



Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center, Inc.

4400 Beck Lane, Ringwood, IL 60072

Phone-815-653-0240 Fax-815-653-0390

Website www.NaturesScholars.com

Co-Owner/Administrator Renee McCauley

[Email-Renee@NaturesScholars.com](mailto:Renee@NaturesScholars.com)

Co-Owner/Director Mary Flugler

[Email-Mary@NaturesScholars.com](mailto:Mary@NaturesScholars.com)

Hours of Operation Monday – Friday 6:00a.m.-6:00p.m.

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Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center, Inc.-Mission Statement



Welcome to Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center

Nature's Scholars is a quality learning center based around our natural world. Our hope and goal is that the children in our care grow up with us learning an eco-friendly way of living. A love of the earth they will take with them in life as they become young adults. We strive to guide and help to develop them into a "whole mini individual". Teaching children not only the knowledge to enter into the world academically but socially, emotionally & physically. Seeing children gain self-confidence and the ability to be self-sufficient is important to us. We base our day in a way that teaches manners, eco-friendly daily practices and the development of all 5 of their senses using nature as our base. Basically, nurturing through nature. Using our natural world to teach, explore and grow through play.

Children will absorb the many different aspects we offer in a comfortable relaxed atmosphere. That's why our environment is designed to make you feel at home. Beyond the environment is our educated and experienced staff. The ones who work hand in hand with the children and families of Nature's Scholars. Our vision is shared throughout. Everyone brings something special to our program. Staff who truly care, love and nurture the individual in every child.

We would love for you to join in the fun! Come learn, explore and grow with us as we take this journey together.

Miss Mary & Miss Renee

Co-owners of Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center, Inc.

Purpose and Goals

What ages do you care for at Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center, Inc.?

Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center Inc. is dedicated to providing quality child care and teach lifelong valuable practices to children between the ages of 6 weeks and 12 years old.

What are the goals of the program?

Nature's Scholars has several goals that focus on bringing out the best in children in many ways:

- ☑ Children need to feel good about themselves in order to build self-confidence, self-regulation and the ability to enter into the school system as a well-balanced individual. Teaching children life skills such as being, respectful, caring, responsible, patient, helpful, healthy and possessing basic manners is what is important to us all while meeting the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards. Our professionals, support this learning through positive play experiences, careful observation and encouraging guidance. Putting children in charge of their learning experience and actions is what keeps them engaged in learning new topics and to be the best they can be.
- ☑ Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center was designed to provide a comfortable "home-like" atmosphere. Using nature as our guide, calming colors, textures and lighting was all designed around the comfort of the children. Our professionals strive to provide an atmosphere that says, "Come join us". Every attempt is made to make the families feel welcome and secure, like part of a family, the Nature's Scholars family. Children and family are warmly greeted, respected as individuals, and most of all ... loved. We especially hope to create an atmosphere where warm relationships exist now and beyond, between the children, teachers and their families.
- ☑ An interacting environment is very important to us at Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center. Learning is not an isolated affair, but transpires between individuals and their environment. Nature's Scholars provides an enriching environment for children to express themselves to peers and adults. We create a community of learners among all classrooms and ages. The children will be given opportunities to create, explore and learn in a way that inspires them. We believe that children learn skills and concepts when they are developmentally ready and will indicate this readiness by participating actively. Our educational activities are designed to help children learn about themselves, those around them, and their world. Outdoor experiences will give maximum opportunities in order for all five (5) of the senses to be developed.

Is this center licensed or accredited by any agencies? (After opening in May 2014)

Yes, Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center Inc. will be licensed by and follows regulations set by: 1) *Illinois Department of Children and Family Services*; 2) *McHenry County Department of Health*, and 3) *Office of the State Fire Marshal* and local fire codes.

Employees' educational backgrounds vary, but as a whole meet or exceed the degree of certifications required by the above organizations.

Nature's Scholars is a member of the Environmental Education Association of Illinois.

Is information about me or my child confidential with Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center Inc.?

Release of child's and/or families' personal information will not be allowed unless the center has written permission from the child's parent(s) or legal guardian.

If a child has any health or medical conditions, information or procedures pertaining to that child will be provided to all professionals that will be interacting with your child. Proper training will be provided to those individuals by the parent or legal guardian of the child. This information will also be in writing, posted in each classrooms specified area. It will remain out of plain view, but available in case of review or substitute professionals are in place.

All employees of Nature's Scholars are Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect and are required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Daily Schedules

How will an average day look like for my 2-5 year old child?

An important teaching strategy is to have a daily schedule. To provide a sense of consistency and security, a daily routine is followed in each of the classrooms. Activities and timing will vary based on the age and skill level of those children in a particular classroom as well as the children's daily needs. Schedules may be modified a bit to make best use of the daily weather forecast.

6:00am-8:30am - As the children arrive at the center, they are able to choose to participate in a variety of activities and move freely among them. Activities will be available such as, but not limited to, puzzles, small motor skills, coloring, reading/writing/listening centers, science center and more.

