


A child's hands are shown holding several fresh, ripe tomatoes. The background is a soft-focus image of a crocheted basket, likely made of cotton or wool, with a light green and pink color scheme. The overall scene is bright and natural, suggesting a focus on fresh produce and nature.

# the NATURE SCHOOLS

**Family Handbook**



CONNECTING.  
CREATING.  
PLAYING.  
IMAGINING.  
EXPLORING.

## **What is a Nature-Based School?**

To be considered a nature-based school, nature must be at the heart of the program. While the Nature Schools has the same child development goals as any other high quality center, we have created engaging lessons that blend hands-on activities with nature-inspired materials to achieve these goals. Your child will be provided opportunities to learn about the natural world, while also working towards personal growth and achievement. By connecting young children with the natural world, we hope to inspire a love of nature, foster an environmental ethic and encourage a caring attitude that will follow each child throughout their life. We will meet best practices in all areas of early childhood learning and development. Children have opportunities to:

- Make discoveries and learn through play
- Make choices and follow their own interests and agenda
- Use their senses, as well as large and small muscles
- Express themselves creatively
- Make friends and learn about the social and natural world
- Problem-solve and find solutions

The Nature Schools provides many of these experiences through direct interactions with nature. Our program is designed to help children develop physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally, in a dynamic and stimulating natural environment. We also strive to meet best practices in environmental education. At our school, nature-based activities happen indoors and outdoors; in whole groups, small groups, and individually; as planned teacher-facilitated activities, child-initiated interests, and spontaneous pursuits throughout the campus. Children will be strongly encouraged to:

- Make observations and discoveries
- Satisfy their natural curiosity
- Hike on trails and climb on logs
- Appreciate the beauty of nature
- Build an understanding of themselves, as they relate to others and to the natural world
- Experiment and Communicate about nature
- Learn to nurture animals and plants

## ***Parents at The Nature Schools Must Understand and Agree that:***

- The safety of our students is our number one priority.
- We will go outside in rain, snow, or shine, and in a wide range of temperatures. Please refer to the weather chart on page ? for more details.
- Children will get wet and muddy, often requiring changes of clothing.
- While we always do our best to return your child in perfect condition, your child may occasionally experience small scrapes, scratches, bumps, and bruises. Please see the 'Risks' section on page ? for more details.
- Your child will start their educational day between 8:00am and 8:25am. The daily schedule remains the same each day. If you consistently drop off at a later time your child may be missing part(s) of our curriculum.
- If you drop off after your child's class has started lessons, in order to maintain the integrity of our teaching program you will be asked to dress and walk your child to their outdoor learning space.

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Welcome to The Nature Schools! Our goal is to partner with you to create positive experiences and foster independence for your early learner in a safe and transparent environment. We're happy that you chose us to assist in the development of your child!

The following pages contain some important information. Please use this handbook as a resource to help you become more familiar with the practices of The Nature Schools.

# General Information



**Finances:** For any questions or concerns regarding tuition, send a message on Brightwheel to “Admin Only.”

- *Returned Checks and Late Payments* may be charged a \$25 fee through Brightwheel. Tuition not received within 5 days of the due date is considered late.
- *Non-Payment of Tuition* is grounds for immediate dismissal from our centers. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at The Nature Schools. However, if you anticipate difficulty in paying on time, please reach out as soon as possible by messaging through Brightwheel.

## **The Financial Agreement and Disenrollment for Nonpayment Policy:**

- *Services and Payment*
  - Provider agrees to provide services to Child in accordance with the program description and enrollment materials provided to Parent/Guardian.
  - Parent/Guardian agrees to pay the tuition fees associated with such services as set forth in the fee schedule of the program for which the Child has been enrolled (Full-time, MWF, or TR) and acknowledges there is no prorating for sickness, vacation, or closures due to holidays, resets, or weather.
  - Parent/Guardian assumes responsibility for full payment of tuition regardless of subsidy agreements or employer sponsored benefit plans.
  - Tuition is due as indicated by the date on each invoice with a frequency of either monthly, biweekly, or semi-monthly according to the payment plan selected on the registration form.
- *Payment Terms*
  - All tuition and fees are due on the date indicated on each invoice.
  - A late fee of \$25 may be applied on all delinquent invoices at the discretion of the Provider.
- *Delinquency & Disenrollment*
  - To ensure fairness to all families, if Parent/Guardian's account becomes delinquent for more than 30 days, Provider reserves the right to disenroll Child from the program with written notice to Parent/Guardian.
  - Provider will attempt to contact Parent/Guardian by written notice via Brightwheel as well as text and email to the contact information entered on the registration form. It is the responsibility of the Parent/Guardian to inform Provider of accurate contact information.
  - Disenrollment due to non-payment does not relieve Parent/Guardian of their obligation to pay the outstanding balance.

**Withdrawing:** Should you choose to withdraw your child, we require two weeks of notification. Please inform admin by sending a message on Brightwheel to "Admin Only." State your child's final day. If your end date needs to be extended, please notify us via Brightwheel and our admissions team will determine our ability to accommodate an extension. Tuition will be prorated according to your child's last day. If two weeks' notification is not received, payment for that time is expected.

