



PARENT HANDBOOK

Natural Start Preschool *at the South Bellevue Community Center*

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Bellevue, WA 98006

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Preschool Phone: (425) 233-4480

South Bellevue Community Center: (425) 452-4240

Website: www.naturalstartpreschool.com

Email/Inquiries: NSPdirector@outlook.com



Dear Natural Start Preschool Families,

Welcome to our program! We are excited that you have made the decision to send your child to Natural Start Preschool, and we are looking forward to an exciting new school year.

This Parent Handbook is designed to answer any questions that you may have about topics such as school closings, illness policies and procedures, tuition information, snack suggestions, what your child needs to bring to preschool each day, and appropriate clothing for our outdoor adventures. **Please take the time to read our Parent Handbook carefully before the start of the school year.**

We will be hosting a **Teacher Meet-and-Greet** shortly before our first full day of preschool. This event will be a good opportunity for you and your child to meet their teachers and classmates, become familiar with our preschool, and get a brief introduction to our daily routine. Although the Teacher Meet-and-Greet is optional, we strongly encourage all families to attend, especially those families whose children are new to our program. (See the "Calendar" menu on our website for more information and dates).

If you have any questions before the school year begins, please email our director, Stephanie Hoener, at NSPdirector@outlook.com. We are looking forward to a fun-filled school year and are excited about getting to know you and your family. Thank you for sharing your child with us and for giving us the opportunity to share our love of nature and learning with them!

Best Wishes,

Stephanie Hoener, *Preschool Director, Co-Founder, Assistant Teacher*
and **Natural Start Preschool Staff**

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ABOUT NATURAL START PRESCHOOL

1. OUR MISSION

The mission of Natural Start Preschool is to provide a high-quality early childhood learning program that meets the developmental needs of preschoolers aged 3-5 while at the same time inspiring them to love and appreciate the world of nature. Our unique nature-based curriculum combines traditional kindergarten readiness learning with age-appropriate educational activities that are designed to teach children about the natural world, exercise and physical fitness, health and wellness, and the importance of experiencing the outdoors.

2. OUR PHILOSOPHY

At Natural Start Preschool, we believe that nature plays a vital role in the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of young children. Research shows that children who spend time in nature are healthier, can think more clearly, have an easier time paying attention, and have the ability to cope more effectively with stress. Childhood experiences in nature help stimulate children's curiosity and interest in the world around them and help them grow intellectually in their desire to better understand the world and their place in it.

We believe that children's interactions with the natural world allow for the development of a lifetime of skills. Nature serves as a living classroom for our preschool and provides an ideal environment for children to learn through direct experience and play. Our preschoolers spend time outdoors every day, where they can fully engage all their senses in a safe and nurturing environment. On the very rare occasions when the weather is too extreme for outdoor exploration, children may participate in active play in the gymnasium.

We also believe that children need time to be themselves: children. They need ample opportunities to play, to practice and work out social skills with other children in a safe environment, and to gain self-confidence and self-esteem. We believe that helping children develop a positive self-image and become socially competent is the best foundation for their future.

3. WHAT IS A NATURE-BASED PRESCHOOL?

Natural Start Preschool is one of a growing number of nature-based preschools in the United States, and the only one of its kind on the Eastside. What makes these preschools unique is their overarching focus on introducing young children to the world of nature and incorporating age-appropriate environmental education methodologies into a traditional preschool curriculum. Ken Finch, the founder of Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood, described the many benefits of nature-focused preschools in the following excerpt from his article, "What is a Nature Preschool?" (For the full article, please see www.greenheartsinc.org/Nature_Preschools.html)

"Since they attend for at least two days per week over at least one full school year, preschool students are assured of far more direct contact time with the outdoors than students receive in nearly any other model of environmental education. In fact, each child enrolled in a nature preschool will usually enjoy hundreds of hours exploring and playing in natural settings during the course of his or her preschool experience.

This approach is more likely to generate life-changing experiences than are shorter, infrequent, cognitive-focused environmental education programs. In addition, nature preschools' loosely-structured, daily outdoor explorations allow the time and opportunity for real discovery and play, as compared to traditional K-12 environmental education lessons that are scheduled, regulated, and confined by schools' curriculum objectives.

The nature preschool model also provides exceptional support for the overall healthy growth and development of children. The daily explorations build valuable skills such as observation, experimentation, and sorting, while allowing for both individual experiences and group sharing. The children's outdoor discoveries also provide great subjects for all manner of artistic and verbal expression, and the daily walks help to establish early habits of physical fitness.

Perhaps most of all, nature preschool students truly learn how to learn – developing the curiosity and joy that should pervade all education, while practicing key social skills such as sharing, waiting one's turn, and following simple directions."

PROGRAM INFORMATION

1. OUR CURRICULUM

Natural Start Preschool offers a unique nature-based curriculum that combines traditional kindergarten readiness learning with appropriate play-based preschool activities. Our curriculum focuses on the whole child by promoting physical, emotional, social, creative, cognitive, and linguistic growth.

At Natural Start Preschool, children learn about nature through direct experience, exploration, and discovery of the world around them. The natural world is a guiding theme in all areas of curriculum, including:

- Letters, language, and literacy skills
- Numbers and math activities
- Writing and fine motor skills
- Sensory activities
- Music
- Perceptual and cognitive skills development
- Social and emotional development
- Cooperative and interactive play
- Science
- Arts and crafts
- Exercise and movement
- Most importantly, daily outdoor exploration and play

In addition to our program's unique emphasis on environmental education and social emotional learning, the incorporation of traditional school readiness skills is also accomplished through nature-related and interactive experiences. Working closely with the Bellevue School District's K-12 program, our teachers support children as they develop independence and the necessary skills for kindergarten readiness and future school success.

2. FACILITIES

Situated on the grounds of the 39-acre Eastgate Park, the South Bellevue Community Center provides an ideal location for Natural Start Preschool. Children have daily opportunities to play, have fun, explore the world around them, and experience genuine learning in both indoor and outdoor settings.

Facilities include:

- Indoor and outdoor classrooms
- Dedicated preschool garden
- Large indoor gym for active play
- Outdoor sports field
- Hiking trails, forests, meadow, and stream
- Natural areas for daily outdoor exploration and play
- Playgrounds, sandbox, and mud kitchen

3. CLASSES

Natural Start Preschool offers two classes at the South Bellevue Community Center:

- 1) **Junior Explorers:** For children ages 3-4 who will be 3 by December 31st of the year of enrollment
- 2) **Explorers (Pre-K):** For children ages 4-5 who will be 4 by August 31st of the year of enrollment

4. TEACHER-TO-STUDENT RATIOS

To allow for optimal supervision and individualized attention, teacher-to-student ratios average 1:6 for the Junior Explorers class and 1:7 for the Explorers class.

5. IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Natural Start Preschool:	(425) 233-4480 – <i>For all contacts and inquiries during and outside of school hours</i>	
S. Bellevue Comm. Center:	(425) 452-4240 – <i>For registration and Community Center information only</i>	
Website:	www.naturalstartpreschool.com	
Stephanie Hoener, Director:	NSPdirector@outlook.com	
Preschool Address:	14509 SE Newport Way	Bellevue, WA 98006
Mailing Address:	15600 NE 8 th Street, Suite B1 #321	Bellevue, WA 98008

6. PARENT/CAREGIVER INVOLVEMENT

Natural Start Preschool offers many opportunities for parent/caregiver involvement throughout the school year. We believe that parents and caregivers are a child's first and most important teachers, and we therefore provide the option for you to be actively involved in your child's education by participating in the learning process.

The following list offers some possible suggestions for parent/caregiver involvement opportunities. We also invite you to develop your own ideas for supporting and participating in your child's preschool education.

- a. Volunteering with your child's class (during certain days of the week, parents/caregivers can sign up as classroom volunteers and assist with our preschool day)
- b. Participating in preschool field trips
- c. Assisting with special family programs and activities
- d. Sharing knowledge, experiences, family traditions, special projects, and careers with the children when parents/caregivers have expertise related to the weekly curriculum topics
- e. Communicating regularly with teachers about your child's progress

7. PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION

We believe that good communication between parents/caregivers and teachers is essential for the success of our students and our preschool. Good parent/teacher communication will ensure that we are able to identify and meet the needs of our students and the expectations of their families.

