

White Bear Lake Area Schools and Ramsey County

# Tamarack Nature Preschool

Parent  
Handbook  
2025-2026



# Normandy Park Early Childhood Education Center

Phone: 651-653-3100, Fax: 651-653-3155  
Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 7:30 am - 3:30 pm

## WBL Early Childhood Mission Statement

The mission of the WBL Schools Early Childhood Programs, a nurturing community of educators, young learners, families and caregivers, is to build a foundation for all children to reach their greatest potential by providing dynamic environments that foster a love for learning and strengthen families and communities.

## About Tamarack

Tamarack Nature Center,  
5287 Otter Lake Road,  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

Tamarack Nature Center is a 320-acre park preserve of prairies, ponds and woods, located within Bald-Eagle-Otter Lakes regional park in White Bear Lake. The Backyard and The Cove are the preschool outdoor classrooms.

## Phone Numbers

### ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

**Jennifer Chappuis** ..... 651-653-3102  
*Questions regarding program policies or concerns*

### ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

**Angela Orange** ..... 651-653-3101

### EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM SPECIALIST

**Nicole Mersch** ..... 651-653-3118

### ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

**Macy Skroch** ..... 651-653-3100  
*Questions regarding tuition and billing or contract issues*

### TAMARACK NATURE CENTER DIRECTOR, OUTDOOR EDUCATION MANAGER

**Noelle Roden** ..... 651-266-0365  
*Questions regarding Tamarack facilities and grounds*

### Tamarack Nature Center Office Manager

**Kristy Rockford** ..... 651-266-0360  
*Contact regarding dropping something off, picking up early, day of concerns for child*



## Tamarack Nature Preschool Philosophy

At Tamarack Nature Preschool, a collaboration between White Bear Lake Area Schools Early Childhood Program and Ramsey County, we believe in the power of nature to shape and enhance the lives of children and their families.

We support this belief through:

- Authentic play-based experiences where children both influence and respond to the world around them
- Honoring each child by recognizing individual strengths, needs, abilities and circumstances
- Providing indoor and outdoor environments that engage children in exploration, hands-on learning, risk-taking, and problem solving
- Nurturing connections to each other, the natural world, and ourselves
- Celebrating the diversity of our community, families, and children
- Respecting children's right to make choices, learn from mistakes and grow at their own pace



# Tamarack Nature Preschool Early Learning Philosophy

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## A Place to Learn and Grow

Tamarack Nature Preschool provides a safe and nurturing environment for a child's first school experience. Daily activities help children develop social and emotional skills that are a key for future school success. Licensed teachers and Ramsey County Naturalists provide a variety of meaningful hands-on learning experiences in the areas of reading and math readiness, science and social studies, art and sensory, music, and dramatic play through a nature lens. Our language arts curriculum is aligned with the district's kindergarten curriculum so our preschoolers will be well prepared for learning to read and write.

## Play Based Learning

Play is the foundation upon which all preschool learning is built. As such, free-choice play times are incorporated into our preschool day, as well as guided play-based learning activities that are designed to teach children a specific skill. Children will experience hands-on and creative activities that will stimulate their learning while allowing the freedom to explore their environment and express their creativity. This play-based learning philosophy is supported by our guiding curriculum: the Creative Curriculum for Preschool.

## Risky Play

Good things happen when children are encouraged and supported in risky play. Driven by curiosity, they naturally want to explore and be adventurous. When children are curious, they explore, ask questions, and make discoveries. In doing so, they learn and grow in all areas of health, development, and well-being. Children engage in pro-social behavior (communicating, negotiating, co-operating), improve executive functioning abilities (goal setting, attention span and focus, spatial working memory, judgment, planning, etc.), and learn how to keep themselves safe (understanding what feels safe, knowing the limits of their skills and abilities).

## Conscious Discipline

White Bear Lake Early Childhood uses Conscious Discipline, which is an innovative social-emotional learning and classroom management framework. Conscious Discipline teaches children self regulation skills for everyday life. This is taught by helping children to identify and name their feelings, and use breathing and calming strategies to regulate.

## Parent Aware Rated

WBLAS Preschool Program is a four-star Parent Aware rated Program. Parent Aware is a statewide quality rating system for programs that demonstrate best practice for early education. Programs that receive a four-star rating are the highest quality programs in the state.

## Serving All Children

We are an inclusive community. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion creates a culture of equity for children and families. We embrace our differences and we recognize that children bring their own unique cultural strengths to our classrooms.