**Drop Off:** Each child must be signed into Brightwheel by an adult with the Brightwheel app who is dropping them off. They must also be signed out at the end of the day by the adult picking them up by using the Brightwheel app. Classes start for each program between 8:00am and 8:30am. Drop offs before the start of class will be at the playground. You are welcome any time but late drop-offs will miss some curriculum content. We also ask that you notify us through Brightwheel if you plan to drop off late.

**Pick Up List:** Custodial parents and only those listed on the child's approved pick-up list are permitted to pick up a child. Driver's licenses will be checked before a teacher will release a child. This practice may cease when the teachers become familiar with the parents or approved pick-up persons. The child must be signed out on Brightwheel at the time of pick up.

**Social Media:** The teachers at The Nature Schools communicate daily via Brightwheel. This is our primary way to share our classroom activities with you. We love to share what is going on in our classes and it is a great way for you to talk with your child about their day. Also, be sure to follow The Nature Schools on Facebook.

**Communicating with Teachers:** Our teachers' first priority is your children! A great way to communicate with the TNS teachers is via Brightwheel. When a teacher is teaching, or caring for their class, they will not respond immediately. Teachers will be able to post updates and respond to messages at nap time when all of their students are asleep. Teachers are not permitted on their phones while children are in their direct care. Please avoid messaging after business hours. We want our teachers to maintain a work-life balance by being able to separate school and home.



# Safety



**Risks:** At The Nature School s,our goal is to eliminate hazards as much as possible. However, we do believe in the value of early learners being exposed to age-appropriate risks. It’s important to understand the difference between a risk and a hazard.

Examples of a Hazard: storms, unstable ice, a sharp branch at eye-level

Examples of a Risk: climbing a log, handling sticks, rolling down a grass hill, climbing a tree at a safe height

Learning to take appropriate risks can help children develop confidence and improve executive function as they learn to consider and assess challenging situations. We feel that learning to address risks is a valuable skill that will serve children well, years after they leave our program.

**Parent “No Contact” List:** If there is a person, or persons, your child is not allowed to be in contact with, TNS will make every effort to satisfy your wishes. We may require additional documents stating the terms of the situation.

**Weather:** Monitoring the weather is our supervisory responsibility and planning for playtime, classes outside, and weather safety is part of the daily routine. We will use the chart below as a guide. The Child Care Weather Watch charts posted in each classroom as a guide for outdoor play. This chart uses the humidity and temperature to gauge safe temperatures for outdoor play. It is important to note that a good chunk of the time that our students spend outside is for class which includes seated activities, hiking, and walking with lots of opportunities for rest, shade, and even some misting from the water hose. Foundation and Exploration classes are held outdoors with each one lasting 45 minutes. What does this mean for you and your child? We go outside the majority of the time at The Nature Schools. All staff will closely monitor students and themselves. If anyone is uncomfortable or needs to come into air conditioning to cool off we will take a break before returning outside. If the weather chart is in the red we will not have outdoor recess. We will monitor that your child's water is staying cold and has ice, that we are getting classes in the shade and cooled off with misting and air conditioning frequently as well.

This chart references heat index and relative humidity, which are both important to consider when setting expectations for play-time. These terms are defined below.

**Heat Index:** How hot it feels to the body when the air temperature (in Fahrenheit) and relative humidity are combined.

**Relative Humidity:** The percent of moisture in the air.

## Child Care Weather Watch

		Wind-Chill Factor Chart (in Fahrenheit)									
		Wind Speed in mph									
Air Temperature		Calm	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	
	40	40	36	34	32	30	29	28	28	27	
	30	30	25	21	19	17	16	15	14	13	
	20	20	13	9	6	4	3	1	0	-1	
	10	10	1	-4	-7	-9	-11	-12	-14	-15	
	0	0	-11	-16	-19	-22	-24	-26	-27	-29	
-10	-10	-22	-28	-32	-35	-37	-39	-41	-43		

		Heat Index Chart (in Fahrenheit %)												
		Relative Humidity (percent)												
Air Temperature		40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
	80	80	80	81	81	82	82	83	84	84	85	86	86	87
	84	83	84	85	86	88	89	90	92	94	96	98	100	103
	90	91	93	95	97	100	103	105	109	113	117	122	127	132
	94	97	100	103	106	110	114	119	124	129	135			
	100	109	114	118	124	129	130							
104	119	124	131	137										

■ Comfortable for Outdoor Play  
■ Caution ■ Danger

**Sunscreen and Bug Spray:** We require families to apply sunscreen and bug spray before drop off. This is one of the many ways you can help us keep your child safe in the outdoors. Teachers will reapply after lunch. All students have a sunscreen and bug spray permission form where families can detail if they have an allergy or brand preference in their enrollment paperwork.

**Ticks:** Ticks are part of nature. Unfortunately, an unpleasant part. They 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 from hikes. 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. Teachers have “tick removal kits” to ensure safe removal of a tick if one is attached. Dressing children in long sleeves and pants that are light colored, and tucking pants into socks are some ways to prevent the ticks getting onto children’s bodies.

**\*\*PLEASE CHECK YOUR CHILD FOR TICKS AFTER SCHOOL EVERY DAY\*\***

**Animals:** Animals play a large part in our curriculum and we may have visiting animals as well as permanent residents at The Nature Schools. Please notify your child’s teacher of any animal or other allergies your child may have, or other concerns you have regarding animals. Please do not bring your pets to the Nature Schools.