In addition to the ongoing dialogue between parents/caregivers and teachers regarding daily preschool happenings, we will also utilize various other forms of communication to keep our families informed about individual, class, and preschool news. The following are some of the ways in which we will communicate events, progress, and general news about our students and our preschool:

- a. **Weekly eNewsletters:** These will keep families informed about their child's classroom activities, events, milestones, classroom needs, and other important information.
- b. **Email:** Preschool staff will use email to relay information about issues such as school closings, reminders for field trips, preschool news, and announcements for special activities. Parents/caregivers may email the preschool director at any time with questions or concerns.
- c. **In-Person Check-Ins:** Teachers and staff are available to speak with parents/caregivers in person after preschool pick-up.
- d. **Class Rosters:** Each family will receive a class roster with the names of preschool students and parents' contact information.
- e. **Conferences:** Parents/caregivers may sign up for one-on-one conferences to discuss their child's developmental progress and set individual goals.
- f. **Meetings:** Parents/caregivers may also schedule a meeting with their child's teachers and/or the preschool director at any time during the school year.
- g. **Preschool Events:** Field trips, family activities, and special events will also provide parents and caregivers with the opportunity to engage in further dialogue with their child's teachers and other preschool families.
- h. **Questions, Suggestions, and Concerns:** We encourage parents/caregivers to discuss any questions or concerns they may have with their child's teachers and the preschool director. We do ask that discussion of more detailed matters be reserved for after preschool hours, so that the teachers may ensure the safety of the children during class time and offer their full attention to parent/caregiver concerns. We encourage parents/caregivers to share any relevant information concerning their child that will help teachers to better meet that child's needs, such as major changes in a family situation or recent changes in the child's health, behavior, or disposition.

SCHEDULE INFORMATION

1. PRESCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

To view our yearly academic calendar, including preschool dates, special family events, field trips, holidays, and school closings, please see the “Calendar” tab on our website: www.naturalstartpreschool.com.

2. HOURS OF OPERATION

Natural Start Preschool’s hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 9:00am-12:00pm. We offer an optional 1-hour Explorers Lunch Bunch from 12:00-1:00pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays for concurrently enrolled Explorers students who are ready for a 4-hour preschool experience (see the “Enrollment” tab on the homepage of our website for more information). Our preschool year runs from early September through mid-June. We follow the Bellevue School District calendar for holidays, school breaks, and weather-related closings.

3. SCHEDULE OPTIONS

The following schedule options are available:

2-Day Program: Tuesday/Thursday	9:00am-12:00pm
3-Day Program: Monday/Wednesday/Friday	9:00am-12:00pm
5-Day Program: Monday-Friday	9:00am-12:00pm

4. A TYPICAL DAY

A typical day at Natural Start Preschool begins at 9:00am when the children arrive for preschool. This is a time when parents or caregivers drop off their child and help them transition from home to preschool, with support from the teachers as needed.

Our daily preschool routine unfolds in a number of settings, both outdoors and in the classrooms, with a range of developmentally appropriate activities. A typical schedule is as follows:

Welcome to Preschool, 9:00am

Sign in, greet teachers and friends, transition into day with free play

Free Choice Time

Free play at various learning stations to include sensory and fine motor activities, dramatic and large motor play, arts and crafts, sandbox and mud kitchen, gardening, and exploration of natural materials

Teacher Time

Individual and small-group learning with the teachers to explore kindergarten readiness skills (letters, numbers, science, art, writing and scissor activities, etc.)

Group Time

“Good Morning Song”, weather, calendar, Letter of the Week, and introduction to our daily theme which may include a story, song, music, and movement activities

Clean-Up, Restroom Break, Snack Time

Nature Exploration and Play

Outdoor activities may include a hike in the woods to observe and listen, playtime in the meadow to support independent discovery, group games and activities with a focus on exercise and cooperation, as well as activities using natural materials to sort, count, and have fun while learning!

Closing Group Time, “Goodbye Song”, 12:00 PM Dismissal

5. HOLIDAYS AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Natural Start Preschool follows the Bellevue Public Schools (Bellevue School District) schedule for holidays, school breaks, and weather-related closings (see below for our Inclement Weather Policy).

6. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Information about weather-related school closures will be communicated to preschool families via email as early in the day as possible.

Natural Start Preschool will follow the Bellevue Public School District schedule for all weather-related closings.

- If Bellevue Public Schools are closed, we will be closed as well.
- If Bellevue Public Schools are operating on a "late start" schedule, our start time will depend on the opening time for the South Bellevue Community Center. In some cases when the access road to SBCC is unsafe or impassable, the community center will remain closed and preschool will not be in session. In all cases of Bellevue Schools operating on a "late start" schedule, we will let families know via email if/when preschool will be open that day.

In the event of inclement weather, you may consult one of the following sources for updated Bellevue School District closure information:

- Local TV / Radio Stations
- BSD website: <http://www.bsd405.org>
- BSD Newsline: (425) 456-4111
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bsd405/>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TheBSD405>

If you are still uncertain as to whether or not preschool will be in session on any given day, you may get in touch with us directly as follows:

- Call or text our director, Stephanie Hoener, on her personal cell phone.
- Email Stephanie at NSPdirector@outlook.com.

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

1. BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are an exciting and special time for children! When we celebrate birthdays in preschool, we honor each child by singing "Happy Birthday" to them, allowing them to be the class "line leader" for the day, and acknowledging them in a special way during Circle Time.

Some parents have asked us in the past whether they can send along a treat for the class on the day we celebrate their child's birthday. We are unable to have cupcakes, cake, candy, or other edible treats in the classroom due to the many children who have food allergies/sensitivities and dietary restrictions. As an alternative, some parents have opted to provide small "goody bags" with a pencil, crayons, coloring book, or small toy for their child to distribute to their classmates in honor of their birthday. This is a *completely optional* practice, but it can be a special way for students to share their birthday celebration with friends from preschool.

Please note that for children whose birthdays are during the summer, they will be celebrated in class toward the end of the preschool year.

2. FIELD TRIPS

Depending on site availability, Natural Start Preschool normally participates in two field trips during the school year. Field trip dates and additional information are provided to families as soon as they become available.

The following general guidelines apply to all Natural Start Preschool field trips. (*For more information, see also the "Field Trips" section under "Safety and Supervision Procedures" below.*)

- a. Parents are responsible for driving their children to and from field trip sites.
- b. Parents are asked to stay and participate in our field trips. These are special events for the children, and they are always excited to be able to share these outings with family members.
- c. There may be some field trips for which we will recommend that other arrangements be made for younger siblings of our preschool students. In some instances, the walk may be too long for little ones, or there may be limits to the number of students allowed at certain field trip sites. We will be sure to inform parents of such restrictions as far in advance as possible.
- d. Backpacks are not necessary on field trips; however, please make sure that your child has a snack and water bottle to take along to the field trip site.

3. SPECIAL EVENTS

In addition to field trips, Natural Start Preschool offers a number of special events for students and their parents/caregivers throughout the school year. These include our Teacher Meet-and-Greet, Fall Family Hike/Scavenger Hunt, Mother's Day Picnic in the Meadow, and Year-End Celebration/Father's Day Field Day. Please see the "Calendar" tab on our website for specific dates.

4. WHAT TO SEND TO PRESCHOOL WITH YOUR CHILD

In order to ensure a successful preschool experience for our students, we have put together a list of items that we are asking parents/caregivers to send along with their child **each day they attend preschool**:

1. **A backpack, labeled on the outside with your child's name.** The backpack **should have a chest strap** and should be easy for your child to open and close. It should be a standard-sized backpack for preschool-aged children (not a mini toddler backpack) that is large enough to hold your child's snack containers, water bottle, extra clothing layers in a plastic bag, and any other personal belongings. It would be helpful if you could assist us by familiarizing your child with the contents of their backpack before preschool begins so that they know where to find needed items.