7:00am-7:30 Breakfast - For those children who are interested, a light breakfast will be offered. Items such as but not limited to bagels, cereal & milk, fruit, yogurt or granola will be provided as per the daily menu posted.

7:30am-8:30am-As individual group sizes increase, children will then proceed to their assigned classrooms as needed per DCFS teacher/child ratios.

8:30am-9:00am-This time will be used for morning greetings, attendance, story time, calendar, and daily planning with the class. Children will also use this time to prepare for snack, use the restroom and wash hands before seated at the table. For those enrolled in our "Little Scholars" program 8:30am is the drop off time as they join in on the full day attendance classrooms.

9:00am-9:30am -Morning Snack- Everyone gathers at the table/s to enjoy conversation and a healthy snack that consists of 2 of the following; fruit/vegetable, grain, protein or dairy products.

9:30am-11:30am-Morning Activities –Nature's Scholars believes that children learn best through play and their experiences. Therefore, an Emergent Curriculum will be utilized. This time will be used to explore the interest of the children. With a project approach, classrooms will be actively exploring topics of interest and investigations throughout their morning. Use of books, "real life" nature, art, dramatic play, sensory items, music, math, personal experiences and some technology will be used to investigate the topic. These topics will incorporate developmentally appropriate practices and the Early Learning and Development Standards. Topics will be continually changing to meet the children's interests with guidance or sparks of interests from their teachers. Opportunities for children to move freely among these areas and maintain an acceptable number of children for optimal educational experiences and safety. "Little Scholars" pick up time is 11:30am

11:30am-12:00noon- This time will be used to gather and review our morning activities, participate in "show & tell" and prepare for lunch (set tables, put out name cards, use restroom and wash hands).

12:00noon-12:45pm-Lunch-A nutritious meal will be served family style. Everyone, including teachers, are encouraged to engage in casual conversation during their meal while practicing everyday table manners. Meals are prepared fresh at the center, posted and follow all regulations put forth by DCFS and the MCDH.

12:45pm-2:45pm- Rest is a healthy habit we encourage at Nature's Scholars. Nap/rest time will occur at this time. A cot and sheet will be provided for your child along with a relaxing atmosphere and soothing music.

2:45pm-3:00pm-Children organize and put away sleep items, use restroom and wash hands to prepare for afternoon snack.

3:00pm-3:30pm-Afternoon Snack- - Everyone joins at the table/s to enjoy conversation and a healthy snack that consists of 2 of the following; fruit/vegetable, grain, protein or dairy products.

3:30pm-5:30pm- Activities from the morning may be re-engaged as well as learning centers and free choice of available activities as children are being picked up. Majority of this time will be spent outside (weather permitting)

5:30pm-6:00pm-Finalize all projects and activities and prepare classrooms for morning. Quiet areas will remain open until 5:50 which then the last few remaining children will gather with their items for departure.

***Outdoor time**-The majority of outdoor time will be from 9:30am-11:30am and 3:30pm-5:30pm (weather permitting, *see weather guideline section of the handbook for more details*) Nature's Scholars encourages the use of outdoors as much as possible in a day. Lessons, activities and centers that can be done inside can almost always be accomplished outside.

"Stress reduction, greater physical health, a deeper sense of spirit, more creativity, a sense of play, even a safer life—these are the rewards that await a family when it invites more nature into children's lives".

— Richard Louv

Last Child in the Woods

What does a typical daily schedule look like for my infant or toddler?

As the parent of a young child, you know as well as we do that each child is an individual with his/her own temperament, schedule, and preferred way of doing things. With this in mind, we structure the Infant/Toddler room a little differently than the rest of the school. There is ample opportunity for learning and stimulus, but only at the appropriate time and level for your child. We understand that one of the most important thing for your little one to receive at this age is a stable, positive, loving and caring relationship.

To assist in providing a sense of loving stability for your infant, we would like you and your child to join us in the classroom for an extended visit before his/her first day. This 'getting acquainted' visit usually lasts anywhere from ½ hour to 2 hours and several things happen during this time. First of all, we learn about your child - how they usually fall asleep, how they take a bottle, what to do when he/she is fussy, etc. In doing this, we can provide a smoother transition to Nature's Scholars because your little one is receiving some of the 'comforts of home' as we use similar ways to care for your child. Secondly, we want you to get to know the teachers who will be caring for your child; our hope is that the parent-teacher relationship is one in which you feel comfortable sharing your child's needs and experiences.

Since feeding is also very important and individual at this stage, it will be discussed in more detail in the *Meals and Nutrition* section of this handbook.

What kind of schedule can I expect for my school age child?

All school age children follow the schedule listed for 2-5 year olds. Of course when bus times need to be met, children will transition to/from their primary school schedule. When children's primary school is closed for prearranged days off, your child may remain at Nature's Scholars for the day and are encouraged to engage in the age appropriate activities planned for the day. Summer campers will follow the full day schedule, except for special activity days where schedules may be slightly adjusted. All meals will be provided by the center on full day attendance days.

See special tuition rates for full day attendance/holidays and summer camp.

Meals and Nutrition

How is bottle feeding handled?

