interactions between the children and animals, and will teach the children safe and respectful ways to interact with animals both in the cage and out. All of the animal's food and supplies will be kept in a locked cupboard, separate from any food-service supplies. NPINC's classroom animal will be part of Ijams Nature Center's overall animal care program, including receiving proper veterinary care and necessary permits. Parents are required to inform NPINC of any allergies to animals.

Walking Field Trips

At NPINC, we believe every day is a field trip! Children will take daily walking field trips through Ijams Nature Center for the purpose of nature study and nature play as well as for other curriculum- and development-related activities. NPINC will not take field trips off the grounds of Ijams Nature Center during the school day. We don't need to leave Ijams to find adventures and to learn about the world because Ijams has over 300 acres of forests, meadows, wetlands and ponds to explore! Parents give their permission for these walking field trips via the Enrollment Information Form at the time of enrollment.

Parent Communication

Daily Communication

Our teachers work hard to meet the needs of all children. As part of this goal, NPINC strives for ongoing communication and collaboration with all families through a variety of methods. Please feel free to bring any questions or concerns to the NPINC teachers and/or the director. Arrivals and departures can be useful times for you to BRIEFLY exchange information or concerns with the teachers. You are strongly encouraged to communicate to staff, verbally or in writing, any information that may help NPINC teach and interact with your child. In the case of a late pick up or non-emergency communication with the teacher, please call or text the teacher staff phone at (865) 678-5491 or preschool@ijams.org. Understand that the teacher will only be able to respond to this phone during arrival, dismissal, and times when class is not in session. Also, teachers will not be responding to texts, calls, messages or email during non-working hours or holidays. If there is an emergency while school is in session and you need to speak to someone IMMEDIATELY, please call the nature center at (865) 577-4717.

Please try to share any private information out of the hearing of other adults and other children. It is helpful to share information when:

- A family member is ill.
- A parent is out of town.
- The child did not sleep well the night before.
- A pet is missing or has passed away.
- Other life changes occur, such as a move, a divorce or the arrival of a new sibling.

Any topic that will take more than a moment to communicate; however, should be communicated via a written note, an email or a phone message. A meeting also can be arranged so that you have time to adequately discuss an issue with your child's teacher(s) and/or the NPINC director. A family bulletin board is located between the restroom doors, over the water fountains. This board will be used to communicate with families about the week's activities, upcoming events, announcements and reminders. These announcements also may be communicated through the weekly email or the closed Facebook Parent Group. You also are welcome to call or email your child's teacher to talk about your child, the program or any concerns or questions you may have. All teachers can be reached through the preschool@ijams.org email address.

Weekly Email Updates

You will receive an email each week describing your child's activities. These emails also may provide photos from the week, information about the schedule for the week to come, updates on appropriate seasonal clothing and other reminders.

Weekly Ijams Nature Center Newsletter

Parents also may decide to subscribe to Ijams Nature Center's weekly electronic newsletter. This newsletter provides up-to-date information on what is happening at Ijams. It also will remind you of special events, camps for children of all ages, and adult and family programs.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are offered twice a year and are a formally scheduled time for you to discuss your child's growth and development and set future goals with your child's teacher(s). Staff will use a variety of tools to document and report on your child's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development including work samples, photos, checklists and anecdotal notes kept in your child's assessment portfolio. Staff will share information about your child's strengths, interests and successes, and collaborate with you to plan for areas in which your child needs to strengthen his/her skills. Please feel welcome to schedule additional meetings with teachers throughout the year as needed.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is a vital aspect of our program and critical for the healthy development of young children. Throughout the year we may offer parent meetings various formats. There are many ways in which you can help and support NPINC, such as volunteering, organizing a fundraiser or arranging to present a special activity. Parents are encouraged to be involved in any of the following ways:

- Attend Parent Orientation held before the preschool year begins to meet the staff and learn what to expect for the coming year.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences, which are offered twice a year.
- Read emails, newsletters and other communication from NPINC.
- Attend parent and family events offered by NPINC or Ijams Nature Center when possible.
- Volunteer in the classroom.

