



***ENRICHMENT PROGRAM
PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK***

2024-2025



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WELCOME TO NATURE'S WAY PRESCHOOL

At the Austin Nature & Science Center, we provide children with the opportunity to learn more about themselves and their world through our unique enrichment program, Nature's Way Preschool. One of the first nature-based preschools in the United States, our program was established in the fall of 1992, and has grown since then to arrive at its present state of ten different classes. With continued help and support from the Austin Parks and Recreation Department, community, parents, and a dedicated staff, the NWPS enrichment program continues to grow and blossom!

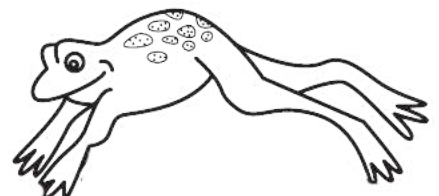
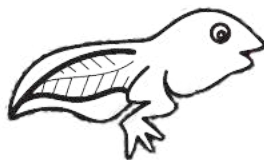
A quality nature immersion program develops inquiring minds and the skills with which to search for explanations. Science education is not about providing all the answers, but rather about helping children develop the means to find them on their own. Nature's Way Preschool encourages children to discover and explore their environment through a variety of hands-on science experiences. Each class day, children participate in activities that develop coordination, promote self-esteem, and increase a sense of wonder and curiosity. In a warm, safe environment, children are encouraged to take initiative, express their ideas, and make choices. Through participation in our program, we hope children will develop a connection to and a respect for the natural world.

All classes are held in the 1880's Ashford-McGill Trail House on the ANSC grounds. This historic building offers space for three classrooms, a kitchen, and bathroom facilities. Our expansive outdoor play area includes a garden, sand and water play area, art area, and more. Classes also explore the Nature Center, including meadows, a pond system, animal enclosures, and 80 acres of hiking trails.



CLASS OPTIONS

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
MORNING CLASSES					
3 yrs Hummingbirds 2x	X		X		
3 yrs Hummingbirds 2x		x		X	
3 yrs Hummingbirds 1x					X
4-5 yrs Iguanodons 4x	X	X	X	X	
4-5 yrs Iguanodons 1x					X
4-5 yrs Starfish 3x	X		X		X
4-5 yrs Starfish 2x		X		X	
AFTERNOON CLASSES					
4-5 yrs Mockingbirds 2x		X		X	
4-5 yrs Roadrunners 1x		X			
4-5 yrs Roadrunners 1x				X	



QUICK REFERENCE

First Day of Class: Friday, September 13, 2024

Last Day of Class: Friday, April 25, 2025

Class Times:

Morning: Monday-Friday 9 am-1 pm | Afternoon: Tuesday and Thursday 2-5 pm

Class Location: Ashford-McGill Trailhouse building on the Austin Nature & Science Center grounds

Mailing Address: 301 Nature Center Drive Austin, Texas 78746

Physical Address 2389 Stratford Drive Austin, Texas 78746

What to send with your child every day:

- Filling snack (AM and PM) and nutritious lunch (AM only)
- Reusable water bottle
- Weather-appropriate clothing that can get wet and dirty
- Closed-toe shoes appropriate for hiking

Preschool Holidays:

- October 3
- October 4
- October 11
- October 14
- November 1
- November 5
- November 11
- November 25-29
- December 23-January 6
- January 20
- January 29
- February 17
- March 14
- March 17-21
- March 31
- April 18



PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

We believe:

- The development of the whole child depends on appropriate physical, mental, and social nourishment supplied by the home, school, and community.
- Play, both informal and organized, is significant to intellectual growth.
- Learning can happen at any time.
- Children have a natural curiosity and desire to learn and make sense of the world around them.
- Children need to develop an awareness and appreciation of the world if they are to learn to respect and protect it.
- Children have the right to make choices, to express their own ideas, and to take initiative; each child should view themselves as a unique and capable individual.
- We should challenge children to question and to seek answers.
- We must respect each child's individuality and unique qualities.
- Children need a warm, safe, and enriching learning environment.
- Children should feel empowered to develop self-reliance and independence.
- By loving and respecting children, they come to love and respect themselves.