Caregivers at Nature's Scholars strive for feeding time to be similar to their feeding schedule and habits at home. Ensuring the safety and well-being of each child is also very important. All bottles must be prepped at home and brought into school each day. Any refrigerated bottles not used by the end of the day must be taken home. Bottles are heated using hot water; microwaves are not used. The time that a bottle is prepared and warmed will be noted and discarded after one (1) hour. If a child does not finish a bottle within that hour, remaining liquids will be discarded. Please be sure to supply us with at least one (1) more bottle that you think your child will need, in case of child's extra needs, spillage, child at center later than anticipated, etc.

We ask that bottles be prepped at home in the following ways:

Breast Milk - brought in bottles or bottle liner bags in the portions that you desire them to be used.

All breast milk will be stored in the refrigerator or freezer in a sealed container correctly labeled and will be properly heated at feeding time.

Formula - Ready-made - pre-measured bottles need to be filled by the parent at home.

These types of bottles will be stored in the refrigerator and will be heated at feeding time.

Powder - bottles must come prepared with the water pre-measured in it; pre-measured amounts of powdered formula need to be packed separately. The bottles will be prepared by staff at the school, mixing the powder with the pre-measured water and heating if desired.

What about solid food for my baby?

Once your infant begins to eat infant cereal, we ask that you bring in a box of cereal to keep on hand at the center, with instructions as to how you would like us to prepare it.

Once your infant begins eating other solid foods, (baby food), parents need to supply the center with the baby food that you want us to feed to your child. A week's supply or more of pre-packaged store-bought baby foods can be kept here at school; you will be notified when you need to bring more. If you prefer to supply "homemade" foods for your child, ask to fill out an additional dietary release form and we would be happy to accommodate this.

What about food for my baby or toddler?

The transition to table food is very different for every child. Once your child has started eating some table food or finger foods at home, let us know. We can then work together to feed your child appropriate items from our menu, supplementing with baby food (that we ask that you continue to bring in from home).



How are meals handled for my child while at Nature's Scholars?

Meal schedule is as follows:

7:00am-7:30am-Breakfast

9:00am-Morning snack

12:00noon-Lunch

3:00pm-Afternoon snack

All meals are prepared by a staff member who is certified in Food Service & Sanitation. A minimum of 2 staff at the center are certified and have current certificates posted. All meals are prepared by guidelines provided by DCFS

and MCDH. All equipment is maintained and inspected as per State Fire Marshal and MCDH. Nature's Scholars teaches children important skills. Table manners as well as appropriate social skills are practiced during all meal times. Children are asked to taste all items on their plate before asking for seconds of something. Most often picky eaters see other children enjoying foods which they may have never tried or liked and eventually acquire a more advanced taste for food served. Children will be taught to only ask or take what they will eat to avoid waste. Eco-friendly "real" plates, utensils and napkins will be used in place of disposable items when applicable. No food is to be brought into the center from home for your child to consume unless a "*Special Diet Authorization Form*" is completed with the director. Meals are provided to ensure health and nutrition for your child. Young children sometimes do not understand why someone is consuming something else than what is offered to them. To avoid this situation, all food items need to be finished before your child joins us.

What if my child has allergies or is on a special diet?

At the time of your child's enrollment, please inform us of any known allergies that your child may have, which should be listed on your child's physical form. We are often able to omit a certain ingredient or make appropriate substitutions depending on your child's needs. Food allergies/special diet notifications are posted in the classrooms so that all staff are aware of known allergies/diets. If your child follows a special diet for personal or religious reasons, please inform us. These conditions must be discussed with the director and a "*Special Diet Authorization Form*" must be completed. Again, we will make every effort to accommodate your requests, or may ask you to assist us in this effort by supplying food substitutions as needed.

How are holidays or birthdays celebrated at Nature's Scholars?

There are special days, such as holiday parties, birthdays, etc. where your child can share a treat or favorite snack with their friends. According to McHenry County Department of Health, all foods brought from home MUST be store bought and wrapped in the original packaging; no homemade treats will be accepted. If simple preparation is necessary, our kitchen staff will be happy to accommodate. We strongly discourage treat bags and candy being brought in for birthdays or special occasions. If invitations are to be passed out for a party, please pass on to the classroom teacher to distribute. This is to insure that no hard feelings are had if the invitations are not for the whole class.

Guidance and Discipline

What are the policies regarding guidance and discipline?

The goal of guidance and discipline is to help children acquire self-control and to help them develop appropriate ways to express their feelings.

There are three basic guidelines that Nature's Scholars follows:

1. Children need to care for others.
2. Children need to care for themselves.
3. Children need to care for their surroundings and property.

There are five life skills that we encourage at Nature's Scholars:

1. Be Respectful
2. Be Responsible
3. Be Helpful
4. Be Careful
5. Be Patient

The key to effective guidance is setting clearly defined expectations, allowing children to make choices, and responding consistently to all situations. We also reduce the occurrence of problem situations through good program planning and room arrangement, and by keeping children engaged meaningfully. On occasion, Nature's Scholars may have professional services called in to observe, evaluate and advise us on our program and practices along with other programs of interest conducted with the classrooms.