Visitors

Parents/Guardians of Enrolled Children

Parents/guardians of enrolled NPINC children are welcome to visit the preschool anytime during the hours of operation. For safety and security, all parents must check in with NPINC staff, show an ID if asked to do so and wear a visitor button. We ask that parents wait at least one month before visiting NPINC to allow each child to adjust to the preschool setting. For additional information about helping your child adjust to NPINC, see the ***Adjustment to Nature Preschool*** section.

Community Volunteers

Many visitors want to observe or participate in the NPINC program in a variety of ways. All visitors, including grandparents or teenage siblings, must sign in with the NPINC staff and wear a visitor nametag. A volunteer may not be left alone with NPINC children, other than their own child, at any time. Ijams Nature Center reserves the right to deny access to the preschool classroom or children to any person at any time for the purpose of protecting the rights of children, parents and staff, and for programmatic integrity.

Siblings in Class

Siblings under the age of 13 are not permitted to visit NPINC. Class time is reserved for enrolled participants only. Throughout the year we offer special events and activities that often include family members to allow everyone to share in our learning adventures.

If parents or guardians have made arrangements to volunteer in the class or to present a special activity with the children, siblings cannot attend with the parents. Parents will need to make alternative child care arrangements for times they are visiting the classroom.

Adjustment to the Nature Preschool

Starting preschool is a big step for most 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 when they realize the change is permanent. 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 the program.

As a parent/guardian, you have unique insight as to how your child reacts to new settings. There are many ways to prepare your child for class, such as talking about it a few weeks before school starts. As your child asks questions, answer them honestly. "You're going to explore outside, meet animals and new friends, sing, make art projects and learn lots of new things. It will be a fun adventure!" You may want to set up a visit to Ijams Nature Center with your child to get familiar with the trails. This may alleviate some trepidation about unfamiliar settings. Ijams Nature Center's weekend animal programs are a great (free!) reason to visit. We offer many family and parent/child classes as well as preschool summer camps if you are looking for more ways to acclimate your child before the school year.

When you drop off, assure your child that you will be excited to hear all about the day when it is time to be picked up. You might even give your child a challenge: "While you are in class today,

pick something special to tell me about—I can't wait to hear about your day!" If your child is experiencing a very difficult transition, please share your concerns with the teacher so that he/she can help provide a happy, smooth transition. It is helpful if your child is experiencing separation issues to let them know what is going to happen on their ride to school. That you will be dropping them off with their teacher and that you WILL be there to pick them up after their fun time at school.

Photography and Social Media

Photography is a common means for documenting learning and development, and is used by staff doing observations. For example, preschool staff may take photos of a child's art project to include in the child's portfolio or take photos for the newsletter, or a local news channel may come to NPINC to do a story on nature preschools. Ijams Nature Center also uses social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram to promote the NPINC program and to spread the word about the importance of nature play. No last names will be used and no "tagging" will be done by Ijams Nature Center staff in photos posted on social media sites, including Ijams Nature Center's website.

Enrollment in the NPINC indicates your acknowledgement that we will use photos of your child in publicity and marketing. In the event that you do not wish to have your child's photograph used, you must submit this request in writing to be kept on file in the NPINC office.

Withdrawal of Child Care Services

Parental Notice of Termination

If you wish to discontinue preschool services at NPINC, a written notice must be submitted to the NPINC director at least four weeks prior to your child's last enrollment day. Tuition will be charged for the entire quarter, regardless of your child's attendance during that time. There will be no refunds for quarterly fees paid in advance of withdrawal. The deposit will not be refunded and cannot be applied to the child's last payment if before March 1.

