

Nature Pre-K Program

Nestled among 67 acres of Rock Hollow Woods, our Nature Pre-K Program immerses children in the outdoors while providing a caring and positive atmosphere. Through hands-on discovery and inquiry-based learning, children will explore, discover, and grow with all that nature has to offer. Themed activities are both child-centered and teacher-guided, and place a focus on the process rather than the product.

We believe that play is an essential method of learning and are inspired by the **Reggio Emilia Approach***. Daily routines encourage active involvement, meaningful experimentation, and reinforcement through repetition while balancing structure and free choice. Children will be exposed to a wide variety of educational opportunities that encourage self-expression, communication, logical thinking, and problem-solving, all while preparing them for the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical challenges of the future.

*The **Reggio Emilia Approach** follows four major principles. These are:

- **Emergent Curriculum.** A classroom's curriculum stems from the particular interests of children. Curriculum topics are derived from talking with children and their families, as well as from things that are known to be interesting to children (puddles, dinosaurs, and so on). Teachers compare notes and observations in team planning sessions to decide which projects would be best suited to children in their classes, what materials will be needed, and how they can encourage parents and the community to become involved.
- **In-Depth Projects.** These projects are thorough studies of concepts and ideas based on the information gathered about children's interests. Projects are often introduced to children as adventures, and can last anywhere from a week or two to the entire year. Teachers act as advisors on these projects, helping children decide in which direction they would like to take their research, how they can represent what they learn, and what materials would be best suited for their representations.
- **Representational Development.** This principle takes into account Howard Gardner's concept of multiple intelligences. The Reggio Emilia approach calls for the presentation of new ideas and concepts in multiple forms, such as print, art, drama, music, puppetry, and so on. Varied presentations ensure that all children have the chance to understand and connect with the concepts being explored.
- **Collaboration.** The idea of collaboration is seen as necessary to further a child's cognitive development. Groups both large and small are encouraged to work together to problem-solve using dialogue, comparisons, negotiations, and other important interpersonal skills. Each child's voice is heard in order to promote a balance between a sense of belonging to the group and a sense of self.

Rock Hollow Woods Environmental Learning Center's Mission

- Our mission is to provide children with outdoor opportunities to discover and learn about the natural world and empower them to protect their environment.

Rock Hollow Woods Environmental Learning Center

615 Rock Hollow Road, Birdsboro, PA 19508

Nature Pre-K Program Dates

- The Nature Pre-K Program year begins on Tuesday, September 3rd, 2024 and ends on Thursday, May 8th, 2025.

Holiday Closings & Days Off

- November 5th & 28th, 2024
- December 24th, 26th, & 31st, 2024
- March 6th, 2025
- April 17th, 2025

Hours of Operation

- The Nature Pre-K Program will be held on **Tuesdays** and **Thursdays**, from 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- Drop-off is between 9:20 - 9:30 am (please understand that teachers are preparing for the day and won't be able to supervise children before 9:20 am.)
- Pick-up is promptly at 12:00 p.m.

Drop off & Pick up

- When dropping off your child, please pull into the driveway, proceed around the loop, and wait in your car with your child where a staff member will greet you.
 - Due to the emotional nature of leaving a young child, it is normal that your child may cry on arrival. The crying usually stops within seconds of your departure. We ask that when you bring your child you make your goodbye brief. It is much easier on the child when the impending separation is not long and drawn out.
- When picking up, please wait in the car until a staff member brings your child. If you are first to arrive, please proceed the entire way around the loop.

Closings and Weather Delays

- In the event of severe weather conditions that prevent the opening of Rock Hollow Woods, the Director will notify all parents via email and text as soon as a decision is made. Rock Hollow Woods will take into account the decisions made by neighboring school districts, but will ultimately make our own decision on closings. In the event that severe weather conditions make it necessary for Rock Hollow Woods to close early, parents will be notified by the staff. It is essential to ensure your child's emergency contact information is always up to date for events such as this.

Snacks and Drinks

- Children should bring their own snacks and a reusable water bottle that can be refilled.

What to Bring to School

- The Nature Pre-K Program encourages children to explore and discover, which can be messy. For this reason, it is important that children wear appropriate clothes. Clothing that can be covered in mud, paint, and other materials is necessary every day. When your child comes home dirty from exploring, we have done our job!
- Your child should wear comfortable, closed-toed, protective shoes with gripping soles for running, jumping, and climbing.
- Layers of clothing are needed to enjoy the variety of activities offered both indoors and outdoors throughout the day. You should expect your child to go outside **every** day. The only exceptions will be thunderstorms or extreme wind chills and/or temperatures.
- An extra “emergency” outfit (shirt, pants, undergarments, and socks) should be packed and brought to school. This can be stored at Rock Hollow Woods if preferred or sent each day with your child. Please make sure the clothes are seasonally appropriate.
- Clothing needs for each season include:

