

ALNP Registration Packet 2022-23

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 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 is 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.

It is our goal to be inclusive and representative of our diverse community and to assist all families in enrolling, registering, and attending environmental education programs at ALNC. Families of ALL abilities, backgrounds, communities, income-levels, neighborhoods, and other societal structures are encouraged to enroll at Aldo Leopold Nature Preschool/register for Summer Camps at Aldo Leopold Nature Center. In an effort to be inclusive of our diverse community of varied backgrounds, ALNC reserves the right to hold space for families in financial need and/or who speak English as a second language.

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. This packet will give you basic information and FAQs about our preschool program. More information will come if/when you enroll your child. 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 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.

Preschool Sessions

Each class has 16 students with two teachers. Preschoolers must be three years old by the first day of school, no older than five and must be fully toilet trained. Children cannot attend both the morning and afternoon sessions. The ALNP calendar mirrors the Madison Metropolitan School District academic calendar with a few exceptions. 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 |
| Lunch Bunch | 11:30-12:30 <i>for half-day students only</i> |

Tuition Rates

ALNP's goal is to be accessible to all families in our community. We set monthly rates on a sliding scale based on family income. We accept Wisconsin Shares payments, cash, check or credit card for tuition payments. Please click here for information on [the cost of tuition](#).

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. 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.

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 nature play space. 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 an hour in the outdoor play area, then take a hike on ALNC grounds. Play area 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.

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

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. 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

Closing circle might be inside, where we gather on the rug to say goodbye before families/caregivers 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/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. See above for details on particular activities.

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

- **Choice Time**
- **Snack**
- **Group Lesson**
- **Closing Circle**

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 work closely with families to ensure we meet the needs of every child, including those with food allergies.

Facilities

ALNP classes are held in a secure wing of the ALNC building with a private entrance. There are two classrooms each with their own kitchen and child-sized bathrooms, a lobby, offices, and a family bathroom. 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. Open-ended/hands-on materials encourage creative learning. Daily hikes in the Aldo Leopold Nature Center acres provide for slowly expanding the opportunities and experiences.

I'm interested! How do I register my interest?

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 registration form (available [on our website](#)) before February 11, 2022. This will ask you to rank your preferences for which preschool session you prefer.
2. Pay our registration fee (non-refundable, on a sliding scale \$0-\$75).
3. Make sure your child is or 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 February 21 with your child's placement in one of our classes or on a waiting list!

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 indicate this when you fill out our interest 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, \$200 is due. This is a non-refundable, non-transferable deposit that will be applied to the first month of your tuition payment. Our school year mirrors the Madison Metropolitan School District academic calendar and runs from September to June (usually the first week of June is our last week). Each month's balance is considered a 1/9 portion of the total yearly tuition. Tuition can either be paid monthly or in one lump sum (discounted).

Discounts

The following discounts are available to families:

- Pay-in Full Discount 3%
- Sibling Discount (10%)
- Staff Discount (50%)