Program Notice of Termination of Care

In the event that any of the following situations occur, preschool services may be terminated by NPINC:

- Non-payment of fees by parent/guardian, i.e., 30 days in arrears or breach of established payment plan contract
- Failure to provide the required health, immunization and/or emergency contact information
- A parent's inappropriate behavior, such as menacing and/or verbal threats towards staff, children, other parents or Ijams Nature Center property

- Lack of cooperation from parents/guardians with the program's efforts to resolve differences and/or to meet the child's needs through parent-teacher meetings, conferences and/or additional interventions.
- Chronic lateness in picking up a child at the end of the session
- Failure to pick up an injured or ill child within an hour of being notified, for the third time in a calendar year

A written notice from NPINC will be sent to the parent/guardian as soon as possible after the occurrence of any of these events. NPINC will also communicate this decision to the parent verbally. A parent may grieve the notice of termination within two working days of its receipt (see Grievance Procedures). Regardless of the duration of the grievance process, the child or children of the parent/guardian who has received the notice of termination shall remain in NPINC for a period of not more than two weeks after the parent/guardian has received the notice of termination. No refunds are given for tuition already paid.

Behavior Guidance Policies and Procedures

Participation Skills

In order for your child to gain the maximum benefit from participation in our program, we recommend that children meet the following participation skills:

- Have the ability to participate in an environment with an age-specific staff to child ratio
- Be able to make the transition from leaving parent within one month
- Be able to participate for the duration of the class
- Have the ability to follow simple/single instructions
- Be able to eat and dress independently
- Be able to be in both indoor and outdoor environments
- Respect others and their property

Our Approach to Discipline

We use a proactive approach to behavior management that uses self-regulation and integrates social-emotional learning and discipline. Positive discipline allows children to solve their own problems with the guidance and modeling of preschool staff, transforming conflict into a learning opportunity. Moments of "behavior issues" are an opportunity to teach children the social, emotional and communication skills necessary to manage themselves, resolve conflict and develop pro-social behaviors.

In a typical day, you will hear teachers acknowledging that a problem exists, labeling the feelings being experienced and guiding the children to find a solution. In extreme situations where behavior is detrimental to the learning atmosphere on a continuing basis, a child may be asked to stay home

for a day or two while the teachers work with his/her parents on a plan to help the child function more appropriately in the classroom.

General Rules of Behavior

- Respect staff, visitors and other children.
- Keep hands and feet to oneself.
- Obscene and inappropriate language or gestures are not acceptable.
- Children will only leave the room with an adult.
- Respect and take good care of the equipment, toys and other people's belongings.
- We ask that children do not bring toys from home.
- No play guns, swords, knives or anything of a violent nature are allowed.

We understand that all behaviors, positive and negative, have a function. Children exhibiting inappropriate behaviors are usually trying to escape something (e.g., an activity such as circle time) or to obtain something (e.g., a toy or attention from a classmate or teacher). It is important to our teaching staff that we determine the reason for a child's behavior so that we can teach an appropriate replacement skill to help the child reach acceptable resolution to a conflict.

NPINC teachers will take the time to speak with children about the feelings that led to the inappropriate behavior. Preschoolers will be encouraged to use their words to express their feelings and solve their problems. Staff will help children verbalize their feelings and facilitate conflict resolution and problem-solving when necessary. NPINC staff uses a variety of age-appropriate, research-based behavior-intervention strategies:

- Maintaining realistic expectations of children
- Providing clear and simple limits
- Utilizing preventive practices
- Modeling appropriate behaviors
- Encouraging positive redirection
- Teaching replacement skills
- Using conflict resolution and problem-solving techniques
- Providing logical and natural consequences for children's actions

Unacceptable behaviors include:

- Biting and hitting
- Destruction of property
- Inability to stay within group/classroom

Preschool teachers strive to maintain consistent and open communication with families regarding the progress of their children. You may be notified of minor behavioral incidents in the following ways: email, telephone, written communication or in person. A disciplinary report will be required

for more serious incidents. In this case, you may be asked to come in and discuss the incident with your child's teacher.