**Poison Ivy and Bees:** Our teachers identify poison ivy and steer clear of it as well as possible. While we will actively avoid poison ivy, if you are suspicious of a rash that your child may have please contact a physician. Bees are celebrated at The Nature Schools! They are the unsung heroes of the food chain. We encourage children to respect, but not touch, our buzzing friends. In the event of a sting, we will monitor the child’s condition and notify parents.

**Allergies:** Parents need to notify The Nature Schools in writing of their child’s allergies. We will assess on a year-to-year and case-by-case basis, if it will be a tree nut/peanut free school.

NOTE: If your child requires an EpiPen, please give one to your child’s teacher at the start of the school year. You will also need to fill out the EpiPen section on your enrollment form giving us permission to administer the medication if needed. EpiPen must be kept in the original prescription box at school.

**Permission to Medicate Form:** A medication form needs to be filled out each time it is needed so that staff can administer it to a child. Each permission form will dictate the dose and time medication is needed and be kept in the child’s file. Permission to administer Benadryl is on the enrollment form. In the event that your child is having a reaction we will always call a parent/guardian before giving them the medication.

**Media Release:** Teachers will only post pictures of children with a signed media release on Brightwheel or Facebook posts. If a student does not have a signed media release their photos will only be posted on their individual Brightwheel feed.

**Safety Drills:** Safety is our number one priority. Each school participates in monthly fire drills and quarterly disaster drills, tornado drills and lockdown drills. Each drill is scheduled in advance, timed, and documented. All drill dates can be found in your Brightwheel calendar.

**Incident Reports:** As much as we wish that children would never get hurt at TNS, it may happen. The Nature Schools employs many teachers trained in First Aid and CPR and all staff are fully educated on safety protocols.

Should a child sustain an injury at TNS, an incident report will be written and sent home with the child. A parent signature is required, and a copy of the form will be kept on file at TNS. Reports will not be written for minor injuries; however, parents/guardians will be notified. These notifications will be in the form of a Brightwheel message, phone call, or in person conversation.

If one or more children are involved in an incident (ie. hitting, biting, colliding into each other), a report will be written for each child separately. Due to confidentiality requirements, the teacher is not allowed to document or tell another parent the name of the other child involved in the report. These notifications will be in the form of a Brightwheel message, phone call, or in person conversation.

# Curriculum



We pride ourselves on the integrated curriculum we have built for our early learners. You may view lesson plans in the learning section of your child's Brightwheel profile each day. Our structured environment allows children to learn through play, small group, and one-on-one activities. Each lesson is focused on the Kentucky Early Learning Standards and your child's development both mentally and physically. In each program, the students rotate through classes to allow them to experience different environments and teaching styles daily.

It is important to note that our curriculum is intended to introduce children to a variety of concepts and that we do not expect mastery of any skill. We recognize that children develop and learn at their own pace and we work with them at their level. They are also gaining social skills everyday at an age-appropriate level.

**Academic Assessments/Developmental Screenings:** At least twice per year, and once within your child's first 90 days with us, teachers will screen children individually or in small groups. This allows teachers to learn more about each child and how to cater to their learning and/or developmental needs. It is also a tool for teachers and parents to see how they can work together to help a child learn. It also reveals what areas the child has shown growth in over the school year. Please note, many children are not interested in being assessed, and although the teachers make it fun, it can be difficult to obtain an accurate picture of a child's academic skill set. We will not force compliance. Twice per year parent-teacher conferences will be held to discuss progress and goals for each student.

**Special Services:** Our teachers often recognize when a child may need special services. We may recommend that your child be screened for speech, occupational, or physical therapy. Should your child qualify for special services and you choose to have your child seen while at TNS, we will accommodate therapists with a space where they can work with your child individually and away from classroom distractions.

We understand that some children may have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) in place before starting with us. We welcome and encourage families to share these plans with us. Our team will work collaboratively with families and any designated professionals outlined in the IEP or IFSP to ensure a smooth transition and create the best possible learning environment for your child. This may include adaptations to our curriculum, communication with therapists, or creating a support plan that aligns with the child's existing plan.



# What to Bring

**Lunch and Snack:** Children eat lunch with their homeroom outdoors. Parents are required to pack a healthy lunch and two healthy snacks for their children each day. We ask that you include a fruit, vegetable, dairy, protein, a grain, and a drink. Ice packs and thermoses help keep food warm and cold. We do not have a refrigerator and do not heat lunches. Please label your child's lunch box, thermos, and ice pack with their name in case of loss. We will be outdoors every day.

**Water Bottles:** Please make sure your child packs their water bottle daily to ensure they stay hydrated. We are outdoors 90% of our day most days. We will take breaks and make sure that each child is drinking water to maintain a comfortable body temperature. Teachers will encourage them to drink often during play.

**Toys from Home:** Children love bringing a little bit of home with them wherever they go! We leave it up to each teacher as to whether they allow toys from home in their classroom. If your child brings a toy from home, it is their responsibility to keep up with it. Please note that it is not the teacher's responsibility, nor TNS' responsibility, to keep it from getting lost or broken. Do not let them bring fragile items, electronic items, or any items that resemble a weapon.

