



Nature School Handbook

This document outlines policies, procedures, and other info that helps in learning how this Nature School works!

If English is not your first/primary language, contact 1-888-291-9811

Please inquire if you need this document translated or the information presented in an alternate format (eg. audio recording or conversation). We will seek interpretation services to communicate with families if needed.

★ The School

- Kindred Paths Nature School (KPNS) is located at French River Lutheran Church
5310 Ryan Rd, Duluth, MN 55804
- KPNS is owned and operated by **Lane Schraufnagel (218)721-2580** and **Zach McAlear (607)342-3377**. We can also be reached at kindredpathsllc@gmail.com.
 - If a substitute is needed for any reason (vacation, illness, etc.), we will provide one if possible. We may also cancel school for any amount of time if a substitute is not available.
- **We hold a Minnesota Class C-3 Special Family Childcare license with Group E Occupancy**, which allows us to care for up to 14 children with two caregivers. This includes up to ten under school-aged children and four school-aged children. **At this time, we are only offering care for children who are at least 3 years old and/or are toilet-trained.**
 - We have met the family child care licensing requirements from the State of Minnesota.
 - A copy of the licensing rule is available upon request.
- Kindred Paths Nature School is committed to creating a just and equitable community for all families we serve by:
 - Upholding the unique value and dignity of each child and family.
 - Prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.
 - Ensuring that all children see themselves and their daily experiences, as well as the daily lives of others within and beyond their community, positively reflected in this program.
 - Celebrating diversity by acknowledging similarities and differences and providing perspectives that recognize beauty and value across differences

- Recognizing each child's unique strengths and supporting the full inclusion of all children given the differences in culture, family structure, language, racial identity, gender, abilities and disabilities, religious beliefs, or economic class.
- We are required to immediately report any suspected physical or sexual abuse, or neglect of any child in my care, according to Minnesota Statutes, Section 626.556.
- **We are open** to provide childcare Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, and occasional Friday evenings 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM. These hours are subject to change with advanced notice. Other hours may be available upon request according to our availability.
 - We follow our own calendar for holiday breaks and other days off. We begin the school year on the Tuesday after Labor Day and we go until the last Friday in May. Our holiday breaks are closely aligned with ISD 709's breaks.
 - We follow ISD 709 for weather-based closures, but due to how close we live to the church, we might make our own decision to stay open.
 - Possible summer programming dates are provided in January/February each year, with adjusted hours of operation.
- ★ **Mission Statement:** Kindred Paths Nature School, a majestic Cedar Grove near the French River and Lake Superior is a safe place for children to explore, take risks, play, learn, and grow.
- ★ **Vision Statement:** Walking along a kindred path, the entire self is supported by and connected to the ecosystem, who is our greatest teacher. Slow down, look around. Work together, recycle waste to make new beauty, reach toward the light.
- ★ **Enrollment Information**
 - **Enrollment for upcoming school years will open up on February 1st or earlier of the current school year. To hold your child's spot in the program, you will make a non-refundable deposit of \$150. This deposit will not go towards future tuition.**
 - Families who have had children attend our school prior will have preference over new families.
 - Families who choose to enroll in full-time care (M-Th) will be given preference over part-time families.
 - **Requirements for enrollment include:**
 - Enrollment Application
 - Registration form (MN DHS form)
 - Signed Acknowledgement & Agreement Page and Tuition Contract
 - Medical packet (Immunization records, allergies, permission to

administer medication/other products, medical history, insurance/doctors information)

- Vaccinations and signed physical forms are required for all children enrolled in a state licensed childcare facility. We are required to have records on file showing that each child has been immunized against or has a legal exemption for the following diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, Hib, and pneumococcal. Vaccines for Hep. B and chickenpox are recommended but not required by law. Children whose parents or legal guardians are conscientiously opposed to any or all immunizations must submit a signed and notarized statement to that effect.
- Deposit of half of 1st month's tuition
- **Application for enrollment:**
 - If you choose to apply to our school, we will need some introductory information about your child/ren as well as what type of schedule you are looking for. Once you send us this information via email, we will schedule a time to meet your family and take a tour of the school. After that, if we all choose to move forward, we will give you the rest of the enrollment requirements.
 - Each new child that is enrolled will undergo a trial period to adjust to the space. This trial period will last one month. If the trial period is unsatisfactory, we each have the right to terminate this agreement within that period, with no further obligations.

