



NATURE STORY MONTESSORI

FINS PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Nature Story Montessori's mission is to provide an enjoyable and educational environment that nurtures the mind, body, and spirit of every child, and to guide each individual on the path of development that is tailored to them.

Our commitment is to be a resource for families by providing a program that inspires academic excellence and environmental awareness utilizing the Montessori Method.

OUR CORE VALUES

Respect
Responsibility
Compassion
Honesty
Kindness
Awareness

NATURE STORY MONTESSORI'S PRINCIPLES

- Education is an aid to the natural development of the child.
- The child has an absorbent mind and is sensitive to language.
- The child has embarked on a process of exploring and manipulating the environment to build their inner qualities.
- The child needs a loving, safe, orderly, stimulating, and enjoyable environment.
- The teachers in the environment are a guide between the child and their environment.
- The child receives a structured environment to gain the experiences needed to navigate our current social structure in a balanced way
- Providing the child an environment for the child to be able to build self-esteem
- The Montessori classroom and philosophy will give the child meaningful life experience based on everyday, real-life activities.

MONTESSORI CURRICULUM

Montessori education contains an integrated and anti-bias curriculum.

The goal is multi-faceted development of the child by implementing the subjects of study below.

Science

In science, children learn about natural phenomena, the world around them, and how they are connected to every aspect of our environment. They conduct safe and fun experiments to explore our environment, and learn to identify, classify, grade, and record their observations of plants, animals, and humans within the environment.

Physical Education

Physical Education is designed to nurture large, small, and fine motor development. Keeping the body moving helps growth and physical development. Strength and coordination are developed through child led play. This may include gym activities, utilizing the playground, or field trip activities like climbing rocks, swimming, or hiking.

Practical Life

Children take care of the environment by taking part in maintaining the beauty of the class, watering plants, cleaning, dusting, etc. They also learn the healthy habits of sharing space, working materials, solving problems, taking constructive criticism, and giving compliments in positive ways. By engaging with other children, they learn critical social skills and conflict resolution within a controlled and encouraging environment.

Mathematic

All the activities in math are designed to develop the child's mathematical mind by studying the science of pattern, including numerical patterns, abstract patterns, and patterns of shape and motion. Math may be intuitively and subtly represented in forms of volume of substrate, length of hikes, measures of wingspan, the flow of water, among others.

Language Arts

These activities are organized to progress the natural language development of children and include storytelling, signing, music, drama, creative writing, and self-expression. Journaling and scientific notation are examples of integrated language arts development during field trips. Children are exposed to Montessori nomenclature cards which introduce new vocabulary and ideas. Children are also encouraged to use new vocabulary words which are introduced in association with the learning topic.

Geography

Children are introduced to the globe as "the world they live on," and learn the land and water forms. These lessons are reinforced during field trips to provide first hand experiences. In the classroom, they work with geographical puzzles and learn more about our earth and its continents, various countries, and the United States.

Social Studies

Social Studies are directly tied to the studies of Geography and History. We learn about diverse music, dances, languages, and cultures. We use the diversity of our classroom as a source for learning and teaching.

Art

Art appreciation is cultivated by exposing the children to various kinds of crafts and art skills such as painting, drawing, sewing, collage, printing, and more. Many "nature focused" crafts and activities are tied into the curriculum.

Music

Music is provided as part of the daily routine in the form of rhythm, instruments, dancing, and singing.

Sensorial

These activities refine the five senses – tactile, visual, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory; they encourage movement and engage the hands. "What the hand does, the mind remembers." - Dr. Maria Montessori

BE PREPARED EVERY DAY!

In order for your child to be prepared for their day, they will at least need:

- Weather appropriate clothing
- Closed toed shoes
- Sunscreen applied **before** drop off
- Two snacks that do not need refrigeration
- Lunch that does not need refrigeration
- A **full** water bottle
- Extra socks or slippers for the classroom
- An extra set of clothes
- Extra shoes
- Bathing Suit
- Towels
- Life Vest
- Booster or car seat
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent

PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING!

Clothing

If possible, we will go outside every day so please send weather-appropriate clothing every day. It is important that children are able to join their friends at play. Your child must wear closed toed shoes for safe running and climbing. Labels are needed! Duplicates are inevitable. Much confusion can be avoided if children's belongings are labeled with their names.