We focus on having children practice working out their problems verbally rather than physically; you will often hear us tell children to "use their words".

When it is necessary to address discipline situations the following techniques will be used:

1. The use of positive statements to remind children of appropriate behavior, (i.e. "remember to use your walking feet," rather than "stop running.")
2. Redirection is another strategy, in which the child's attention or behavior is directed towards a more desirable alternative than the one the child is currently focusing on.
3. Consequences that follow logically from the unacceptable behavior, (i.e. asking a child to pick up the crayons he threw on the floor before joining their friends in the kitchen play area.)
4. A short time-out, two (2) to five (5) minutes, away from the group. This time gives the child some quiet time to think about ways to interact appropriately when he joins the group again. Guidelines for time-outs are no more than 1 minute per years of age, (i.e. 3 min. for a 3 year old for children 2 years and up.)
5. If a time-out is ineffective, and the child continues to display inappropriate behaviors, the child will be escorted to the director's office. Sometimes a child needs to be away from the stimulation of the classroom, given time to calm down and talked with quietly.
6. Our last resort is calling a parent. Sometimes a parent's insight enables us to understand why a child is having problems and together we can work to resolve the difficulties.

As a parent, what is my role in guidance and discipline?

Children learn what they live. Being aware of your own actions is the best policy to follow. Nature's Scholars encourages open communication with parents so we can help all children act appropriately and become good problem solvers. Staff will talk with parents and/or write notes home regarding their child's behavior. Since consistency is the key to effective guidance, we may discuss how parents handle situations at home in addition to how certain behaviors are addressed at the center. We may need to implement a plan that is consistent between school and home to be most effective.

What if inappropriate behaviors persist?

A recorded log of behavior will be set up between the director and classroom teacher/s to record and track any patterns of inappropriate behaviors or actions. The director will always set up times to discuss this type of situation with the parent(s) in advance and plans will be made to remediate the situation before disenrollment occurs. If necessary, referrals for professional guidance outside of the school setting will be made to help the child and the parent(s). Nature's Scholars reserves the right to terminate enrollment of a child if the child consistently displays inappropriate behavior that is harmful to himself or others, or, behavior that makes it problematic to provide an environment that facilitates the positive development of the other children in the class.



Attendance

What hours are you open?

Nature's Scholars is open from 6:00am - 6:00pm Monday through Friday. You may utilize this time as needed. However, we do not recommend that a child's day at the center exceeds more than ten (10) hours in a day. We have an open door policy, however, please direct your attention to our daily schedule. If you expect the most out of our program we recommend that children arrive no later than 8:30/9:00am. Also, we request no drop offs during designated nap time hours unless arranged with the director. If arrival will be after 9:00am then a phone call would be appreciated so your child will be included in the class lunch count and teachers can plan for their arrival.

What if I am late picking up my child?

The center closes nightly at 6:00pm. If you expect to be arriving after 6:00pm we would appreciate a call so we can reassure your child when your expected arrival will be. We charge \$1.00 per minute for the first 15 minutes after 6:00pm, which will be added to your account. After the first 15 minutes the rate increases to \$2.00 per minute. (i.e. 6:00pm-6:22pm would result in a \$29.00 late fee). Please make sure that alternate people that pick up your child are aware of this policy. Your account will be charged no matter who the expected late arrival person is. Excessive lateness may result in your child's disenrollment from the center.

After 7:00pm the director and staff members will work under the supervision of The Department of Children and Family Services and/or the local Police Department. After 7:00pm the center staff will post a notice on the door of Nature's Scholars indicating where you may obtain information about your child.

What is the arrival procedure?

Each child must be logged/signed in at the beginning of the day and then escorted to his or her classroom. Please do not allow your child to walk to his or her room alone. Make sure the teacher acknowledges the arrival of your child in the classroom. Any important information concerning the child may be communicated at this time.

What are your departure policies?

When picking up your child, it is necessary for the supervising teacher to be aware of his or her departure and that they are logged/signed out. If the children are playing out in the playground area, we ask that you walk through the building for departure. Again, please make sure a teacher acknowledges your child leaving with you.

Children are not allowed to leave with anyone other than those people listed as "Permit to Pick Up" on your *Admittance* form. If someone comes to pick up your child and the staff does not recognize them, we will ask to see photo identification. If you need to amend the "Permit to Pick Up" form for your child, please ask for another form. If you are not sure whether an individual is on the list to pick up your child for a particular day, please bring in a written note with the parent's or guardian's signature that morning; a phone call or fax will not suffice. In addition, siblings may not retrieve their younger brother/sister without an adult, as staff needs to be assured that your child is leaving only with authorized persons. You are responsible for your child once the teacher acknowledged you at the end of the day. Children are never to be left unattended at any time in the center.

What happens if my child is absent?

If your child will not be attending on a regularly scheduled day, please inform us as soon as you can. Preferably by 9:00 am. It is easier for us to plan the day's activities when we know who will or will not be here; it is also beneficial for us to know of any illnesses as soon as possible.