★ **Termination Policy**

- At any time we may choose to discharge your child from the school for reasons that include, but are not limited to:
 - Repeated failure to pick up your child/ren before the agreed-upon pick-up time.
 - Failure to pay tuition on time.
 - The inability for us to meet your child/ren's needs.
- If we do choose to discharge your child from our school for the reasons above or other reasons, advance notice might not be given.
- **If you choose to unenroll your child from our school during the school year, tuition will not be returned for that month.**

★ **Payment**

- Monthly rates for attending KPNS account for each month's number of school days throughout the year, (for example, December could have only 11 school days

while January has 18, though the tuition is averaged out so it is the same each month).

- 5 days/week- \$1110/month
- 4 days/week- \$890/month
- 3 days/week- \$680/month
- 2 days/week- \$490/month
- ½ day/week- \$125/month
- **Tuition for your child's planned days of attendance is due on the first school day of the month.**
- **You will not be reimbursed for any school days that your child misses for any reason or any school days that are canceled for any reason.**
- You will be notified of any changes in the tuition rate when enrollment for the next session opens on February first.

★ Daily Flow

- 8:00-9:00 - Drop-Off
 - During this time, we will either be in the classroom or in the forest by the parking lot. A theme may be introduced through a display or activity that will guide our day.
- 8:30-11:30- Morning Routine
 - 8:30-9:30- Free play in the playscape. Optional activities, such as cooking snacks, arts and crafts, or music take place at this time.
 - 9:30-10/10:30- Snack and story. During this time we also have group time where we sit and talk about what is going on around us and the topics for the day.
 - 10/10:30-11:30- A hike to a playspot- we have countless spots that the kids choose from every day- maybe it's a walk to the French River beach, an adventure down to one of our favorite river spots, or a jaunt to the fort. We have freeplay once we get to our spot, and optional natural explorations, such as looking at field guides, scavenger hunts, nature art, tea making, and more.
- 11:30-12:30- Lunch transition
 - 11:30-12/12:30- Eat lunch, chat with tablemates, listen to books/stories.
- 1:00-2:00- Rest time
- 2:00-2:30- Bathroom, wash, snack, and get ready for the afternoon
- 2:30-4:30- Afternoon Routine
 - Snack and handwriting practice first. Then a large portion of this time will be spent outside having free-play with optional enrichments, such as cooking, music, storytelling, science experiments, or arts and crafts.

- 3:30-4:30- Pick-Up

★ **Pick-up/Drop-off**

- We want to minimize parents in the classroom and the playscape to allow the children to focus on their peer-based play. For this reason, we ask that parents stay by the cubbies when we are inside the church or by the fire-ring when we are outside. There will be opportunities throughout the year where your child will be able to show and explore these spaces with you.
- **Drop-off will occur by the main upper-level entrance of the church in colder months or the fire ring in warmer months.** You will park your car in the lot and walk your child/ren inside. You will sign them in on the iPad on the front table and put away their gear/backpack in their cubby space. Then, you will say goodbye to your child either across the parking lot by the fire-ring (if we are starting outside) or by the cubbies (if we are starting inside). We will then greet your child and bring them into the classroom or the playscape.
- **Pick-up will occur wherever we are ending our day. This will either be by the fire ring/playground (most of the time) or inside (if it is very cold or wet).** After picking up your child/ren, you will take them inside to the cubbies to gather their belongings and sign out on the iPad. We need to be notified in advance if your child/ren will be picked up by someone not listed on your child/ren's forms. We will need the full name of the unlisted person and will need to see a photo ID before the child can leave.
 - Be on time for pick-up. If you know you could be late, please try to make other arrangements and let us know as early as possible. If you are late more than once, you will be notified of a late pick-up fee of \$1/minute that can be paid anytime before or with the next month's tuition.

★ **Curriculum**

- Children this age have a strong sense of curiosity and drive to learn, and the school's curriculum will be fed by the budding interests of the children in the program, which will change daily/weekly/seasonally.
- Teachers will use these interests as the foundation for multidisciplinary exploration (eg. Interest in frogs could lead to jumping or leapfrog, recording observations of frogs' activity and habitats, counting the number of frogs or body parts of a frog, spelling the word out, drawing, or painting them).
- Outdoors we will use natural objects for counting and letter practice. Indoors there will be plenty of materials for engaging in math, language, science, art, and more. Teachers will encourage growth in each of these areas for each child by providing resources and opportunities for fun engagement in learning individually and as a group.

- Teachers will support each child in becoming a respectful, compassionate, and communicative member of a group/class. This will prepare students for kindergarten and life-long learning!