Goals and Objectives:

- To teach elementary science skills including: observing, classifying, measuring, hypothesizing, communicating, collecting data, predicting, and experimenting.
- To stimulate and reinforce children's curiosity in nature.
- To develop knowledge and instill appreciation for our natural resources.
- To provide opportunities for children to develop social-emotional skills while exploring their natural surroundings.
- To provide children with opportunities to make connections with and feel a part of the natural world.



TUITION INFORMATION



Payments

- Nature's Way families can make monthly tuition payments online. To make additional payments, please contact the front desk at (512)974-3888 for assistance.
- Payments may also be made in person, by mail, or walk-in. ANSC accepts credit cards, checks and exact cash. Payment by check must include valid driver's license information. Payments made through mail will incur a delay in processing.
- There is a non-refundable fee of \$100 due upon registering.
- Tuition Payments are due in full on the first day of each month and no later than the 10th of each month, August through April.
- Tuition not paid by the 10th of each month will be subject to a late fee of \$2 per business day.
- If any tuition payment and late fees remain delinquent by the last day of any month, the Austin Nature & Science Center may cancel your child's enrollment.

Late Pickup Charge

- Morning classes end at 1:00 PM and afternoon classes end at 5:00 PM. We ask that you pick up your child no later than 1:15 PM or 5:15 PM, respectively.
- If you arrive later than this, you will be charged \$5 for each 15 minutes that you are late.
- Late pick up charges will be added to your next month's tuition.

Cancellation Policy

Registration for Nature's Way Preschool is intended to be for the complete session from September through the end of April. If you choose to unenroll your child, written notice to anscprograms@austintexas.gov is required by the first of the month prior to the month you would like to unenroll. Otherwise, you will be responsible for paying the next month's full tuition (ex: If your last month is in December, you must notify anscprograms@austintexas.gov by November 1st).

Program Costs:

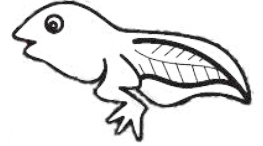
	ANNUAL COST	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
DUE:		9/1	10/1	11/1	12/1	1/1	2/1	3/1	4/1
MORNING CLASSES									
M-TH	\$4,220	\$360	\$680	\$400	\$480	\$520	\$600	\$480	\$600
M/W/F	\$3,020	\$320	\$400	\$320	\$360	\$360	\$440	\$320	\$400
M/W	\$2,060	\$200	\$320	\$200	\$240	\$200	\$280	\$240	\$280
TU/TH	\$2,260	\$160	\$360	\$200	\$240	\$320	\$320	\$240	\$320
FRI	\$1,060	\$120	\$80	\$120	\$120	\$160	\$160	\$80	\$120
AFTERNOON CLASSES									
TUES	\$910	\$60	\$150	\$60	\$90	\$120	\$120	\$90	\$120
THURS	\$910	\$60	\$120	\$90	\$90	\$120	\$120	\$90	\$120
TU/TH	\$1,720	\$120	\$270	\$150	\$180	\$240	\$240	\$180	\$240

*Annual costs include a \$100 non-refundable registration fee.

*Fees reflect resident-based pricing and totals. Please visit <https://www.austintexas.gov/departments/natures-way-preschool> for non-resident pricing.



CURRICULUM OVERVIEW



Nature's Way Preschool students take part in an active program designed to help them explore and fully experience their own environment. Instructors emphasize hands-on discovery and allow the children to experiment with a variety of ideas and materials at their own pace. Activities are provided in science, art, dramatics, music, body movement, and outdoor exploration. Daily activities are geared toward helping children understand themselves and their world according to their own needs, interests, and abilities.

Our curriculum begins by asking the question, 'Who in the world am I?' and encourages children to become more aware of their feelings, personal care, and body composition. This section also examines other animals that share our world and the similarities and differences that exist between us all.