If your child will be absent for an extended period of time, please notify the director/administrator.

What holidays are you closed?

The center will be open Monday through Friday every week of the year, with the exception of the following days:

New Year's Eve - *2 weekdays will be taken as holidays;

New Year's Day - *this may vary slightly each year as the holidays may fall on weekends

Memorial Day

Independence Day - If holiday falls on a weekend it will be taken on a Friday or Monday.

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Day

Friday after Thanksgiving

Christmas Eve - *2 weekdays will be taken as holidays;

Christmas Day - *this may vary slightly each year as the holidays may fall on weekends

Are there any other days you are closed?

To facilitate continuing education for our teachers, Nature's Scholars may close one day during the year, allowing staff to attend a conference or workshop related to early childhood education. We may take this day off as our tenth holiday, therefore, regular tuition is expected for the week. Be assured that we will give you as much advance notice as possible for your planning purposes.

In case of inclement weather during the winter, be assured that staff at Nature's Scholars make every effort possible to get the center open on time. At the discretion of the director/administrator, the center may have to be closed due to dangerous conditions. If this were to occur before 6:00am the voicemail message will indicate so along with a posting on our Facebook page. If any of the following conditions occur during the school day, a phone call will be made indicating that we will need to close. Those conditions could be, but are not limited to... ice, snowfall, loss of power for an extended amount of time, loss of water or insufficient quality and more. Full payment is expected for the weeks containing these holidays or days off. This policy applies whether your child attend full or part time. This policy is in place because we give our teachers the benefit of paid holidays and shouldn't be penalized due to celebrations or acts of nature.



Enrollment

What else do I need to start my child at Nature's Scholars?

Prior to the 1st day of attendance

The following forms must be completed and on file at Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center, Inc.:

1. *Admittance Form* - both sides completed
2. *Consent Forms* - completed and signed
3. Checklist for Enrollment form, with signed Parent Handbook Agreement
4. *Transportation Release Form*
5. Illinois Department of Public Health *Child Health Examination* form - both sides completed, signed by a physician; dated within six (6) months - (*original form - not copied or faxed*)
6. Illinois Department of Public Health *Childhood Lead Risk Assessment Questionnaire* - with a signature from the physician's office
7. Back page receipt from DCFS's *Summary of Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers* pamphlet
8. Court orders, if necessary
9. A certified copy of child's birth certificate or equivalent documentation.

The following payments need to be made to Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center Inc. prior to the 1st day of attendance:

10. A onetime non-refundable \$50 registration fee per child, \$25 registration for additional children in same family.
11. Payment for one (1) week of child care (to be held as deposit on account)

How do I withdraw my child from the center?

You are not enrolling your child for any length of time. Once you have decided to withdraw your child, we require at least a two (2) week notice in writing as you will be charged a minimum of two (2) weeks once you have informed us of your child's last day.



Payment

What fees and costs are due to enroll my child?

A onetime non-refundable registration fee of \$50 per child, \$25 registration for additional children in same family will be required before a space will be held. One week's payment is also due prior to the child's 1st day of attendance. Please see the enclosed tuition chart regarding current rates for child care.

What do I need to know about payment?

- ✓ All payments are due before your child is dropped off, the first day of the week your child is in attendance.
- ✓ Child care payments can be made on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis, as long as they are received prior to service. (i.e. if your child attends Tuesdays and Thursdays, payment is due no later than Tuesday morning each week.) Late payments will not be tolerated and subject to late fees.
- ✓ You are required to pay for the days your child is enrolled, not for the actual days in attendance.
- ✓ Payment is expected in full for each week of the year with one exception. Each child is eligible for one week of vacation per year; this vacation week is permitted without payment. This week may not be used until a full three (3) months of enrollment has been reached. This vacation is for the same number of days that the child is enrolled for each week. The year is not based on a calendar year, but rather from your child's enrollment date year to year. If your child will be away for other times during the year, please inform us, but understand that payment is expected.
- ✓ You will be charged the one day rate if your child attends additional days other than their regular schedule. Prior arrangements must be made with the director/administrator.
- ✓ Payments may be made by pre-arranged direct deposit or credit card directly through our website: www.NaturesScholars.com
- ✓ If choosing to pay by check or money order, please place in the box mounted in the reception area. If you are making a payment by cash be sure to hand it to the director/assistant director or administrator and a receipt will be provided by the end of the day.
- ✓ There will be a \$35.00 charge for any check returned to the center by the bank for any reason.
- ✓ Once two (2) checks have been returned to the center by the bank for non-payment, all future child care payments will be expected in cash, credit card or money order.
- ✓ Any bill that becomes more than two (2) weeks past due without a payment schedule being arranged with the director/administrator will result in dismissal of the child/children. A \$25.00 late fee will be charged for each week the account is overdue. If the accumulated past charges are not paid, the account will be turned over to a collection agency. The parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will also be responsible for any and all fees accrued during the collection process (i.e. legal, attorney, etc.).
- ✓ There may be a yearly rate increase, effective the week after Memorial Day. (prior notice will be given)
- ✓ A two (2) week notice is required as you will be charged a minimum of two (2) weeks once you have informed us of your child's last day.
- ✓ If you have previously withdrawn your child/children from the center you must re-enroll your child/children and pay another registration fee.
- ✓ A yearly statement of child care payments will be provided to the parent(s) of currently enrolled children for tax purposes. If weekly receipts are needed, please see the director/administrator. If your child was a past student within the year, a tax statement may be picked up at Nature's Scholars with a prior request.