We communicate regularly with parents. If a student is not responding to disciplinary efforts, we work with parents/guardians and other professionals to address behavior and implement an education support plan that addresses the child's unique needs. We strive to balance the needs of the entire class with the support necessary for each individual child to be successful.

Serious problems will be discussed with parents. If, after corrective actions have been implemented to help rectify the problem and the behaviors are not corrected, parents may be asked to withdraw their child from the program. NPINC reserves the right to suspend or terminate a student from the program if the child cannot meet the basic participation skills or violates established class rules. NPINC also reserves the right to immediately proceed with suspension/dismissal of a child based on the severity of the behavior.

Financial Policies

Family Payment Policy

NPINC is a program of Ijams Nature Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We rely on revenue from tuition fees for the preschool's operating expenses. It is essential that you pay tuition promptly and regularly. By enrolling your child in NPINC, you agree to pay the fees as set out in the policies and procedures.

Tuition is due quarterly on the following dates: September 1, November 1, January 1 and March 1.

Annual tuition is \$1960 (two-day program) or \$3920 (four-day program). A \$200 deposit is necessary to secure a child's place in the NPINC. The deposit is nonrefundable and will be applied to the March tuition payment.

- Tuition is based on the enrollment schedule, not on children's actual attendance. Sick days, vacation days, holidays, staff development days and emergency closings are considered to be part of the enrollment schedule.
- If payment is not received within five business days after the due date, Ijams Nature Center will apply a \$25 late fee.
- If payment is 30 days past due, it becomes delinquent. See Collection of Delinquent Accounts for more information.
- If a child is withdrawn from the program, the family must provide written notification to the NPINC Director. The deposit is not refunded to the family. See Withdrawal of Child Care Services for more information.
- Tuition for the 10-month school year can be paid annually or quarterly. A one-time discount is made to accounts paid in full for the entire preschool year by check or cash on

or before the first day of preschool. For students enrolled in the two-day program, the discounted tuition is \$1900.

- If you wish to pay quarterly, you will be sent an invoice two weeks prior to the due date. Invoices are issued through Square and can be paid directly online by credit card. Please DO NOT send payment with your child to school or give payment to the teacher.

Families choosing to pay quarterly will be billed as follows:

Two-day program

Nonrefundable deposit:	\$200
September 1:	\$490
November 1:	\$490
January 1:	\$490
March 1:	\$290
TOTAL:	\$1,960

Collection of Delinquent Accounts

An account is considered past-due when the balance is delinquent more than 30 days from the posted due date. The following steps will be taken when an account becomes 30 days past-due, in addition to the \$25 late fee charged when a payment is not received within five business days after the due date:

1. Ijams Office and Finance Manager will speak with the family. If necessary, a notification letter, identifying the delinquent charges owned to Ijams Nature Center and the date when the fees must be submitted, will be given to the family.
2. A meeting will be scheduled between the family and the Ijams Nature Center Office and Finance Manager, Executive Director and/or NPINC Director to determine a payment schedule, such as a promissory note or signed payment contract.
3. If a delinquent account is not paid as agreed upon in the payment plan, enrollment will be terminated.

Health Policies and Procedures

You can expect an accident/injury report any time your child needs first aid beyond an adhesive bandage and appropriate comforting while attending NPINC. You will be contacted immediately if an injury requires emergency attention.

First Aid Policies

Great care is taken to provide a safe environment and children are taught safe practices for being in the preschool classroom, at the nature center and outdoors. Sometimes; however, accidents and injuries occur. All teachers and assistant teachers are certified in first aid and CPR. There is a first aid kit in the classroom and a first aid kit travels with staff when the class is outdoors. In the event of injury, such as minor bumps, bruises, cuts, or insect bites, or illness, a staff member will administer appropriate first aid, which always will be accompanied by verbal explanation and appropriate comfort.