Once our students have a greater understanding of themselves and other living creatures, our curriculum raises the question, 'Where in the world do we all fit in?' Children are given opportunities to explore their own environment as well as those of the animals they have studied. They will spend time observing seasonal changes, learning how animals and people work together, and examining why harvesting food is important to us and our fellow creatures alike.

Upon returning from winter break, our preschoolers will spend some time considering, 'What in the world is our Earth made of?' Students will answer this question as they learn ways to take care of the Earth, explore different biomes, and dig in to and investigate the land and water. They will learn more about dinosaurs and creatures who lived on our planet before us and consider what is under our feet and in the sky above our heads.

The final component of our curriculum challenges our preschoolers to use their previously gained knowledge to explore answers to the question, "How in the world can I connect the dots?" At this point, children will be equipped with the confidence and the curiosity to build a garden from seed, discover the cycles of nature, and even take a look back at their growth throughout the school year.

Our curriculum is structured in order to provide a logical progression from topic to topic, which cultivates more meaning and builds deeper connections. In turn, this empowers children to use these connections as building blocks in acquiring new knowledge.

WEEKLY TOPICS AND IMPORTANT DATES

September 12	Open House
September 13-20	First Day of Classes Families and Communities- Family and Friends <i>We all have a family! Let's talk about what makes ours special.</i>
September 23-27	Families and Communities- NWPS Team <i>We will spend time learning more about the people and places that make Nature's Way a great place for kids.</i>
September 30-October 2	Animals Around Us- Humans <i>We will learn about the human body. What's happening under our skin? What are our five senses and how do we use them?</i>
October 3-4	No Class- Rash Hashanah and ACL Festival
October 7-10	Animals Around Us- Mammals <i>Dogs, whales, kangaroos, humans, and many more belong in this special group. We'll learn all about animals with fur!</i>
October 11	No Class- ACL Festival
October 14	No Class- Indigenous Peoples' Day
October 15-18	Animals Around Us- Birds <i>Learning takes flight as we investigate birds. We will search for nests and look closely at eggs.</i>
October 21-25	Animals Around Us- Reptiles <i>Let's find out what makes snakes, lizards, turtles, alligators, and crocodiles so unique.</i>
October 28-31	Animals Around Us- Wet and Slimy <i>We'll head out to the creeks and ponds at the Nature Center to look for signs of amphibians (and maybe fish too)!</i>
November 1	No Class- Diwali
November 4, 6-8	Animals Around Us- Arthropods <i>Bugs are everywhere (and that's a good thing). Six legs...eight legs... fourteen legs... let's take a closer look!</i>
November 5	No Class- Election Day
November 11	No Class- Veterans Day



WEEKLY TOPICS AND IMPORTANT DATES

November 12-15

Animal Helpers

Let's take a closer look at all the way animals help humans- from farming to service animals to pets.

November 18-22

Fall Celebration- Families Invited!

Join us as we celebrate the season with pumpkin rolling, apple peeling, face painting, and more!

November 25-29

No Class- Fall Break

December 2-6

Animal Communication

From songs to smells to colorful stripes to twitching tails, how do different animals send and receive messages?

December 9-20

Winter All Around Us

As the days grow colder and darker, we'll explore what creatures around us do to stay happy and healthy this time of year. We will also create gifts for important people and animals in our lives.

December 23-January 6

No Class- Winter Break

January 6

Optional Conference Day with Instructors

January 7-17

Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Life

We will explore the lives of those who lived on Earth long before us. What was life like for dinosaurs, early humans, woolly mammoths, and saber tooth cats?

January 20

No Class- MLK, Jr. Day

January 21-24

Fables, Myths, and Legends

We will examine the history and process of storytelling as we listen to stories from around the world. We will even create a few of our own!

January 27-28,30-31

Outer Space

Let's investigate what's happening far, far away in the sky above us. We will look closer at the moon, sun, and all that shares our galaxy.

January 29

No Class- Lunar New Year

February 3-14

How Things Work

Pulleys and wheels, baking soda and vinegar. We will create experiments to help us understand and celebrate how things move and change.

February 17

No Class- Presidents' Day



WEEKLY TOPICS AND IMPORTANT DATES

February 18-21

Weather

Let's look to the skies in order to learn about different kinds of weather. We'll investigate clouds, rain, wind, and more.

