

Parent Handbook Nature Kids Program 2020-2021 Ages 3-4



Chipmunks

9:00 – 11:30 am
Tuesday/Thursday

Tualatin Hills Nature Center



Hummingbirds

9:00 – 11:30 am
Tuesday/Thursday

Jenkins Estate Gatehouse



Tualatin Hills Nature Center

15655 SW Millikan Way
Beaverton, OR 97003
(503) 629-6350

Jenkins Estate Gatehouse

8005 SW Grabhorn Rd
Beaverton, OR 97007
(503) 629-6350

PHILOSOPHY

Nature Kids is a nature-based early childhood education program for children ages 3-5 where students discover nature using their five senses. We strive to connect children to the nature in our park and in their own neighborhood. We engage students in hands-on, experiential learning to provide opportunities for children to smell, touch, listen and observe nature. Our primary goal is to inspire a sense of place and a connection to the natural world that children can carry with them throughout their lives.

In our program, we use The Creative Curriculum® as a guide to encourage students to create, explore, learn, play, express ideas, and problem-solve. This curriculum fosters growth in a positive and supportive environment. We focus on the whole child, promoting social-emotional, physical, language and literacy, and cognitive development.

We ensure that students have a positive, safe, and secure place to develop. We value the involvement and support of our families and strive to build a sense of community. Friendships blossom as children share their discoveries with one another. Nature-themed activities, which follow the changing seasons, allow children to learn through play as they prepare for kindergarten.

STAFF

Our staff are experienced in early childhood education and environmental education. The Nature Kids' team consists of a Program Coordinator, Shawna Hartung, two Directors, Maddie Cole and Alyssa Sleva, and a team of teachers. Parent volunteers and student interns often support the classrooms as well. THPRD Inclusion Assistants are available to support students when requested by families.

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Alyssa Sleva
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REGISTRATION

A non-refundable program deposit equivalent to one month's tuition and Deposit Acknowledgement form must be received by the Tualatin Hills Nature Center to confirm your child's registration and hold their space in the 2020-21 Nature Kids program.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The non-refundable deposit of one month's tuition is due upon enrollment to hold your child's place in the program. If your child remains enrolled in Nature Kids, your deposit will pay your May 2021 tuition. Early withdrawal will result in forfeiture of your full deposit. If you withdraw from the program, your tuition will not be applied to any other tuition payments or any other THPRD programs.

Prices listed are for in-district patrons. Families who live outside of the THPRD district boundaries will need to pay a quarterly assessment fee. The 2020 assessment fee is currently \$92 per quarter. The assessment fee allows all household members to receive in-district rates on all THPRD classes, drop-in activities, fitness passes and other programs for that quarter. For a full year of the Nature Kids Program, there will be three quarterly assessments needed.

Monthly Tuition for Chipmunks and Hummingbirds: \$198

Payments for Nature Kids are due on the fifteenth of each month, one month in advance. September tuition is due August 15. Payments can be made in the following ways:

- **In person** – Stop by the Tualatin Hills Nature Center front desk with cash, check, gift card, or credit card (Visa, MasterCard, or Discover)
- **Online** - Call the Nature Center to have staff put the next month's payment in your online patron shopping cart. You can pay with a credit card or learn about the *Payment Token* option to make checking out even easier: www.thprd.org/activities/payment-tokens.
- **Phone** – **We cannot take credit cards over the phone**, although with the new Payment Token option, you can authorize staff to charge your credit card when you call.

Late Tuition Payment Fee – A late fee of \$30 will be charged if your monthly tuition payment is made after the due date each month. If payment is not made by the current month, we reserve the right to request that your child not attend class.

Late Pick-Up Fee – You will be charged a late fee of \$1.00 per minute if you are later than 10 minutes after the class's scheduled end time.

WELCOME PACKET

In August, you will be mailed a Welcome and Registration Packet with required forms for you to review and fill out. **These forms must be completed and returned to the Tualatin Hills Nature Center by Friday, August 21, 2020.**

SCHEDULE

Please closely observe the starting and dismissal times for your child's class. The teachers use the time before class to prepare for the day's activities. Your on-time arrival helps keep continuity and order in the classroom. The teachers will begin class promptly, so please move conversations with other parents and other children outside the classroom at this time. Please pick up your child immediately after class, as our teachers have other classes to prepare for.

CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT

For the Nature Kids Program, please escort your child to and from class. The person(s) dropping off and picking up the child must sign in and out with the teachers each day. For safety reasons, we ask parents or other adults, listed by parents as approved to pick up the child, to show a photo ID at pick-up time, in order to verify with whom we are sending your child home. The names of approved pick-up adults must be written on the Check-In Sheet or be provided in writing to teachers in advance.

If you are not volunteering in the classroom, please do not stay in class more than 15 minutes, with the exception of days when parents are invited to participate or observe (e.g. birthdays).

HOLIDAYS OBSERVED

We follow a schedule similar to the Beaverton School District; however, we do not take off all teacher in-service days. The Nature Kids Program will not be in session on:

November 11, 2020	Veterans Day (Wednesday)
November 25-27, 2020	Thanksgiving
December 21, 2020-January 1, 2021	Winter Break*
January 18, 2021	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Monday)
February 15, 2021	Presidents' Day (Monday)
March 22-26, 2021	Spring Vacation*

**Schedule dependent on the Beaverton School District Calendar.*

CHIPMUNKS AND HUMMINGBIRDS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Chipmunks is for children that are participating in a long-term program for the first time or are not old enough to participate as a Nature Kids' Ladybug or Owl. Most children in this program are more than a year from starting kindergarten. Participants in this program must be at least 3 years old (born before Sept. 1, 2017).

Ages: 3 years old as of September 1, 2020

Meeting Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays

Meeting Times: 9:00-11:30 a.m.

Class Size: 12 children with 2 teachers

Meeting Location:

- **Chipmunks:** Robin's Nest classroom, Tualatin Hills Nature Center
- **Hummingbirds:** Jenkins Estate Gatehouse

CLASS ACTIVITIES

The classroom environment, set up to facilitate learning through hands-on discovery, uses a blend of lessons and activities in social skills, creative arts, literature, math, community awareness, science, music, physical development, problem-solving, and appreciation of others. We pride ourselves on our small classroom size of 12 children with 2 teachers.

Our typical class routine (subject to change based on class needs):

Chipmunks/Hummingbirds: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.	
9:00a	Free play
9:30a	Circle time, calendar, etc.
9:45a	Snack and story time
10:15a	Learning Centers
10:45a	Nature and outdoor activity
11:30a	Pick-up

DATES TO REMEMBER

September 22, 2020

First Day of Class (Tuesday)

May 27, 2021

Final Day of Class (Thursday)

SHARE DAYS

Your child will have the opportunity to share items from home throughout the year. This activity helps build self-confidence. You will be notified in advance of your child's Share Day.

FIELD TRIPS

We enjoy the opportunity to do yearly field trips to nearby parks or natural areas, in order to expand exploration of local natural resources. Dates for field trips will be announced at the beginning of the school year. They will be scheduled during normal class time, and you will receive prior notice about trip details from the teachers. Parents will be asked to bring their child to the designated field trip location, where the entire class will meet. If your child is not coming on a field trip, please inform the teacher prior to class time.

TEACHER CHECK-INS

Teacher check-ins are offered twice a year for Nature Kids' parents and guardians. These conferences are offered to keep you informed about what is happening in the program and how your child is progressing. It also gives the teachers an opportunity to discuss what their expectations are for the classroom, and for parents to ask questions.

THINGS TO BRING/WEAR TO NATURE KIDS

The Nature Kids programs can be messy, so please make sure that your child has appropriate clothing for art projects, active play, and weather variations. Dressing your child in layers works very well. Pack a spare change of clothes in a separate bag that will stay in the classroom. **Please label all removable clothing and belongings with your child's name.** Please bring these items for your child every day to Nature Kids.

- We go outside every day, rain or shine. Always come dressed for the weather (bring rubber boots, rain coat, rain pants, etc. as needed). Long pants are better than shorts for protection from itchy plants. Mittens and hats are required for winter.
- **Wear closed toed shoes** like sneakers/hiking boots - NO sandals, crocs, or flip-flops.
- Small, reusable water bottle and a hearty, **nut-free snack.**
- Small backpack or lunch box that can carry all of the above.

SNACKS

Children will need to bring a hearty snack every day. If you would like to bring a treat to share with the entire class to celebrate a birthday or some other special event, please prearrange this with the teachers. Allergy concerns and healthy eating will be addressed.

- The best snack choices are low in sugar, easy to open, and consumable in 10 minutes.
- **We are a nut-free class, so please avoid products with peanuts and tree nuts.**
- Water and natural juice drinks are recommended rather than soda pop.
- Children do not share snack items to promote respect for allergies. In some cases if a child has severe allergies we will ask that certain food items be saved for home.
- We encourage low waste snacks packed in recyclable or reusable containers.

