

Nature Kids Handbook 2023-2024 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

Welcome to the Tualatin Hills Nature Center's Nature Kids Preschool Program. Nature Kids offers preschoolers the opportunity to experience an education that allows them to learn, grow, play and develop a relationship with nature, themselves and community. Nature Kids promotes whole-child development and builds a foundation for environmental literacy.

This Preschool Handbook provides the information you need to know about Nature Kids before your child begins the program. **Please take time to review the entire handbook and sign and submit the Handbook Acknowledgement form upon completion.**

Thank you for choosing a nature-based preschool experience for your child! We look forward to sharing the Nature Kids journey with you and your family!

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. Each Nature Kids' class consists of a Program Coordinator, Rachel Fort, a Lead Teacher and Co-Teacher(s). THPRD Inclusion Assistants are available to support students when requested by families.

Rachel Fort, Program Coordinator
r.fort@thprd.org
(503) 619-3912

REGISTRATION

A non-refundable \$50 registration fee and *Registration Acknowledgement* form must be received by the Tualatin Hills Nature Center to confirm your child's registration and hold their space in the 2023-24 Nature Kids program.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

There is a non-refundable \$50 registration fee due upon enrollment to hold your child's place in the program. Early withdrawal will result in forfeiture of your registration fee. If you withdraw from the program, your registration fee will not be applied to any other tuition payments or any other THPRD programs.

The prices listed are for in-district patrons, families who live outside of the THPRD district boundaries will need to pay a quarterly assessment fee. To see if you are in-district or to view out-of-district assessments visit www.thprd.org/activities/am-i-in-district.

Monthly Tuition for Chipmunks and Hummingbirds: \$275

Payments for Nature Kids are due on the fifteenth of each month, one month in advance. September tuition is due August 15th, 2023. Payments can be made in the following ways:

- **Online** – Tuition will be placed on your account approximately one to two weeks before it is due on the 15th. When logging onto your portal, click the “Pay Balance” link on the left-hand menu to see your tuition for the upcoming month. For security reasons, we do not keep credit cards on file.
- **Phone** – **We cannot take credit cards over the phone**, although with Payment Token option, you can authorize staff to charge your credit card with a custom PIN when you call: www.thprd.org/activities/payment-tokens
- **In Person** – You can stop by the Nature Center during open hours to make a payment in person by cash, credit card, or check.

The monthly tuition is based on the total number of days in attendance and divided equally among the nine months of the program. September tuition is due by August 15th and the last payment of the year is April 15th for May tuition.

Late Tuition Payment Fee – Monthly tuition is due by the 15th of the prior month. After the 15th, payment is considered late, and a \$30 late fee will be charged. Children whose tuition has not been paid by the 1st of the month are not considered registered and will not be able to 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 emailed a welcome packet with required forms for you to review and fill out.

Forms must be completed and returned to the Tualatin Hills Nature Center by September 1st, 2023.

Forms can be emailed to r.fort@thprd.org

SCHEDULE

Please closely observe the start 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 guardians and other children outside the classroom at this time. Please pick up your child immediately after class, as our teachers must prepare for class the next day.

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 all adults to show a photo ID and confirm that they are an approved authorized pick-up person. Please make sure you update your THPRD Medical and Emergency Contact online at www.thprd.org/portal, so we have the most recent, up to date information for your child for all authorized pick-ups and emergency contacts.

Prior to attending class each day participants, parents, and guardians will be asked to answer daily health screening questions relating to COVID-19 that will be recorded on the daily check-in sheet. Teachers will sign-in the child on the sign-in/out form on a daily basis provided at the check-in table.

HOLIDAYS OBSERVED

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

November 10, 2023	Veterans Day
November 22-24, 2023	Thanksgiving
December 18, 2023– January 1, 2024	Winter Break*
January 15, 2024	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 19, 2024	Presidents' Day
March 25-29, 2024	Spring Break*

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

Other no school days: October 13, 2023, April 8-9 for conferences

CHIPMUNKS AND HUMMINGBIRDS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Chipmunks and Hummingbirds is for children that are participating in a long-term program for the first time or are not old enough to participate in Nature Kids' Ladybugs, Owls, or Dragonflies. Most children in this program are more than a year from starting kindergarten. Participants in this program must be at least 3 years old by September 1st of the year they are starting the program. The program runs September through May.

Ages: 3 years old as of September 1, 2023

Meeting Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays

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

Class Size: 12 children with a Lead Teacher and Co-Teacher

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 and Hummingbirds: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.	
9:00a	Free play
9:15a	Circle time, calendar, etc.
9:40a	Snack and story time
10:00a	Individual Learning Centers
10:30a	Hike/Nature Play
11:30a	Pick-up

DATES TO REMEMBER

September 14, 2023

First Day of Class (Thursday)

May 24, 2024

Final Day of Class (Thursday)

FIELD TRIPS

Typically, field trips will be scheduled during normal class times, and you will receive prior notice about trip details from the teachers. Parents/ guardians are 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 in advance.