February 24-28

Dirt & Underground

Let's get muddy! We will put our hands in the soil to learn more about what grows and who lives underground.

March 3-7

Plants

We will dig into the fascinating world of roots, shoots, stems, and leaves to find out more about plants.

March 10-13

Gardening

Spring is almost here! It's time to get seeds in to the ground and hone our gardening skills.

March 14-21

No Class- AISD Holiday & Spring Break

March 24-28

Cycles in Nature

Round and round we go as we examine changes that take place in the natural world!

March 31

No Class- Cesar Chavez-Dolores Huerta Day & Eid-al-Fitr

April 1-4

Art in Nature

Nature creates amazing art all around us... in the patterns of a spider web, the colors of leaves, the formation of rocks under our feet, and so much more. We will work together to discover the beauty of nature and use that as inspiration to create art of our own!

April 7-11

Camping

Pack your bags and let's learn how to have fun and be safe while having the ultimate experience in nature.

April 14-17

Growing, Growing, Growing

Let's take a look back at our year of learning together!

April 18

No Class- Good Friday

April 21-25

Our Favorite Things

We will spend this time visiting our favorite places and enjoying time together.

April 23,24,25

Class Slideshows- Families Invited!

April 28

School-Wide Picnic at Zilker Park- Families Invited!

REQUIRED PARTICIPANT PAPERWORK

Austin Parks and Recreation Program Registration and Waiver Form

- Parents/guardians receive an electronic copy of this form before classes begin in September. Hard copies are available during Open House.
- Originals will be kept in a file cabinet at the Preschool. Please keep information current.

Admission Form

- Parents/guardians receive an electronic copy of this form before classes begin in September. Hard copies are available during Open House.
- All forms must be completed and signed by the parent or guardian. Please keep the information current at all times. Should you have any changes to make during the school year, please notify preschool staff.
- All originals will be kept in a file cabinet at the Preschool. Staff will carry copies of relevant paperwork for hikes.

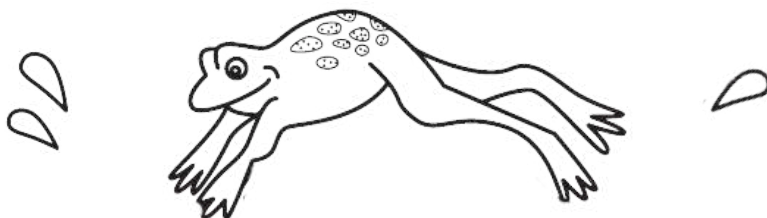
Health Statement

- A written statement, from a health care professional who has examined your child within the past year, indicating they are able to take part in our child-care program, or
- A signed affidavit from a parent/guardian stating that medical diagnosis and treatment conflict with the tenets and practices of a recognized religious organization of which a parent/guardian is an adherent or a member.

Vision and Hearing Screening (only required for children 4+ as of September 1st)

Acceptable documentation includes:

- Individual visual acuity and sweep check results,
- A signed statement from a parent/guardian that your child's screening records are current and on file at another school they attend, or
- A signed affidavit stating that vision or hearing screen conflicts with the tenets or practices of a church or religious denomination of which a parent/guardian is an adherent or a member.
- For more information, visit [Texas Health and Human Services](#).



Immunization Record

- All immunizations required based on your child's age must be completed by the date of admission, unless your child is exempt or excepted from an immunization due to medical reasons or reasons of conscience, and the exemption is verified by the date of admission. For more information, visit [Texas Health and Human Services](#).

Acceptable documentation includes:

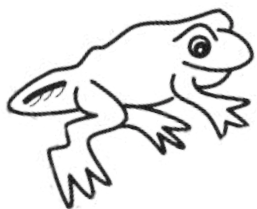
- An official immunization record generated from a state or local health authority, including a record from another state. For example, the record may be from the Texas Immunization Registry, or a copy of the current immunization records that is on file at the other school your child attends,
- An official immunization record or photocopy. For example, the record may be from a doctor's office or pharmacy,
or
- A signed statement from the parent/guardian that your child's vaccination records are current and on file at another school they attend.
- The record must include:
 - The type of vaccine and the number of doses,
 - The month, day, and year your child received each vaccination,
 - The signature of the professional who administered the vaccine, if applicable,and
 - Clinic contact information, if the record is generated from an electronic health record system.