**Nap Items:** Rest time is a much needed part of our busy day at The Nature Schools. We want each child to be comfortable with a crib sheet (to fit over a cot), and a blanket from home. Your child may bring a small, soft toy for comfort during nap. The item will be put up directly following a nap. Space is limited, so please be sure their nap items fit into a bag that they can easily open and close by themselves. Please take nap items home at the end of the week to be washed.

**Footwear:** When we head outdoors, your child will change into their boots. Please help your child change into their boots when you drop them off each day. It is important to provide appropriate footwear for any weather to ensure your child can explore freely. Children need comfortable, protective shoes with gripping soles for running, jumping, and climbing. Sneakers or well-fitting hiking boots are best. Waterproof shoes like crocs are great too. Your child will need rain boots to stay at school for wet and rainy days and also for visiting the creek. When we return to the building we will leave boots in the designated space for your child's class. Please make sure your child has several spare pairs of socks and a pair of shoes in case of wet feet.

**Clothing Recommendations:** Outdoor discovery requires freedom of movement in non-restrictive clothing that offers protection from the weather. This is why we recommend that you dress your child in layers when appropriate. Always dress your child in clothing that can get messy, so they will feel free to participate in messy projects, and splash in mud puddles. Expect that your child (and their clothing) will get dirty! If at any time your child's clothing becomes wet and/or uncomfortable, they will change into their extra set of clothes following the activity.

Below is a set of recommendations for each season. Please check the weather daily to stay mindful and provide your child with appropriate clothing.

Spring/Fall	Summer	Winter	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jacket or Sweatshirt</li> <li>• Warm Socks</li> <li>• Sun Hat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shoes with Tread</li> <li>• Tall Socks</li> <li>• Light Clothing</li> <li>• Shorts</li> <li>• T-shirts or Tank Tops</li> <li>• Sun Hat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fleece Jacket &amp; Pants</li> <li>• Wool/Fleece Socks</li> <li>• Waterproof Snow Pants</li> <li>• Snow Boots</li> <li>• Waterproof Gloves/Mittens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scarf/Neck Cover</li> <li>• Warm Long Underwear</li> <li>• Warm Winter Hat</li> <li>• Ear Warmers</li> </ul>

**Extra Clothes:** A bag with at least one complete change of clothes is required in the event your child spills or has an accident. A large name-labeled ziplock bag with clean socks, underwear, and an appropriate seasonal outfit should always stay in your child's backpack. Please update backup clothes seasonally.

# Events



**Calendar, Teacher Contacts, Professional Development Days, and Closures:** The messaging feature on Brightwheel is the best way you can reach any staff member and also stay up to date with the happenings at TNS. For immediate assistance, call your child's site director. You can find their phone number at the end of every Weekly Top 3 Brightwheel message. Please avoid texting after business hours. We want our staff to maintain a work-life balance by being able to separate school and home.

In an effort to maintain our facility as well as ensure that our curriculum and teacher training hours are up-to-date, we have scheduled professional development days during the school year. Breaks are scheduled to give our teachers time to attend professional development training, deep clean the facility, and prepare their classrooms as needed. By not prorating monthly tuition during these dates, we are able to make improvements, provide staff with paid days off, and provide the best trainings possible.

Annual closure dates can be found on our website [www.TheNatureSchools.org](http://www.TheNatureSchools.org), the calendar on Brightwheel, and the PDF calendar in the documents section of Brightwheel.

**Inclement Weather Policy:** In the case of inclement weather, The Nature Schools will make the best and earliest decision possible on closings and delays. The decision will always be based on the safest option for our staff and families. Please stay tuned to Facebook and Brightwheel for updates and reminders of this policy.

**Birthdays:** We love to celebrate special occasions with our TNS kids. We ask that you communicate with your child's homeroom teacher if you wish to send special treats and/or invitations. Teachers will notify you of any allergies in the school or classroom and the quantity needed.

**Holidays:** For holidays throughout the year, we celebrate by having classroom parties. Signups will be available for parents to bring in a special treat for their holiday party. Some of our holiday parties include egg hunts, costume parties, outdoor picnics, games, singing, and dancing. Our celebrations are during morning snack time.

**Family Involvement:** We truly enjoy each child and strive to get to know the families. It is important to build relationships with our families and we do this in a variety of ways. We may decide to do things differently each year, but here are a few that have become tradition:

- **Christmas Spectacular** is a holiday gathering for the whole family. Your children will have the opportunity to participate in crafts and treats! Santa may also stop by to spread some Christmas cheer.
- **Reading Logs** - It is never too early to start reading together as a family, and the kids enjoy keeping track of how many books they read!
- **Scholastic Book Fair** - Families are invited to shop for new books through monthly book orders and during our annual Literacy Night. Proceeds from the book orders and book fair help build a library for The Nature Schools.
- **Turkeys!** - This is a fun artistic family project where your family is asked to 'disguise a turkey' before Thanksgiving.
- **All About Me!** - Lining our halls with these smiling faces is a bright spot for us each year! Students love to share a little about their lives with this project.
- **Summer Bash** - Before each student moves into their new program, we want to celebrate the growth and fun that has been had during the school year! In past years, this has included bounce houses, performances, and gifts.
- **Back to School/Meet the Teachers** - We invite students and parents to view the school and meet the teachers before the school year begins. This is typically a fun night of snacks and getting to know each other.
- **Orientation** - Each year before the start of the year, new families will be invited to an in-person orientation where they can hear all about our schools, see the classrooms, and ask questions.