Please do not dress your child in clothing that you would not like to get dirty or messy. Your child's clothes WILL get dirty. All outer clothing and extra clothes must be marked clearly with your child's name.

Extra clothing: Please bring extra pants, shirts, underwear, socks, swimsuits, and towels for your child, and make sure that their spare clothes are always available.

Lunch/Snacks and Nutrition

Nature Story Montessori does not provide meals or snacks. Your child needs to arrive with lunch and two snacks for the day. Please remember that we spend most of our days outside and refrigerators and microwaves may not be available.

We will make all families aware of any food allergies.

Please try to pack a healthy snack that will provide your child with the energy and focus they need to get through the day.

Your child should bring their own well-balanced lunches from home. We try to instill good eating habits as part of our program. If possible, we will ask your child to take home any uneaten food so you are aware of what they have consumed during the day.

Items from Home/Sharing

We request that all other personal items be left at home. Exceptions will be when the teacher allows and specifies a designated time to share those personal items. Please label everything in order to avoid confusion. Provider is not responsible for loss or any damage to personal items. Electronics are not permitted.

Field Trips and Activities for Nature Story Montessori

Your child will have the opportunity to take field trips. Field trips are planned to correspond with the program curriculum. Nature Story Montessori's curriculum involves child lead learning. This means that children have more freedom to explore in their own way. When children are able to explore on their own terms, they learn valuable lessons about themselves, their autonomy, and self confidence by understanding their own limitations. Opportunities like outdoor activities, hikes in the woods and being around various water forms may have mosquitos, bees, ticks, poison ivy, and slippery and jagged surfaces. With this structured freedom children may be injured while learning their own boundaries and limitations.

Hold Harmless Waiver for Activities: By enrolling your child into Nature Story Montessori's program, you authorize Nature Story Montessori staff to provide indoor and outdoor learning opportunities for your child in conjunction with field activities, and hereby voluntarily release, waive, discharge, hold harmless Nature Story Montessori and its owners, agents, and employees from and against any and all claims, actions or losses for bodily injury, property damage, wrongful death, loss of services or otherwise which may

arise as a result of exploration in various environments with various risks, known and unknown.

Your child will be participating in camp activities that may include play near and in pools, streams, rivers, lakes, bodies of water, and any/all other water activities.

We ask that you ensure your child is appropriately attired for camp activities, and to provide insect repellent and sunscreen for my child to use at camp.

Hold Harmless Waiver for Transportation: By enrolling your child into Nature Story Montessori's program, you authorize Nature Story Montessori staff to provide transportation services to your child in conjunction with field activities, and hereby voluntarily release, waive, discharge, hold harmless Nature Story Montessori and its owners, agents, and employees from and against any and all claims, actions or losses for bodily injury, property damage, wrongful death, loss of services or otherwise which may arise as a result of the providing of transportation services for your child including without limitation transportation to, from, or during any activity.

You also agree to see that your child is appropriately prepared for transportation to and from field trips, and to provide needed safety devices and car seats for vehicle transport. You will not expect Nature Story Montessori to provide these items.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Sign in/out Policy

Sign in/out stations are at the entry of the building. This serves as a record of your child's arrival and departure and is also a source for quick communication between you and your child's teachers. Noting the time of day and a full, legible signature is required by the person who drops off and picks up your child each day. Sign in codes cannot be shared. Each individual must use their own sign in code.

Pick Up

Children are to be picked up before the end of the program day by an authorized person. Your child will be encouraged to be responsible for getting their personal belongings.

A late pick-up fee will be charged for any pick ups after the close of the day. Each occurrence will have a higher charge. An additional charge will occur for a lack of communication. CPS will be contacted for abandonment if more than thirty minutes has passed since departure time and no communication has taken place.

Absences

Tuition is non-refundable.

Nature Story Montessori does not have make-up days or provide refunds for illness, absences, or family vacations.

If your child is going to be absent, please let us know not to expect you.

Holidays and Closures

Nature Story Montessori follows the calendar of the state of Montana and local school districts. Additionally, Nature Story Montessori may close due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances. Tuition will not be prorated or refunded for these closures.

Parent/Guardian Communication

Nature Story Montessori uses the software program, Brightwheel, to communicate program news, activities, etc. to our families.