★ Outdoor Spaces

- The majority of the time at the school will be spent in the forest. Here **children will have space to engage in “free-play,” which is the foundation of growth and development at this age.** Young children thrive in nature, where there are limitless possibilities for play. Children will navigate various types of terrain and natural obstacles, build and play with loose natural parts, observe, tell stories, and ask questions.
- **Risk is an integral component of developing self-awareness, confidence, and independence.** Teachers at the school will be supervising play closely and asking guiding questions to help the children assess the risk of the situation that they are in. Teachers will only stop the activity if there is immediate danger of injury. The forest is a rich and forgiving environment to engage in assessing and taking risks in order to build confidence, creativity, and resilience!
- **Going to the bathroom:** Your child will most likely have to go to the bathroom when we are outside at some point. We want to be able to support them in going to the bathroom outside and believe that even if they are uneasy with it at first, they will soon see it as an empowering experience.
 - We will always have water, soap, and wipes to make it easier to go away from the toilet and in case of an accident in the forest.
 - If we are outside, we will encourage the children to go pee in the forest. If they have to poop, they will go inside with a teacher. If we are on a hike further away from the church (outside of the French River forest) we will bring the “Luggable Loo”, which will be an option for poop as well. The indoor bathroom will always be available, although we might be quite a walk away from it.
 - During the winter months, the children will have a lot of gear on. This can make going to the bathroom more challenging. With practice and support from both home and school, going to the bathroom outdoors during winter can be a successful experience.
 - During a hike or during winter months when we can't have our portable handwashing station outside, hand sanitizer will be used after peeing in the woods. Hands will be washed with soap and water when we return to the church.
 - **We want your child to feel safe and comfortable going to the bathroom when they need to. Let us know how we can best support this.**

★ Outdoor Play

- It will always be our goal to make sure that your child/ren are practicing safety and assessing the risks in a given situation, but accidents still happen. **With outdoor play, it's important that we give freedom to the children, and trust in their ability to know what is comfortable for them**, but there are a few rules that we will put in place to make sure the play is inclusive and safe, yet still wild and free. We believe in not restricting a child's play, for it's important for them to be able to process what they need to through different types of play. We'll describe a few different types of play where we often implement more guidance, and how we talk about it with the children.
 - **Consent:** We require everyone to ask for consent to do anything to anyone else's body, and we require everyone to give consent before allowing others to do anything to themselves. This includes common things like: chasing, touching, hugging, holding hands, high 5s, pointing something at them, etc. It helps kids if they practice this at home and are familiar with the concept. There are many great books for kids on consent, check some out and talk about it with your child!
 - **Big-Body Play** (puppy play, wrestling/tackling): As the children gain confidence in their big-bodied play, they may want to explore this kind of play with others, and we will want to support that for their development. Consent is mandatory, and we will encourage the children to talk about their own ground rules, boundaries, and how to know when enough is enough. The children will have their own freedom in these situations, and we will be there as guides to make sure that everyone is feeling heard and safe.
 - **Stick Play:** This is another type of play that is so important for children, for a stick can be anything! As long as the stick play stays positive and safe, and everyone who is playing is on the same page, we will support that kind of play.
 - **Violent Play:** If the children are engaging in this type of play (such as gun or sword play), we want to be able to support them through it and help them to understand the implications of certain scenarios. We believe that in some situations this type of play is important for the child, as they might be trying to understand more about it themselves, however, we will have zero tolerance for violence directed at others who are not on board. With any play like this, it's important to frame it beforehand so it doesn't get out of hand.
 - Wet or dirty play: **Your children will get wet and your children will get**

muddy- this type of play will never be restricted unless the weather isn't suitable. When getting ready in the morning, please **choose clothes that can get dirty**. Please be ready to pick-up your child and have them be muddy, and be excited with them too, because they definitely will be!

★ **Play Areas:** We are lucky to have plentiful places to play and explore, especially as everyone grows stronger and more confident throughout the school year. The church owns a large forested area behind the parking lot that will be a widely used space. We will have access to a fire pit for those chilly winter days and cooking yummy snacks over, a play structure with a swing set and slide, and a mud kitchen for limitless creations. As the children explore these woods, there will be areas that they will gravitate towards more, and we will follow them.

