

NATURE PRESCHOOL Information and FAQs

Nature Preschool at Anoka-Hennepin

Welcome to the Riverview Outdoor Classroom (ROC) Nature Preschool Program, where the classroom is the great outdoors! Our nature-based preschool program sparks curiosity, builds resilience, and fosters a lifelong love of learning through direct experience in nature. We spend a majority of our time outside, regardless of weather. We are in the process of certifying the classroom through [Nature Explore](#).

Students spend their afternoons exploring our [nature certified] outdoor classroom and garden. Learning is primarily driven by the children's interests, questions, and discoveries. The environment is seen as a space for open-ended exploration and play.

Programming includes:

- Hands-on Science: Observing ecosystems and seasonal changes
- Creative Literacy: Storytelling and communication in natural settings
- Motor Skills: Climbing, balancing, and maneuvering in uneven terrain
- Social-Emotional Learning: Collaborative problem-solving and risk-assessment

Give your child the gift of a truly wild and enriching start to their education!

Class Details

Age: 4 years old by September 1, 2026

Location: Riverview Early Childhood Center - Outdoor Classroom

Schedule: M/W or T/Th, 12:45-3:30pm

Why should I consider a Nature Preschool class for my child?

Research shows there are many benefits to nature-based learning. Students become better problem solvers, creative thinkers, and more curious about the world around them.

Nature-based learning can also improve attention, stress levels, and self-discipline, and helps



students navigate risky play. Check out this [video](#) from the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families to learn more about outdoor learning in Minnesota.

What will my child be learning in Nature Preschool?

We believe anything that can be taught indoors can also be taught outdoors. Just like our indoor preschool classes, the Nature Preschool utilizes Creative Curriculum and the Teaching Strategies Gold assessment. Students will learn the same material through similar learning centers, but in an outdoor setting, following Minnesota's Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs).

Features of the ROC:

- Greenhouse for gardening and learning year-round
- Sensory Walk
- Garden beds for planting and digging
- Sandbox and spaces for water and mud play
- Open Area for large-motor activities, music, and movement
- Area for building with outdoor materials
- Stage for Dramatic Play
- Easels for outdoor art and other messy activities
- Structures for climbing

Is my child ready for a Nature Preschool experience?

Nature Preschool is different from a traditional indoor preschool class. While we still follow the Anoka-Hennepin Preschool program guidelines featured in our [handbook](#), there are some additional guidelines to consider:

- Is your child toilet trained, able to use the bathroom independently, and notify an adult when they need to use the bathroom?
- Is your child comfortable getting dirty, muddy, cold, and wet?
- Is your child capable of putting on their jacket, gloves, hats, etc. independently (or with minimal assistance), and keeping those items on throughout play?

Is the entire class time spent outside? What happens if there is inclement weather?

We will spend a majority of time in the outdoor classroom but follow [weather guidelines](#) to determine if class needs to be moved indoors to our indoor preschool classroom.

What kind of outdoor clothing and gear will my child need?

Please see the Three Rivers Park District's Nature School [Recommended Outdoor Gear](#) list, shared with permission. If your child is in need of any gear, please contact our program.

FALL & SPRING		WINTER	
- Jacket/Sweatshirt - Waterproof Mittens - Hat 		- Long underwear top and bottom - Waterproof mittens - Scarf/neck cover - Hat 	
Rain jacket with hood and rain pants/bibs 	OR one piece rain suit 	- Warm, water resistant winter coat - Snowpants 	OR one piece snowsuit 
- Rubber boots (rain boots) - Wool/fleece socks  		- Insulated Boots (snow boots) - Wool/fleece socks 	

What safety protocols are followed?

See information about inclement weather above. The outdoor classroom is completely fenced in, although we may utilize the playground and explore areas outside the fenced area as well with adult supervision. Students will practice safety drills along with the indoor preschool classrooms.

We understand that there is an additional level of risk when children engage with natural materials in natural spaces. We have worked closely with our Buildings & Grounds department to design an outdoor classroom that makes activities as safe as necessary while still giving students the opportunity to engage in appropriate risky play. We also teach and reteach rules and expectations for outdoor play so all students are aware of how to safely engage with classroom materials and centers. If you ever have questions or concerns about safety, please contact our program.

Nature Preschool Contact Information:

Classroom Teacher

April Griffith (Ms. G)

763-506-6167

april.griffith@ahschools.us

Program Supervisor

Sarah Holmboe

763-506-6171

sarah.holmboe@ahschools.us