Food Allergy Emergency Plan (if applicable)

- An individualized plan prepared by your child's health care professional that includes: a list of each food the child is allergic to, possible symptoms if exposed to a food on the list, and the steps to take if the child has an allergic reaction.

****Paperwork must be submitted by the first day of school.****





EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In our effort to keep our staff and participants as safe as possible in a variety of situations, we have created the following specific emergency plans:

Fire

Child Care Regulation requires NWPS to have a monthly fire drill as well as regular fire and safety inspections. Should classes need to evacuate the Trailhouse area due to fire, our meeting site is the picnic area in the Meadow directly across from our school. In an evacuation, classes meet at the back play yard gate with their instructor and are counted and matched using the class lists. All students proceed to the picnic area and are counted and matched again. Staff have emergency contacts, care information, and class lists with them at all times. The coordinator contacts the local authorities, followed by a child care regulation representative. Instructors contact parents via phone as soon as all children are in the safe location and accounted for. All staff carry a First Aid Kit with them at all times and are trained in CPR and First Aid. Staff provide care as needed.

Severe Weather (i.e. hurricane, tornado, flood) Emergency

Staff will follow weather updates and notify parents via phone to collect their children if approaching dangerous weather is reported. If severe weather occurs during class hours, students are counted and confirmed using class lists and taken to the center of the building, which has thick walls and no windows. Staff have emergency contacts, care information, and class lists with them at all times. Staff and students remain there until the threatening weather has passed. If necessary, the coordinator contacts the local authorities, followed by a child care regulation representative. Instructors contact families via phone regarding new pick-up information as soon as all children are safe and accounted for and once the severe weather has passed. All staff carry a First Aid Kit with them at all times and are trained in CPR and First Aid. Staff provide care as needed.

Lockdown Emergency

In the event of a sudden lockdown, students are counted and confirmed using class lists and taken as quickly and quietly as possible to the center of the building, which has thick walls and no windows. Staff have emergency contacts, care information, and class lists with them at all times. The coordinator contacts the local authorities, followed by a child care regulation representative. Staff and students remain there until local authorities have verified it is safe to move. Instructors contact families via phone as soon as the scene is safe. All staff carry a First Aid Kit with them at all times and are trained in CPR and First Aid. Staff provide care as needed.

Emergency Causing ANSC Site To Become Unsafe

In the event of a human caused emergency (gas leak, chemical spill, etc.) making the site unsafe, staff and NWPS students are transported via ANSC van or by foot (over the pedestrian bridge) to Austin High School at 1715 Cesar Chavez St. Austin, Texas 78703. During the evacuation, classes meet at the back play yard gate with their instructor and are counted and matched using the class lists. Instructors guide the children down the entrance path to Stratford Drive. After being counted and matched again, the group either begins their walk across the pedestrian bridge or loads into parked vans. The coordinator contacts the local authorities, followed by a child care regulation representative. Instructors contact families via phone regarding new pick-up information as soon as all children are safe and accounted for. All staff carry a First Aid Kit with them at all times and are trained in CPR and First Aid. Staff provide care as needed.

ILLNESS PROTOCOL

In accordance with child care regulation guidelines, NWPS staff must not allow an ill child to attend if one or more of the following exists:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in child care activities, including outdoor play.
- The illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care.
- The child has one of the following (unless a medical evaluation by a healthcare professional indicates that you can include the child in the child care center's activities):
 - An oral temperature above 101 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness.
 - A forehead temperature above 100 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness.
 - A tympanic (ear) temperature above 100 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness.
 - An axillary (armpit) temperature above 100 degrees that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness.
 - Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill.
- A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.

- For an updated list of communicable diseases, as well as recommendations for prevention and control, please visit [Texas Health and Human Services](#).