2. **A healthy snack** packed inside a **lightweight*** Tupperware container, Ziploc bag, or small lunch bag that **fits inside your child's backpack**. Lunch bags and snack containers should be labeled with your child's name. (See the "Preschool Snacks" section below for more details.)
 - ***IMPORTANT NOTE:** Many of the large stainless steel snack containers that are popular today are quite heavy and add considerable weight to a child's backpack. Because our students carry their own backpacks for short distances each day, we recommend choosing a lightweight snack container instead of a large metal one.
3. **A lightweight water bottle filled with at least 10-12 ounces of water** and **labeled with your child's name**. (See the "Water Bottles" section below for more details.)
4. **An extra layer of clothing, top to bottom.** This should include: 1) a warm base layer (shirt and pants), 2) underwear, 3) socks, 4) and 2-3 pairs of dry mittens. All spare clothing items should be placed inside a large Ziploc bag that is **labeled with your child's name**. The Ziploc bag should also include an extra plastic bag for dirty clothes to go into when necessary.
5. **Other:** Except on special occasions, we do not allow children to bring toys to preschool because they can detract from our learning environment. However, your child may bring a small stuffed animal or blanket to use during the first part of class in order to help with separation or anxiety issues. **This special item should be small enough to fit fully inside your child's backpack along with its other contents.**

5. PRESCHOOL SNACKS

- Please send a healthy **NUT-FREE** snack along with your child each day they attend preschool. Snacks should be packed inside a **lightweight** Tupperware container (see note under #2 above), Ziploc bag, or small lunch bag that **fits inside your child's backpack**. Some preschool-friendly snack suggestions are listed below.
- Due to health concerns and the growing incidence of food allergies and sensitivities, teachers will ensure that children do not share food with one another.
- Have foods ready to eat, limiting the need for teacher assistance. Oranges and hard-boiled eggs should be peeled ahead of time. For foods packaged in plastic such as string cheese, meat sticks, granola bars, yogurt squeezers, snack mixes, etc., please pre-cut a small slit into the package for easy opening by your child.
- It is important to **AVOID ALL NUTS AND NUT PRODUCTS** in preschool, as some students have life-threatening allergies to them. This includes peanuts, peanut butter, Nutella, and all tree nuts (almonds, cashews, walnuts, hazelnuts/filberts, etc.). **Read food labels carefully to ensure the absence of nuts before packing your child's preschool snack, especially in crackers, cereals, granola bars, and trail mix.**
- We also ask that you please help us support optimal learning and energy levels by sending your child to preschool with a nutritionally balanced snack that is **LOW IN SUGAR**. Our experience is that it's very difficult for preschoolers to pay attention and follow safety directions after consuming sugary foods such as cookies, candy, fruit gummies, yogurt raisins, sweetened rice cakes, juice, chocolate milk, high-sugar granola bars or yogurt, etc.

Here are some suggestions for healthy, preschool-friendly snacks:

- **FRUITS:** Apple slices, bananas, grapes (sliced in half for very young children), fresh berries, pre-peeled oranges or clementines, unsweetened applesauce, etc.
- **VEGETABLES:** Baby carrots, sugar snap peas, celery sticks, sliced cucumbers, edamame, etc.
- **GRAINS:** Whole grain crackers, unsweetened whole grain cereal, nut-free pretzel mix, low-sugar nut-free granola bar, low-sugar whole grain muffins, etc.
- **PROTEINS:** Sunflower or pumpkin seeds, hard-boiled egg (peeled ahead of time), string cheese or sliced/cubed cheese, low-sugar yogurt cup or squeezable yogurt, etc.
- **OTHER:** Cheese and crackers, small whole grain bagel with cream cheese or sunflower butter, mini "wraps" (cheese and lunch meat rolled in a tortilla), pita bread triangles with hummus or other bean dips, etc.

6. WATER BOTTLES

- Your child should bring their own water bottle filled with at least 10-12 ounces of water each day they come to preschool.
- Please DO NOT send juice, soda, milk, sports drinks, or any other sugary drinks to preschool with your child.
- Lightweight water bottles with built-in straws or other spill-proof openings work best for young children. Recommended models include 12-ounce versions of **CamelBak** “Eddy”, **Thermos** “Funtainer”, **Snug Flask** for Kids, and **Nalgene** “Grip-N-Gulp”. These are all available on Amazon.
- Avoid sending your child to preschool with a water bottle that has a twist-off cap. These spill easily and are extremely difficult for young children to open by themselves.
- Water bottles must be labeled with your child’s first and last name (duct tape and a marker will be available the first week of preschool to assist with this). Many of our students have the same style of water bottle and we want to make sure no germs are shared.

7. CLOTHING AND OUTERWEAR

“There is no such thing as bad weather – just bad clothes.” (Swedish proverb)

As a nature-based preschool, our students go outside every day of the year, regardless of the weather, and **spend at least 90 minutes of their preschool day outdoors**. The only exceptions are in the event of thunderstorms, extreme winds, unhealthy air quality, and/or extreme temperature conditions, when we will either stay inside the South Bellevue Community Center building or cancel preschool. Please be aware that even on cold, rainy days, the children will go on hikes and spend time exploring the various natural habitats in our 40-acre park.

As such, **we expect our preschoolers to get dirty as a natural part of their explorations!** Your child should wear durable, washable, seasonally appropriate play clothes to preschool at all times. Please do not send your child to preschool in clothing that is for special occasions. Play is important, and we would not want your child to worry if they happen to get dirty or wet.

Helping your child dress comfortably for the weather and role-modeling a positive attitude about the weather are the two most important things you can do to set your child up for success in our nature-based program. Make sure everything your child wears can get muddy or wet each day they come to preschool. Having extra clothes packed in their backpack for spares or extra layers is essential. Investing initially in the right outerwear will last your child through the whole school year and often beyond. Resale and consignment shops such as Value Village, Goodwill, and Small Threads (in Issaquah) are great places to find used children’s outerwear that is still in good shape. This gear is an investment that can be used by your child and often resold or passed on multiple times.

Below are some guidelines to help you ensure that your child comes to preschool appropriately dressed for outdoor fun.

A. GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESCHOOL OUTERWEAR

- **IMPORTANT:** All of your child’s outerwear should be **labeled** with their name, especially hats, mittens, rain pants, boots, and coats! Many of our students have identical clothing items and we want to make sure they go home with the right owners.
- Make sure any and all clothing and shoes your child wears to preschool can get wet and/or dirty.
- Have an extra layer of clothing, top to bottom, inside your child’s backpack every day they attend preschool. This should include: 1) a warm base layer (shirt and pants), 2) underwear, 3) socks, 4) and 2-3 pairs of dry mittens.
- Place all your child’s spare clothes inside a plastic Ziploc bag labeled with their name and keep it inside their backpack. This will ensure that clothes remain dry and protected from spills and rain.
- The Ziploc bag should also include an extra plastic bag for dirty clothes to go into when necessary.
- **BE SURE TO CHECK YOUR CHILD’S BACKPACK EVERY DAY AFTER PRESCHOOL** to remove wet, dirty clothes and replace them with dry ones.

- For preschool-aged children, pants with stretchy waist bands are preferable to buttons and zippers for easy and fast use of the restroom.
- Dress your child in layers, layers, layers! Multiple thin layers can be more comfortable than one thick layer and allow for more flexibility with heat regulation.
- Work with your child to find the right balance and type of clothing that works for them.

B. FOOTWEAR

1) Boots

- Waterproof boots are a MUST for your child's daily outdoor adventures in preschool, as our hiking trails and play areas get very muddy during the rainy months.
- Our experience over the years has shown that the **Bogs** and **Oaki/Oakiwear** brands of kids' **neoprene and rubber** boots (not the all-rubber boots) work best for active play in both wet and cold conditions. They are insulated to keep feet warm and dry, and they have a "tailored" fit that helps them stay on your child's foot during active play (unlike regular rubber rain boots that tend to fall off when children are running and climbing).
- These boots are somewhat more expensive than regular rubber rain boots, but they can also be worn in the snow, thereby saving you the expense of having to buy both a rain boot and a snow boot for the season. These boots are rugged and hold up for multiple years, so you can also check local resale shops, kids' consignment shops like "Small Threads" in Issaquah, as well as Facebook and OfferUp for used Bogs and Oakiwear boots that are still in great shape.
- To view an example of the Oakiwear neoprene/rubber boot, search up "Oaki Kids Neoprene Rain Boots" on Amazon. You can also find them on the Oakiwear website: www.oaki.com (be sure to check out their sales and discounted boots).
- To view an example of the Bogs neoprene/rubber boot, search up "Bogs Kids Classic High Waterproof Insulated Boots" on Amazon. Local stores that reliably carry Bogs include REI and Nordstrom. Occasionally, Zappos has a few styles of kids' Bogs boots on sale: www.zappos.com.

2) Socks:

- We recommend wool-blend socks in the winter for all boots, as they keep children's feet warm even if they get wet. (Cotton socks can result in miserably cold feet if they get wet.)
- Always keep an extra pair of socks in your child's backpack, stored inside a Ziploc bag so they stay dry.