THINGS NOT TO BRING

- Toys and video games (Teacher can acknowledge a favorite toy if necessary, but it will be kept in backpack during class.)
- Pets, candy, gum, umbrellas
- Anything that you would rather not run the risk of getting dirty, broken, or lost.
- We share diversity of cultures, but not printed religious materials.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

Safety is our number one priority. By creating a safe environment, we feel all students are able to learn and enjoy the program. Our behavioral management techniques include positive reinforcement and guidance. We stress respect for others, following directions, and problem-solving.

Not only are we learning about nature and what lives in it, we are also learning about ourselves, each other, and how to function as a class *together*. We nurture the young child social behaviors listed below and hope for support from you at home, to ensure your child knows what these behaviors are.

1) We follow directions.

Your child must be able to follow directions in and out of the classroom.

2) We stay together.

Children must always be with a teacher and may not leave the room on their own. On our daily walk, one teacher is always in the front of the group, while another teacher is in the rear. This keeps children from getting separated from the group or going off the trail. Staying on trails keeps kids safe and prevents them from touching some of the itchy plants that grow in the forest (poison oak and stinging nettle).

3) We listen to the teacher and each other.

When the teacher talks, children should stop, look at the teacher, and listen. If this is your child's first time in a classroom situation, they may not know this yet. We will provide a nature clue for them to stop talking and listen. It is also important that children listen to each other during sharing and other activities.

4) We use friendly words and actions.

We love to hear words like "please", "thank you", "you can play too", "hello", and "can I help?" We strive to make the classroom a friendly place. When a child has something to say we encourage them to raise their hand and wait to be called on.

CONSEQUENCES

We try hard to help children understand positive and acceptable behaviors. When children do not follow the rules, we often ask them to practice doing things the right way. For example, if a child runs ahead of the group, we talk about staying with the group or holding on to a teacher's hand. If children don't respond to gentle suggestions, and depending on the severity of the problem, we go through the following steps:

1. The child will hold a teacher's hand or sit out of an activity until they are ready to rejoin the group. If a child's behavior is out of control or becomes disruptive, the teachers will help redirect his/her energies. Removal from the group for an appropriate amount of time for "quiet time" is used for a child who has continued unacceptable behavior. Quiet time is for the child to reflect on his or her behavior and refocus.
2. Talk to the parent and ask them to discuss behavior expectations with their child. We also hope parents will share tips with us on ways to help work with their child. Class disruptions including tantrums, excessive crying, throwing objects, screaming, or abusive language, create an unhealthy environment for the entire class and take the teacher's attention away from the rest of the children. If these disruptions persist, a parent will be called and asked to pick up the child from class as soon as possible.
3. A parent may be required to attend class in order to observe their child's behavior. The parent is invited to observe 1-1.5 hours of class. Unlike volunteer days, the parent is hands-off, watching their child's normal interactions with teachers and other children, rather than interacting with their child and the rest of the class. The goal is to give the parent a clear impression of the child's behavior to develop more strategies for supporting the child.
4. The parent will be required to attend class to help their child succeed.
5. When previous steps have failed, a child may be asked to stay home from class for the day. We reserve the right to hold parent/teacher conferences as necessary, should a pattern of concerning behavior persist. A plan will be developed to remedy the situation and if the plan is not followed or improvement is not seen, further action will be required.
6. At this time, the teachers could consult with THPRD Inclusion staff. Children with persistent behavioral and/or social problems can be assisted with special plans to ensure their success in the classroom setting.
7. If repeated attempts to redirect a child's behavior are not successful, the parent(s) will be asked to remove the child permanently from the program.

Please note: Since the safety and well-being of all children is our first priority, hitting, biting and other unsafe physical behavior is taken seriously. We reserve the right to suspend or dismiss a child from the program if staff determines that the program does not meet the needs of the child, if the child is a physical threat to himself or others, or if the child's behavior consistently impedes the normal function of the classroom.

We are unable to provide refunds or credits for any class missed due to behavior problems.

RESTROOM VISITS

All children must have the ability to, and be comfortable with, using the public restroom on their own. A teacher will always accompany them, **but they must be able to be independent when they get inside the public restroom.** Please take your child to the restroom before class each day to reduce the amount of time teachers spend making restroom trips.

ABSENCES

If your child will be absent from Nature Kids, we ask that you call the Tualatin Hills Nature Center at **(503) 629-6350** and convey the message regarding the absence. We are unable to give credit for any days missed.

