

NATURE IMMERSION COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

DROP OFF

Drop off begins with greeting an educator; this process creates connection and safety between educator and student. This is an essential time to connect to higher parts of the brain for problem solving, reasoning, and readiness to learn. Next, students are responsible for putting their lunch box and backpack under the porch to create responsibility for belongings and pride of place.

FREE EXPLORATION

Students have the opportunity to explore their playspace, manipulate tools in the environment, and notice changes within themselves, the environment, and others. The outdoor classroom is carefully designed with the intention of following students patterns of play and connecting to nature. Shovels, pots, and pipes are used freely as props to expand on play and work together to achieve goals. Students are able to problem solve with peers, build gross and fine motor skills, and exercise cognitive abilities through play. The natural environment is observable and attainable to our school family. We notice mushrooms, growing plants, birds in the trees, squirrels exploring our space, cicadas, weather changes, airplanes, trains, trucks, butterflies, millipedes, and anything going on around us. We observe the natural world over time; noticing changes, similarities, and things that stand out to us.

GARDENING

Gardening in NI is the introduction to the world of farming and the easiest way for the children to connect with nature and nurture living things in our environment. The goal of the gardening is an opportunity for students to learn about parts of seeds, flowers and plants. Children learn how to care for the plants and are fortunate to observe the whole growing process. We encourage ownership of the gardens as well of the animals, plants and flowers that live in it. Last semester, the students had the opportunity plant seeds and watch them to sprout. This semester, the students will have the opportunity to transfer them into the ground and watch them to strength, grow and produce flowers/ vegetables. The first few weeks of the semester, the students are going to build and plant their butterfly and cutting flower garden that, hopefully, they will be able to cut the flowers that they grew and learn to make flower arrangements and use our abundant herb garden where they will have plant of basil to make pesto. They love digging up so we are planting some rooted vegetables to give them a purpose. Our garden is going to be just an extension of our classroom and the children will thrive on them.

SENSORY EXPERIENCES

Sensory play will involve the students 5 senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing) as well as vestibular and proprioception systems. It will give the students time to explore, discover, and create using many textures and items to help develop fine motor skills. We will be working with foods and learning how to wash and prepare healthy snacks. Exploring the inside textures, smells, and tastes of fruits and vegetables as well as harvesting their seeds to plant. Students

will learn how to clean and sanitize their space when finished. Students will be encouraged to communicate with fellow peers on their experience.

MORNING MEETING

Morning meeting begins by taking breaths, telling ourselves we're safe to be problem solvers, and calming our bodies to spend intentional time together. It is a time for students to connect with peers and educators while practicing attention skills (listening to stories), control of body (staying in space), conversation skills (speaking and listening to others), and awareness of the environment (talking about what we can observe). Following the Conscious Discipline framework, students sing songs for connection and safety. We sing a connection song, safety song, and a wish well song. These songs cultivate social emotional development through routine, connection and feeling safe within our school family. Our morning story consists of observable nature experiences (identifying weather, growing plants, animals and habitats), social emotional development (feelings, handling strong emotions, being the boss of self), or expanding on student interests (dinosaurs, princesses, animals, or construction).

SNACK

Students practice being responsible for their materials by grabbing their water bottles, putting their food away, and making space for themselves and others. Students exercise conversation skills and appropriate table manners.

CHOICE CENTERS

The classroom is peaceful, calming and was designed to meet the developmental needs of each child. The choice centers are inspired in Montessori and Reggio Emilia's classrooms. The classroom contains many places for the children to learn and play in many ways that reinforce their developmental necessities: self-directed , in pairs, in small groups , inside and outside , at tables and/or the rugs on the floor . All items in the classroom are scaled to the child's size , including furniture, utensils, shelves and cleaning implements that allow the child to have pride of place. There is no focal center to the classroom ; this reflects that the educator is not the focus of the children's attention, but the children are all one community. The materials in the classroom are bright and attractive colors , natural materials , fascinating cultural objects and interesting provocations based on Reggio Emilia system . Children move freely throughout the environment , choosing provocations that interest them or working with Ms. Solange in individual or small groups. The environment is unrestricted by the teacher unless it endangers themselves, other students and/or the environment .

ATELIER

Inspired in Reggio Emilia , the atelier is carefully planned by Ms. Sydney to be a place for creativity by using multimedia. The students encounter a wide range of media and materials that allow them to become skilled and begin to use materials to communicate and/or represent their understanding , emotions, and interests. The atelier, as the rest of the program spaces, are child-led where each student chooses what they want to work with or without the assistance of an educator. Our goal with offering open-ended art experience is to emphasize the process of

creating, rather than the goal of the end product. Open-ended materials allow the students to understand the medium in many ways along with building concentration, hand-eye coordination and muscle memory. This semester we are going to continue to explore their senses through and help them to critically think and analyze media using creativity.

FOOD PREP

Food prep was incorporated in the NI program due to its endless opportunities for learning and exploration. Our goal is to grow food in our environment and the children pick what they want to cook that day. This semester we will, once again, focus on teaching the children to use kitchen tools and make simple recipes while our garden still growing. The children planted some lettuce last semester so, we will incorporate salad prep using leaves from our garden.

LUNCH

Full day students gather together and eat lunch together. Unprompted conversation topics include what is in our play space, I-spy, predator vs. prey, making up stories, and sharing their experiences. Students practice sitting down, opening and putting their food away, and how to eat at a restaurant.

YOGA & MINDFULNESS

Students explore yoga poses and child friendly meditations. Students practice yoga moves resembling animals and objects in nature. We practice breathing techniques, listening to nature, and visualizations.

NAP

A time to learn that our bodies need rest. This is also a time when educators clean and sanitize classroom materials.

NON-NAPPERS ACTIVITY

While the younger students naps, Ms. Solange uses this time to do one to one activities with the non-nappers. Ms. Solange carefully observe the children during this period identifying their interests and abilities and from her observations she develops personalized learning plans tailored to each child's developmental needs. Ms. Solange offers encouragement, time and tools needed to allow each student's natural curiosity to drive their interest in complex subjects, drive learning and offer choices that allow them to learn, grow and succeed. In the afternoon, Ms. Solange demonstrate a material to the students and the children are free to choose provocations on their own. During this time, students also can work on their gardens, prep food, use the atelier to create art, and use the inside materials to learn math concepts.

GOODBYE CIRCLE

This the time that half-day students gather together to say their good-byes and listen to a story by Ms. Sydney and discuss about their day. Students talk about acts of helpfulness they saw throughout the day and what they liked to do that day. We expand on topics of interest such as roads, volcanoes, ants, pretend play and how we brought it to life for the day.