We will have our Open House on Tues. Sept 18 2012

Open House is a time we set aside to meet new faces, reacquaint ourselves with old friends, and spend a little time at the Trailhouse together before our new school year begins. We will meet at the Trailhouse at the following times.

**Morning Classes**

**Meet at 9:00 am to 10 am**
- Mon-Thurs class- **Iguanodon class**- 4&5 yrs
- Mon/ Wed class- **Hummingbird class**- 3yrs
- MWF class- **Starfish class**- 4&5 yrs

**Meet at 10:00 am to 11 am**
- Tues/ Thurs classes- **Starfish 4&5yrs or Hummingbird class**-3yrs
- Friday only **three yrs class**- **Hummingbird class**- 3 yrs
- Friday only- **Starfish or Iguanodon class**- 4&5 yrs

**Afternoon Classes**

**Meet at 11:00 am to 12 noon**
- Tues only class- **Bluejay class**- 4&5 yrs
- Thurs only class- **Bluejay class**- 4&5 yrs
- Tues/ Thurs classes- **Cardinal or Mockingbird class**- 4&5 yrs
For the first day of Class

1. Bring all paperwork - To include:
   - Medical Information and Release Form
   - Authorization for Emergency Medical Care
   - Discipline and Guidance Policy
   - Car Seat Waiver
   - Immunization records or waiver

Find on our web page: http://austintexas.gov/department/natures-way-preschool

2. Change of clothes - this includes shirt, pants (or shorts) underwear, socks and extra shoes (labeling helps!)

3. Labeled hearty snack (and lunch for a.m. students) and a water bottle.

4. Come dressed in clothes suitable for hiking. This includes closed toe shoes (no Crocs or flip flops please!)

5. Check your information for Parent Directory and newsletters.
Austin Nature & Science Center

Nature’s Way Preschool
Enrichment Program

Parent Handbook

2012-13
Nature’s Way Preschool

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Welcome to Nature's Way Preschool enrichment program

At the Austin Nature and Science Center, we provide children with the opportunity to learn more about themselves and their world through our unique enrichment program, Nature's Way Preschool. One of about twenty nature-based preschools in the United States, our program was established in the fall of 1992, and has grown since then to arrive at its present state of eleven multi day classes. With continued help and support from the Austin Parks and Recreation Department, community, parents, and a dedicated staff, the Nature's Way Preschool enrichment program continues to grow and blossom!

A quality science program develops inquiring minds and the skills with which to search for explanations. Science education is not about providing all the answers, but rather about helping children develop the means to find them on their own. Nature's Way Preschool encourages children to discover and explore the environment through a variety of hands-on science experiences. Each class day children participate in activities that develop coordination, promote self-esteem, and increase a sense of wonder and curiosity. In a warm, safe environment, children are encouraged to take initiative, to express their ideas, and to make choices. We help children become more aware of the world around them and to appreciate it as a precious resource worth protection. Through this, we hope children will develop respect for all life, most especially their own.

Nature’s Way Preschool classes meet for four hour sessions, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (ages 3-5) and 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. (ages 4-5). Participants may register for four days a week, 3 days a week, 2 days a week or 1 day a week. All classes are held in the 1880’s Ashford-McGill Trail House on the ANSC grounds. This historic building offers space for three classrooms, kitchen and bathroom facilities. Outside grounds include a fenced outdoor play area for nature exploration including a garden, a water play area, a puppetry theater, art area and more.