## Family Engagement

Meaningful family engagement in children's learning supports school readiness and later academic success. Here are some ways for you to support your student:

- Attend your child's preschool orientation meeting at the beginning of the year
- Ensure your child's regular and timely attendance at school
- Attend conferences twice a year with your child's teacher
- Read the communication that comes from your child's teachers, and reach out if your child needs support
- Attend school events throughout the year
- Consider joining our White Bear Lake Area Schools Early Childhood Parent Advisory Council (PAC). For more information, email [wblearlychildhoodpta@gmail.com](mailto:wblearlychildhoodpta@gmail.com).

## Early Childhood Screening

Early Childhood Screening is required by the state of Minnesota for all children prior to entering kindergarten. Screening offers a snapshot of each child's health and development and provides families with valuable information about their child. Screening children between ages three and four, allows time for intervention (if needed) before the start of Kindergarten. For this reason, we require Early Childhood screening within the first 90 days of the start of the preschool year. White Bear Lake School District provides the screening at no charge to families. Screenings are held at Normandy Park on Thursday evenings and Fridays throughout the school year. Please contact our main office at 651-653-3100, if you have any questions regarding screening.



# Tuition

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Tuition payments are based on a yearly amount divided into nine equal parts. Payment is due on the first day of each month. Automatic monthly payment deductions are an option through your Eleyo account. You also have the option to pay the entire annual bill at the beginning of the year.

## Online Payment

Monthly bills will be sent to the email address that you provided when you created your Eleyo account. Follow the instructions given in the email to submit your payment

## Mail or In Person Payment

If you are paying by check, make checks payable to WBL Early Childhood Program. Then submit payment to:

**Normandy Park Education Center**  
2482 County Road F East  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

## Withdrawing From the Program

You are required to provide our office (at Normandy Park) with notice of withdrawal from the program two weeks before the first of the month. If notice is not received, the following month's tuition will be charged. If withdrawing from preschool, please call 651-653-3102.

## Late Tuition Charges

It is important that tuition be paid on time. However, we understand that life sometimes intervenes. We provide a grace period of 10 days for each tuition payment. After 10 days, a late fee of \$15 will be assessed to your account. Not paying your tuition will result in termination from the program.

## Absence Due to Vacation, Illness or Inclement Weather

No tuition reductions or reimbursements will be made for absences for preschool.

# Transportation

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## Student Drop off and Pick up

Drop off and pick up procedures will be explained by your child's teacher at the beginning of the school year. Children will be released to parents or authorized persons listed on the emergency form. If someone different is picking up your child from school, please notify the teacher. Please be aware that photo identification is required when someone different is picking up a student.

## Late Pick-Up Policy

If you are more than 10 minutes late to pick up your child, late fees will be assessed.

- First incident: warning and reminder of the pick up policy.
- Second and subsequent incidents: copy of our late pick up policy and charge of \$5.00 for every 10 minutes late.
- If late pick ups continue, you will be asked to set up a meeting with the program administrator. *Consistent late pick ups may result in termination from the program.*

If no one picks up the child at the dismissal time of class, first the caregiver/parents will be called and then all emergency contacts will be called. **If staff cannot reach anyone after 45 minutes, and do not hear from an adult responsible for the child, the police will be notified.**



# Safety Protocol

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## Cold Weather Policy

The majority of class time is spent outdoors. At the beginning of the school year your child's teaching team will provide families with a list of gear needed for the school year. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather! While most Minnesota days are great for outdoor play and adventures, district staff will monitor the weather and keep children indoors on days when weather conditions make it unsafe to be outdoors. The district's temperature guidelines for outdoor activities and play is -10 degrees (air temp and/or windchill). Your child's teacher will communicate more about cold weather policies as winter approaches.

## Emergency Contact Information

Emergency contact information is required prior to the start of each school year and needs to be updated with the teacher when there are changes. Be sure to inform all individuals listed on the emergency form that they have been named as potential caregivers in your absence. You will be notified in the event that your child experiences an accident or a sudden illness that makes remaining at school inadvisable, and you will be asked to pick up your child, or send someone listed on the emergency form to pick them up.

## Mandated Reporters

State law requires that all school employees report suspected abuse and neglect to the local county social service.

## School Closing Information

Closings are announced on the radio (WCCO 8:30 AM), local TV stations and on the district website. In addition, parents will also be notified by a School Messenger phone call, email and/or text message.

## Fire, Tornado and Lock Down Drills

Children and staff participate in fire, tornado and lock down drills periodically throughout the year.