COVID-19 Policies and Procedures

- Please refer to the [City of Austin's COVID-19 site](#) for current information.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE POLICY

In accordance with child care regulation guidelines, discipline must be:

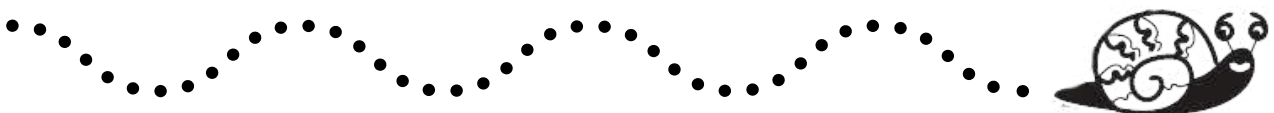
- Individualized and consistent for each child.
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

A positive method of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, including the following:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior.
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements.
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements.
- Using brief supervised separation from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment.
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training.
- Grabbing or pulling a child.
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth.
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child.
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language.
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet.
- Placing a child in a restrictive device for time out.
- Withholding active play or keeping a child inside as a consequence for behavior, unless the child is exhibiting behavior during active play that requires a brief, supervised separation that is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.



Should a participant's behaviors put themselves, other participants, and/or staff members in danger:

- Staff will document the incident and parent/guardians will be notified.
- Parents/guardians will be asked to attend a meeting with their instructor and program coordinator to discuss and develop a success plan for their child.
- NWPS staff members might request additional support from the City of Austin's Inclusion Unit.
- After multiple recorded incidents, students will not be permitted to return until a plan is decided upon. This plan will be established through a meeting with the program supervisor, the parent/guardian of the participant, and a representative from the PARD Inclusion Unit.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Allergies

- Occasionally, there are participants at NWPS with severe and even life-threatening allergies. Your child's instructor will notify you in the event any food items are prohibited while at school.
- If you would like to provide treats to celebrate a special event in your child's life, please check with your child's instructor ahead of time (2+ days in advance).
- For special school events involving food, all parents/guardians of children with severe allergies will be notified ahead of time so they may plan accordingly.

Animals

- Nature's Way Preschool curriculum is rooted in nature study and environmental education. Resident wildlife are an integral part of the program. Children observe the resident wildlife that call ANSC their home, like Moxie the bobcat and Pogo the raven.
- Small animal ambassadors also visit the classrooms on a regular basis. Some examples of visitors are: a rabbit, turtle, snake, and various arthropods.
- All NWPS staff members are trained in animal handling and presentation skills. Animal visitors in the classrooms are presented to children in a small, quiet group setting. Children must wash their hands after any contact with animals.
- All resident animals receive medical care from a veterinarian and receive immunizations and medicines as needed. Records of medical care are on file with the ANSC wildlife staff.
- In compliance with child care regulation rules and for everyone's safety, please leave pets (including dogs), at home.

Child Abuse Reporting Requirements

- Nature's Way Preschool staff are REQUIRED by Texas State Law to immediately report any instance where there is reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect, or exploitation to the police or Child Protective Services (CPS) .
- Our staff members receive annual training on recognizing and preventing abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse. Staff will not be able to notify parents when the police or CPS are called about possible child abuse, neglect, or exploitation, except on the recommendation of CPS or the police when they are called.
- Some examples of abuse and neglect are: leaving a child in a vehicle unattended, not securing a child in a seat belt or booster seat, unexplained marks or bruises on opposite sides of the body, and child hygiene issues.



Communication

- NWPS utilizes MailChimp to send out weekly class newsletters to families, as well as any schoolwide communications (including changes to our policies and procedures). If you are not receiving emails, please notify staff as soon as possible.
- In addition, you will receive your instructor's email address and phone number closer to the start of the school year. Parents/guardians are welcome to use both forms of contact (texts are preferred during class time). We ask that you respect "business hours" of 8 am-5:30 pm, except in an emergency.
- If your child will be absent, a courtesy email or text is appreciated.
- If you have any questions or concerns, we encourage you to speak with your child's instructor. If you believe further input is necessary, please contact Kelly Campbell, program coordinator, at kelly.campbell@austintexas.gov or (512)974-3882.