The Nature's Way Preschool staff includes:

- Bonnie Cook-Kassens, Program Coordinator, Nature's Way Preschool Director
- Kelly Speed, Instructor, Nature's Way Preschool
- Anjoli Fry, Instructor, Nature's Way Preschool
- Britt Luttrell, Instructor, Nature's Way Preschool
- Cedrick Davis, Floating Instructor, Nature's Way Preschool
- Margaret Russell, History, Art and Nature Education Manager
- Janice Sturrock, Supervisor, Education and Programs- ANSC
- Kathy Maddox, Supervisor, Operations and Exhibits- ANSC
Program Philosophy

We believe:

- The development of the whole child depends on appropriate physical, mental, and social nourishment supplied by the home, school, and community.
- Play, both informal and organized, is significant to intellectual growth.
- Children have a natural curiosity and desire to learn and make sense of the world.
- That learning can happen at any time.
- In respecting each child’s individuality and unique qualities.
- Children need to develop an awareness and appreciation of the world if they are to learn to respect and protect it.
- Children have the right to make choices, to express their own ideas, and to take initiative; each child should view him/herself as a unique and capable individual.
- In providing children with a warm, safe, and enriching learning environment.
- In empowering children to develop self-reliance and independence.
- That by loving and respecting children they come to love and respect themselves.
- That we should challenge children to question and to seek answers.
- That each child is entitled to a pleasant childhood and a good beginning toward a successful life.

Goals and Objectives of NWPS are:

- To teach elementary skills: observing, classifying, measuring, hypothesizing, communicating, collecting data, predicting and experimenting.
- To stimulate and reinforce children’s curiosity of nature.
- To develop knowledge and instill appreciation for our natural resources.
- To provide opportunities for children to develop self-confidence while exploring their natural surroundings.
- To provide children with opportunities to make connections with and feel a part of the natural world.
Curriculum Overview

Natures Way Preschool children take part in an active program designed to help them explore and fully experience their own environment. Instructors emphasize hands-on discovery and allow the children to experiment with a variety of ideas and materials at his/her own pace. Activities are provided in science, art, creative dramatics, language, music, body movement, and outdoor exploration. Daily activities are geared toward helping children understand themselves and their world according to their own needs, interests, and abilities.

The preschool science curriculum emphasizes natural science, environmental science, and physical science. The body of this curriculum is organized into four main sections. Each section is set up to provide basic knowledge for the children to synthesize more complex topics. It is also designed to help children begin to recognize their roles and responsibilities as members of a global society.

The curriculum begins by asking the question, ‘Who in the world am I?’ and encourages the children to become more aware of their feelings, personal care, and body composition. This section also examines other animals that share our world and the similarities and differences between us.

Once the children have a greater understanding of themselves and other living creatures, the curriculum raises the question, ‘Where in the world do we all fit in?’ The children are given opportunities to explore their own environment as well as those of the animals they have studied. They spend time learning about how animals and people work together; about creatures that live in our own back yards and about how harvesting food is important to us and our fellow creatures alike.

Upon returning from winter break, the preschoolers spend time considering, ‘What in the world is this Earth made of?’ They explore this question as they learn ways to take care of the Earth based on their knowledge of biomes, and dig into and investigate the land and water. They learn more about dinosaurs and creatures who lived on our planet before us, focus on the earth and sky and who lives there.

The final component of the curriculum challenges the preschoolers to use all of their previously gained knowledge to explore answers to the question, ‘How in the world can I get my hands into it all?’ At this point, the children will be equipped with the confidence and the curiosity to build a garden from seed, investigate the day and night skies and learn about cycles of nature and the Texas beaches.

The overall structure of the curriculum allows a logical progression through the topics. This makes the subjects more meaningful to the children while also enabling them to use prior learning to acquire new knowledge.
Nature’s Way Preschool

Weekly Topics
(By calendar day)

September

Sept. 18- Open House.................. 9-10 am for Mon-Th and MW classes- AM
10-11 am for T/Th AM and T/Th PM classes- AM & PM
11-12 noon for Fri only and MWF classes- AM

19-21........................................ Discovering You, Discovering Me
Find out what makes you and your friends so special!

24-28........................................ Body and Bones
Find out what your body is made of, and what you can do to make it healthy.

October

1-5............................................. Mammals & Me
Compare and contrast your body to those of other mammals!

8-12........................................... Amazing Amphibians
We will explore the unique characteristics of frogs, toads, and salamanders.