C. HEAD AND NECK

- A well-fitting fleece or soft wool hat that has some coverage over the ears works best for comfort and warmth. Make sure the hat fits comfortably and does not feel "itchy" or "scratchy" to your child while they are wearing it.
- For the neck, a neck warmer is preferable to a scarf since the latter can get tangled.

D. MITTENS

- Cold hands are generally the number-one source of discomfort on wet days. We recommend you pack 2-3 pairs of **mittens** in your child's backpack on any given day. They will get them wet, no matter how waterproof they are, and your child will need an extra pair on especially rainy days.
- **NO GLOVES**, please, as they are too difficult for young children to put on by themselves.
- **On cold, WET days**, the types of mittens that work best are the waterproof types -- with fleece on the inside and nylon on the outside -- that have a zipper for easy on and off. We recommend either the **Head** brand "Kids' Ski Mittens" (available on Amazon and usually available at Costco in the fall and winter months) and the **Gordini** brand "Easy-On Mitts for Children and Toddlers" (available on Amazon), or something similar.
- **On cold, DRY days**, thick fleece mittens tend to work best for young children. However, please note that fleece mittens *by themselves* are NOT WATERPROOF on a wet or rainy day! If a child is wearing fleece

mitten and plays with something wet outdoors (which they are bound to do), the fleece will soak up water and the child's hands will be even colder than they would be without mittens.

E. BASE LAYER

- Fleece pajamas, polyester long johns (**Columbia** and **REI** have styles for kids but there are other generic brands as well), or wool-blend long johns such as **Hocasa Kids** (these are really expensive but can sometimes be found in resale shops) work best against your child's skin for insulating as a "base layer". No need for anything fancy here – pajamas or long johns found at Goodwill or Value Village work great as base layers!
- Depending on outdoor temperatures, more layers can be added on top of the base layer. Adding layers on top leaves a lot of room for temperature adjustment throughout the day.
- Avoid cotton fabrics during the wet/cold months. Cotton soaks up moisture and causes kids to feel cold.
- We always recommend rain pants on the outside to keep your child warm and dry. If your child's core stays warm, the need for mittens is minimized.

F. RAIN PANTS

- Rain pants are a crucial layer and are required at preschool on rainy days, and every day during the months of October through April. When worn over sufficient base layers, rain pants will help keep your child comfortable even when it's not raining because the ground will be cool and damp.
- Please note that **for preschool-aged children, elastic-waist rain pants WITHOUT suspenders, with a separate rain jacket on top, are much easier to manage during bathroom breaks than one-piece rain suits or rain pants with suspenders.**
- It is crucial that the rain pants you choose for your child have a closure at the ankle (Velcro, elastic, or cord and toggle) so the rain pants can be cinched tightly over boots to help keep water out.
- Keep in mind also that during very cold, rainy weather, rain pants with warm base layers are better than snow pants because snow pants can absorb water and rarely have ankle cinches.
- We highly recommend **Oakiwear**, **REI**, **Columbia**, **Reima**, and **Hatley** brands of children's rain pants.
- Rain pants can be very effective if properly waterproofed. If you have used rain pants or gear that has been out in the rain for a season or more, you may want to spray it with a water repellent spray (see the "Treating Rain Gear" section below for more information on waterproofing outerwear).

G. JACKET

- Layers are important. A solid fleece jacket with a sturdy, proven waterproof, hooded rain jacket on top is ideal. This keeps the warmth in and the rain and wind out.
- It is crucial that the rain jacket has a hood and a system for cinching sleeves at the wrist in order to keep water out.
- We highly recommend **Oakiwear**, **REI**, **Columbia**, **Reima**, **Hatley**, and **North Face** brands of children's rain jackets.

H. TREATING RAIN GEAR

- Many types of rain pants and rain jackets should NOT be dried in the dryer, otherwise they will lose their waterproofing ability. In this case, wash rain gear in the washing machine on cold and hang dry or tumble dry on the "no heat" setting. Be sure to read labels with care instructions on all rain gear.
- If the waterproofing ability of rain gear begins to fade (or to ensure extra strength waterproofing ability), you may treat the rain gear with a Durable Water Repellent (DWR). These come in sprays or washes and you can buy them at most sporting goods stores or online. Here is a great article on how to use DWRs and what types to use: <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/rainwear-dwr.html>

ENROLLMENT

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Natural Start Preschool is designed for children whose parents are looking for discovery-based learning and a hands-on approach to education. Children should be prepared for outdoor fun: Except during extreme weather conditions, our students are outside every day to enjoy both structured and unstructured exploration and play in a natural setting. We believe that children learn by being outdoors – regardless of the weather!

2. ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

- a. Natural Start Preschool offers two classes at the South Bellevue Community Center:
 - 1) **Junior Explorers:** For children ages 3-4 who will turn 3 by December 31st of the year of enrollment
 - 2) **Explorers (Pre-K):** For children ages 4-5 who will turn 4 by August 31st of the year of enrollment
- b. Children must be toilet-trained and self-sufficient. Please contact our preschool director with questions.
- c. State law requires that all children be up-to-date with their immunizations upon enrollment. A *Certificate of Immunization Status* must be on file by your child's first day of preschool. If your child is not vaccinated due to personal or religious reasons, we must have a *Certificate of Exemption* on file when preschool begins. Both forms are available on our website. Parents will be notified in the event of an outbreak of illness and asked to keep their child at home until the outbreak has been eradicated.

3. ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

- a. To register for our program, please follow the instructions under the "Enrollment" tab on our website: www.naturalstartpreschool.com. To check on enrollment availability, you may email our preschool director at NSPdirector@outlook.com.
- b. All applicants must submit a completed *Tuition and Fees Agreement* form at the time of enrollment.
- c. New student enrollment is processed on a first-come, first-served basis. A waitlist is maintained by the South Bellevue Community Center when classes are full.

4. TUITION AND FEES

An up-to-date listing of Natural Start Preschool's tuition and fees may be found under the "Enrollment" tab on our website: www.naturalstartpreschool.com.

- An annual Registration Fee of \$200 is due at the time of enrollment. \$75 of this Registration Fee is nonrefundable and the remaining \$125 will be applied toward the first month's tuition payment. If a student is withdrawn from Natural Start Preschool before their first month of attendance, the entire \$200 Registration Fee will be nonrefundable.
- The last month's Tuition Deposit (June) is also due at the time of registration.
- Paying the Registration Fee and Tuition Deposit reserves your child's place in class for the entire school year.
- A one-time, non-refundable annual Materials Fee is to be paid directly to Natural Start Preschool on your child's first day of attendance. Payment may be given directly to your child's teacher or to our director in the form of check or cash. Please make checks out to *Natural Start Preschool*.
- Scholarships are available through the City of Bellevue for Bellevue residents. For application information please visit <https://bellevuewa.gov/city-government/departments/parks/programs/scholarships>.

5. TUITION PAYMENTS

- a. Tuition payments are due monthly, by the 5th day of each calendar month.
- b. Natural Start Preschool is contracted through the City of Bellevue. Tuition payments and program registration are managed by the South Bellevue Community Center: (425) 452-4240.
- c. Tuition is based on a ten-month commitment (September-June) and is divided into ten equal monthly payments. The number of days in a month that school is in session does not affect the monthly payment rate, and there are no adjustments in tuition for holidays or days missed. As long as your child is officially enrolled in preschool, tuition is due in full each month, regardless of illness, vacation, school holidays, scheduled breaks, or school closures during the 10-month academic year.
- d. Mid-month enrollment may be prorated. Please contact the preschool director for more information.
- e. Natural Start Preschool operates on the monies from your monthly tuition fees, and therefore we ask that payments be made on time in order for us to be able to provide a quality experience for your child.

6. DELINQUENT PAYMENTS

- a. A late charge of \$25 will be applied to any account not paid in full by the due date.
- b. Tuition payments not received by the 5th day of the month will be considered delinquent. If the account is not brought up to date by the 1st day of the following month, a child may be withdrawn from our program.