Sources of Emergency Medical Care

In an emergency situation, a staff member will immediately call 911. If emergency transportation is required it will be provided by the paramedics who respond to the 911 call or by the hospital you indicate on the Emergency Information Form. You will be contacted immediately; if you cannot be reached, NPINC staff will contact the emergency contacts listed on your child's Emergency Information Form.

Immunization Policy

Ijams Nature Center requires that any child enrolling in the NPINC be up-to-date on all immunizations recommended by the Center for Disease Control, unless medically contraindicated. You must submit a record of immunizations at the time of enrollment. There are no exceptions. An updated report is required whenever a child receives additional immunizations. Families who have medical exemptions for immunizations must have their health care provider sign their Immunization Form.

Sunscreen and Bug Spray

It is your responsibility to apply sunscreen to your child prior to arrival at NPINC. Physical barriers to the sun such as long-sleeved shirts and wide-brimmed hats are encouraged. You also may apply bug spray to your child's skin and/or clothing. Please remember that bug spray can decrease the water-proofing abilities of rain gear. Sunscreen and/or bug spray should never be applied to children inside NPINC due to concerns about allergies. Children should always wash their hands before entering the preschool classroom in part to wash off any sunscreen or bug spray which may get on toys or books in the classroom and be ingested by a child.

If you forget to apply sunscreen or bug spray, staff may only apply sunscreen or bug spray with a signed Medication Administration Form and from the original bottle that you have provided. Staff will not realistically be able to apply sunscreen and bug spray to each child before going outdoors, so please apply these products before the preschool session. See Administration of Medications for more information on over-the-counter medications including sunscreen and bug spray.

Ticks, Poison Ivy and Bees

Yes, they are part of nature. Yes, we may encounter one or all of them on the trails. We recommend that you check your child for ticks at the end of each day. This can be a routine that you do during bath time or while getting ready for bed. Staff will teach children to do basic tick checks when returning from the trails, and will remove a tick that is spotted crawling across a child's clothing or skin.

Our teachers identify poison ivy and avoid it on the trails. Call your physician if you are suspicious of any rash your child has. Bees are celebrated at NPINC! 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 signed by a physician.

Administration of Medications

If your child is on prescription medications that must be administered during the time they are at NPINC, please contact your child's teacher to discuss procedures.

Illness

NPINC 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 or if they are experiencing any symptoms. 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. If students are exposed to a contagious illness such as chicken pox or strep, notices will be posted and sent home within 24 hours of NPINC being notified. We maintain confidentiality as to the contagious student to protect your privacy.

Attendance and Health

Regular attendance is very important for your child to get the most from preschool. When there are frequent absences, a child may feel uncomfortable as he/she may not know the songs, activities

or the other children. Friendships are easier when children attend regularly. If regular absences begin to interfere with your child's preschool experience, we will discuss with you possible solutions to resolve whatever issue may be preventing regular attendance.

That being said, there are times when it is best for a child NOT to be at school. The following guidelines may help prevent illness from spreading and allow you to make an informed decision about sending your child to school.

1. After a fever, a child's temperature must be normal (98.6) 24 hours before returning to school.
2. If antibiotics are prescribed, a child must be on them 24-48 hours (depending on the illness) before returning to school.
3. Excess coughing is a germ spreader, and young children often have a difficult time covering their coughs.
4. An unidentified rash, chicken pox or pink eye requires exclusion. In the event of chicken pox, children may not return to school until after the sixth day of the onset of the rash. The lesions must be dry and crusted.
5. In the event of pink eye, the child needs to be on an antibiotic at least 24 hours before returning to school.
6. If your child has any contagious illness (including illnesses listed above as well as strep, pneumonia, measles, hepatitis, scarlet fever and flu), they should not return to school until the illness or infection has subsided. In addition, the illness should be reported to us in order to let other parents be aware so they can watch their child for symptoms.
7. Vomiting and diarrhea illnesses are often quite contagious and should be managed at home. **PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME AT LEAST 24 HOURS AFTER HE/SHE HAS EXPERIENCED EITHER OF THESE PROBLEMS.**
8. If 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, he/she should stay home until he/she feels well enough to participate in typical daily activities.