12........................................... Austin City Limits Festival (ANSC closed)

15-19........................................ Scales for Skin
Find out what makes snakes, lizards, turtles, alligators, and crocodiles so special.

Oct 22-26.................................... Birds of a Feather
Learning takes flight as we investigate birds, nests, and eggs!

29-Nov 2..................................... Incredible Insects
We begin our investigation of arthropods with these little six-legged cuties!

Nov 7 ....................................... Back To School Night
6-8 pm in the Multi-purpose room at the Austin Nature and Science Center

5-9.............................................. Amazing Arthropods
Creep into the dark corners of the world with crusty crustaceans and astonishing arachnids.

12.............................................. Veteran’s day observed No school (city holiday)

12-16......................................... Urban Naturalists
Investigate the wildlife that has adapted to living in the city right alongside us!
Thankful Harvest
We’ll spend some time breaking bread with our families at our Harvest Soup Lunch and being thankful for all that we have.

November 21-23 ......................... Closed for Thanksgiving Holidays

Harvest Happiness
We will learn about where harvested food comes from, check out what we gather from our own garden and what we grow here in our part of Texas.

December
Hand In Hoof
Find out all the amazing ways humans and other creatures share life and help one another.

Weird and Wonderful
We will spend time this week focusing on the special traits of those creatures that stand out in a crowd. Their defenses, appearances and everything that makes them weird and wonderful!

Wonderful Winter Celebrations
We will have fun during the shortest days of the year making crafts with light and natural found objects

Winter Holidays –NWPS Closed

January
Classes back in session

Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Life
We step back in time and spend the next two weeks learning more about the creatures who lived on our planet before us. Our journey will take us on land and exploring the oceans that made up Austin way back then!

MLK Day-NO SCHOOL-City Holiday

Nifty Nature in Winter
What are those creatures around us doing during the coldest times of the year? The next two weeks will be devoted to answering just that question.

How Things Work
Pulleys and gears and rockets and wheels....The next two weeks we will tinker and experiment with everything we can find in our quest to find out ........How Things Work.
Feb 18 ........................................ President's Day- No School- City Holiday

18-22 ........................................ Earth and Sky
We will spend our time this week checking out what’s right under our feet. Then we’ll tilt our head toward the sky and investigate that space over us too!

25-Mar 1 ........................................ Sun and Rain
Now that we are looking towards the skies, let’s learn more about what goes on there. Clouds, sun, moon, rain and so much more!

March
4-8 ........................................ Powerful Plants
We will dig into the fascinating world of roots, stems and leaves and find out more about what makes the plant world work.

11-15 ........................................ Spring Break (NWPS Closed)

18-22 ........................................ Dirt and Underground
Who makes their home right under our feet? How is dirt responsible for the food we eat and so much more? We will devote the next two weeks to the wonders of soil and all who call it home.

April
1-5 ........................................ How Does Your Garden Grow?
Spring is here and it’s time to plant and learn how to make a successful garden!

8-12 ........................................ Cycles in Nature
‘Round and ‘round we go as we take a look at the changes that take place in the natural world

15-19 ........................................ Happy Habitats
A hole in the ground, a cave under water, a home on a street…they are all homes for someone. We will spend time this week looking at what makes a home and which habitat is just right for who.

22-26 ........................................ Texas Beaches
Head down to the coast and look more closely at who calls the Gulf of Mexico home. Who is crawling on the beach and floating in the surf?

29-May 3 ........................................ Camping Texas Style!
Pack your bags and come see how nature-lovers camp lightly on the earth!

May 6-10 ........................................ End of Year Fun!
We will spend this time visiting our favorite places and just enjoying time together. Friday we will all join friends and family on a field trip to Crowe’s Nest Farm! See you there!
Field Trips and Special Guests

Children enrolled in the Nature’s Way Preschool go on educational, fun, and topic-specific field trips throughout the year. Transportation is provided by the Austin Nature and Science Center in City of Austin Ford F-350 fifteen-passenger vans. Parents are welcome to attend the field trips but may need to drive their personal vehicles. Teachers will post a field trip chaperone sign-up sheet on their bulletin boards. Interested parents should sign up as soon as possible for the trip you wish to attend.

