



THE SOUTH SHORE NATURAL SCIENCE CENTER



Nature Center Preschool News

Happy New Year! The staff of Nature Center Preschool wishes all of our families a terrific new year with many opportunities to get outside and explore! Winter is a fun time for Nature Center Preschool with exploration in the snow, tracking how animals move through our woods, and welcoming the light back to our part of the Earth as the days become a few minutes longer each week. Warm and waterproof clothes will keep your children dry, comfortable, and having fun even as it gets colder!

Enrollment for Fall 2020 is ongoing for current Nature Center Preschool families and siblings! Registration is also open to new families in January. If you know a family who will love nature-based education, have them contact us for a tour!

Please continue to bring appropriate clothing and footwear as we venture out in all weather. Label all children's belongings!

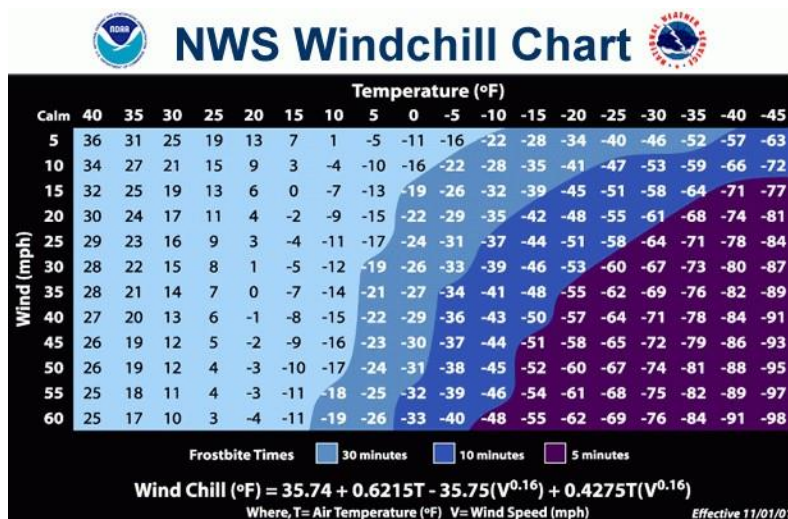
Storm closing information for Nature Center Preschool can be found at:

<http://ssymca.org/>

On the front page under "Announcements"

Did you know?

Nature Center Preschool follows the guidelines on the National Weather Service wind chill chart.



A South Shore
YMCA Organization
ssymca.org

January 2020

Family Advisory Council News!

Thank you to all families for your outpouring of generosity in supporting the Friends of the Homeless on the South Shore and the South Shore YMCA Germantown Neighborhood Center Holiday Gift Drive! In speaking with some of the NCP families that donated to the drive, it was clear that the gifts were given from the heart as if they were members of your own families!

Dates in January

Jan 2 Classes resume

Jan 2 Registration for new families

Jan 6 Registration opens for February vacation week

Jan 16 FAC meeting 6:30-7:30

Jan 20 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day—no school

Feb 1 Save the Date! Hygge Danish Festival

In 1965, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas proposed a Wilderness Bill of Rights and wrote a book of the same name. Here is an excerpt that is specific to children:

- We believe in the right of children to an understanding of their place in nature's community of which they are a part.
- We believe in their right to acquire skills for living in the out-of-doors as part of their heritage, to swim, to fish, to manage a canoe, to climb, to hike.
- We believe in their right of discovery and adventure in nature's world.
- We believe in their right to friendly comradeship with someone older, likewise an adventurer in the out-of-doors.
- We believe in their need of the healing found in the wilderness of nature.
- We believe in their unfolding response to the warm earth, the friendly stars, the music of streams, the unknown life in hidden places, great trees, sunsets, and storms.

Nature Notes

How do trees survive the winter?

Trees go through a process similar to hibernation called dormancy, and that is what keeps them alive during the winter.

Dormancy is like hibernation in that everything within the plant slows down. Metabolism, energy consumption, growth and so on. The first part of dormancy is when trees lose their leaves. They don't make food in the winter, so they have no use for masses of leaves that would require energy to maintain.

Excerpted from <http://www.mnn.com/local-reports/illinois/local-blog/how-do-trees-get-through-the-winter>



A South Shore
YMCA Organization
ssymca.org

Teacher Appreciation Events



Thank you to the Family Advisory Council and all NCP families for the wonderful teacher appreciation events! The morning faculty was treated to a delicious breakfast spread and the afternoon faculty enjoyed savory soups & salads. We are very grateful for your kindness!



A South Shore
YMCA Organization
ssymca.org



Documentation of Children's Learning

At the Orientation/Curriculum night at the beginning of the year, we often show a video of a group of children interacting with each other working out the logistics of a catapult construction. This video

effectively demonstrates children's learning by highlighting dialogue and action toward mutual goals while the children navigate social relationships and expectations they have for each other. Here is a snippet of the transcript:

Charlie: "I have a good idea" He runs around and gets the smaller tree piece that they started with. Lena continues to jump and move Simon. "Guys, Everybody get off. Guys? I know a good idea". Charlie is bringing the smaller tree piece to put on the bigger one and everybody scatters to get off and allow him to do this.

Milo: "Ooohh"

Lena goes to start jumping and Charlie says, "No, no, not right now!" Lena stops and says "OK"

Charlie: "I'm going to get some other stuff. Who wants to help me get some heavy stuff?"

Simon: "Me!" And he runs over to help.

Simon brings over another log and puts it on. "Guys, not yet. Prepare for the hugest yet"

They continue collecting and Milo, who is waiting for his turn says "I can't do this!"

Charlie: "We're going to try to do it heavier than before. Are you ready guys?" The stack is now 5 pieces high. Milo jumps on and the tower begins to crumble.

"Charlie: "That's pretty cool, right?"

Documentation can take many forms.

- Photography
- Video and Audio recording
- Collections of Children's work
- Documentation panels
- Class books
- Children's portfolios

When NCP faculty considers documentation and assessment, we are looking to find samples that are "authentic". Authentic documentation and assessment

consists of many voices—the child, the family, and the teachers. In order to be authentic, it has to show what actually happened, not a version of what happened through the viewer's lens. For example: "Josie is drawing a picture" rather than "Josie loves to draw". There are no assumptions or interpretations about what a child might be thinking or feeling. It also allows us to see each child as an individual with a strengths-based approach, without comparison, so diverse modes of learning and expression are honored and celebrated.



We take many photos and notes during our days with the children and we utilize Teaching Strategies Gold as a formal assessment tool. Along with this approach, we will collect samples of children's work in portfolios, note children's thinking on documentation panels, and take dictations as children talk about what they are doing.

The **Nature Based Preschool Professional Practice Guidebook** published by the Natural Start Alliance gives the following as best practice:

~Children's progress in both standard early childhood developmental domains and domains that relate to the development of environmental literacy are included in assessment measures.



~Teachers document and assess children's learning through observation and artifacts so as to not interfere with children's learning experiences.

~Teachers engage children in documenting their own individual and group learning so children can process and reflect on their own learning over time.

~Teachers use documentation and assessment to inform the emergent curriculum.

Take a moment to view the documentation in your child's classroom!



A South Shore
YMCA Organization
ssymca.org