# Classroom

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## Toileting

Children must be independent with toileting without the use of a pull-up or a diaper to attend preschool classes. \*Special circumstances are accommodated for children with an IEP or 504 plan.

## Backpacks

Your child should bring a backpack and a filled water bottle to school everyday, labeled with their name. Please make sure that their backpack is large enough to fit all of their belongings, including outdoor gear, extra clothes and a folder for school communication and art work. Please check your child's backpack everyday!

## Preschool Attire

Please have your child arrive in outdoor clothing each day. Children need comfortable, non-restrictive clothing appropriate for active, messy, outdoor play. Comfortable and protective shoes with good soles and covered toes/heels are a necessity. Please keep a labeled change of clothes in your child's backpack including underwear, pants, shirt, and socks. In the winter months, also send a pair of inside shoes.

**Recommended outdoor gear for each season is as follows:**  
Please label all items with your child's name.

- Fall: rubber boots, jacket or sweatshirt, rain jacket with hood or hat, rain pants, light gloves or mittens, sunhat
- Winter: snow pants, winter coat, waterproof mittens, scarf/neck cover, hat/ear covers, boots, wool/fleece socks
- Spring: rubber boots, rain jacket with hood or hat, rain pants, sunhat

**FOR SAFETY PURPOSES, PLEASE NO UMBRELLAS.**

## Outdoor Clothing and Lending Library

We have a gear library for all seasons. Clothing is available to borrow for the day, week, season, or year. Please speak with your child's teacher or naturalist to check out outdoor clothing.

## Snacks

Classes will have a snack time built into their schedule each day. Teachers will communicate snack procedures for each class at the beginning of the year. Students drink water with their snacks. Please send a labeled water bottle to school with your child everyday.

## Conferences

Conferences are held twice a year. Each teacher will send out communication about scheduling conferences. Please plan to attend; you will hear valuable information about your student's progress and some ideas about what you can work on at home to support your child's learning and development.

# Classroom (cont'd)

## Behavior

Preschool teachers are trained in Conscious Discipline and incorporate strategies that foster a positive learning environment for all students. If challenging behavior(s) occur on a continuous basis in the classroom, the teacher may consult with a specialist, in partnership with families, to develop and implement targeted supports to prevent the challenging behavior(s).

## Full Day Lunch and Rest Time

Students will need to bring lunch from home each day and eat breakfast before arriving at school.

Rest time will be a scheduled part of the full day class. Preschoolers need downtime to recharge their minds and bodies. Having a designated rest time gives them a chance to decompress. Students will bring a blanket to create their own space on the floor for rest. During rest time, teachers will turn off the lights and often quiet music will be played. Students are expected to be quiet during this time so that their friends who need to sleep are able to do so. Having rest time encourages preschoolers to slow down, relax, and as a result better process what they have learned that day!

## Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance will be read weekly *at the start of the day on Mondays*. Minnesota Statute 121A.11 mandates that “Anyone who does not wish to participate in reciting the pledge of allegiance for any personal reason may elect not to do so. Students must respect another person’s right to make that choice.



# Health

## Illness/Absences

If your child is ill, or will be absent for any reason, please contact your child’s teacher and let them know. When a child becomes sick during class time, the parent will be called at the phone numbers provided on the emergency form.

## Immunization Record

Any child entering a Minnesota public school must provide a statement from a physician or public clinic indicating the child has received age appropriate immunizations.

## Medication

If medication is necessary during school hours, it will be administered by the school nurse, and in compliance with appropriate law and school district administrative procedures. The following must be provided before a medication (either prescription or over the counter) may be administered to a student at school:

- A signed order from the licensed prescriber stating the name and dose of medication, times and duration for administration.
- A written authorization from a parent/guardian
- Medications must be sent in the original container or pharmacy labeled container

## Allergies

If your child has allergies, an allergy plan should be completed by your child’s physician and a copy should be provided to the health office at your child’s preschool site. Please talk with your child’s teacher and the school nurse about any necessary accommodations.

## Insect Repellent/Sunscreen

We recommend applying insect repellent and sunscreen on your child before coming to school each day, at least until the first frost in the fall, and again after the spring thaw. Please check your child each day for ticks. Please don’t leave bug spray and sunscreen in your child’s bag.

## Adventures

Classes will go on an adventure most days at school. This means the class will leave the classroom areas and hike out onto the Tamarack property. When staff is outside of the classrooms, they will carry a walkie-talkie to maintain communication with the building and insure student safety.