In order for your child to gain the most from these unique field trips, it is important that you arrive at the ANSC no later than 9:15 AM or 2:15PM on field trip days. The time spent at a field trip site is limited, so an early departure is a necessity.

Instructors make every effort to arrive back from field trips by the end of class time. However, with young children anything is possible! Instructors carry cell phones with them in the vehicles. If they are running late for any reason, the ANSC will be notified of their delay.

On field trip days, please send your child in an ANSC T-shirt and shoes that can get wet or dirty. Also, on hot days we recommend that you send your child with a small water bottle, sunscreen and a hat. All of these items along with a hearty snack (and lunch for a.m. students) should be placed in a backpack or a bag that your child can easily carry.

The tentative listing of field trip dates and destinations is provided in the calendar and are posted at your child’s classroom. Please note, that due to the early nature we get the schedule out, all field trips and guest speakers are subject to change. We will notify everyone as these changes occur in the event that they do occur. Your child’s teacher will let you know more about the exact field trip details as the date draws closer.
Quick Reference

Open House: Tuesday, Sept. 18, 2012

AM- Mon/Wed, M/W/F Classes: 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.  
AM- Monday- Thursday Classes: 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.
AM- Friday only Classes: 10:00-11:00 a.m.  
AM- Tuesday/Thursday Classes: 10:00 - 11:00

PM- MW Class- 11:00- 12noon  
PM-MWF Class- 11:00-12noon  
PM- Fri only Class- 11:00-12noon

1st day of Class: Wednesday, September 19, 2012
Last day of class: Friday, May 10, 2013

Class times: AM- Monday-Friday 9:00 am-1:00 pm,  
PM- 2:00 pm-5:00 pm

Class location: Ashford-McGill Trailhouse building on the Austin Nature & Science Center grounds

Mailing address: Nature’s Way Preschool  
Austin Nature and Science Center  
301 Nature Center Drive  
Austin, Texas 78746

What to send with your child every day:  
A healthy snack and lunch (A.M. classes) snack only (P.M. classes)  
A water bottle  
Weather-appropriate clothing, closed-toe shoes  
Weather appropriate change of clothes (can remain at school and change out as we go).

Preschool holidays:  
October 12...............ACL Festival  
November 12...............Veteran’s Day observed  
November 21-23.........Thanksgiving Holidays  
December 24-Jan.4.........Winter Break  
January 21...........Martin Luther King Day  
February 18...............President's Day  
March 11-15...............Spring Break

Important Phone Numbers:  
Trailhouse: 329-8238  
ANSC Main: 974-3888 ANSC fax: 974-3890  
Registrar: 974-3891  
Margaret Russel: 974-3867  
History, Art and Nature Education Manager  
Kathy Maddox: 974-3865  
Supervisor, Operations and Exhibits ANSC  
Janice Sturrock: 974-3868  
Supervisor, Education and Programs ANSC  
Bonnie Cook-Kassens: 974-3882  
Program Director, Nature’s Way Preschool  
Anjoli Fry: 329-8238  
Instructor, Nature’s Way Preschool (4&5yr class)  
Kelly Speed: 329-8238  
Instructor, Nature’s Way Preschool (4&5 yr class)  
Britt Luttrell: 329-8238  
Instructor, Nature’s Way Preschool (3 yr class)
Important Tuition Information

Program costs: A.M.

**Friday Only Program**
- Annual Cost: **$1008.00**.
- Payable in full by September 10, 2012 or in monthly payments of **$112.00**.
- A non-refundable fee of **$112.00** is due at the time of registration, followed by 8 monthly installments of **$112.00** due by the 10th of the month October - April.