7. WITHDRAWAL POLICY

- a. If you choose to withdraw your child from Natural Start Preschool or switch your child from one section to another, you must fill out the *Enrollment Modification or Withdrawal* form, which is available under the "Forms" section of our website: www.naturalstartpreschool.com.
- b. The last month's Tuition Deposit you paid at the time of enrollment can be applied to early withdrawal as long as the *Enrollment Modification or Withdrawal* form is signed and submitted as follows:
 - For a summer withdrawal prior to the start of the new school year, this form must be signed and submitted to the preschool director on or before July 15 for a refund of the Tuition Deposit.
 - For a withdrawal during the school year, this form must be signed and submitted to the preschool director at least 30 days in advance of the child's intended date of withdrawal. The Tuition Deposit will then be applied to the child's final month of attendance.
- c. If the *Enrollment Modification or Withdrawal* form is not signed and submitted in accordance with the guidelines above, or if your child is withdrawn from Natural Start Preschool without submitting this signed form, the last month's tuition deposit that was paid at the time of enrollment will not be refunded or applied toward early withdrawal.

ATTENDANCE

1. ABSENCES

The following guidelines are designed to facilitate communication between parents/caregivers and teachers about children's preschool attendance:

- a. If your child is ill or unable to attend class, please email or text our preschool director, Stephanie Hoener, as soon as possible on the morning of your child's absence.
- b. If your child will be more than 20 minutes late for preschool, please notify the preschool director ahead of time so that we can make arrangements to accommodate your child's late arrival.
- c. You can also inform us by phone, email, or in person if you know in advance of an upcoming absence or vacation for your child.

2. ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

a. Arrival Time: 9:00am

Preschool begins promptly at 9:00am, at which point parents/caregivers may drop off their child with the teachers.

b. Sign-In and Sign-Out

Natural Start Preschool maintains a daily attendance record of all children under our care. Parents/caregivers will be asked to sign in their child when arriving; teachers will sign out students when departing. Accurate attendance records are vital in the event of an emergency, and therefore we will require families to comply with our procedures. Children will not be permitted to sign themselves in or out of our program.

c. Arrival Procedures

- 1) Children must be delivered to preschool every day by a parent, caregiver, or other authorized adult over the age of eighteen (18), who will also sign them in. Since it is very important that teachers be aware of a child's arrival or departure, we ask the accompanying adult to get the teacher's attention when their child arrives and leaves.
- 2) On certain days, class may begin in a location other than the usual arrival point. On such occasions, we will inform families ahead of time via email and post a sign at the preschool attendance table directing parents to the appropriate location.
- 3) Regardless of the gathering site, all children must be accompanied to and from preschool every day by an authorized adult over the age of eighteen (18). Under no circumstances should children be dropped off in the parking lot and allowed to walk to class by themselves.

3. DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

a. Dismissal Time: 12:00pm

Your child looks forward to your return; therefore, we ask that you pick up your child ***promptly at 12:00pm***. Please let us know beforehand if you will need to pick up your child early.

b. Dismissal Procedures

- 1) Teachers will sign out students and dismiss each child individually once their parent/guardian arrives in the designated preschool pick-up area.
- 2) In order to expedite the dismissal process, parents/caregivers are asked to wait for their child in the designated gathering area where pick-up takes place.
- 3) Natural Start Preschool staff will ensure that children have their backpacks and personal belongings with them at the time they are picked up.
- 4) A teacher will be available to check in with parents/caregivers during and immediately following the 12:00pm dismissal.

c. Late Pick-Up

- 1) **Pickup time is 12:00pm.** Due to after-class staff responsibilities and scheduling requirements, a late pick-up fee of \$10.00 will be incurred for every 10 minutes that a child is picked up past program closing time.
- 2) **If you are running late, please call or text our preschool director on her personal cell phone.**
- 3) If a child has not been picked up within 10 minutes of the preschool's designated closing time, the following procedure will be implemented:
 - a) A staff person will call the child's parent(s) or caregiver(s) at the work, cell, and home phone numbers listed on the *Child Release Form* and the *Health History and Emergency Care Plan*.
 - b) If the child's parent(s) or caregiver(s) cannot be reached, the staff person will call the emergency and/or alternate contacts listed on the *Child Release Form* and the *Health History and Emergency Care Plan*.
 - c) If every effort to reach the child's caregivers has been made and the child has not been picked up, the Bellevue Police may be called for assistance.

d. Release of Children

- 1) A child will be released only to those adults authorized by the parent or caregiver on the *Child Release Form* and "Emergency Contacts" section of the *Health History and Emergency Care Plan*. These forms must be filled out, signed, and turned in to the teachers or director on your child's first day of preschool attendance. All forms must be updated as necessary.
- 2) Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone other than those adults listed on the *Child Release Form* or "Emergency Contacts" section of the *Health History and Emergency Care Plan* without prior written approval from the child's parent or guardian.
- 3) Should the pick-up person be new, a valid picture ID (i.e. driver's license) must be shown for the child to be released. This will be cross-referenced with the information on the *Child Release Form* and/or "Emergency Contacts" section of the *Health History and Emergency Care Plan* in order to ensure that this person is authorized to pick up your child.
- 4) Parent/guardian permission must be obtained in writing before all authorized pick-ups.

e. Child Custody Situations

In the event that a non-custodial parent (a parent without custody) arrives to pick up a child, Natural Start Preschool must follow all legal guidelines for child custody situations. Unless a copy of a court order is on file granting permission for the child to be released to their care, it is our policy to NOT release the child to the non-custodial parent. If a non-custodial parent arrives to pick up a child without advanced clearance and written notification from the custodial parent, release of the child will be denied, even if a court order is on file with the preschool.

SAFETY AND SUPERVISION PROCEDURES

1. INSURANCE

Natural Start Preschool maintains major liability insurance covering all scheduled staff-supervised activities. Children are covered by this insurance when they are participating in activities conducted through Natural Start Preschool. Both before and after preschool hours, while the South Bellevue Community Center maintains property liability, it is the responsibility of the parents/caregivers to ensure their child's safety before and after regularly scheduled preschool hours.

2. GENERAL SAFETY AND SUPERVISION PROCEDURES

The following safety and supervision procedures will be implemented at all times during normal operating hours for Natural Start Preschool at the South Bellevue Community Center:

- a. Natural Start Preschool students will be supervised at all times by responsible adults while indoors and outdoors at the South Bellevue Community Center and Eastgate Park during normal preschool hours.
- b. The supervising adults will be Natural Start Preschool teachers, staff, and/or other adults affiliated with Natural Start Preschool (such as South Bellevue Community Center Staff).
- c. All Natural Start Preschool teachers, staff, volunteers, and other adults working directly with students are required to pass a background check.
- d. To allow optimal supervision and individualized attention, teacher-to-student ratios average 1:6 for the Junior Explorers class and 1:7 for the Explorers class.
- e. Students will never be left alone or allowed to separate from the group without an adult for any reason.
- f. Natural Start Preschool teachers, staff, and/or classroom volunteers will accompany students to and from all preschool-related activities at all times. A place for regrouping after activity time will be identified ahead of time and communicated to all Natural Start Preschool students, teachers, staff, and classroom volunteers.
- g. Natural Start Preschool teachers and/or staff will carry cell phones with them at all times during normal preschool hours, including while groups are away from the classroom.
- h. Natural Start Preschool teachers and/or staff accompanying students away from the classrooms will have emergency contact information with them at all times during normal preschool hours, including students' and parents' names, telephone numbers, local emergency telephone numbers, and emergency contact information for students, parents, teachers and staff.
- i. Teachers and/or staff members will also have an accurate list of students in attendance each day, including while students are away from the classrooms.
- j. A designated preschool teacher and/or staff person will have the responsibility of carrying a first aid kit and other needed supplies while students are away from the classrooms, including emergency medications, any medications required by individual preschool students, and a list of potential allergy/medical concerns for each student.
- k. Natural Start Preschool will have fully stocked first aid kits and other emergency supplies, both in the classrooms and with the preschool staff when the class meets in an alternate location, including outdoors. First aid kits will be restocked following each incident, and contents will be reviewed and updated regularly.
- l. All Natural Start Preschool teachers and staff will stay current with First Aid and CPR training and certification.
- m. Enough staff, including backup personnel, will be in place so that a teacher can accompany a student to the hospital and remain with the student until the parent or caregiver arrives.
- n. Natural Start Preschool teachers and staff will have information with them at all times on the closest emergency medical/dental care facilities, including location, hours, and two routes to the facility (in case one is not accessible).