- ✓ There will be a 10% discount for siblings attending. If two or more siblings attend the center, there will be a 10% discount off the oldest sibling and a 5% discount off the middle sibling. No discount is given on the youngest sibling.
- ✓ There will be no refunds.

Health and Illness

What happens if my child becomes sick while at the center?

We do our best to keep all children and staff safe while at Nature's Scholars. This includes keeping illnesses at bay. If a child starts to show symptoms or reports that they are not feeling well, we will assess their wellbeing and try to provide a quiet space/activity for the child for a short period of time. However, if a child develops a fever, is vomiting, has unexplained excessive diarrhea, or is very lethargic or is unable to actively participate in the program, we will contact the parents to pick them up as soon as possible. If a parent cannot be reached, we will proceed to contact the people listed on the child's "Permit to Pick Up" form. Note: The child must then be fever/symptom free for at least 24 hours prior to returning to school.

Under what circumstances should my child remain at home?

Your child should not come to school if any of the following exists:

- ⊗ If a child is too ill to comfortably participate in the program
- ⊗ If a child has a fever of 101 degrees or more within the last 24 hours
- ⊗ If a child has not been fever free for 24 hours
- ⊗ If a child is vomiting or has excessive diarrhea in the last 24 hours
- ⊗ If a child has a communicable disease, please contact the center immediately. (These would include conditions such as strep throat, pink eye, mumps, impetigo, etc.) The director can then inform you of when the child would be allowed to return to the school again, under the guidelines of McHenry County Department of Health.
- ⊗ If a child has been determined to have lice, they need to be "nit" free before they may return.

What happens if my child gets hurt while at Nature's Scholars?

Sometimes accidents happen and a child may get a slight cut or bump during his or her play at the center. If this happens, a staff member will administer first aid and TLC. A "Boo Who" or "Owly Report" will be completed and a copy placed in the child's cubby or backpack. (We follow DCFS guidelines in regards to staff members' CPR and First Aid certification.) If a child is injured and requires medical attention beyond basic first aid, (but the situation is not an emergency), then a staff member will administer first aid and comfort the child while another staff contacts the parent or emergency contact person. When the parent (or "Permit to Pick Up" person) arrives, he or she can decide what further treatment, if any, is needed.

What happens if my child needs emergency medical attention?

If a child requires emergency medical attention, a staff member will call 911 and the parent(s). If the emergency medical technician decides that the child should be transferred to a medical facility, a staff member can accompany the child to the treatment center or hospital until a parent or "Permit to Pick Up" contact person arrives. Usually the paramedics use the closest hospital from the center, such as Centegra Hospital-McHenry. The parents are required to cover all the medical expenses for their child. In case that the child's family is exempt from medical care, a certified practitioner of families' choice and the parents are called. The family is responsible to cover the expenses for their child's services. The family exempt from medical care should complete the exemption form at the time of enrollment with all the required information and emergency legal aspects of responsibilities. The form needs to be signed by two witnesses and notarized.

Administration of Medication

Can medication be given to my child at the center?

Yes, once we have received an original, completed *Medication Permission* form. This form is to be completed/signed by a physician and signed by a parent which applies to both prescription and over-the-counter medication.

What is the process for having medication dispensed to my child?

A *Medication Permission* form can be obtained.

Please feel free to have several forms on hand, so that you will have them when needed.

You will need to bring the original, completed form (not a copy or fax) back to Nature's Scholars accompanied by the medication with original label intact.

- The *Medication Permission Form* requires that a physician deems it absolutely necessary that a medication be dispensed while the child is in attendance at Nature's Scholars. The physician must state the name of the medication, dosage, the specific dates and times to be dispensed and additional information regarding diagnosis, side effects, and any special instructions on the form. Medication will not be administered on an 'as-needed' basis except in the case of inhalers or epinephrine dispensers.
- Prescription medication will only be administered if it is labeled with the child's name, the date, the doctor's name, and directions for administering the medication. Non-prescription medication must stay in its original container and must also be labeled with the child's name and the date.
- Please hand the medication and the completed *Medication Permission Form* to a staff member. No medication should be in a diaper bag, backpack, cubby, etc. for safety reasons.

Diapering and Clothing

What diapering supplies are needed from me?