The teachers are eager to know of any changes in the child or in family life – anything that might provide insight into the behavior of the child. Anything occurring in the program should be reported as well. Teachers appreciate your observations of environmental surroundings and of your child's growth in relation to the program.

Authorized Persons for Pick Up

We require parents/guardians to supply the names of at least three individuals to whom we may release the child.

- We will not release the child to any individual whose name is not on the list.
- Before we release the child, if the individual is unknown to the teacher or staff, the teacher will require that the individual show positive identification in the form of a valid Driver's License or other state issued identification. Other forms of

identification, such as work identification, are not acceptable. Individuals must be 18 years of age or older.

- Parents/Guardians must be aware that the staff are not properly trained to make assessments relating to intoxication or other impairment and therefore assume no responsibility to assess the competency or condition of any individual appearing to pick up the child.
- Should a parent/guardian wish to have a one-time special exception to allow an individual not listed on the card to pick the child up, the parent/guardian must leave a signed, dated, written note with the teacher the morning of the release. Parents/Guardians are not allowed to change any release instructions orally.
- We assume no responsibility for any injury or harm to the child who has been released to persons on the child release form or identified in the written exception request process.
- We respect the family's privacy. However, where other questionable child release situations occur, we have a duty to maintain our role as the child's advocate.
- With respect to child custody disputes, until custody has been established by a court order, neither parent/guardian may limit the other parent/guardian from picking up the child, and we will release the child to a known identifiable parent/guardian. If possible, we will keep a copy of the custody order so as to avoid any potential disputes.
- Your child will be released ONLY to names listed on the child's authorized pickup list. It is very important that this information be kept current. Please notify us immediately of any changes.

DISCIPLINE POLICIES

Discipline is designed to help the child develop inner control and respect for the rights of self and others. Our goal is the development of self-discipline. In general, a child may not harm another person (or self), disturb another person's work, misuse a piece of equipment, or violate the rights of the group. Nature Story Montessori does not use corporal punishment.

Disciplinary Measures

- Careful preparation of the teacher and classroom environment to aid in the child's daily success and independence.
- Clear descriptions and modeling of safe rules, social etiquette, and daily routine.

The following describes a procedure a teacher may use for redirection:

- Teacher observes interaction or may simply go near the child involved and watch (non-verbal)
- Teacher may make non-directive, descriptive statements if indicated ("Yes, Tommy took the paintbrush you were using")
- Teacher may ask a "what" question to assist the children in building conflict resolution skills (i.e. "What can you do/say to get your paintbrush back?")
- Teacher may make a directive statement and help the child find the necessary words
- Physical intervention- the teacher repeats what is required (i.e. "Tommy, it is time to give back the paintbrush), and then "I'm going to take the paintbrush and give it back to Amy, she was painting with it. Let's find something that you and I can do together."
- The child may require some "quiet time/watching time" to regain composure. This can be a spot anywhere that is deemed safe and appropriate.

Bullying

Nature Story Montessori has a zero tolerance for bullying.

There are three main types of bullying:

- Physical, which can include but is not limited to physical contact, hitting, kicking, or taking belongings
- Verbal, which can include but is not limited to name-calling, insulting, and racist remarks
- Indirect or emotional, which can include activities such as spreading nasty stories, excluding from groups, making a joke about someone and saying "I was just kidding."
 - 1st Occurrence: Child will be sent home
 - 2nd Occurrence: 3-5 day at home suspension
 - 3rd Occurrence: Permanent expulsion from Nature Story Montessori's program

The following action will be taken if a child intentionally:

- Abuses property

- Abuses personal property
- Disregards other children's rights
 - 1st Occurrence: Child will be sent home
 - 2nd Occurrence: 3-5 day at home suspension
 - 3rd Occurrence: Permanent expulsion from Nature Story Montessori's program

MEDICATION AND ILLNESS

Illness

In order to protect the health of the children and staff, we ask that parents/guardians keep children at home if they are ill. If the program determines that a child is too sick to participate, the parents/guardians of that child are responsible for picking their child up from the program within a reasonable period of time.

It is requested that parents/guardians:

- Keep their child at home until they are fever free for **at least** 24 hours. (Do not send children on fever-reducing medication.)
- Keep their child at home until 24 hours have elapsed since the first dose of antibiotics.
- Keep their child at home if your child has been vomiting.
- Keep their child at home if they had diarrhea the previous day or night.