3. RESTROOM BREAKS

Since the classrooms at the South Bellevue Community Center are not equipped with restrooms, a preschool teacher or staff person will always accompany students to and from the restroom. All individual and group restroom breaks will be supervised by a preschool teacher or staff member. All personnel working directly with NSP students are required to pass a background check.

During normally scheduled restroom breaks, a preschool teacher or staff person will take students to the restroom individually or in small groups. For safety reasons, children will be instructed to leave the stall door unlocked while they use the restroom. The supervising adult will wait by the sink area until the children are done using the restroom and will then supervise their handwashing. If a student needs assistance in the restroom stall, the supervising adult may enter to help but must leave the stall door open. The supervising adult will accompany the students back to the preschool classroom and then accompany the next group of students to the restroom.

Should one of the students need an additional trip to the restroom, they will be taken to the restroom by either a preschool teacher or staff member. The group restroom procedures outlined above will apply to individual restroom breaks as well.

4. FIELD TRIPS

The following safety and supervision procedures will be implemented at all times for all field trips:

- a. Parents are required to accompany their children on all field trips. During field trips, adult supervision of all children at all times is essential. Children will never be left alone or sent ahead of the group for any reason.
- b. All sites for proposed field trips will be visited by a preschool staff member prior to scheduling the field trip for students.
- c. Parents are required to transport their children to and from the field trip sites. Parents will be asked to stay and participate in the field trips. There may be some field trips in which we will recommend that other arrangements be made for the younger siblings of our preschool students.
- d. Safety precautions, the buddy system, positive behavioral expectations, and emergency procedures with children and adults will be reviewed and rehearsed as necessary before each field trip.
- e. The teachers leading the field trip will have students' and parents' names, telephone numbers, and emergency contact information with them at all times. Each teacher will also have an accurate list of students in attendance on the day of the field trip.
- f. A place for regrouping and checkpoints will be identified at each field trip site and communicated to all adult chaperones.
- g. A designated preschool staff person will have the responsibility of carrying a first aid kit and other needed supplies. Required medications, allergy concerns, and nutritional needs will be considered and discussed before the field trip begins.

HEALTH POLICY AND ILLNESS PROCEDURES

1. COVID-19 HEALTH POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Natural Start Preschool follows the Washington State Department of Health guidelines and procedures for COVID-19 illness: <https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/420611-RespVirusIllness-onepager-english.pdf>.

2. HEALTH POLICY

In any preschool setting, disease and illness can be easily spread due to the large numbers of children, the age of the children, and the number of hours they spend together on a daily basis. Even with adequate hygiene that is practiced regularly, both at home and in the classroom, the personal contact and close interactions between young children and staff are such that germs will be shared on a regular basis.

In order to ensure, as best we can, that illnesses do not spread, we ask that all parents/caregivers keep their child at home when he or she is ill. A sick child who is allowed to come to preschool will be more vulnerable to infection and may not feel well enough to actively participate in our preschool program, including daily outdoor play time. We are concerned with the well-being of all children in our care, and we ask everyone to take appropriate precautions in order to prevent the spread of germs and contagious illnesses.

In order to help minimize exposure and prevent the spread of illness, we have developed the following "Illness Procedures and Guidelines" for staff and parents/caregivers of Natural Start Preschool. We have also developed a list of "Specific Illness Procedures" that will help guide parents and caregivers in making an informed decision about whether or when to send their ill child to preschool. It is to everyone's advantage if our health policy and illness procedures be respected and adhered to at all times. This will ensure a much healthier environment for the students, families, and staff of Natural Start Preschool.

3. ILLNESS PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR PRESCHOOL STAFF

- a. Should a child become ill at preschool, a preschool staff person will move the child to a quiet, supervised area away from the other students. We will notify the parent, caregiver, or authorized emergency contact and request that necessary arrangements are made for the child to be picked up from preschool.
- b. Parents/caregivers will be contacted by the preschool and asked to pick up their child immediately if the child exhibits any of the following conditions:
 - Fever
 - Vomiting or diarrhea
 - Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
 - Head lice
 - Skin rashes/lesions
 - Constant and/or profuse nasal drainage
 - Severe or prolonged coughing
 - Any communicable or childhood disease
 - Conditions requiring one-on-one care
- c. Parents/caregivers will be notified immediately if their child has been exposed to an infectious or communicable disease. We will also sanitize the affected child's classroom.
- d. For the welfare of the other children and staff at Natural Start Preschool, we reserve the right to send a child home upon arrival if they appear to be ill.
- e. Natural Start Preschool reserves the right to determine when a child who has been sick may return to preschool.

4. ILLNESS PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

- a. Parents/caregivers are asked to inform preschool staff if their child has been **exposed** to an illness or disease. This will allow us to prepare for and be alerted to the specific symptoms of that illness or disease.
- b. Parents/caregivers are also asked to inform preschool staff within 24 hours if their child has been **diagnosed** with *any* communicable or childhood diseases (see "Communicable Diseases" below). This will allow us to inform other preschool families of possible symptoms to be aware of in their children.
- c. Parents/caregivers are asked to NOT send their child to preschool when symptoms of illness or disease are present. While we understand that it is neither practical nor realistic to expect that a child be kept at home

every time they have a runny nose, it is also impossible for preschool staff to provide one-on-one care for ill children without compromising the care of the other children. Therefore, we have carefully outlined the “Specific Illness Procedures” below to help parents decide whether or not to send their ill child to school.

5. SPECIFIC ILLNESS PROCEDURES

- a. **Fever:** A child with a fever will be excluded from care for the remainder of that day. The child’s temperature must return to normal (98.6° F) *without the use of fever-reducing medication* for at least 24 hours before coming back to preschool.
- b. **Vomiting and Diarrhea:** Vomiting and diarrhea illnesses are often quite contagious and should be managed at home. Any child who has vomiting and/or diarrhea while in our care will be sent home from preschool for the remainder of that day and the following day until they have gone 24 hours without any further occurrences.
- c. **Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye):** Any child having eye drainage or pink and itchy eyes will be immediately excluded from our program. Conjunctivitis is highly contagious. Children must be seen by a physician and treated for 24 hours prior to returning to care.
- d. **Head Lice:** Any children suspected or diagnosed with head lice will be excluded from our program until treatment is completed and all nits have been removed. We will also require parents to wash all the child’s personal belongings (blankets, coats, hats, stuffed animals, etc.) prior to returning to our program.
- e. **Constant and/or Profuse Nasal Drainage:** Any child having symptoms of an upper respiratory infection (yellow/green mucus, watery eyes, nasal congestion, etc.) will be excluded from our program at our discretion. If the child is diagnosed with an illness that requires antibiotics, the child must be treated for 24 hours before returning to preschool (Strep Throat is an exception that requires 48 hours of treatment before returning to preschool).
- f. **Severe or Prolonged Coughing:** Any child with severe or prolonged coughing will be excluded from attending our program at our discretion. A child who has difficult or rapid breathing, severe coughing with vomiting, or a high-pitched croupy or “whooping” cough will be sent home immediately.
- g. **Skin Rash/Lesions:** Any child having an undiagnosed or contagious skin rash, a lesion that is bleeding or oozing, or persistent itching or scratching of the body or scalp, will be excluded from our program until the problem is diagnosed and/or treated as necessary.

6. COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Any child having symptoms of a known communicable/childhood disease will be excluded from program participation immediately. These children should be kept at home until a doctor has determined that a) the child does not have a communicable disease, b) the child is no longer contagious, or c) the symptoms have disappeared. In the case of communicable diseases, Natural Start Preschool may request a doctor’s note indicating that the child is no longer contagious and can return to preschool. Please report any communicable or contagious diseases to our staff right away so that we may inform the other families.

Communicable diseases include, but are not limited to:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Measles | • Scarlet Fever |
| • Mumps | • Bacterial Meningitis |
| • Rubella | • Hepatitis |
| • Diphtheria | • Pneumonia |
| • Pertussis (Whooping Cough) | • Chicken Pox |
| • Strep Throat | • Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease |

MEDICATION PLAN

Medication will only be given with prior **written** consent of the child's parent/guardian and pediatrician. Any time medication needs to be administered, we will require parents or guardians to fill out a *Medication Authorization Form* (for non-allergy conditions) and/or an *Allergy Care Plan* (for emergency allergy medications). These forms must be completed and on file before the child's first day of school attendance.

