

Little Seeds Nature Preschool FAQs

What should my child bring each day?

Your child should come dressed in weather appropriate clothing and footwear each day. In their backpack they should have a water bottle, tennis shoes, and a change of clothes.

Are there any special eligibility requirements?

We are requiring that all children be independent with their potty skills upon enrollment in the program. Children also need basic safety awareness skills. Please be sure to review our 'Basic Safety Awareness Skills for Preschoolers' form.

What does potty trained mean at Little Seeds Nature Preschool?

At Little Seeds, potty trained means; being able to indicate needing to use the bathroom with teacher reminders and support, pulling pants and underwear down and back up with minimal to no support from teachers, wiping independently, getting on and off the toilet with step stools, washing hands with soap and water, and no use of pull-ups during class and rest/nap time.

Do you provide food?

All participants will be provided lunch and two healthy snacks per day.

My child has allergies/special dietary needs, can you accommodate them?

If your child has any dietary restrictions, please be sure to speak with the teacher and indicate any restrictions/allergies in your registration paperwork. Our program is a nature focused program requiring children to be outside the majority of their day. Please keep this in mind if your child suffers from severe seasonal allergies.

What happens during bad weather?

We embrace the idea that there is no such thing as bad weather! We appreciate that changing weather helps children develop resiliency. We find when children are dressed appropriately for the weather, they enjoy rain, snow, and mud just as much as sunshine.

When weather does not support a full session of outdoor learning, we may modify class in the following ways:

- **Significant Cold/Wind Chill:** In significantly cold, we follow a sliding scale of wind and temperature developed by the National Weather Service to determine the appropriate amount of time to spend outdoors. Some winter days may result in shorter outdoor visits or more time spent in the yurt or inside to help balance safety and fun. <https://www.weather.gov/safety/cold-wind-chill-chart>
- **Storms:** In the event of a thunderstorm, we will remain in the classroom for 30 minutes after the last lightning strike or boom of thunder. Time spent inside may include investigation stations, stories, journaling, nature themed activities, or free play.

Will my child be ready for kindergarten?

Nature Preschools have the same child development goals as other high-quality preschools, but the curriculum and teachers achieve these developmental goals through nature-based experiences.

At Little Seeds we promote open-ended child-initiated play. We prepare and develop your child's foundational skills by instilling an early love of learning through inquiry-led and hands-on approaches. We emphasize curiosity and guide students in finding answers to their own questions. Our Nature Preschool staff are trained to put a strong emphasis on Social Emotional Learning and Development. They are also knowledgeable of the Minnesota Early Learning Standards and incorporate opportunities for children to engage in these skills throughout the week. Nature Preschool staff keep in consistent communication with families as we informally assess skills, interests, likes, and dislikes.

Our outdoor classroom includes nature exploration of music, art, science, math, literacy, and dramatic play, as well as opportunities to practice both fine and large motor skills. Time spent outdoors and hiking through various habitats promote development in observation, self-regulation, and risk assessment. Nature journaling allows for practice in reflection, writing, and drawing. All of these skills combine to provide an outstanding foundation for holistic growth.

What curriculum will you be using?

Little Seeds uses an integrated approach to curriculum. As teachers we will be facilitators of learning, taking our lead from the interests of our students. We thrive on seasonally relevant themes, child-led interests, and emergent curriculum. Emergent curriculum evolves directly from what is relevant, interesting, and meaningful to the students. Using an inquiry-based teaching model, children are able to wonder and ask questions about discoveries and observations. It is then the job of the teacher/guide to provide students with materials and hands-on explorative opportunities in order for them to form their own reasoning and theories. Through interest-led, experiential learning, a deeper understanding takes place that is meaningful to the child. Indoor and outdoor activities are designed to expand on the interests of the children and reflect what is going on in the world around them. Research shows us that if a child is interested in a topic then they will internalize so much more about a subject.

We believe that all children develop at their own pace and that they learn through play, our program is set up to meet those fundamental needs. With our small class sizes, teachers are able to really focus on each child's needs. The social and emotional support we are able to provide to children is our greatest benefit. Laying the foundation for "root" skills that all of us need to thrive within our communities.

Is Little Seeds Nature Preschool a licensed program?

Little Seeds Nature Preschool and YMCA Camp Ihduhapi are licensed through the Minnesota Department of Health as a Youth Camp and have an exclusion in accordance with the Minnesota Department of Health and Human Services under Minnesota State Statute 245A.03 Subd. 2. (a) (18) camps licensed by the commissioner of health under Minnesota Rules, chapter 4630. In addition to being licensed through the MN Department of Health Little Seeds Nature Preschool and Camp Ihduhapi are accredited by the American Camp Association. As members of the American Camp Association, we are rigorously held accountable on over 300 standards regarding health & wellness, staffing requirements, aquatic and program safety, and more. At

Little Seeds we value the diversity of experiences our teaching staff hold in various fields. Such as, early childhood education, psychology, social work, environmental science, art, and more. They are certified in CPR and First Aid and have also completed numerous hours of in-service training for preschool.

Can your program accommodate children with special needs?

We have an accommodations process that enables us to work with families to determine if we can safely meet the needs of participants. We will discuss alternatives and determine if we can provide a safe environment that fosters learning and a positive experience for all.

What if we choose to withdraw from the program?

Registering for preschool means that your child will be enrolled for the entire school year or the balance of the year. If a family chooses to withdraw a child from the program, we require a two-week written notice and two week advanced tuition payment. Registration fee is non-refundable.

Can I come for a tour and meet the staff?

Absolutely! Email eric.fallon@ymcanorth.org

Is there financial support available?

Yes. As always, we never want to turn anyone away because of their financial situation. Please consider reaching out for financial assistance before choosing to cancel, we want all students to have the opportunity to experience Little Seeds Nature Preschool:

<https://www.ymcamn.org/scholarships>.

I am interested in volunteering my time or donating needed items to Little Seeds. How can I help?

We are always looking for ways to improve access and experiences for our littlest learners in the community. Quality outdoor gear, wooden toys, child size tools and gardening equipment, and funds for expansion projects are just a few of the ways you can leave an impact on Little Seeds Nature Preschool for our current and future students and families. Please email eric.fallon@ymcanorth.org for more information on donating!