**Community Engagement:** The Nature Schools partners with the Madison County Public Library to keep new books for students and teachers that are tailored to student interests and curriculum themes. Directors will also share fliers and information about events happening in our community and surrounding areas frequently on Brightwheel.



# Policies

## Aggressive Behavior Policy

Aggressive behavior is defined as an action in which intentional physical harm occurs or their behavior results in safety concerns for the other students or teachers in their classroom. We will provide individual support and intervention for students who display aggressive behavior, addressing their needs on a case-by-case basis.

When preschool-aged children are capable of articulating their actions and emotions to their teachers and/or parents/guardians, it allows us to discern whether their actions have moved beyond exploratory behavior and have begun to pose a safety concern.

### Immediate Action Taken When an Aggressive Behavior Results in an Injury to Another Child:

1. A teacher or school leader will discuss the behavior with the child. Staff member will review the guidance below and select the most appropriate approach with the child.
  - a. **Use Simple and Direct Language:** Keep sentences short and straightforward. Use language that children can easily comprehend. For example, instead of saying "That's not appropriate behavior," say, "We do not hit. Hitting hurts."
  - b. **Be Specific:** Instead of giving general instructions like, "Be nice," be specific about what to do or not do. For example, "We use gentle hands and kind words."
  - c. **Use Visuals and Role-Play:** Young children can better understand complex ideas when they are presented visually or through play. Draw pictures, use puppets or dolls, or act out situations to explain concepts.
  - d. **Repeat and Reinforce:** Young children might not grasp the concept right away. Repeating the same message in different contexts and reinforcing it through various activities can help them understand.
  - e. **Reflect Feelings:** Teach them to empathize by reflecting feelings. For example, "How would you feel if someone hit you? It wouldn't feel good, right? That's how your friend feels when you hit them."
  - f. **Offer Choices:** When possible, offer choices instead of commands. This not only makes the child feel more in control but also encourages independent decision-making.
  - g. **Positive Framing:** Instead of focusing on what the child should not do, emphasize what they should do. For example, instead of saying, "Don't snatch toys," say, "We wait our turn to play with the toys."
  - h. **Use Real-Life Examples:** Use situations from storybooks, cartoons or real life to explain the consequences of certain actions and the importance of positive behavior.
  - i. **Validate Their Feelings:** Acknowledge their emotions. Let them know it's okay to feel upset, but it's not okay to hurt others because of these feelings.
  - j. **Model Behavior:** Demonstrate the desired behavior. Kids often learn more from what they see adults do than from what they are told.

Remember, patience is key when dealing with young children. They may take time to fully understand and apply the behaviors being taught. Regular reinforcement can help inculcate these values effectively.

2. The child will be given 'cool-down time' away from others. This will last no more than one minute per year of the child's age.
3. Meanwhile, another teacher will attend to the injured child or teacher. A school leader will assess the injury and administer first aid as needed. If, after the injury is assessed, it is found that the child intentionally broke skin on another student/teacher or caused an injury to the face, the parent/guardian of the aggressive child will be called to pick up the child. If the parent/guardian is not reachable, the next person on the child's pick up list will be contacted. The child may return the next school day.

4. Afterwards, a teacher will talk separately with both children involved to explore why the incident happened. If it's deemed necessary, both children will be encouraged to communicate and understand each other's perspectives under adult supervision.
5. Finally, the child who caused the injury will be invited to apologize, and care will be taken to ensure they understand why it's important to say sorry. This approach fosters a positive environment that empowers our children to grow independently while respecting others. Reference the guidance in 1a-1j in order to facilitate this conversation.

### **Communication:**

2. If an incident of an intentional injury occurs, the parents/guardians of both students will be informed.
  - a. If a student is injured, this will be documented in the form of a "Behavior Report." A Behavior Report is an important tool that we use to track and manage children's behaviors in our school setting.
  - b. Each Behavior Report details the location where the behavior occurred and the teacher who was present at the time. It includes a clear description of the observed behavior, providing an objective record of the event.
  - c. The report also contains information about what happened immediately before the behavior was observed, as it often holds clues about what might have triggered the behavior.
  - d. Lastly, the Behavior Report outlines the teacher's response to the behavior, which ensures transparency about how the situation was managed. Together, all of these elements in the Behavior Report give us a comprehensive understanding of the incident, allowing us to identify causes and patterns, and develop effective strategies for positively guiding your child's behavior in the future.
  - e. All reports will be kept confidential.