TEACHER CHECK-INS AND CONFERENCES

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 teachers an opportunity to discuss what their expectations are for the classroom, and for parents/guardians 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:

- 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. 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.**
- Please pack child a water bottle.
- 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 electronic games or devices
- Pets, candy, gum, umbrellas
- Anything that you would rather not run the risk of getting dirty, broken, or lost.
- Items that cannot be easily sanitized.
- We share diversity of cultures, but not printed religious materials.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS

We believe open communication between parents/ guardians and teachers is essential for the program to run smoothly. A monthly E-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, call or talk to the Lead Teacher or Co-Teacher.

We encourage regular communication between parents/guardians 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 parents/guardians and teacher conversations over the phone, virtually or via email outside of class time. 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/guardians; please inquire as needed.

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/guardians, 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/guardian is out of town.
- Child slept poorly the previous night.
- A pet is missing or has passed away.

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

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*. A safe environment is a top priority for all our programs. It is our goal that each child feels safe and secure in our programs and that the environment promotes positive social skills, problem solving, and conflict resolution. 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.

We foster the following behaviors:

- Following directions
- Listening respectfully to others
- Keeping hands/feet/bodies to yourself
- Staying together on the trail
- Being kind, safe, and respectful

Our behavior management techniques include:

- Listening to each child's needs
- Clearly communicating the expected behavior and restating the expectation as needed
- Offering choices such as a break from the activity to re-regulate behavior
- Reinforcing appropriate behavior
- Re-directing the child to another activity

All behavior is an attempt to communicate a need or a want. If a participant engages in disruptive/inappropriate behavior, THPRD staff, in cooperation with the parent/guardian, instructors, and other stakeholders, will identify various accommodations and strategies to manage behavioral risks. When a participant's behaviors impact their ability to interact with others or participant demonstrates the inability to control their emotions or to judge social and play situations appropriately, this may result in an interactive process with THPRD (outlined below).

Step 1: Early Intervention

Program staff will work with participants and their parent/guardian to collaboratively resolve participant behavior. Program staff will document participant behavior and communicate with parents/guardians about the situation and steps taken by staff. We encourage parents/guardians to share tips with us to work with their child.

Step 2: Behavior Support & Strategies

If the behavior continues, program staff will continue to document the participant's behaviors and determine appropriate intervention strategies. Program staff will work with the parent/guardian, instructors, and other stakeholders to gather additional information and to develop additional supports and accommodations for the participant. These strategies may include quiet time to re-regulate or calling home for participant pick-up.

Step 3: Behavior Modification Plan Development & Implementation

Program staff will work with the parent/guardian, instructors, and other stakeholders to develop a behavior modification plan that outlines supports and goals for participants to meet expectations for participation in the program. Program staff and parents/guardians will actively monitor and evaluate the plan to consider more effective accommodations or communicate any changes.

A parent may be required to attend class to observe their child's behavior. The parent is invited to observe up to an hour of class, depending on the circumstances. During the observation period, 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.

Step 4: Behavior Modification Plan Review

If, after implementation of behavior modifications, the behavior continues, program staff will refer the participant to the program coordinator, and parent/guardian will be contacted. The program coordinator will conference with the parents/guardian to review the behavior modification plan and may consider alternate strategies. A child may be asked to stay home from class for a predetermined length of time upon further occurrences of the concerned behavior.

Please note: Parents will not be allowed to be involved in disciplinary situations which involve any child other than their own.

RESTROOM VISITS

All children must have the ability to, and be comfortable with, using the restroom on their own. A teacher will always accompany them, **but they must be able to be independent when they get inside the restroom.** Please encourage your child to use the bathroom before they leave home 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 OR INJURY

Please notify preschool staff if your child will be staying home sick and missing a day of school. If your child should develop an illness, please do not bring your child to class until they have been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.

Illness is defined as having one or more of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- New onset or severe cough
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes
- Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping or pus-filled
- Stiff neck and headache with one or more of the symptoms listed above
- Difficult breathing or abnormal wheezing
- Complaints of severe pain

If your child develops any of these symptoms during school, you will be contacted and asked to pick your child up early. If your child should develop a communicable disease such as COVID-19, chicken pox, or head lice, etc., please stay home and notify the preschool staff.

COVID-19

We are closely monitoring statewide, national, and industry guidelines to keep our students, families, and staff safe. Guidance will be based on the most recent Oregon Health Authority or Department of Education recommendations.

EMERGENCIES

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

Our staff members are certified in first aid and CPR and will provide basic emergency assistance when needed. 911 will be called if 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.