- **Water Areas:** We are lucky to have access to both the shoreline of Lake Superior and the banks of the French River. We will visit these bodies of water regularly when the teachers trust that the children in the group can listen well enough to safely travel to them via trail or roadway and respond to boundaries regarding the water, other people, and general safety.
 - On days that conditions are appropriate for getting in the water, we may do so by **wading or swimming**. We define wading as walking in the water around ankle depth. To be in the water any deeper than the ankles we call swimming, and we require that children wear a PFD/life jacket brought from home. Anytime that swimming or wading are options, there will be two teachers present and supervising, and safety and boundaries will be discussed with children each time prior to getting in the water.
 - On days that conditions are appropriate for **boating in Lake Superior**, we may do so in a canoe, inflatable kayak, or other appropriate vessels. Children and adults will wear PFD/life jackets brought from home whenever in a boat. There will be no more than 3 children and 1 adult in the boat at once, and when a teacher is out on a boat, there will always be a second teacher supervising the children on land. Each time there is an opportunity to boat, children and teachers will discuss the risks and how to stay safe.
 - During the coldest months, we may walk or boot-skate on the ice. Children will wait on the ground until teachers have determined that the ice is safe.
 - Upon arriving at a play area by water, we always discuss the risks present as a class. The conditions change every day, so each time we set new

boundaries about what is safe and what is out of bounds (for example, in winter months the bigger rocks by the lake get slippery with ice, so we will choose to play on snowy or pebbly beaches).

★ Meals

- **Two snacks/full-day will be provided for your child/ren.** We focus on healthy, energizing whole foods to keep your child/ren moving throughout the day. There will also be a focus on the children helping to prepare the snack as well. **Dietary restrictions will be met.**
- **Foraging:** We teach children about edible plants in our forest area and neighborhood. We talk to the children about identification, ethical harvesting, and safety. If you want to know more about this practice, we are happy to discuss more.
- **Lunch is provided by each child's family.** We ask that you send your child with a clearly labeled (with name), low-waste lunch, in reusable containers. Everyone will “pack out” what they “pack in” every day, so parents can easily see what their children have or have not been eating in their lunches. Lunches will not be able to be refrigerated.
 - Bentgo children's lunchboxes are a good option because they are well portioned for a preschooler's lunch. Tupperware in a reusable bag works great too.
 - A healthy preschooler's lunch is recommended to contain 1 oz of grain, ½ cup of fruit, ½ cup of vegetable, ½ cup of dairy, and 1 oz of high protein foods such as nuts, meats, or beans.
 - If there are allergies in the group, you must accommodate by not packing allergens. These will be communicated to you as they come up.

★ Rest Time

- Your child/ren will likely be tired after a morning of running and playing in the woods, so we will have rest time after lunch. This will usually take place in the classroom or other church areas, and could potentially happen outside. We will provide the sleeping mat and sheet, and we ask you to provide a light blanket and a small pillow, which will be kept at the school during the week and sent home to be washed each weekend.

★ Supplies and Gear

- **We will be outside a lot, and the weather isn't going to stop us! Due to this, your child will need a variety of gear to stay happy in these conditions.** Currently, we provide all necessary rain gear.
- **Your child/ren will be responsible for getting themselves dressed, even though we'll be there for help and it will be a lot of practicing in the beginning, it's**

important that your child is comfortable with using their gear.

- We ask that when gear gets dirty (which it definitely will!) that it is washed and dried for the next day. If it is school provided gear, we will be responsible for cleaning it.
- **Fall:** Rubber boots, tennis shoes, wool socks, light fleece jacket, light mitten liners (wool/blend is best).
 - Optional: sunglasses, sun hat, winter hat, sandals, rain jacket (please test to see if it is truly waterproof)
- **Winter:** Hat, mittens, neck warmer, sweater/fleece jacket, winter jacket, snow pants, or a snowsuit, winter boots, wool socks.
- **Spring:** Rubber boots, tennis shoes, wool socks, rain gear, light fleece jacket
 - Optional: Sunglasses, sun hat, sandals
- **Summer:** Rain gear, light fleece jacket, sunhat, tennis shoes, water shoes
 - Optional: Sandals, rubber boots, sunglasses
- Check out brands: Stonz, Polarn O. Pyret, Reima, and Burton
- We require that you **always have one full change of clothes** (shirt, pants, shorts, sweater, socks, underwear) to be left at the school for accidents. If clothing gets soiled, we will send it home in a plastic bag and ask that clean items are returned the next day.
- We require that you **provide your child with a small water bottle and clean it regularly.**
- We will provide a mineral-based sunscreen, but you are also welcome to bring your own with your child's name on it.
- We will provide a natural tick/mosquito repellent, or you can apply your own before coming to school. There is potential for ticks in our play area- we will practice tick checks at school, but it is also important that you do thorough tick checks at home in the Spring, Summer, and Fall.
- **We do not allow toys from home at the school**, except for one stuffed animal to be used during resting time.
- **Show and Tell:** whenever a child wishes, up to once per week, they may bring one item to share with the group. We have guidelines on what these items may be to ensure that it is an enriching experience for everyone. The item may be "something found or something made" (for example, natural objects collected outdoors, artwork, etc).