### **Additional Measures:**

1. Aggressive behaviors may be logged in order to discern trends or patterns. If a trend of aggressive behavior is seen from the same child, additional measures will be taken as shown below. A trend may be one or more intentional incidents a day, two to three intentional incidents in a week or more than three in a month, whether an injury is apparent or not. Teachers and parents will work together to determine what may be causing the aggressive behavior and will work as a team to find a solution to end the behavior. The staff at The Nature Schools will make every effort to work with each family and handle each situation with the goal of obtaining favorable results for all parties.
2. **Observe and Learn:**
  - a. With the first (1) act of intentional injury or aggressive behavior, there will be documentation in the form of a Behavior Report.
  - b. Parents of the child will receive a phone call from a leader of the school and a copy of this report at pick up. During the phone call, the leader and parent/guardian will set up a time for a meeting to create a behavior plan. The behavior plan will be shared with and followed by all teachers.
  - c. The plan will include the function of the behavior, as well as a plan for teachers to use during the behaviors.
  - d. The plan could include a referral for therapy services. Therapy services for preschool-aged children can include a variety of interventions, such as play therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioral therapy, depending on the child's needs. Therapists can help identify triggers for aggressive behaviors and develop strategies to replace them with more positive responses. They can also uncover underlying issues—like strong emotions or environmental factors—that might be contributing to the aggression. In addition, therapists provide crucial support and guidance to parents and teachers, helping them manage and respond to the child's behavior effectively.
  - e. The behavior will be logged for tracking purposes. Both the report and log will serve as a tool for teachers and parents to work through aggressive behavior together. Some of the things teachers and leaders will be looking for are:
    - i. Are there any external factors at home or school?
    - ii. Is there a pattern to the behavior? (time, person, etc.)
    - iii. What happened before the behavior occurred?

### 3. *Behavior Plan:*

- a. Every instance where a child—navigating aggressive behavior patterns—chooses words over harmful actions, there is cause for celebration. We'll warmly acknowledge these strides, offering praise and encouragement, fostering their journey towards adopting these kinder behaviors consistently.
- b. After the second (2) incident of aggressive behavior, the teacher(s) and leaders of the school will work together with the family to create a behavior plan for the student during a second conference. The parents/guardians of the student will be asked to participate in the making of this plan. Therapy services will be suggested in the plan and the permission form to receive a screening will be presented at this time. If the student is already receiving therapy services, their therapist may be asked to join the meeting to help create a plan for the student.
- c. If a child inflicts three (3) intentional and/or aggressive injuries to another student or teacher within five (5) days or after the implementation of the behavior plan, the parents/guardians will be asked to attend a third conference. The child's therapist will also be invited to this conference if they are receiving services. This meeting is designed to discuss the child's current behavior plan, as well as potential modifications to better address the ongoing issues. At this stage, please note that the child's continued enrollment at The Nature Schools may become contingent upon specific conditions. These could include the child receiving therapy services or undergoing a therapy screening. Our goal is to ensure a safe and productive learning environment for all students and staff. Consequently, these measures are considered to ensure that any behavioral issues are professionally addressed and managed to benefit the child and the entire school community.
- d. If two (2) more intentional and/or aggressive injuries to another student or a teacher occur after the third conference, the parents will be notified of suspension. Suspension from school will be for the following five (5) consecutive school days.
- e. Following suspension, if a child continues to exhibit aggressive behavior, the parents may be asked to make other schooling and care arrangements. The end date of enrollment at The Nature Schools will be effective at the discretion of the Director of The Nature Schools.

## Preschool Biting Policy

We acknowledge that biting is a natural developmental stage that many children go through. It is usually a temporary condition that is most common between one & two years of age. However, it can be developmentally appropriate all the way up to the age of four. The safety and well-being of all the children at our center is our primary concern. Therefore, it is imperative we address any biting issue with the utmost sensitivity and diligence.

If an incident of biting occurs, the parents of both children will be informed.

If skin is broken or a mark is apparent, this will be recorded in the form of an "Incident Report" and placed in each child's file. Incident reports are kept confidential. If a trend of biting from the same child is seen, additional documentation in the form of a log will be kept. A trend is one or more bites a day or two to three bites throughout the week, whether a mark is apparent or not. Teachers and parents will work together to determine what may be causing the biting behavior and will work as a team to find a solution to end the behavior. The staff at The Nature Schools will make every effort to work with each family and handle each situation with the goal of obtaining favorable results for all parties.

### **Some Common and Developmentally Appropriate Causes of Biting at This Age are as Follows:**

- **Exploration:** Young children explore the world around them using their senses. Children often seek ways to meet their sensory needs.
- **Attention:** When children are in a situation where they feel they are not receiving enough attention, biting is a quick way of becoming the center of attention.
- **Communication:** Young children are trying very hard to be independent in their actions and words. If a child wants a toy, another child is too close, or the child wants another child to do something but they do not have the knowledge or ability to communicate these things, this could lead to a biting incident.
- **Frustration, Anger, or Other Intense Feelings:** Children can be frustrated by a number of things, such as long waiting times before or after transition times, wanting to do something independently, but not quite able to do it on their own, and processing their emotions.
- **Changes:** Major changes at home or school can cause emotional distress resulting in aggressive behavior.