1. NONPRESCRIPTION (OVER-THE-COUNTER) MEDICATIONS

Non-prescription (over-the-counter) medications may be given with **written** permission from the child's parent or guardian through the *Medication Authorization Form*. Over-the-counter medication must be in its original container, with the expiration date on the bottle, and have your child's name written on it. Medication will be administered in accordance with the instructions on the manufacturer's label, unless alternate written instructions for its use are provided by a licensed physician. Any expired or unused portion of the medication will be returned to the child's parent/guardian or disposed of according to program policy.

The following classifications of non-prescription medication can be given with written parent consent, but only at the dose, duration, and method of administration specified on the manufacturer's label:

- Anti-itching ointments/lotions
- Non-aspirin fever reducers/pain relievers
- Antihistamines

A physician's written consent is required for any non-prescription medication not listed above, or if the medication is to be taken differently than specified on the label.

2. PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS FOR NON-ALLERGY CONDITIONS

Prescription medications may only be given at preschool with a physician's **written** permission. A *Medication Authorization Form* must be on file that is signed by the child's physician. Prescription medication must be in its original container and be properly labeled with the child's name, name of the prescribing physician, date the prescription was filled, dosage, duration (start and stop dates), and expiration date of the medicine. Any expired or unused portion of the medication will be returned to the child's parent/guardian or disposed of according to program policy.

3. EMERGENCY ALLERGY MEDICATIONS

Emergency allergy medications, such as EpiPens and Benadryl, will be administered when needed. If your child requires an emergency allergy medication, it must be provided to the teachers before your child's first day of preschool, along with a completed *Allergy Care Plan* signed by both the child's parent/guardian and physician. The *Allergy Care Plan* must identify any known or suspected allergies and provide instructions for when and how the medication should be administered. Any expired or unused portion of the medication will be returned to the child's parent/guardian or disposed of according to program policy.

PLANS AND PROCEDURES FOR EMERGENCIES, INJURIES, AND ILLNESSES

1. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Natural Start Preschool will have the following procedures in place at all times in order to prepare for an emergency event:

- a. All preschool staff will stay current with First Aid and CPR training and certification.
- b. Enough staff, including backup personnel, will be in place so that a teacher can accompany a student to the hospital and remain with the student until the parent or caregiver arrives.
- c. The preschool will have fully stocked first aid kits and other emergency supplies, both in the classroom and with preschool staff when the class meets in an alternate location (e.g. gym, playground, nature trails, field trip sites, etc.). First aid kits will be restocked following each incident, and contents will be reviewed and updated regularly.
- d. Preschool staff will have information on the closest emergency medical/dental care facilities, including location, hours, and two routes to the facility (in case one is not accessible).
- e. Preschool staff will have emergency information and supplies with them at all times, including emergency contacts for students and staff, medication, first aid supplies, and cell phones.
- f. Students and staff will practice fire/evacuation drills regularly, and additionally when new students or staff join the program.
- g. Students and staff will know at least two ways to exit the building.
- h. Emergency equipment at the South Bellevue Community Center will be regularly tested, restocked, or replaced in accordance with City of Bellevue guidelines.
- i. Preschool staff will know of at least two evacuation location sites (one nearby, one farther away) and at least two ways to reach the alternate sites.
- j. Parents/caregivers will be informed of off-site evacuation locations and procedures.

2. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

The following are Natural Start Preschool's emergency procedures:

- a. Natural Start Preschool requires that all paperwork be on file on or before a child's first day of preschool attendance. In the event of an emergency, these forms will provide the preschool with important data such as parent contact information, emergency contacts, authorization for the release of a child to other adults, and health and medical histories. In addition, these forms will give Natural Start Preschool permission to seek emergency medical care should the child require such treatment.
- b. In the event of an emergency, staff members will assess the situation and, if warranted, call 9-1-1. Staff will respond as necessary until emergency help arrives.
- c. Parents/caregivers will be contacted immediately and apprised of the situation.
- d. In the event that we are unable to reach the child's parent or caregiver, we will contact the individual(s) designated as emergency contacts for the child.
- e. If the situation requires professional care, a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and remain with the child at all times until family members or authorized emergency contacts have arrived.
- f. If parents have a family emergency that will require their child to be picked up early from preschool, they may call the preschool director at any time during the school day to arrange for pick-up.
- g. In the event of a fire, earthquake, or other natural disaster, Natural Start Preschool will follow the South Bellevue Community Center's evacuation procedures by first getting all of the children and teachers out of the building and then calling 9-1-1. One teacher will contact the parents/caregivers with their cell phone, while the other teacher(s) will be responsible for providing supervision and comfort to the children.

3. INJURY PROCEDURES

Due to the active nature of our program, minor injuries, bumps, and bruises will undoubtedly occur. All preschool staff are trained in Basic First Aid and CPR. Staff members will always carry a first aid kit and will be prepared to deal with minor injuries and first aid concerns. The staff will also carry cell phones to aid in communication in the event of an emergency while on the playground or trails.

a. Minor Injury

In the event of a minor injury, the child will be treated with first aid by the preschool staff. The incident will be reported to the parent or caregiver at the end of the day, either verbally or by way of an *Accident and Injury Report Form*. The severity of the injury or incident will dictate whether or not the parent/caregiver will receive an immediate phone call.

b. Serious Injury/Accident

- 1) In the event of a serious injury or accident, staff members will assess the situation and, if warranted, call 9-1-1. Staff will respond as necessary until emergency help arrives.
- 2) Parents/caregivers will be contacted immediately and apprised of the situation.
- 3) In the event that we are unable to reach the child's parent or caregiver, we will contact the individual(s) designated as emergency contacts for the child.
- 4) If the situation requires professional care, a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and remain with the child at all times until family members or authorized emergency contacts have arrived.

AIR QUALITY AND WILDFIRE SMOKE POLICY

1. PURPOSE

Natural Start Preschool is committed to providing children with rich outdoor learning experiences while protecting their health and safety. During periods of wildfire smoke or other poor air quality events, staff will monitor conditions closely and adjust programming as needed using guidance from the Washington State Department of Health and local air quality agencies. Natural Start Preschool is an outdoor education program. Decisions regarding outdoor activities during wildfire smoke are made for the group as a whole based on this policy.

2. AIR QUALITY MONITORING

Staff will monitor air quality:

- Prior to the start of each class.
- Throughout the program day, with additional checks whenever conditions appear to change.
- Before traveling to off-site locations.

Air quality information may be obtained from one or more of the following:

- AirNow (US Environmental Protection Agency): <https://www.airnow.gov/>
- Washington Air Quality Map (WA Department of Ecology): <https://airqualitymap.ecology.wa.gov/>
- IQAir/AirVisual: <https://www.iqair.com/>
- PurpleAir (using the nearest reliable outdoor sensor): <https://map.purpleair.com/>

3. PROGRAM RESPONSE BY AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI)

AQI	Response
AQI 0–50 (Good)	• Normal outdoor programming.
AQI 51–100 (Moderate)	• Normal outdoor programming. • Staff remain attentive to children who have asthma or other respiratory conditions.
AQI 101–150 (Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups)	• Outdoor activities may be shortened or modified. • Strenuous activities such as long hikes, running games, or steep climbs will be reduced. • Staff remain attentive to children who have asthma or other respiratory conditions.
AQI 151–200 (Unhealthy)	• Outdoor learning will be moved indoors whenever possible. • Outdoor time will be limited to essential transitions or brief periods only. • Families will be notified if programming changes significantly.
AQI Above 200 (Very Unhealthy/Hazardous)	• Outdoor programming will not occur. • Classes may move indoors, be delayed, or be canceled depending on available facilities and forecasted conditions. • Families will be notified of changes as early as possible.

4. INDOOR AIR QUALITY

When activities move indoors:

- Doors and windows will remain closed whenever practical.
- HEPA air purifiers will be operated if available.
- HVAC systems will be set to recirculate indoor air when appropriate.
- Physical activity will be adjusted as needed.

5. INDIVIDUAL HEALTH NEEDS

- Families are encouraged to inform the preschool if their child has asthma, allergies, or another respiratory condition that may increase sensitivity to smoke.
- Staff will follow each child's Individual Health Care Plan or physician instructions when applicable within the scope of the program. However, due to the nature of our outdoor program and staffing ratios, we are unable to accommodate requests for individual children to remain indoors while the rest of the class participates outside. If a child needs to avoid outdoor smoke exposure beyond the program's air quality policy outlined above, families should keep their child home until conditions improve.