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. Please give a courtesy call if your child will be out due to illness.

You will be notified if your child has been exposed to a contagious disease. It is requested that you inform preschool staff if your child has been exposed to or contracts any communicable disease. Please take into consideration the rest of the children and staff.

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 he/she 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 on your Emergency Information Form.

Cleaning & Sanitizing of Equipment

Nature Preschool staff shall complete regular cleaning and sanitizing of equipment, toys, and surfaces. Cleaning procedures should be conducted according to the timeline below and anytime a child contracts a communicable disease.

Area	How Often?	With What?
Countertops & tabletops	Daily and when soiled, before and after food is served.	Spray/bucket bleach solution
Bare floors	Swept daily, mopped weekly	Commercial floor cleaner
Rugs	Vacuum daily, shampoo every 3 months or when visibly soiled; must be dry when children return	Commercial cleaner
Door knobs and cabinet handles	Daily or when visibly soiled	Spray/bucket bleach solution
Telephone receivers	Weekly	Spray/bucket bleach solution
Toys (not contaminated with bodily fluids)	Bi-weekly	Spray/bucket bleach solution
Dress-up clothes, stuffed toys	Bi-weekly and when head lice or skin infection is identified	Laundry detergent
Water tables	Weekly	Spray/bucket bleach solution
Trash cans	Bi-weekly or when visibly soiled; empty daily	Spray/bucket bleach solution
Refrigerator	Monthly or visibly soiled	Spray/bucket bleach solution
Hand washing sinks, faucets, counter tops, soap dispensers and floors	Daily and visibly soiled	Spray/bucket bleach solution
Toilet seat, flush handles and stall handles	Daily and visibly soiled	Spray/bucket bleach solution
Toilet bowls/urinals	Daily	Spray/bucket bleach solution
Any surface contaminated with bodily fluids	Immediately	Spray/bucket bleach solution

Snacks

Each child will bring no more than 2 snacks from home to eat at snack time. Please remember this meant to be a quick snack and not a full lunch. Some notes about snacks:

- Snacks will be stored at room temperature. Send a cold pack if needed to keep food cool.
- Please break or cut snacks that could pose a choking hazard into appropriately sized pieces.
- Send a utensil with your child if they he/she needs one to eat his/her snack; it will be returned home for washing.
- Children are not allowed to trade or share food due to concerns about germs and allergens.
- NPINC is a peanut- and tree nut-free classroom.
- We recommend healthy snacks that contain a mixture of carbohydrates, fats and protein to give your child lots of energy to play. Also be mindful of portion size. Sending too much food than your child can eat during a short snack period can lead to waste.
- When dropping off your child for preschool, please do not allow them to finish eating a snack or meal inside the classroom. If your child is eating on the way to preschool, please have them finish before carline.

Peanut- and Tree Nut-Free Classroom

Ijams Nature Center is committed to having a peanut- and tree nut-free classroom. Please do not send peanut or tree-nut products for your child's snack and please carefully check labels in order to respect the food allergies of other children. Tables are cleaned before and after each snack to reduce the risk of cross-contamination from the presence of potential allergens.

- Peanuts and tree nuts are not allowed. Tree nuts include, but are not limited to, almonds, hazelnuts, cashews, walnuts, Brazil nuts and pistachios.
- Sunflower seeds and sesame seeds are okay. Sun butter (made of sunflower seeds) and Wow Butter (made from soybeans) are great alternatives to peanut butter.
- Snacks that say they are "manufactured in the same facility that processes peanuts and tree nuts" are okay as long as the snack does not contain nuts or traces of nuts.
- Snacks that say "May contain traces of nuts" on the label are not allowed.
- Be extra careful to read the labels of granola bars, which often unexpectedly contain nuts.

Please disclose your child's dietary restrictions and allergies on the Enrollment Information Form prior to the start of school.