Any vulnerable parties will be asked to stay home should sickness or disaster sweep the area. In this event, a signed waiver will be required if the parent/guardian still chooses to have their child attend.

If your child contracts a highly contagious illness such as chickenpox, strep throat, etc., please inform us so that the other parents/guardians may be advised.

This policy is subject to change per county health and CDC recommendations.

Epi-Pens, Inhalers, and other emergency medication

From the moment of registration, we must have a signed doctor's note, along with detailed instructions on hand how to administer the medication, including Epi-Pens and

inhalers. Epi-Pens, inhalers, and other emergency medication are not allowed to be kept in the child's backpack. If such medication is transported that way, please inform one of our staff so that we may store it safely.

ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES

Every effort is made to prevent accidents.

However, if one should occur, the procedure is as follows:

Routine procedures for treatment of minor injuries

- Superficial wounds shall be cleaned with soap and water.
- Minor injuries shall be washed with soap and water and protected with a Band-Aid.
- When there is any injury to the head with or without blood or one that causes a lump or bump. Parents/Guardians will be given a telephone call so they may decide if they would like to come check on their child or take them to the doctor.

First Aid measures for serious accidents

- Care will be taken to prevent infection and further injury.
- The parents/guardians will be notified, or a designated responsible person.
- Depending on the type of injury, arrangements will be made with that person to be transported for medical treatment if necessary.
- If no one can be reached, EMS will be called.
- The teacher will accompany the child to the emergency room in the case that there is no parent/guardian available.
- The program will use St. Peter's Hospital, or the closest hospital, as our emergency location. 911 will be called as needed. Parents/guardian's will be responsible for any costs associated with transport and medical treatment.

Emergencies

- If a child becomes seriously ill or receives an injury requiring immediate emergency medical attention, 911 will be called.

Emergency Medical Authorization Form

- Parents/Guardians will be asked to fill out and sign an emergency contact and parental consent form.
- Parents/Guardians will be asked to submit a copy of their health insurance card at the time of enrollment to be kept in their child's file.

Eligibility

Nature Story Montessori accepts families of any race, color, religion, ethnic background, sexual orientation, or physically challenging condition.

Nature Story Montessori is a secular program and we do not uphold any particular religious tradition. We do recognize the holidays our families celebrate and explore them as a cultural activity to enrich the classroom experience. We do our best to be proactive in recognizing the celebrations that matter to your child and ask all families to help us ensure your child sees their culture reflected in the classroom.

Enrollment

Should Nature Story determine that a child or family is not a good fit for our program for any reason, Nature Story Montessori reserves the right to unenroll any child at any time.

Parent, Guardian, and Volunteer Participation

We very much appreciate parents/guardians and volunteers who are willing to help with projects, join field trips, assist in the classroom, or share something special of themselves with the children. This is arranged with your child's teacher. Your participation in any of these areas is a powerful demonstration to your child of your interest in and commitment to what is happening in their world at Nature Story Montessori. We believe that our program should be an extension of the home. We appreciate volunteer assistance and encourage involvement.

Volunteers shall maintain the same confidentially standards expected of staff and exhibit the ethical behaviors of a professional. Volunteers shall not have access to confidential child records or files.

Behavioral Guidelines

The growth of self-discipline in the children is a primary goal of Montessori education. It is attained at our program by clearly establishing limits and guidelines of appropriate behavior. Staff provide unconditional love, immense patience, and role models by organizing the children's environment to minimize frustrations, chaos, and the need for adult assistance.

Nevertheless, boundaries and limits are present. As stated in previous sections, a child may not harm another person, disturb another person's work, or violate the rights of the group. Every effort will be made to help parents/guardians, teachers, and children to positively resolve any difficulties that may arise. Parents/Guardians will be notified in writing, via telephone, or in person if there are any continuing behavioral issues.

Child Abuse Policy

If Nature Story Montessori suspects a child is a victim of neglect/abuse, we will report it to proper authorities.

Questions and Further Details

Nature Story Montessori reserves the right to modify the FINS Program Handbook at any time, with or without notice.

In closing, if you have any questions or comments regarding the information outlined in this Parent/Guardian Handbook, feel free to contact us for further details.

**WE WELCOME YOU AND YOUR FAMILY TO
NATURE STORY MONTESSORI!**