FALL	WINTER	SPRING
*Jacket or sweatshirt *Rain jacket w/ hood *Rain pants *Rubber boots/Water shoes (early fall)	*Winter coat *Snow pants *Snow boots *Hat *Waterproof mittens *Wool/fleece socks	*Snow boots (early spring) *Rubber boots (later spring) *Winter coat (early spring) *Jacket or sweatshirt (late spring) *Rain jacket w/ hood *Rain pants

**Rock Hollow Woods is not responsible for any items that are misplaced, damaged, and/or stolen. We do have a lost and found box.*

Communication

- Conferences will be scheduled in the spring for every child attending our Nature Pre-K program.
- Parents/guardians are *always welcome* to visit Rock Hollow Woods! Please give Michelle Zeitz, the Nature Pre-K Program Director, a call at (#610-698-2112) or send an email to michellezeitz@rockhollowwoods.org to inform us of your planned visit.

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Registration

To register your child for Rock Hollow Woods’ Nature Pre-K program, you will need to complete the online registration form (www.rockhollowwoods.org) for your child and pay a \$150 non-refundable registration fee per child before the start of school. The registration fee will be used to cover tuition for the short month of May. We are asking parents to complete the registration forms as soon as possible so you can insure your child’s space in our Nature Pre-K Program. After your child is registered, you will be contacted to set up a brief tour that we require before the program begins in the Fall.

Tuition Payment Schedule

- First month’s tuition is due at the time of registration (September 1st at the latest) with subsequent payments due on the first of each month. Tuition can be paid monthly or at a discounted price in one lump sum.
- *There will be a \$25 fee added if monthly payments are made past the 14th of the month.*

Days per week	Per child monthly cost	Annual
Tuesday & Thursday a.m.	\$260.00	\$2,000

Refunds

- No refunds will be made for late arrivals, early departures, or absences.

Cancellations

- If you choose to withdraw your child, a one month’s written notice is required. If withdrawal is made any time after the first of the month, full payment for the month is required. The \$100 enrollment fee that was paid at the time of enrollment is non-refundable.

Nature Pre-K Program Sick Policy

- If your child is sick, please keep him/her home for their own sake and for the sake of the other children and staff members. In the event that your child becomes ill during the Nature Pre-K Program, we will contact the parent/guardian listed on the MEDICAL FORM followed by those listed as emergency contacts.
- The majority of the Nature Pre-K Program is spent outdoors. Keeping that in mind, we ask that parents use their own judgment when sending their children back to the Nature Pre-K Program after being sick. Make sure your child will feel up to participating comfortably in our usual program activities, including all outdoor time.

Emergency Information

- In the event of an emergency, we will make every effort to reach you or other contacts on your child's registration form. If we are unable to do so, we will take the necessary actions for the health and safety of your child. Should there be any changes in the emergency contact information, please notify Rock Hollow Woods in writing so that we may update your child's file.

Procedures for Weather and Outdoor Play

- School will be held rain, shine, and on cold winter days. The learning center is heated, which will provide us with enough space and shelter to keep the students engaged, happy, and comfortable when learning indoors.

Goals of Outdoor Play:

- Ensuring that children are safe at all times. Staff on outside duty will check all areas before allowing the children to go outdoors.
- Providing a variety of activities that support inclusion and individual needs.
- Encouraging children's participation in decision making and actions affecting their outdoor play.
- Modeling social skills such as sharing, turn taking, decision making, cooperation with others, negotiation and fairness.
- Guiding children to initiate and develop ideas for themselves.
- Creating opportunities for children to take risks, build ideas, concepts and skills.
- Providing opportunities for children to practice their fine motor and gross motor skills.
- Being supportive when children are boisterous, active, noisy and messy.
- Allowing children sufficient time and space to explore and engage in free play in their outdoor environment.

Outdoor Play Safety Measures:

- Staff members have been trained in Pediatric First Aid and CPR.
- Although minimal, there will be a few rules regarding outdoor play. Children will have an understanding of the rules and be expected to follow them accordingly.
- Staff must always carry a cell phone and a safety bag at all times when taking children outdoors. The safety bag includes an emergency safety kit, water, and tissues.
- Children will experience their natural environment every day in the Nature Pre-K Program. Outdoor activities will continue throughout all seasons, except in the event of extreme weather conditions.

Using the Bathroom

- All students need to be fully potty trained and able to use the bathroom independently to attend the Nature Pre-K Program at Rock Hollow Woods. We understand accidents occur with preschool-aged children. The extra set of clothing you provide will be used if an accident does occur.

Parent-Staff Communication

- We are interested in hearing your suggestions and appreciate your calls! Please let us know of any questions, suggestions and/or difficulties so we can provide you and your child with a successful experience at our Nature Pre-K Program. You can contact us via phone or email.
 - Michelle Zeitz, Executive Director - #610-698-2112
 - Rock Hollow Woods - #610-582-0415
 - michellezeitz@rockhollowwoods.org

We're looking forward to an adventure-filled year ahead!

Thank you for enrolling your child in our Nature Pre-K Program at Rock Hollow Woods!