**2 - Day Program**
- Annual Cost: **$2016.00**.
- Payable in full by September 10, 2012 or in monthly payments of **$224.00**.
- A non-refundable fee of **$224.00** is due at the time of registration, followed by 8 monthly installments of **$224.00** due by the 10th of the month October - April.

**3 - Day Program**
- Annual Cost: **$3024.00**.
- Payable in full by September 10, 2012 or in monthly payments of **$336.00**.
- A non-refundable fee of **$336.00** is due at the time of registration, followed by 8 monthly installments of **$336.00** due by the 10th of the month October - April.

**4 - Day Program**
- Annual Cost: **$4032.00**.
- Payable in full by September 10, 2012 or in monthly payments of **$448.00**.
- A non-refundable fee of **$448.00** is due at the time of registration, followed by 8 monthly installments of **$448.00** due by the 10th of the month October - April.

Program Costs: P.M.

**2 - Day Program**
- Annual Cost: **$1512.00**
- Payable in full by September 10, 2012 or in monthly payments of **$168.00**
- A non-refundable fee of **$168.00** is due at the time of registration, followed by 8 monthly installments of **$168.00** due by the 10th of the month October - April.

**1-Day program**
- Annual Cost: **$765.00**
- Payable in full by September 10, 2012 or in monthly payments of **$85.00**
- A non-refundable fee of **$85.00** is due at the time of registration, followed by 8 monthly installments of **$85.00** due by the 10th of the month October - April.

- A non-refundable fee equal to one month’s tuition is due at the time of registration.
- Payments are due in full on or before the 10th of each month, September thru April.
- Tuition not paid by the due date will be subject to a late fee of $2.00 per class day.
- If any tuition payment and late fees remain delinquent by the last day of any month, the Austin Nature & Science Center may cancel your child’s enrollment.
Cancellation Policy

If you need to withdraw from the program for any reason during the year, a written statement must be submitted to the Registrar 30 days prior to your withdrawal date. **Failure to do so will require you to pay the following month’s tuition. This fee is non-refundable.**

Class time
Classes begin at 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM. Please do not bring your child to class earlier than this because the teachers use this time to set up the activities for the day, bring animals to the classroom, etc. Also, please try not to bring your child much later than this; late arrivals may disrupt the teacher’s activities, and your child may not make a comfortable transition into the class.

Late pickup charge
Morning classes end at 1:00 PM and afternoon classes end at 5:00 PM. We ask that you pick up your child no later than 1:15 PM or 5:15 PM, respectively. If you arrive later than this, you will be charged $5.00 for each 15 minutes that you are late. You will be allowed your first late pickup free of charge.
1. **HEALTH STATEMENT**
   There must be a health statement on file at the child care center within 1 week after the date of admission.

2. **IMMUNIZATION RECORDS**
   Each child enrolled in the center from birth to age 17 must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Health.
   Forms must be in the child’s file
   - the original immunization record or a photocopy of the record or an official immunization record generated from a state or local health authority. This record must contain
     - the child’s name
     - date of birth
     - the number of doses and vaccine type
     - the month, day and year when vaccine was received
     - signature or stamp of physician or health care professional who administered the vaccine

3. **VISION AND HEARING SCREENING**
   The special Screening and Communication Disorders Act, Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 36, requires a screening or a professional examination for possible vision and hearing problems for children of certain ages and grades. See website for more information. [www.dshs.state.tx.us/vhs/](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vhs/)
   Children enrolled in a licensed child care facility must have a record on file within 120 days of turning 4 years old. The following data must be recorded: **CHILD'S NAME, TYPE OF SCREENING, DATE, SCREENER, AND SCREENING RESULTS.**

4. **POLICY FOR RELEASE OF CHILDREN**
   Parents must initial the sign in / sign out log each day when they drop off their child in the morning and when they pick up their child in the afternoon. The log must include the name of the child, the date, the time of arrival and time of departure and parent or staff initials.
   Logs for each class are kept outside the classroom by the cubbies.
   If someone other than the parent will pick up the child, their name must be listed on the non-custodial pick up authorization and signed by a parent. Adults other than parents may be asked to show a photo ID before the child is released to them.