### **In The Event a Child Bites, the Following Steps Will Be Followed:**

1. The teacher will separate the children involved.
2. The teacher will move the biting child away from other children to calm down.
3. Meanwhile, a teacher will tend to the bitten child and wash the area with soap and water before applying ice if necessary.
4. Once both children have calmed down, the teacher will discuss what happened with each child separately. They will ask questions such as:
  - a. Why did you hurt your friend?
  - b. Do you know why your friend hurt you?
  - c. How did that feel?
  - d. Is that ok? What can we do instead?
5. The teacher will work with the children to form the appropriate apologies before facilitating the apology.
6. Staff will call the family of the children to inform them of what happened and then write incident reports for each child.
7. If a child bites another child on the face and/or breaks the skin, the family member of the biting child will be called to pick him/her up due to the severity of the bite. If the family member is not available or does not return a call within a reasonable timeframe, the next person listed on the child's pick up list will be contacted and asked to pick up the child. He/she may return the next school day.
8. Each time a child who is working through biting behavior uses words instead of harmful actions, he/she will be praised and encouraged to continue to model that acceptable behavior.

## Rehabilitative Steps

1. Each time that a child bites or is bitten a log will be updated to track patterns in behavior.
2. The first time a child bites, their family member will be provided with the information needed to have the child screened for therapy services in our schools.
3. Staff will meet to discuss the child's behavior, review the child's biting log, review their developmental assessment(s), and develop a plan of action to better help the child.
  - a. This plan will be shared with the biting child's parents or guardians.
  - b. The plan will be monitored by staff, family, and administration to ensure goals are being met.
  - c. Modifications to the action plan will be made as needed.
4. If a child's biting becomes excessive, a formal conference will be held with the family member of that child, the staff in the child's classroom, and the director to form a biting plan. Excessive biting is defined by three (3) bites in the span of one (1) week or five (5) bites in a month.
5. If a child inflicts two (2) more biting incidents after the conference, the family member will be notified of the next step, suspension. Suspension from school will be for the next five (5) consecutive school days.
6. Following suspension, if a child continues biting, the family member may be asked to make other schooling and care arrangements. The end date of enrollment at The Nature Schools will be effective at the discretion of the Director.



## Disruptive Behavior Policy

Disruptive Behavior is defined as any actions or behaviors by a student that negatively impact the educational environment or the safety and well-being of others in the school community. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Unsafe Acts:** Performing actions that compromise the safety of oneself or others, including reckless behavior, violation of safety protocols, running, and endangering the physical well-being of people in the school.
- **Outbursts:** Exhibiting uncontrollable emotional or verbal reactions that disrupt classroom teaching, school activities, or the learning process of others.
- **Distraction of Fellow Students:** Engaging in behavior that diverts or interrupts the attention and focus of other students from their educational activities, including excessive talking, inappropriate use of electronic devices, or other disruptive conduct during class time.
- **Bullying:** Engaging in repeated aggressive behavior, whether verbal, physical, or through social exclusion, intended to harm, intimidate, or coerce another individual or group of individuals.

Such behaviors are considered detrimental to the creation of a dynamic and engaging learning environment and are subject to the appropriate actions as outlined in the school's three-phase disruptive behavior policy. See below:

### Green Phase: Early Observation

- **Trigger:** Teacher observes initial signs of disruptive behavior in a student.
- **Actions:**
  - Collective discussion among teachers in the program reaches a majority agreement that progression to the Green Phase is appropriate. This suggestion is then presented in a meeting with school leadership or at the weekly program leaders meeting.
  - Documentation of behavior incidents, including incident reports and possibly maintaining a running record.
  - Classroom teacher communicates with parents regarding observed behavior.

### Yellow Phase: Patterned Behavior

- **Trigger:** Disruptive behavior becomes patterned.
- **Actions:**
  - Teachers in the program confer and, by majority, agree to propose entering the Yellow Phase. The suggestion is then presented in a meeting with school leadership or at the weekly program leaders meeting.
  - Implementation of classroom modifications and specific strategies.
  - Teachers use resources to develop strategies.
  - Classroom aides may assist by removing the child from the classroom to conduct a reset break for the child. Options include a school or outdoor walk, a break to chat outside the classroom, and/or an alternate activity that will redirect the student's disruptive behavior. The goal is to de-escalate and rejoin the classroom.
  - Referrals for pediatric therapies as determined.
  - Continuation of detailed documentation through incident reports and running records.
  - Classroom teacher communicates with parents regarding observed behavior.

### Red Phase: Critical Intervention

- **Trigger:** Persistent, disruptive behavior; interventions not effective or fast enough.
- **Actions:**
  - Teachers in the program confer and, by majority, agree that progression to the Red Phase is necessary. This decision is presented in a meeting with school leadership or at the scheduled weekly program leaders meeting.
  - The school recognizes that the ongoing behavior compromises safety and learning, necessitating decisive action.
  - Immediate removal of the student from the classroom upon disruptive behavior.
  - Mandatory pickup by parents or caregivers, with non-compliance potentially leading to disenrollment.
  - A school leader will communicate with parents or caregivers to share progression into the red phase.

## Head Lice Policy

It is our goal to ensure the health and well-being of each child at The Nature Schools.

### What are Lice?

Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that live on the human scalp. They are about as big as sesame seeds. Head lice sustain themselves by sucking blood, just as mosquitoes do. However, unlike mosquitoes, lice cannot fly or jump from one person to another. They can only crawl. Children often get head lice from head-to-head contact with other children, but may also get them by sharing personal items such as hats, combs, or headbands. The most common head lice symptom is itching. If you notice your child scratching their head, especially at the nape of their neck or behind their ears, check for lice. Head lice have the ability to spread quickly.