We want to keep your child clean and dry, therefore on an average day a child is changed approximately five (5) to six (6) times while in our care. Every family or child's sensitivity prefers specific brands of diapers or wipes, for this reason, it is your responsibility to supply your child with their own diapers, ointments and wipes. These items need to be available for your child at all times. Rather than bringing in supplies daily, we have found it easier if you bring in a large package of diapers to keep on hand. Diapers, ointments and wipes will be labeled for your child's use only. To assist you with maintaining an ample supply of diapers we will leave a notice on your child's cubby when your child has 12 diapers left. If the supply decreases, you will receive a 2nd notice that your child has 6 diapers left. At this point, additional diapers must be brought in, as you will not be able to drop off your child without a minimum supply of 6 diapers. Emergency supplies will be provided by Nature's Scholars if the need arises. In this case Nature's Scholars is not responsible for any rashes or allergic reactions the child may have to the supplies.

We require at least 3 or more extra sets of clothing for messes.

We recommend that children in diapers wear a "onsie" type covering to prevent any leakage or hand placement in diaper area.

Cloth Diaper's: Nature's Scholars allows for the use of cloth diapers at our center. Parents must provide every necessary items for diapering. Soiled diapers will not be rinsed or cleaned per health department guidelines. Diapers will be immediately bagged and sent home. We require additional leak-proof coverage in addition to the cloth diaper.

Also, please remember that children need to come to the center clean and ready to join his or her friends. If your child is exceptionally wet or has had a bowel movement before arriving at school, please ask the teacher to use the changing table and supplies so that your child can be ready to learn and play!

Can my child advance to the next level classroom if they are not fully toilet trained?

Potty training can be tricky. That's is why we provide "child size" flushable toilets at our center" We, at Nature's Scholars, will do our best to assist you and your child in a positive toilet training experience. Consistency is once again a key practice along with child's interest, skills and lots of patience. Diapering facilities are located in our "Tadpole" (Infant/Toddler), "Little Sprouts" (2 year olds) and our "Explorers" (3 & 4 year olds) classrooms. We do not feel that children should be held back due to potty accidents. Therefore, as age appropriate skills develop, your child will be coached in self-help skills like cleaning and dressing themselves. If wetting or bowel movements becomes excessive or a health issue become present for your child or others, a plan of action will be discussed between the director and the parents/guardians.

What type of clothes should my child wear?

Rather than tell you how to dress your child, think about the following questions when dressing your child for his/her day at school:

- Can I launder this easily? Is this a special outfit that I do not want to have stained? - Please send your child in "play" clothes that he or she can be comfortable in and not worry about getting dirty.
- Can staff make an average of 5 to 6 diaper changes today without too much difficulty?
- Can my child use the toilet easily and independently? Or, with a minimal assistance? - This gives a child a sense of accomplishment and minimizes frustration.
- Are my child's shoes comfortable and safe? Gym shoes or rubber-soled shoes are great for just about everything. If sandals are worn, they need to fit firmly on the child's feet and have an attached heel strap. "Party" shoes are sometimes slick and may cause a child to slip or fall. (Please do not send your child to school in shoes without backs, i.e. clogs, flip-flops, etc.)

We are about nature and the outdoors, therefore we will be outside whenever possible. We suggest dressing your child in layers so they can accommodate their comfort level for the time of day as well as weather changes that may take place in a day.

Do I need to have extra clothes at the center?

YES! Clothes can get soiled in a variety of ways while at school and your child needs to have several full changes of clothes (including socks and shoes) at the center at all times in case of any accident. **All clothes should be labeled with your child's name.** Please check these extra clothes periodically to ensure they are not too small or out of weather season or sent home.

Our job is to provide an environment where your child feels safe and well-cared for. Therefore we cannot, in good conscience, leave your child in wet or soiled clothes. In the case that you have not provided a change of clothes, we will provide new clothes for your child at a cost to you. Your account will be charged as follows:

Pants/Shorts - \$8.00

Long-sleeved Shirt - \$7.00

Short-sleeved Shirt - \$6.00

Underwear or Socks - \$2.00.

For the health and safety of all concerned, soiled clothing cannot be rinsed out. Please understand that soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag to be rinsed and cleaned at home.

What type of clothing needs to be available for outdoor play?

All children will be going outside every day snow, rain or shine unless weather is extremely prohibitive. (Due to staff/child ratio requirements, children may not be kept indoors and should remain home if unable to go outside.) Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. Waterproof coat, mittens, hats, snow pants, boots, etc. are needed for cold or wet days. A swimsuit and towel needs to be brought to school on warm days for outdoor/water play. Our guideline for outdoors in the winter is 0 degrees or above with the wind chill in consideration. Our guideline for outdoors in the summer is 95 degrees or below. Children will remain in the air conditioned center if any ozone or heat indexes are issued for immediate area. Special considerations of high and low temperatures will be in place for infants, toddlers and special needs children.

Sleeping and Napping

What can my child bring for nap time?

When the going gets tough, the tough take a nap.-Tom Hodgkinson

Children can learn, concentrate and function best when they are well rested. Our day is packed with lots of activities and fresh air. Children's mind, body and spirit need to rest. That is the purpose of our naptime. Children under 15 months are provided an ASTM approved crib and sheet and children 15 months to five (5) years of age are provided a cot with sheet. Kindergarteners will be provided a rest mat. All sheets are washed minimum of once a week or as necessary. Cots/mats are sanitized weekly or as necessary. Children may bring in a small stuffed animal, travel size pillow and crib size blanket for their comfort. After five (5) days of use, your personal items must be brought home, laundered and returned the next time your child attends.