Emergency Medical Situations

In the event of a medical emergency, staff will proceed as follows:

- Ensure the safety and supervision of the children while providing care to those who need it.
- Notify the child's parent/guardian immediately if they are injured and the injury requires medical attention by a healthcare professional.
- Notify the child's parent/guardian immediately if they have been involved in any situation that placed the child at risk.
- Provide written notice via email within 48 hours of becoming aware that a child in our care or an employee has contracted a communicable disease deemed notifiable by Texas Health and Human Services.
- Provide written notice via email within 48 hours of becoming aware of an outbreak of lice or other infestation.

Employment Standards

- The most important asset to the preschool is the quality of its instructors.
- All staff members are experienced in working with young children and participate yearly in professional development days, workshops, and training sessions.
- All staff members are trained in the policies and procedures manual for Nature's Way Preschool.
- All staff are required to participate in at least 24 continuing education hours annually to meet the child care regulation standards.
- NWPS staff must possess current CPR/First Aid and Water Safety certifications.
- All staff must be fingerprinted and pass a criminal background check.

Enrollment Procedures

- Information about Nature's Way Preschool can be found through [our website](#).
- Registration occurs in January for the following school year (September through April).



Field Trips and Transportation

- Some classes (ages 4-5 AM classes) will go on educational, fun, and topic-specific field trips throughout the year. Children are transported in City of Austin fifteen-passenger vans, which are driven by NWPS staff. Staff must possess valid Defensive Driving certifications and participate in annual transportation training.
- Parents/guardians are welcome to attend the field trips.
- It is important that you arrive at ANSC no later than 9 am or 2 pm on field trip days. The time spent at a field trip site is limited so an on-time departure is necessary.
- Instructors make every effort to arrive back from field trips by the end of class time. However, with young children anything is possible! Instructors carry cell phones with them at all times. If they are running late for any reason, instructors will notify parents/guardians about the delay.

- On field trip days, please send your child in their NWPS t-shirt and closed-toe shoes that can get wet or dirty. Each family will need to provide and install their own safety seat for the van. Refer to your specific booster or car seat manufacturer's height and weight requirements when choosing to send your child in a booster or car seat. Please pack a full water bottle (water bottle carriers are a great idea) and sunscreen if your child will need to reapply. These items, along with a hearty snack (and lunch for AM classes), should be placed in the field trip bag upon arrival.
- Field trip dates and destinations are listed in our school calendar and information is sent out via email. Please note that because we release the calendar in the summer, all field trips and special guests are subject to change. We will notify families in the event that changes do occur. Your child's instructor will provide a sign-up sheet for the field trip, along with more specific information, as the field trip date draws closer.

Food

- Nature's Way Preschool does not provide a snack or lunch for participants. Each child is required to bring their own nutritious food each day.
- Food will not be warmed/refrigerated. Please pack food that will survive the weather.

Gang-Free Zone Information for Child Care Centers

- A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where certain gang related activity is prohibited and is subject to increased penalty under Texas law.
- Specific locations where certain gang related criminal activity is now prohibited include, but are not limited to, public schools, playgrounds, video arcade facilities, and day care centers.
- Gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of NWPS is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty.

Guidelines for Observation

- If you would like to observe your child while they are at Nature's Way, please reach out to your child's instructor.
- Together, we would like to make a plan for a specific date and time that works for you, your child, and your child's instructor.

Inclement Weather

- Children should dress in clothing appropriate for the weather. This includes packing appropriate clothing for any predicted weather changes throughout the school day.
- In situations of extenuating weather events or periods of sustained severe weather (such as flooding, snow, and ice events), school closure may go into effect at the discretion of City of Austin Leadership.
- Any urgent weather information, including school closure or delays, will be relayed to families via email and text.
- Should school be cancelled due to extreme weather, families will not be refunded for those days.