Occasionally, children will have the opportunity to taste produce grown in the organic garden at Ijams Nature Center. In these cases, we will require parents to sign a waiver, giving us permission to provide these foods to children. Examples include, but are not limited to, sweet peas, green beans, berries, peppers, tomatoes, and herbs.

Water and Water Bottles

Drinking water is always available to the children via the drinking fountain near the restrooms, via water in disposable cups in the classroom and in children's water bottles, which are provided by families. A child's water bottle must be easy for the child to use without assistance. For example, a water bottle with a nozzle that can be flipped up or down for drinking is less likely to spill and can be used independently. Children will have access to water when playing outdoors and staff will encourage children to take water breaks for proper hydration. Please remember to regularly clean and sanitize the water bottle and fill it daily with fresh water.

In the event that staff notice any signs of disrepair, they will notify the parents at pick-up so that the parent can either repair or replace the damaged bottle. All water bottles must be in satisfactory working condition. In addition, staff will instruct children in our center-wide policy that we never share snacks or water bottles and ensure, through continued careful supervision, that children do not drink from another child's water bottle. Children who have forgotten their water bottle will have access to water at the water fountains and disposable cups in the classroom. Children will be encouraged to take their water bottle on walking field trips, so a sturdy water bottle is recommended.

Toileting Policies

Children are required to be fully toilet-trained before enrolling in NPINC. Students who wear diapers or pull-ups should wait to begin school when they are fully potty-trained. Children also should be comfortable using the toilet facilities at Ijams Nature Center, as well as the outdoor restrooms, which are likely very different from the facilities they are used to. Families are encouraged to visit the nature center prior to the start of the preschool year to introduce their child to the bathrooms and practice using them.

Toilet-training includes children being able to perform all necessary actions (clothing, buttons, wiping, etc.) by themselves. However, learning these skills requires ongoing practice and NPINC staff are willing to help when needed.

Occasional accidents are a normal and expected part of preschool life. If a child has an accident while at NPINC, the child will be brought to the restroom to complete their toileting. Staff will put on gloves while the child completes their toileting. The staff member will provide the child with baby wipes to clean up and will help clean the child when necessary. The child will be handed their change of clothing and will dress in the clean clothes. Soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag and put in the child's cubby. Both the staff member and the child will wash their hands.

Children who have multiple accidents in a short time frame may be asked to stay at home for a one week period to reinforce potty training before returning to school. There are no refunds or tuition adjustments in these circumstances.

Closures for Weather

Weather-related closings and delays are based on concern for safety of families and staff. If inclement conditions make driving dangerous, NPINC will delay or cancel class. The Knox County Public School system influences these decisions; however, Ijams Nature Center determines its own closings and delays. NPINC reserves the right to make adjustments to weather-related closings. Safety will always be first in guiding these decisions. There will be no make-up days, or refunds in tuition, due to closures.

Weather Policy Details

In the event morning classes start on a one-hour delay, and afternoon classes will be held as scheduled. In the event of a delayed opening, please give your child a snack before class so that we can use the shortened hours for outdoor exploration and creative play. Please also dress your child in cold weather gear so that sign-in can take place outdoors. By starting our day outside, we can use more of our time since children will be ready for outdoor learning right away. Notices regarding weather closures and delays will be sent via text message and/or email. Please check for messages prior to leaving for school. As always, please do not come to school if your location is not yet safe for travel. If the decision is made to cancel school for the day, a message will be sent via text and/or email by 8:15am the morning of the closure day.

Emergency Procedures Related to Child Pick-Up

Attempted Unauthorized Pick-Up

If an unauthorized person attempts to pick up a child, the child will not be released to that person. Staff will immediately contact another authorized person to pick up the child. Staff will call 911 if necessary.