★ Health and Wellness

- School practices to help keep everyone healthy:
 - Spending as much time as possible outdoors will help to keep our lungs, hearts, and immune systems clear, clean, and efficient. We will also spend

more time indoors when it is a healthy choice (ex. Very wet or cold weather).

- **Handwashing** will occur either outside at our portable handwashing station or inside in either the classroom, the bathroom, or at the portable handwashing station. We will wash hands before preparing/eating food, after going to the bathroom (when applicable, see Outside Bathroom in the Outdoor Play section below), or whenever necessary.
 - **Hand sanitizing - during winter months and days <32 degrees, the portable handwashing station will not be outside. During this time when we are outdoors, hand sanitizer will be used before eating, after peeing in the woods, or whenever necessary.**
- Eating a balanced diet with all kinds of vitamins, minerals, and nutrients will support our bodies in staying healthy. We will eat healthy snacks and discuss a balanced diet and lifestyle.
- Plenty of water, exercise, and rest!
- We will always have access to a comprehensive first aid kit.
- **Any child or teacher that is experiencing symptoms of illness should stay home until 24 hours after symptoms subside.**
 - Symptoms could include and are not limited to: cough, runny nose, fever, stomachache, chills, congestion, diarrhea, vomiting, headache, achiness, shortness of breath, etc.
- You will be notified immediately if your child has any of the following conditions: trouble breathing, an underarm temperature of 100 or an oral or ear temperature of 101; is vomiting; has diarrhea, or has a rash other than a heat-related rash. Your child will be separated from the group and you are expected to make arrangements to come and take your child home as soon as possible.
- Written permission and directions are required for us to administer any medications.

★ Behavior Guidance

- We will encourage positive individual and group behavior through affirmation and constructive conversations.
- We will NOT: physically or emotionally abuse children, place other children in charge of discipline, or separate an individual from the group for more than 10 minutes.

★ Emergency Plan

- In case of an emergency, we have designated meeting places outdoors as well as indoors. In case of an emergency, parents will be notified via email and phone and given details about how to proceed. Every month we will practice fire drills

and storm drills with the children. A detailed emergency action plan will be available at the school.

★ **Parent Communication**

- We use a website/app called Brightwheel for parent communication, sign in/out, tuition payment, sharing photos, and more. **We require that parents sign up for this app and have notifications for messages on.**
- We will communicate about our schedule, special events, closures, and non-urgent information via Brightwheel. In the “document hub” on Brightwheel, you can access calendars, this Family Handbook document, the mandated reporter policy information, MN Rule 2 summary, and many more helpful documents/flyers.
- Parents can either reach us by calling us (during the school day only), brightwheel messages (anytime), texting us (anytime) or emailing us (anytime). **One of the great features of Brightwheel is that everyone who is signed up as a caregiver of your child will get notified for a message regarding your child. It’s handy for keeping both teachers, both parents, etc. up to date.**
- We will keep up a Facebook and Instagram page where you can find pictures and other information about what we’ve been doing.
- **Conferences** will be available two times a year in November and April at the request of either the parents or the teachers. These are not mandatory, although they will provide helpful insights for both home and school life.
- **Concerns and Feedback:** If you have any concerns, feedback, or thoughts about our school, please let us know, and we can find a time to talk further. If you have any questions regarding child care rules and statutes that pertain to my family child care program, you may call St. Louis County family child care at (218)726-2064.

★ **Media Release:** In the initial paperwork, there will be a media release in the Acknowledgement & Agreement page attached to this handbook. You can either choose to allow us to use pictures and/or videos of your children at school (mainly for promotional purposes, but also sharing with the local community what we are doing) or not. There will also be an option for specifying if you wish that identifying features (face/hair) be left out of pictures that are posted on our website, social media, or other publications.

★ **Drug and Alcohol Policy:** Lane and Zach, as well as any other employees or volunteers in the school, will not use non-prescribed mood-altering medications, illegal drugs, or alcohol during the hours of operation. There is never any tobacco use at the church or school.

★ **Transportation:** We will not be transporting kids anywhere by vehicle.

- ★ **Insurance:** We carry liability insurance.
- ★ **Once you have thoroughly read this document, please sign the Acknowledgement & Agreement Page stating that you understand and agree to the contents of this handbook.**