Inclusive Services

- In accordance with Child Care Regulation, any child with special care needs will receive accommodations recommended by a qualified professional affiliated with the local school district or early childhood intervention program.
- NWPS will utilize any adaptive equipment that has been provided to the center for that child's use.
- Any child who receives early intervention services or special education services can receive those services from a qualified service provider at our school, with parental request and approval.
- All activities will integrate children with and without special care needs.
- Instructors will adapt equipment and procedures and vary methods as necessary in order to ensure that children with special care needs are able to participate in outdoor play and exploration.

Medication

- Before staff can administer medication, parents must sign an authorization form and include times for Nature's Way staff to administer each medication according to label directions.
- Medication must be in the original container labeled with the child's full name and the date brought to the child care center.
- Staff must administer the medication in amounts according to the label directions or as amended by a physician and to the child for whom it is intended.
- Staff must not administer the medication after its expiration date.

Minimum Standard Rules for Licensed Child Care Centers

- Parents may view the minimum standard rules for child care centers , as well as the results from our most recent inspection, at NWPS at any time.
- The standard rules are in a binder located on top of the file cabinet in the kitchen. You may also access them online through [Texas Health and Human Services](#). The inspection results are posted on the bulletin board in the kitchen.



Personal Items

- Personal items (toys, special jewelry, electronics, etc.) can get lost, broken, and/or dirty at Nature's Way. Please leave personal items at home.
- NWPS is not responsible for any lost or broken personal items while at school.

Physical Activity and Outdoor Play

- The benefits of physical activity and outdoor play for young children are extensive. Research from established organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control, shows that health benefits for young children can include not only improved short and long term physical health, but improved emotional wellbeing and academic outcomes.
- We will engage in structured and unstructured outdoor play for at least 2.5 hours every day in our play yard and/or on our hikes around the Austin Nature & Science Center and attached Zilker Preserve.
- During outdoor play, children have opportunities to climb, balance, run, jump, hike, throw, build, carry heavy things, and work together to achieve a goal.
- Staff will ensure that students have seasonally and activity-appropriate clothing, footwear, and supplies. This includes closed-toe shoes, seasonally appropriate outerwear, and water bottles.
- Children will play outside every day unless there is thunder, lightning, or other inclement weather present. Children will still have access to structured as well as unstructured play opportunities during that time.

Sign In and Sign Out Procedures

- Parents/guardians must initial and record the time on the sign in form each day as their child arrives at Nature's Way Preschool. Parents/guardians must initial and record the time on the same form when they pick up their children at the end of the day. This procedure is to ensure that the instructor knows which children have arrived and which children have been picked up at the end of the day.
- Sign in/out forms are located inside the classrooms.
- Parents/guardians have the opportunity to authorize additional people to sign in/out their child on their Admission Forms or with written permission. Any additional authorized individuals must show photo ID at sign out for verification.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent

- We request that all sunscreen and insect repellent be applied by a parent or guardian before class.
- Please label and pack extra if your child will need to reapply.

Toilet Training

- All participants must be potty trained for the following reasons:
 - Nature's Way Preschool does not meet the child care regulation requirements to handle diapering.



- Participants at Nature's Way are extremely active and spend a large portion of their day away from restroom facilities.
- Bathroom accidents can and will happen from time to time. Further discussion may take place with the program coordinator and your child's instructor in order to collaborate on methods to help your child be successful. If necessary, staff and parents/guardians will also determine the acceptable amount of accidents for your child based on the amount of days they attend.

Vaccine Schedule for Adults

- Nature's Way Preschool staff are given updated information regarding practices for keeping healthy. This includes the suggested vaccine schedule for adults from the CDC and local health authorities.
- As a rule, we follow cleanliness practices when dealing with injuries and body fluids, including handwashing and wearing gloves.
- Staff follow the health guidelines provided by child care regulation regarding staying home when ill.

CHILD CARE REGULATION INFORMATION

**Texas Health & Human Services,
Child Care Licensing**
14000 Summit Drive. Suite 100
Austin, Texas 78728
(512) 834-3426
www.hhs.texas.gov

To Report Child Abuse:
1-800-252-5400