Emergency Pick-Up Situation

If a child is not picked up within 10 minutes of the scheduled dismissal time without communication from the parents, NPINC will attempt to reach the parent/guardian by phone. If staff is unable to reach a parent/guardian, we will telephone the emergency contacts listed on the child's Emergency Information Form. In the event that the parent is unable to contact NPINC, is unable to pick up a child, and NPINC has been unable to contact parents/guardians or other authorized adults listed on the child's Emergency Information Form, and if no one has contacted NPINC by one hour after the session closing time, NPINC will assume an emergency situation exists and staff will call the City of Knoxville Police Department.

Emergency Preparedness

You trust NPINC to keep your children safe during the day and expect staff to be properly equipped to handle emergencies of all kinds. NPINC has an emergency response plan for all potential crises that has been reviewed by an officer of the City of Knoxville Police Department.

Emergency Drills

NPINC will conduct frequent fire drills to ensure that children are prepared and will be less frightened should an actual emergency occur. Similarly, NPINC also will conduct tornado drills as necessary during spring months when tornadoes are most likely. These drills will be conducted in a calm manner and gently explained to children.

Emergency Relocation

In the case of an emergency that requires children and staff to evacuate the Nature Preschool, students and teachers will relocate to the main Visitor Center via the Will Skelton Greenway and/or Ijams Nature Center trails. NPINC will notify families via email, phone and social media that parents/guardians or authorized adults will be able to pick up children at the Visitor Center. Standard pick-up procedures will remain in place in instances of Visitor Center pick-up.

Reporting Child Abuse

Mandated Child Abuse Reports

Everyone in Tennessee is a mandated reporter. Tennessee Code Annotated 37-1-403(i)(1) requires all persons to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. “Any person who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition shall report such harm immediately if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality abuse, or neglect or that, on basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect.”

Failure to report

Failure to report abuse is a violation of the law and a Class A misdemeanor, carrying a sentence of up to three months imprisonment, a fine or both. Those citizens who report and “act in good faith” are immune from any civil or criminal charges that may result. The reporter has the right to remain confidential and anonymous.

Grievances

If you would like to make a complaint regarding action taken by a staff member, please make direct, initial contact with that staff member to share your concern. If you are not comfortable speaking with that staff member or do not receive a satisfactory response, please contact Ijams Education Director Jennifer Roder. If you still do not receive a satisfactory response, please contact Ijams Executive Director Amber Parker. All feedback and complaints will be addressed in verbal and/or written form within a two-week time frame.

Expectations for Adults

Our goal at the NPINC is to create an environment in which everyone is able to achieve their best in an atmosphere of kindness, understanding and respect. The following is an outline of expectations for the staff and parents/guardians to work together in support of the children.

We expect everyone to:

- Treat one another with courtesy
- Set good examples for children in terms of speech and behavior
- Go through the proper channels of communication when problems arise (this includes talking first with teachers regarding any classroom concerns, then with the Education Director, and finally, if necessary, the Executive Director of Ijams Nature Center)
- Maintain confidentiality
- Follow school rules, deadlines and calendars
- Read all school communications, including emails, calendars and handbooks
- Arrive and pick up children on time/start and end class on time
- Parents and caregivers are expected to supervise their children in the building and while playing on school grounds both before drop-off and after pick-up
- Ensure that children have the proper clothing for both indoor and outdoor exploration

Social Media Policy

Please remember that online posts and social media conversations are not private. Even with the strictest privacy settings, you should consider any post you make to be a part of the public domain. We expect our entire preschool community to abide by the following rules regarding social media.

- Do not share confidential information, internal school discussions or personal and specific information about students, parents, teachers or staff on social media sites.
- Do not post photos that identify any NPINC children by name or that show individual's faces without prior permission from that child's parents or guardians.
- Please strive to be respectful when voicing any criticisms you may have of the school or its members. Comments should be constructive rather than hurtful.
- We recognize that some of our teachers and parents are very comfortable maintaining friendships on social media, while others may choose to decline friendship requests on sites such as Facebook while your child is enrolled in the school. This is a professional choice and should not be taken personally.