Special Days

Are children's birthdays celebrated in any way?

We encourage children to celebrate their birthdays with their friends here at school. If a child would like to bring in a store bought treat, we will all share it during snack time; candy and treat bags are strongly discouraged. Please remember that all food items brought into the school must be in its original packaging from the store. You may ask your child's teacher for the number of children in the class. If your child is having a party outside of school and would like to invite ALL of his/her classmates we will be happy to pass out invitations. However, if only some children are being invited, then please allow your child's teacher to pass out invitations to those children's parents more discreetly, so that no one feels left out.

Will my child be going on any field trips?

Nature's Scholar's will not be taking any fieldtrips with children under four (4) years of age. Occasionally, a trip may be planned with children four (4) years of age and up. Prior notification and release forms will be sent home as well as a separate fee charged to cover the expenses.

What about transporting our child?

If transportation is needed for a field trip, a bus service will be contracted by Nature's Scholars. This bus information will be listed along with an emergency contact number located on the release form. A child will not be able to attend a fieldtrip without a signed release form.

Other Frequently Asked Questions

Can my child bring toys from home?

We request that no toys be brought to school unless it is your child's nap toy or it is a "Show and Tell" item that is requested from your child's teacher. "Show and Tell" coincides with the letter/phonetic sound of the week. This information will be posted in the monthly newsletter. The center holds no responsibility for toys or other items which may get lost or broken while at the center. Please do not send any costly toys or those that hold special sentimental value.

NO noisy toys, mouth toys (i.e. whistle), "action hero" or "weapon-like" toys will be allowed. These toys will be placed in the director's office until the child goes home.

What is your policy on photographing in the center?

At Nature's Scholars we will photograph the children in active exploration. Documentation of children's adventures and discoveries are important to us. Therefore, photographs, video or cell phone pictures may be taken and displayed of the children. We have a website www.NaturesScholars.com where photographs of children may also be posted. If for any reason you request your child not be photographed, DO NOT sign the photograph release form. If any photos are to be released outside the center (i.e. newspaper or advertising) a separate release form will be supplied.

Are pets or other animals allowed at the center?

Nature's Scholars on occasion may have a pet or temporary animals on site. We want to immerse children in the subject area of study, therefore, live animals may be brought on the grounds (i.e. incubator with eggs to observe chicks hatch). Rest assured, all health & safety precautions will take place. If your child has an animal related allergy, please include this information on the health form and DO NOT sign the pet release form.

What should I know about sunscreen/insect repellent?

Any sunscreen and/or insect repellent you wish to have applied to your child needs to be supplied by you and clearly labeled with her/his name. Please send only lotion/cream or pump type products, as aerosols reduce our air quality. Applying sunscreen and insect repellent can take up valuable time. Therefore, many parents choose to supply us with a combination sunscreen/insect repellent if available.

What is your policy concerning insecticides and pest management inside or on the grounds of Nature's Scholars?

The Illinois Department of Public Health and The Department of Children and Family Services requires all childcare centers located in Illinois to have an Integrated Pest Management plan. Under this IPM plan, Nature's Scholars does our best to not use any pesticides on our property and manages pest control with only child approved or natural products. If a pesticide application is deemed to be necessary by the IPM Coordinator, parents and staff will be notified two days prior of any application by means of postings on the parent boards and all classroom entry doors. Applications will not be applied in the presence of children; toys and other items handled by children. No one would be allowed to re-enter treated area for at least two hours or as long as is stated on the product label. A copy of our IPM may be requested from the director if there are any further questions or concerns.



Court Orders

What if there are court orders effecting my child?

In cases where an enrolled child is the subject of a court order (ex. Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center, Inc. must be provided with a Certified Copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

What if there are NOT court orders, but I am in the process of getting them?

In the absence of a court order on file with Nature's Scholars Enrichment Center Inc. administration, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. Nature's Scholars cannot, without a court order, limit access of one parent by the request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself, where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, Nature's Scholars suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued.

Helen Keller

"To me a lush carpet of pine needles or spongy grass is more welcome than the most luxurious Persian rug."

Frank Lloyd Wright

Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.

Robin C. Moore and Herb H Wong -Natural Learning, Creating Environments for Rediscovering Nature's Way of Teaching

"Children have a natural affinity towards nature. Dirt, water, plants, and small animals attract and hold children's attention for hours, days, even a lifetime."

Claude Monet

The richness I achieve comes from Nature, the source of my inspiration.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"To laugh often and love much; to win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children; to earn the approbation of honest citizens and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to give of one's self; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived - this is to have succeeded."

William Wordsworth

"Let Nature be your teacher."

Rachel Carson, -A Sense of Wonder

"I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to know as to feel when introducing a young child to the natural world. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. The years of early childhood are the time to prepare the soil."