6. PARENT COMMUNICATION

Families will be notified whenever:

- Significant program modifications are necessary due to air quality.
- Classes relocate indoors.
- Classes are canceled because of smoke conditions.

Notifications may be sent by email or text message.

7. DECISION-MAKING

The Preschool Director or designated staff member is responsible for monitoring air quality and making operational decisions. Decisions will consider:

- Current AQI
- Forecasted conditions
- Length of expected exposure
- Age of participating children
- Individual medical needs
- Availability of suitable indoor space

When uncertainty exists, Natural Start Preschool will choose the option that provides the greatest protection for children's health.

8. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as guidance from the Washington State Department of Health or local public health agencies changes.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. GENERAL APPROACH TO PRESCHOOL BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

A very important part of the preschool experience is helping children learn how to get along in the world, enjoy being with other children, become successful members of a classroom community, and follow the direction of an adult other than their parent. Natural Start Preschool takes a caring and positive approach to behavior management and discipline, keeping in mind that the ultimate goal of discipline is to help children develop self-control and to teach them that each person is responsible for his or her own actions. Our teachers focus on the positive behaviors of the children and reinforce those behaviors as often as possible. We find that we can prevent many behavioral problems in preschool by providing direct supervision and guidance, age-appropriate activities, a daily routine with clear boundaries, and caring interactions between teachers and students.

The primary goal of Natural Start Preschool's behavior management policy is to help our students learn to be considerate and respectful toward others and toward their classroom/outdoor environment. Clear and consistent age-appropriate limits are set, and within these limits each child can learn what it is appropriate behavior. Under the guidance of our teachers, children are encouraged to solve as many of their own problems as possible by using words to handle their differences. When a teacher must intervene, age-appropriate and constructive methods of discipline are used. Physical or emotional danger will be grounds for a teacher to intervene immediately. The parents are included in this discipline process so children can see that both parents and teachers reinforce limit setting.

2. INAPPROPRIATE AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIORS

Natural Start Preschool must ensure that the play and learning environment for all children is safe, respectful, and provides a positive model of behavior to all of the children within our care. We must also ensure that inappropriate and disruptive behavior is addressed in a timely, consistent, and fair manner for the well-being of each individual child, as well as the group as a whole. Inappropriate and disruptive behavior jeopardizes the safety and well-being of our students and detracts from the full benefit of our preschool program. Examples include:

- Infliction of physical or emotional harm on other children, adults, or self.
- Disrespect toward people and materials provided in the program.
- Consistent disobedience of the rules of the classroom/outdoor areas.
- Consistent refusal to comply with a teacher's instruction or request.
- Verbal or physical threats toward other students and/or staff.
- Verbal or physical activity that diverts attention away from the group of children.
- Behavior requiring constant attention from the staff.
- Use of profane or abusive language.

3. PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING INAPPROPRIATE AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

We understand that many preschoolers may use misguided behavior because they have not yet learned what is acceptable in a preschool setting. However, at times a child's behavior may become problematic for others or be disruptive of our classroom environment. We want to assure parents that we will address such behavior immediately by following these guidelines:

1. Teachers will use age-appropriate and constructive methods of discipline, starting with a verbal intervention (which may include modeling of appropriate words and/or actions), possible redirection to a more constructive activity, and/or removing a child from the situation if necessary. If a child exhibits behavior that is violent, dangerous, or abusive toward others, the parent/caregiver will be called and asked to pick up their child immediately.
2. Behavioral issues and concerns are communicated to parents by way of a brief meeting at dismissal time, or via email if parents are not present for pick-up, on the day the behavior occurred. Touching base in this manner will allow the child to be a part of the discussion and solution. Parents are asked to further address the issue with their child at home.

3. If the disruptive behavior persists, or if there seems to be a consistent problem area that needs to be addressed, the classroom Lead Teacher will keep a Behavior Log for two weeks in order to try and identify any particular situations or settings that may be triggering the child's behaviors.
4. Parents will be asked to meet with the child's Lead Teacher and Preschool Director within one week after the Behavior Log has been completed. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss and implement a plan of action for resolving the problematic behavior.
5. This plan of action *may* include a referral for outside professional services and/or assessments (e.g. pediatrician or behavioral specialist). If so, parents must confirm with preschool staff, within one week of the parent-teacher conference, that an appointment with the professional has been made.
6. If the behavioral issues are significant, parents may be asked – during the timeframe in which we are awaiting the appointment or assessment with an outside professional – to either: a) not send their child to preschool, or b) have an adult caregiver or aide stay with their child during preschool hours in order to assist the child with behavior regulation.
7. Every effort will be made to work with the child and their family in resolving problematic behaviors. However, in the rare instances that these problematic behaviors continue even after all possible corrective measures have been implemented, it may be determined that Natural Start Preschool is not a good fit for that child. For the best interests of the child, the preschool program, and the other students, parents may be asked to remove their child from the program.

4. TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT

Termination of a child's enrollment may become necessary if any of the following conditions exist:

- The program cannot meet the child's needs and/or is not a good fit for the child.
- Frequently disruptive behavior by the child requires the teachers' attention for a disproportionate amount of time, thereby jeopardizing the care of other students in the program.
- The child's behavior is adversely affecting the classroom setting and routines.
- The child's behavior endangers the well-being of other students, preschool staff, and/or the child engaging in the behavior.
- Parents/guardians do not cooperate with the program's efforts to resolve differences and/or to meet the child's needs through parent-teacher meetings or conferences.
- Parents/guardians are not able or willing to follow through on the corrective action agreed upon at any meeting or conference, within the timeframe provided by the preschool staff.

Natural Start Preschool reserves the right to terminate a child's enrollment at any time if any of the above factors are present. Termination of enrollment is determined by the preschool Director and Lead Teacher and can be made effective immediately.

MANDATED REPORTING

Natural Start Preschool is obligated by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation to Child Protective Services or to a local law enforcement agency immediately. (WAC-388-150-480: "When any licensed or certified childcare provider or their employees has reasonable cause to believe that a child [...] has suffered abuse or neglect, he or she shall report such incident or cause a report to be made, to the proper law enforcement agency or to the department as provided in RCW 26.44.040.")

NATURAL START PRESCHOOL STAFF

The goal of Natural Start Preschool's teachers and staff is to create a warm, nurturing learning environment that offers young children daily opportunities to explore nature and provides them with a unique, hands-on learning program designed to build a solid foundation for future school experiences. Our teachers are trained in early childhood education, and all our preschool staff are certified in First Aid and CPR and have passed a Background Check. In addition, our preschool director is a licensed Naturopathic Physician who brings to the classroom many years of experience in working with young children. Our low teacher-to-student ratios create an environment that allows for individualized attention and provides fun, safe adventures for all our students.

Stephanie Hoener, N.D.

Preschool Director

Co-Founder

Assistant Teacher

Stephanie is a Naturopathic Physician specializing in pediatrics and family medicine. She graduated from Seattle's Bastyr University in 1998 and has spent the past 25+ years working with children and their families. As one of the co-founders of Natural Start Preschool, Stephanie is passionate about fostering young children's learning and development through age-appropriate curriculum, outdoor exploration and play, and daily interactions with the natural world. She considers it an immense privilege to be able to experience each child's innate sense of wonder and curiosity come alive as they explore the forests and meadow surrounding our preschool, learn about insects and animals, plant seeds in the garden, and discover the other natural habitats of our preschool home. Stephanie lives in Bellevue (where she also grew up!) and is an avid hiker, gardener, and birdwatcher. She has a college-aged son with whom she loves traveling, going for runs, and sharing a variety of outdoor adventures. In her spare time, she also enjoys reading, cooking healthy meals, spending time with family and friends, and going on long nature walks.

Other Classroom Personnel

Please consult our website for a current listing of our teaching staff. Natural Start Preschool's lead teachers are trained and certified in Early Childhood Education. Besides our regular lead teachers and assistant teachers, we may occasionally enlist the aid of a substitute teacher. In addition, parent and student volunteers may also be present in the classroom at various times. All classroom personnel must pass a Background Check.



Thank you for taking the time to read through our Parent Handbook. We hope that the information provided has been helpful in answering your questions and familiarizing you more with our program, philosophy, and policies. If you are the parent/caregiver of a prospective student, we hope this information proves helpful in determining whether our program will provide you with what you are looking for in a preschool. If you have any further questions or would like to schedule a preschool tour, please email our director at NSPdirector@outlook.com.