ILLNESS

Sick children should stay at home where they will have the opportunity to rest, recuperate, and not infect other children. If a child becomes ill during the program, Nature Center staff will contact the parent or other designated person named as an emergency contact to come and pick up the child.

If your child should develop a communicable disease such as flu, chicken pox, head lice, etc. please notify the director immediately. Please use the following guidelines in determining whether to send your child to class.

Your child should remain at home if he or she:

- Has a temperature above 100° F. The child should not return to class for at least 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal.
- Has vomited and/or has diarrhea during the previous night or morning.
- Has a persistent, productive (coughs up mucus) cough. (This type of cough is debilitating to the child and may spread the illness.)
- Has mucus that is not clear in color and/or an excessively runny nose.
- Has a rash or skin lesion that has not been diagnosed by a doctor.

If your child develops any of these symptoms during class, you may be contacted and asked to pick your child up early. It is more uncomfortable for the child to be sent home than to stay home in the first place.

EMERGENCIES

We do everything possible to minimize accidents through safety programs, close supervision, attentive facility maintenance, and consistent discipline. In the event of an accident that requires more than a hug, reassurance, and a band-aid, our staff will contact the parent or other designated person named as an emergency contact and fill out an incident report.

All of our staff members are certified in first aid and CPR and will provide basic emergency assistance when needed. 911 will be called in the event that a higher level of emergency assistance is necessary. First aid kits and mobile phones are present in the classroom and are taken on walks in the park.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

We believe open communication between parents and teachers is essential for the program to run smoothly. A monthly newsletter shares the information and highlights of each month of class. If you have any suggestions or concerns, or would like to share something that generated a "wow, cool!" response from you or your child, please email or talk to a teacher or the director. Teachers are generally available after the program each day.

We encourage regular communication between parents and teachers in order to create a positive, friendly partnership for the benefit of the children. Please allow the teacher to begin class promptly by having parent/teacher conversations prior to class start time or after class ends for the day. The teachers may approach you at the end of class to discuss any incidents that occurred during class. The teachers are also open to having private meetings with parents; please inquire as needed. Parents are always welcome to volunteer in the classroom.

Our teachers work hard to meet the needs of each child. The more knowledge they have about each child, the better equipped they are to do so. As parents, you are encouraged to communicate often with the teachers when something out of the ordinary occurs. As you share the information, please respect the privacy of the situation and discuss out of the hearing range of others, including children. Examples of some things that may need to be shared:

- Family member is ill.
- A parent is out of town.
- Child did not sleep well the previous night.
- A pet is missing or has passed away.

CHANGES IN VITAL INFORMATION

If there is a change in address, phone number, emergency contacts, physician, or your child's health status, it is the parent's responsibility to update the emergency contact and medical information section for your child in your on-line account at www.thprd.org.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

The Nature Kids program is greatly enhanced by parent volunteers. You can volunteer by helping with journals; assisting in the classroom; sharing a story, hobby, talent, art project; or by joining our class on a walk.

For the safety of the children, THPRD requires all volunteers who work with children to complete the Nature and Trails Volunteer Application and Background Check online. Every parent who would like to participate or volunteer in the program is required to fill out an on-line form.

Please sign up on the volunteer calendar if you plan to volunteer. Teachers will explain the various volunteer needs.

DISCONTINUATION

If for any reason your child will no longer be attending the program, please notify the director and the program coordinator in writing. A 30-day notice of discontinuation is requested. A refund for the days remaining in the month that the program is being dropped will be issued. Reminder: the deposit (May tuition) is non-refundable.

CHILD CARE TAX CREDIT

The federal tax number for childcare credits is 93-6011018. You are responsible for maintaining your own records and receipts for tax purposes.

PROGRAM CANCELLATIONS

If for some reason this class is canceled on a regularly scheduled class day (except in situations of inclement weather) every effort will be made to contact you by phone. Otherwise, we meet rain or shine. In the situation of inclement weather, follow closures through the media, watching for *Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District* (THPRD) programs to be canceled or delayed or call our THPRD Inclement Weather Hotline.

THPRD Inclement Weather Hotline: (503) 614-4018

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the staff at the Nature Center.

Tualatin Hills Nature Center
15655 SW Millikan Way
Beaverton, OR 97003
(503) 629-6350

We are excited about the Nature Kids Program and we look forward to providing you and your child with an exceptional experience. We work hard to create a quality program, and we value your patronage and feedback. Please feel free to make suggestions for us to better serve you and your child.

Thank you!