### In the Event a Child has Contracted Lice, the Following Steps Will Be taken to Contain the Spread:

- If a parent notices lice on their child's head, it is their responsibility to notify the staff of The Nature Schools and keep their child home from school to treat it.
  - The child will be asked to remain home until the lice is completely eradicated.
  - There are many good products and websites to refer to for treatment, or contact your family physician.
  - There is also a Lice Clinic that guarantees success located in Lexington.
- **No-Nit Policy:** A child cannot return to TNS unless every louse egg has been combed from his/her hair. TNS staff will check returning students and send them home if any nits are found.
- If a TNS teacher notices lice or nits on a child's head, they will contact the parent to pick up the child from TNS. If a parent is unavailable, they will contact others listed on the child's approved pick up list until someone is reached and available to pick up the child.
- All nap bedding for the affected child, and the children sharing the nap classroom, will be bagged and sent home to be washed.
- All soft toys, cushions, dress up clothes, and hats will be bagged and washed by TNS teachers.
- TNS staff will notify parents whose children share the classroom with the affected child. If deemed necessary, TNS staff will notify all parents at TNS.

## **Preschool Potty Policy**

*All children enrolled and attending The Nature Schools' Three Year Old Program are expected to be Fully Potty Trained.*

### **Reason for Policy**

The Nature Schools is designed to be a premier childcare center dedicated to teaching three-year-olds. Our teachers' primary focus is to provide quality care while teaching using an interactive curriculum.

### **Definition of Fully Potty Trained**

Child is able to determine on their own when he/she needs to use the bathroom. Child is able to use the bathroom as developmentally appropriate for three-year-olds, to urinate and have a bowel movement as well as adequately clean themselves afterward with minimal assistance. There is no discipline in respect to toileting.

### **Pull Ups/Diapers are Not Allowed**

This indicates potty training is still in progress.

### **Accidents**

We understand and acknowledge that occasional accidents will occur. However, to ensure the integrity of our teaching program, it is necessary for us to address repeated accidents. We do take into consideration transitioning to a new school may take a few days, and we will look at each child individually and assess on a case-by-case basis.

### **Repeated Accidents and Plan of Action**

A transition period of five (5) days will be given to each child from their start date.

After the transitional period is over, if the child has two or more incidents within five (5) days, the teacher will address this concern with the parent as well as inform the directors of The Nature Schools. Together, a plan will be discussed on how to prevent future accidents. At this time, documentation will be started to track progress. We may expect progress to be made within five (5) days.

If adequate progress has not been made within five (5) days, the teacher will again address this concern with the parents and TNS directors. At the end of the five (5) days of documentation, and if the child has not shown a marked improvement, The Nature Schools reserves the right to assume the child is not potty trained and therefore does not meet the 'Fully Potty Trained' requirement stated on the enrollment form. At this time, we may recommend to the parents to keep the child home or seek alternative care until they are fully potty trained. We will continue to hold the child's spot for two (2) weeks as long as payment has already been applied for the time in question. (Payment is non-refundable.) If after the two (2) weeks, the child still has not become fully potty trained, The Nature Schools reserves the right to disenroll the child and open the spot up to another child.

## Sick Policy

If a child begins to show signs of not feeling well, a teacher will notify the parent or guardian. After notification, a close eye will be kept on the child to see if he/she shows better or worsening symptoms. In cases of fever, vomiting, or diarrhea, a TNS teacher will contact a parent to pick up the child within the hour. If a parent/guardian is not able to be reached, the teacher will contact the next person on the Approved Pick Up List. In the meantime, the sick child will be separated from the rest of the class. Students may return to school after being symptom free for a 24 hour period.

- **Fever:** If your child has a fever, please do not send them to school. We require a child to be fever free for 24 hours before they may return to TNS. If a child develops a fever of 100 degrees or higher while at TNS, a parent (or approved pick up person) will be contacted and asked to pick up your child within one hour.
- **Pink Eye:** This is highly contagious! Please do not send your child to school if you suspect Pink Eye. We require a child to have 24 hours worth of prescription eye drops before they may return to the Nature Schools.
- **Diarrhea:** As we are limited on assisting the children while in the restroom, we ask that you keep your child home until his/her symptoms are resolved. If your Child has 3 loose stools they will be sent home.
- **Lice:** See lice policy
- **Rashes and Illnesses:** If your child has a rash or illness, please do not send them to school. We require students to be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school.



Thank you for trusting  
the NATURE SCHOOLS  
to provide your child's early childhood education.

We understand that you didn't make this *important* decision lightly. Studies reveal that investments in early childhood education create foundations for future successes. Those *successes* might look academic or they might be more subtle.

Children who are *loved* and *nurtured* stand a greater likelihood of enjoying social and emotional health. Our goal is to set a complete *foundation* for your child while they are in our care.

We'll help you with the great *responsibility* that comes with parenthood and you can help us with your support, communication, and involvement.

We're a *team* in this endeavor!  
We want to honor your investment in your child by providing a great standard of *care*.

Thank you again for your *trust*.