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/guardian's responsibility to update the emergency contact and medical information section for your child in your on-line account at www.thprd.org/portal

PRESCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

We will have one adult volunteering opportunity per class for the day for the last hour of class. In order to give everyone who wants to a chance to volunteer, we will take breaks between adults so it's not the same person every week. You'll be able to volunteer again after 2 weeks. Parents, guardians grandparents, aunts/uncles, family friends, or other relations over 18 can volunteer once they pass the background check.

Volunteers help us prepare crafts, join in with circle time, free play, and our hike, and get to see what life in our preschool is like! Volunteers assist the entire class and support teachers. Teachers are responsible for behavior & classroom management, but you are welcome to interact with and redirect your own child as appropriate. A typical shift includes helping zip up jackets, put on mittens, hand out craft materials, help with fine-motor tasks, maybe read aloud, and hold little hands on the walk.

We will share a link to submit an application for a background check. Once processed, volunteer applicants receive an email to set up a Volunteer Profile, then you can sign up for shifts with your child's class. There is no penalty for signing up last minute or deleting a sign-up last minute. If you have a concern about your preschooler's behavior or interactions in class, please get in contact with the Directors first as a scheduled observation may be more appropriate than volunteering.

DISCONTINUATION

If for any reason your child will no longer be attending the program, please notify the lead teacher 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 \$50 registration fee 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

During inclement weather, THPRD classes/programs may be delayed or canceled if weather conditions warrant. Please note that THPRD closures do not always follow the Beaverton School District closures. For the latest information please call our Inclement Weather Hotline at 503-614-4018. We will also attempt to inform you via email, if possible, of any changes in the schedule. If for some reason your class is canceled for a reason other than inclement weather, every effort will be made to contact you by phone and/or email. **THPRD Inclement Weather Hotline: 503-614-4018**

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Parent/guardian evaluation of the Nature Kids program is an important factor in planning future improvements. Please help us provide your child with the best possible program by giving us feedback on the distributed evaluation forms at the end of the school year.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the staff at the Tualatin Hills Nature Center by calling **(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!

REQUIRED INFORMATION DUE

Complete the following by August 15th, 2023:

- September Tuition Payment – **Due August 15th**. All future payments are due on the 15th of the month, one month in advance.

- Log in to your Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation District online account to fill out **Emergency Contact & Medical Information** form.
 - Visit our website at www.thprd.org
 - Click “Registration LOGIN” in the upper right-hand corner
 - Enter your login information in the blue box
 - If this is your first time logging in, please click “I’m New” and follow the instructions to create your account
 - If you forgot your login information, use the lost password or recover username links under the login button.
 - Click the link in the left-hand column that says “Emergency Contact & Medical Information”
 - Click “Add or View/Update Emergency Contact Information” under your child’s name

- Handbook and Registration Acknowledgement Form
- “Get to Know Your Child” Questionnaire



Handbook & Registration Acknowledgement Nature Kids 2023-24

Student's Name: _____

Check the Nature Kids program that your child will be attending:

- | | | | |
|---|------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chipmunks (Nature Center) | 3-4 years | T/Th | \$275 per month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hummingbirds (Jenkins Estate) | 3-4 years | T/Th | \$275 per month |

I, _____, acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the requirements and the expectations for my child and myself as laid out in the *Nature Kids Preschool Handbook*.

I understand that Nature Kids Programs must provide a safe and cooperative group experience for all students. Participants may be dismissed from the program for reasons including unacceptable behavior or illness.

As a parent/guardian, I understand I am to:

- Provide appropriate clothes and snack for my child daily.
- Agree to follow the behavior support protocols and if necessary, work with THPRD staff to develop a Behavior Modification Plan and implement it.
- Arrange immediate transportation for my child to be picked up from the Tualatin Hills Nature Center if a disciplinary situation arises, my child develops an illness, or is injured in a way that prevents them from being able to participate in the program.

I have read the financial policies as outlined in the *Preschool Handbook*. **I understand my Nature Kids registration fee is non-refundable, even if I withdraw my child from the program prior to the end of the school year.**

Signed _____ Date _____



Get to Know My Child

Nature Kids 2023-2024

Child's Name: _____

1. My child has the following feelings about attending preschool (i.e. excitement, concern):
2. When my child is in an uncomfortable situation, he/she is comforted by (i.e. hugging, singing):
3. Some of my child's special interests and favorite things to do are:
4. My child's experience in nature has consisted of the following:
5. When you need my child's attention he/she responds well to (i.e. touching, speaking loudly, etc.):
6. My child has the following physical or emotional needs:
7. I have the following goals for my child during this year in preschool:
8. My child speaks the following language(s):
9. I would like you to also know the following about my child: