

Dear families,

Thank you for your interest in Aldo Leopold Nature Preschool! We hope you will join us as we embark on this exciting and unique preschool experience. Aldo Leopold Nature Preschool (ALNP) uses the natural world as a stimulus for children's growth and development. Children spend a majority of their day outside exploring the Aldo Leopold Nature Center property which includes prairie, woods, garden and pond areas. We have two early childhood classroom spaces and a nature-based playspace specifically designed for young children. Nature is the lens through which every aspect of play and learning are viewed.

Our seasonally-based curriculum draws upon aspects of Reggio Emilia, Waldorf and Montessori learning philosophies to cultivate an environment rich in child-centered activities, discovery and innovation. It includes play, art, music, cognitive skill development, fine and gross motor development, social/emotional growth, literacy experiences and science explorations. Our teachers play the role of guides to help facilitate a child-led learning environment.

Research strongly supports the notion that nature play is vital for healthy child development. I'm happy to share more about this research with you, and we hope you'll join us on this learning adventure. Please let us know if you have any questions, and we look forward to welcoming your family to our school community!

Sincerely,

Courtney Woods
Aldo Leopold Nature Preschool Director

Aldo Leopold Nature Center Mission

To engage and educate current and future generations, empowering them to respect, protect and enjoy the natural world.

Aldo Leopold Nature Center Beliefs/Value Statements

We believe...

- When we are thoughtful about being inclusive in how we engage and educate, we help students to know that nature is for everyone and is a safe place to learn and explore.
- When we engage students in positive, hands-on experiences in nature, their curiosity is sparked and a lifelong connection to nature is made.
- When we educate students, nurturing a better understanding of the world around them, we foster an environmentally literate generation empowered to take positive ecological, social and fiscal actions.
- When we – as Aldo Leopold wrote – “teach the student to see the land, to understand what he sees, and enjoy what he understands,” empowered students take individual actions and create meaningful change – change that is critical to the sustainability and health of the natural world.
- When we strategically and thoughtfully work with community partners, we help them fulfill their goals while increasing our capacity to engage and educate students, creating healthy and sustainable communities everywhere.
- When we care for the land and are mindful of Aldo Leopold's land ethic, we are equipped to engage and educate students about the world around them – empowering them to preserve the land, providing a sanctuary for human, plant and animal communities.

Aldo Leopold Nature Preschool Statement of Purpose

To provide high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood experiences that foster a love of nature and a lifelong, meaningful relationship with the natural world.

Aldo Leopold Nature Preschool Program Philosophy

At ALNP we believe that children are imaginative, capable, and wonder-full individuals. Children are ready and eager to learn about the world, the environment, and each other.

The teaching staff promotes the process of learning by:

- Providing both indoor and outdoor environments rich in hands-on materials, literature, and open-ended play time that encourage wonder, discovery, experimentation, invention, creation, and the opportunity to see the results of one's actions.
- Developing whole-child centered (physical, social, emotional and intellectual) activities that encourage growth based on children's abilities and interests.
- Encouraging problem-solving and reflection by asking open-ended questions and providing resources in response to children's ideas, insights, inventions, creations, and concerns.
- Assisting children in their interactions with each other and offering opportunities for conflict resolution and cooperative learning while nurturing a caring and courteous community.
- Appreciating the individuality of children and families and celebrating diversity.
- Engaging each child's whole community, honoring the wisdom of their first teachers—the families and communities to which they belong.
 - As Aldo Leopold once said, "When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." ALNC's Nature Preschool aims to foster love and respect for the diverse natural and human communities to which we all belong.

Curriculum

At ALNP we follow an emergent curriculum that is based on the seasons and includes significant time outside. Our learning experiences are designed to address each child's emotional, cognitive, physical and social needs while encouraging curiosity, fostering love of the natural world, and developing the whole child. Teachers serve as educational guides using a child-centered approach, while also maintaining process-oriented teaching objectives that include both content and developmental goals.

Daily activities include outdoor play, natural science explorations, block play, music and movement, art activities, sensory activities, language activities, dramatic play, and cooking or food experiences.

Typical Day at Nature Preschool

We value seasonal spontaneity and take advantage of the "teachable moment." Children also benefit from knowing what will happen next. Our schedule is loose with predictable events throughout the day, such as snack or group experiences, to provide the security of structure.

Part Day Sample Schedule

The following is an example of a possible classroom schedule for a part-day program that includes a mix of plenty of play, independent and group activities, spontaneity and structure. (Order of activities varies depending on the educator and classroom.)

Arrival

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

Outdoor Play and Group Exploration

Children play for at least 60 minutes in the outdoor play area, then take a hike on ALNC grounds. Play area activities include, but are not limited to, 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.

Group Meeting

Children take part in conversation, greet one another, engage in music and movement activities, practice mindfulness, and participate in other whole-group activities.

Snack Time

Snack is served family-style, either inside or outside depending on the weather. Educators and children eat together, converse, share and listen to each other's stories. Children assist in clean-up and transition to choice time.

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

This always begins with clean-up. It is important for children to feel invested in their classrooms by caring for the indoor and outdoor spaces. Children put away materials they have used and prepare for our end of-class routine. Closing circle might be inside, where we gather on the rug to say goodbye before families/caregivers pick up the children, signing them out in the lobby. Or it could be outside, where we assemble in the gathering space close to the building, sing a song, say goodbye and await families/caregivers to pick up and sign out the children.

Full Day Sample Schedule

The following is an example of a typical full day classroom schedule (only the aspects that differ from the half day are elaborated upon):

- Arrival & Station Play**
- Morning Circle**
- Outdoor Play or Adventure**
- Snack Time** (provided by ALNP)
- Group Lesson**
- Lunch** (provided by home)
- Rest**
- Choice Time**
- Snack Time** (provided by ALNP)
- Group Lesson**
- Closing Circle**

School Year and Session Offerings

Eligibility for ALNP is determined by the child's age by the first day of school in the year of enrollment. Children must be three years old by the first day of school, no older than five and must be fully toilet trained (exceptions for children with special needs should refer to the Parent Handbook and contact staff to discuss inclusive accommodations). Children cannot attend both the morning and afternoon sessions. The 2021-22 school year will run from September 7 through June 3. We will follow our own calendar, but will make an effort to align extended breaks with local school schedules. ALNP is a 9-month program and requires a commitment for the entire year.

Days of the Week	Times
Monday/Wednesday/Friday morning	8:30-11:30 am
Tuesday/Thursday morning	8:30-11:30 am
Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri afternoon	12:30-3:30pm
Monday - Friday full day	8:00-3:30pm
Before Care	Begins at 7:30 am <i>for full-day students only</i>
After Care	Begins at 3:35

Facilities

ALNP classes are held in a secure wing of the ALNC building with a private entrance. There are two classrooms, a lobby, offices, family bathroom and a mudroom (used by both classrooms). The classroom spaces are designed to provide the best possible preschool environment for young children. While children will utilize these indoor spaces, it is in the outdoor environment that children will spend the most amount of time. Two adults per classroom oversee a maximum of 16 kids in mixed-ages classrooms (ages 3-5). Open-ended/hands-on materials encourage creative learning. Natural play spaces provide a supervised opportunity to connect with the natural world in large (climbing logs and digging) and small

(sorting leaves), loud (cooperative games), and quiet (reading under a tree) ways. Daily hikes in the Aldo Leopold Nature Center acres provide for slowly expanding the opportunities and experiences.

Tuition Rates

ALNP's goal is to be accessible to all families in our community and sets MONTHLY rates based on a sliding scale. Match your annual income and family size to your desired program (2, 3, 4 or 5 days) to locate your monthly tuition rate for ALNP. Rates are determined by percent of Federal Poverty Levels (FPL) based on income. For more information on where your family falls on the scale, [click here](#).

Family Size	over 500% FPL	500-400% FPL	400-350% FPL	350-300% FPL	300-200% FPL	less than 200%*
2	over \$87,500	\$87,500-\$70,000	\$70,000-\$61,000	\$61,000-\$52,000	\$52,000-\$35,000	less than \$35,000
3	over \$110,000	\$110,000-\$88,000	\$88,000-\$77,000	\$77,000-\$66,000	\$66,000-\$44,000	less than \$44,000
4	over \$132,500	\$132,500-\$106,000	\$106,000-\$93,000	\$93,000-\$79,500	\$79,500-\$53,000	less than \$53,000
5	over \$155,000	\$155,000-\$124,000	\$124,000-\$109,000	\$109,000-\$93,000	\$93,000-\$62,000	less than \$62,000
6	over \$178,000	\$178,000-\$142,000	\$142,000-\$124,500	\$124,500-\$107,000	\$107,000-\$71,000	less than \$71,000
7	over \$201,000	\$201,000-\$160,500	\$160,500-\$140,500	\$140,500-\$120,000	\$120,000-\$80,000	less than \$80,000
2 Day (TR) monthly rate (8:30-11:30am)	\$280	\$255	\$242	\$228	\$215	<i>*tuition assistance available, indicate need in enrollment form</i>
3 Day (MWF) monthly rate (8:30-11:30am OR 12:30-3:30pm)	\$420	\$380	\$360	\$342	\$320	<i>*tuition assistance available, indicate need in enrollment form</i>

4 Day (TWRF) monthly rate (12:30-3:30pm)	\$575	\$525	\$480	\$432	\$390	<i>*tuition assistance available, indicate need in enrollment form</i>
5 Day (M-F) monthly rate (8am-3:30pm)	\$1,250	\$1,200	\$1,100	\$1,050	\$1,000	<i>*tuition assistance available, indicate need in enrollment form</i>

**If your annual income is less than 200% FPL or you need additional assistance for other reasons, tuition assistance is available. Please complete a Tuition Assistance application that can be found as part of the registration process online.*

2021-22 Before & After Care Rates

Before & After Care helps meet the needs of busy families. Rates below follow the same sliding scale as above, with the exception of daily add-ons, which will be charged a set amount. Daily rates for before care are \$10 for morning (anytime between 7:30-8:30am) and \$15 for afternoon (anytime between 3:30-5:30).

	over 500% FPL	500-400% FPL	400-350% FPL	350-300% FPL	300-200% FPL	less than 200%*
5 day (M-F) Before Care monthly rate (7:30-8:00am)	\$78	\$75	\$72	\$69	\$63	<i>*tuition assistance available, indicate need in enrollment form</i>
5 day (M-F) After Care monthly rate (3:30-5:30pm)	\$117	\$113	\$108	\$103	\$94	<i>*tuition assistance available, indicate need in enrollment form</i>

Registration Requirements

- Registration form (includes contact information and is available online)
- Registration fee (\$75 - can be waived in cases of financial need)
- Child is or will be at least 3 years old and no older than 5 by first day of school of registration year
- Toilet trained (see the Family Handbook for our inclusion statement)

Enrollment Process

ALNP welcomes all children regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, gender or gender identity or familial status.

To have your child considered for admission to ALNP, you will need to complete a registration form and submit it with a \$75 non-refundable registration fee per child. You will receive a confirmation email that will include the next steps and placement process. If the registration fee is financially burdensome for your family, please contact preschool@aldoleopoldnaturecenter for a discount or reduction of this fee.

Registration payment includes a one-year membership to Aldo Leopold Nature Center. If you are already a family member of ALNC, your membership expiration date will be extended by one year.

During the week of February 15, 2021 ALNP director Courtney Woods will contact you to confirm your child's enrollment. If more registrations are received than available spots, a lottery process will be used to determine enrollment. In the event that you are not admitted, ALNP will maintain a waiting list and contact you if a spot becomes available. Registrations received after February 15 will be processed on a rolling basis.

An effort will be made to grant each family's first choice for class days and times, however ALNP will attempt to balance classrooms with a mix of ages and other characteristics to create optimal learning environments.

At the time of confirmed enrollment, a \$200 deposit will be due within 10 business days to hold your child's place. Those receiving a *partial scholarship* are still required to pay a deposit. However, a deposit is not required for *full scholarship* recipients. This is a deposit that will be deducted from your total tuition account. The deposit will not be refunded if you withdraw your child from the program and cannot be transferred to another ALNC program.

A complete list of needed paperwork and documentation will be sent to you over the summer to help us prepare for your child's preschool experience. Some of the documentation required before each child's first day of attendance includes:

- Health History and Emergency Care Information
- Child Health Report (must be completed by physician within 90 days after the start of preschool)
- Immunization Record* (must be completed by parent within 30 days after the start of preschool)
- Child Information Form
- First month tuition payment or full year payment
- Adult Agreement

We ask that you complete paperwork (online) as soon as possible and return it prior to Family Orientation in September.

*Please note that enrollment is open to those families with complete immunization records. ALNP aims to maintain herd immunity (a safe and healthy barrier to infectious diseases) for our families, staff and community and, therefore, at this time, ALNP only allows waivers for medical reasons (signed by a licensed physician).

Waitlists

In the event that you are not admitted, ALNP will maintain a waiting list and contact you if a spot becomes available. The non-refundable fee of \$75 still applies if you are waitlisted or are not offered placement. When space becomes available, you will be offered placement. You will have three days to accept the placement and return the deposit to the Preschool Director. If the placement and deposit are not returned within three days, the space will be offered to the next applicant.

Tuition Assistance

Nature Preschool has full and partial scholarships available to assist with tuition. If you are interested in being considered for tuition assistance, please complete the application (included in the online registration process). If you require a printed version, please contact ALNP Director at 608-216-9376.

Tuition Payment Schedule

Upon notification of placement in the program, \$200 is due within 10 working days. This is a non-refundable, non-transferable deposit that will be applied to the first month of your tuition payment. Tuition is based on our 9 month school year; the June week is essentially taking the place of one of the holiday break weeks.

Each month's balance is considered a 1/9 portion or fraction of the total yearly tuition. Payments commence September 1, with subsequent payments due on the first of each month Sept-May. Tuition can either be paid monthly or in one lump sum (discounted).

Discounts

The following discounts may be available to families who qualify:

- Pay-in Full Discount 3% (pay the full-year tuition amount in entirety before September 1 and receive 3% off the total)
- Sibling Discount (10%)
- Staff Discount (10%)
- Only 1 discount may be applied

Family Involvement

We encourage you to talk regularly about your student's new experiences at school. Recognizing the important connection of home and school we ask that your involvement include:

- Attending Family Orientation, held in September without preschoolers, where you will have the chance to meet staff and learn what to expect for the coming year.
- Being available for a home visit and two conferences. The home visit will be arranged at Family Orientation and will occur in late August/early September. This gives students a chance to meet their teacher before school begins and for you to ask any questions and take care of any last paperwork. A second home visit may occur at the end of the school year. Conferences occur in late fall and early spring.
- Reading newsletters and flyers sent home with your child or via email.
- Communicating regularly with your child's educators and other ALNP staff.
- Signing the Adult Agreement (included with enrollment information).

Snacks

A healthy daily snack will be provided once per day for half-day classes and twice per day for full-day classes. Snacks may include water, vegetables or fruit, milk, grains and cheese, with an emphasis on whole foods. Snacks may also be special as the desires of the children develop to include cooking skills. We will also work closely with families to ensure we meet the needs of every child, including those with food allergies.