

ALNP WELCOME PACKET 2026-27

Thank you for your interest in Aldo Leopold Nature Preschool (ALNP)!

We hope you will join us as we embark on this exciting and unique preschool experience. ALNP's mission is to provide young children with high quality, developmentally appropriate experiences that foster a meaningful relationship with the natural world, each other, and our community. Our preschoolers spend a majority of their day outside exploring the nature center grounds which include prairie, woods, garden, and pond areas. We have two early childhood classrooms and a nature-based play-space specifically designed for young children. Our seasonally-based curriculum is rich in child-centered activities, discovery, and play. We learn in nature, about nature, and with nature every day.

Aldo Leopold Nature Center is committed to providing engaging environmental education programs to all children in our community. In doing so, we are working to provide an inclusive environment by being representative of the diverse community in which we live and reserve the right to hold space for families who have historically been underserved and underrepresented.

This packet will give you basic information about our preschool program. For more details, please visit our FAQ page. Please let us know if you have any additional questions. We look forward to welcoming your family to our school community!

Sincerely,

ALNP Teachers & Staff



Aldo Leopold Nature Center Mission

To nurture children, their well-being, and environmental sustainability through connecting and learning in nature.

Aldo Leopold Nature Preschool Statement of Purpose

To provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood experiences that foster a meaningful relationship with the natural world, each other and our community.

Nature Preschool Sessions

We offer both half-day and full-day options. Each class has 16 students with two teachers. Preschoolers must be three years old and no older than five by the first day of school, and must be fully toilet trained. Children cannot attend both the morning and afternoon half day sessions. We offer two add-ons to help extend the child care day if needed.

Preschool Session Options

Program	Days of the Week	Time
Half Day Mornings	Monday - Friday	8:30 - 11:30 am
Half Day Afternoons	Tuesday - Friday	12:30 - 3:30 pm
Full Day	Monday - Friday	8:00 - 3:30 pm

Add On	Times
After Care	3:30-5:30 pm for full-day or afternoon students only
Lunch Bunch	11:30-12:30 pm for half-day students only

Calendar

The ALNP calendar is similar to the Madison Metropolitan School District academic calendar; a school year calendar will be shared during the enrollment process. ALNP is a 9-month program and requires a commitment for the entire year. We offer Vacation Day (schools-out days) and summer options at the nature center when preschool is not in session.

Typical Day at Nature Preschool

Our schedule provides predictable routines for our preschoolers while still allowing for seasonal spontaneity and child-led interests to guide the day. We value deep play in the outdoors, as well as structured learning opportunities. See below for a sample schedule. Actual schedules vary depending on the educator and the classroom.

The following is an example of a typical full day classroom schedule. See above for details on particular activities.



Full-Day Sample Schedule

- Arrival & Free Play
- Welcome Circle
- Outdoor Play or Adventure
- Snack
- Group Lesson
- Lunch
- Nap or Quiet Time
- Snack
- Outdoor Play
- Closing Circle

Half-Day Sample Schedule

- Arrival & Free Play
- Outdoor Play or Adventure
- Welcome Circle
- Snack
- Choice Time
- Small Group
- Closing Circle

Arrival

Class begins outside in the nature play space. The adult dropping off the child will make sure the child has used the restroom and put away their backpack or other belongings. The adult then takes their child to the outdoor play area (dressed for the weather) to join the educators.

Outdoor Play & Group Exploration

Children play in the outdoor play area, called the nature play-space, and/or take a hike on ALNC grounds. Play-space activities include climbing, water play, sand play, snow play, fort building, digging, gardening, and dramatic play. Activities on ALNC grounds include hiking to and playing in the forest, prairie/fields, trails around the pond, the Sugar Bush and the Children's Shack.

Welcome Circle

Children take part in conversation, greet one another, and learn about the day's topic.

Snack

Snack is served either inside or outside depending on the weather. Educators and children eat together, converse, share and listen to each other's stories.

Choice Time

Children have time to choose an activity among the different interest areas of the indoor or outdoor classroom. This allows children time to develop and grow in developmental areas through focus and gained competency with an activity. Children may choose activities that include but are not limited to: blocks, art, dramatic play, discovery, and sand and water.

Small Group

Adult-directed activities occur in small groups and allow educators to focus on a particular skill set. These activities allow children to ask more questions and allow the educators to evaluate each child's needs and progress (according to the program objectives). This is an opportunity for more concentrated learning.

Closing Circle

Closing circle might be inside, where we gather on the rug to say goodbye before families pick up the children. Or it could be outside, where we assemble in the gathering space close to the building, sing a song, say goodbye and await families to pick up and sign out the children



Tuition Rates

ALNC's goal is to be accessible to all families in our community. ALNC has two tuition pricing options for families to choose from: full price and access price. We accept Wisconsin Shares payments, cash, check or credit card for tuition payments. Please click here for information on our tuition.

Tuition Assistance

Nature Preschool has limited assistance (up to 80% discount) available to assist with tuition. If you are interested in being considered for tuition assistance, please indicate this when you fill out our lottery form (found on our website). If you require a printed version, please contact ALNP Director at 608-216-9376. No proof of income is required.

Tuition Payment Schedule

Upon notification of placement in the program, a \$200 deposit is due. This is a non-refundable, non-transferable deposit that will be applied to the last month of your tuition payment in May. Tuition is paid on a monthly basis via the Brightwheel app.

I'm interested! How do I enter the lottery?

Hooray! We'd love to have you. We usually have more people interested in enrolling than we have spots for, so our enrollment is done via lottery. To enter our enrollment lottery, please follow the instructions below:

1. Fill out our lottery form (available on our website) between March 1-7. The form will ask you to rank your preferences for which preschool session you prefer. There is no fee to enter the lottery.
2. Make sure your child will be at least 3 years old and no older than 5 by September, as well as potty trained.

You will receive an email no later than March 20 with your child's placement in one of our classes or on a waiting list! Contact preschool@aldoleopoldnaturecenter.org with any questions.

Thank you!