5. **FOOD**
   Nature’s Way Preschool does not provide a snack or lunch for your child. Each child is required to bring a nutritious snack each day. AM students must bring lunch as well. Foods will not be warmed or refrigerated. Please pack foods that will survive the weather for the day.
6. **MINIMUM STANDARD RULES FOR LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTERS**

Parents may view the minimum standard rules for child care centers at Nature’s Way Preschool at any time.

The standard rules are in a binder located on the file cabinet next to the refrigerator in the kitchen. If you have any questions or concerns, please address them with your child’s instructor or the director of the preschool.

7. **PARENTS WILL BE NOTIFIED IN WRITING OF ANY CHANGES TO THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF NATURE’S WAY PRESCHOOL.**

8. **MEDICATION**

   *Before staff can administer medication, parents must sign an authorization and include times for child-care center employees to administer each medication according to label directions.*

   *The medication must be in the original container labeled with the child’s full name and the date brought to the child-care center.*

   *You must administer the medication in amounts according to the label directions or as amended by a physician.*

   *You must administer the medication only to the child for whom it is intended.*

   *You must not administer the medication after its expiration date.
Sign In and Sign Out Procedures:

Parents must initial and date the sign in form each day as their child arrives at Nature’s Way Preschool. Parents must initial and date the same form when they pick up their children at the end of the day.

This procedure is to ensure that the instructor knows what children have arrived and what children have been picked up at the end of the day.

Sign in/out forms are located at the entrance to each classroom. Please check with your child’s instructor if you have any questions.

Enrollment Procedures:

Information about Nature’s Way Preschool can be found online at www.austintexas.gov/ansc
Registration occurs in February at the Austin Nature and Science Center for the following school year (September thru May). Classes meet Monday thru Friday in the morning or afternoon for one, two, three or four days a week. For a complete listing of program days, times and fees, please see the web site listed above. For more information about the preschool, call Bonnie Cook, Director at 974-3882.

Animals in Nature’s Way Preschool:

The Nature’s Way Preschool curriculum is rooted in nature study and environmental education. Children engage in hands on discovery activities while exploring and enjoying the outdoors. Resident wildlife are an integral part of the program. Children observe the resident wildlife that call the ANSC their home. Some of these animals include Conan the bobcat, Martha the coyote and the gray fox brothers, Kismet and Karma. Small resident animals also visit the classrooms on a regular basis. Some of these visitors include a mouse and babies, a rabbit, a ferret, a turtle, a snake and various insects.

All NWPS staff members are trained in animal handling and presentation skills. Animal visitors to the classrooms are presented to children in a small, quiet group setting. Children must wash their hands after any contact with animals.
All resident animals receive medical care from a veterinarian and receive immunizations and medicines as needed. Records of medical care are on file with the wildlife staff.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Bonnie Cook, Nature’s Way Preschool Director at 512-974-3882.
Minimum Standards of Care for Licensed Child Care Centers:
A copy of the Minimum Standards of Care for Licensed Child Care Centers is stored on the file cabinet in the kitchen beside the refrigerator. Parents may look thru the manual at any time.

Parents may contact the state child care licensing office at:

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
14000 Summit Drive. Suite 100
Austin, Texas 78728
F 512-834-3195
P 512-339-5911

www.dfps.state.tx.us

To report Child Abuse
1-800-252-5400
Austin Nature and Science Center
Austin Parks and Recreation Department

Nature’s Way Preschool Cancellation Notice

Today’s Date: _________________

I am giving 30 days notice from this date, for the cancellation of

My child _______________________________ from the

program _______________________________ at the Austin

Nature & Science Center’s Nature’s Way Preschool program.

I am responsible for the payment during this time period.

_____________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature