



Dancing Sol
Nature-based Early Childhood Program

Parent's Handbook
2011-2012

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Welcome to Dancing Sol Early Childhood Program!

This parent handbook will provide you with answers to most of your questions. The handbook contains important policies and information. ***Please read the handbook, complete the form at the end, and return the completed form to us on or before your child's first day of school.*** We are happy to answer any further questions you may have.

What does your child need for their first day?

The children will play outside in the varying Northwest weather every day. It is imperative that children come prepared for our outdoor adventures so that they can fully participate in all activities. Please provide:

- ⊗ Appropriate clothing for weather each day.
- ⊗ A pair of rain boots w/good traction (like Bogs) and a rain coat (w/hood or rain hat) to be available every day (can be left at school). Rain pants are a great choice to prevent many changes of clothes. Parents often leave the pants at school to dry between wearings and wash only when necessary.
- ⊗ We will take our boots off at the door and will change into indoor shoes or slippers. Please provide a pair of slippers (w/sole) or other slip-on shoes to wear in the classroom (to be kept at school).
- ⊗ At least one extra change of clothing appropriate for weather. (Pants, shirt, socks, underwear.)
- ⊗ Water container (non-aluminum metal or BPA-free plastic are suggested).
- ⊗ We will provide a nutritious snack. Please send your child with a nutritious lunch each day. Please do not send candy or desserts.
- ⊗ Sunscreen labeled with your child's name.

In addition, please provide a copy of your child's immunization record. We must comply with Oregon law, which requires us to have updated records on each child's immunization status.

Here are some important dates:

Open House (Tue/Thurs)	Sept 8 (Th) 10-11:30
Open House (M/W/F)	Sept. 9 (F) 10-11:30
Classes Begin	Sept. 12 (M)
Last Day	June 15 (F)

There will be no school on the following days:

Veterans Day	Nov. 11 (F)
Thanksgiving	Nov. 24, 25, 26 (W,Th, F)
Winter Vacation	Dec. 19-Jan. 3
Martin Luther King Jr.	Jan. 16 (M)
Presidents' Day	Feb. 20 (M)
Spring Vacation	Mar. 26–April 2 (M–M)
Memorial Day	May 28 (M)

Thank you! We are looking forward to getting to know your child and your family. This is going to be a fantastic year!

- Matty & Rees Maxwell

WHO ARE WE?

It is our vision that all children experience themselves as part of nature and grow to become compassionate and peaceful stewards of the earth.

Matty Maxwell has a Masters in Science in Early Childhood Special Education. She has 20+ years of teaching/consulting experience in the field of Early Childhood Education. Her experience varies from working with infants through 5th graders, providing home intervention and parent education, working with at-risk youth and teen parents, working with children who have a wide variety of special needs, and consulting with preschools and child care centers. She received training in the Art of Mentoring through Wilderness Awareness School in Duvall, WA and has taught summer nature camps through Nearby Nature and for 3 years at Dancing Sol.

Rees Maxwell has an Associates Degree, and completed the Wilderness Awareness Residential Program from Wilderness Awareness School in Duvall, WA. He has extensive training and experience in outdoor living skills, and environmental education. He has taught children from 3 years old through high school, has worked with at-risk youth, young adults with Autism, and has taught adults. In 2009 Rees co-founded Whole Earth Nature School where he mentors children through their Coyote Kids! after-school nature program at Eugene/Springfield elementary schools, and runs annual summer nature camps for kids aged 4-15. Rees is a certified volunteer for Lane County Sheriff's Search and Rescue.

(All adults working in the classroom including volunteers have a background check through the State of Oregon. All paid staff have Infant First Aid / CPR, Food Handler's Permits, and training in Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention and Reporting.)

Philosophy / Teaching Approach

We believe that children learn when they are curious and having fun. They learn through their senses and through active contact with their environment, and most importantly, through play. We accomplish this with a combination of an outdoor classroom, the Wee Wilderness, and an indoor classroom that encourages creative play.

We assist children in discovering their own gifts and building new strengths, help them begin to understand who they are as individuals and as members of a community, and mentor them in forming a deep connection with nature. Our teaching approach is a blending from different schools. Some aspects come from Wilderness Awareness School, and some from the best practices in the field of Early Childhood Education.

Coyote Mentoring

The animal Coyote is sly and indirect. He has a lesson for us but he lets us discover it for ourselves. Coyote Mentoring is an approach to teaching/learning through lessons that are hidden in games and stories. Coyote Mentoring taps into the passion that is within each child, and inspires the child to extend and expand on this motivation.

For example, a group of children walking in the woods may come across some unusual marks on the bark of a tree. In other teaching approaches, the teacher might start a mini-lecture

describing what forces may have caused these marks. She or he might name the tree and various facts relating to the tree. In doing this, the children may lose interest or may only hold the factual information in their minds briefly. However, with Coyote Mentoring, the teacher will spark the magic that hides in any mystery. She or he will ask the children a variety of questions without identifying right or wrong answers. The questions are specifically asked to help direct attention to important characteristics that will help children find the answer for themselves. As long as there is a mystery, or an unanswered question, the child will continue to seek knowledge. She may wonder about this question, ask her own questions, draw a picture about it, talk to her parents about it, look in books for the animal that may have made the marks, she may act out a scene that explains the marks and she will probably start to notice other trees that have similar marks. Her awareness grows, her perception grows and in this process her mind develops in a way that will serve her to teach herself.

Emergent Curriculum

Emergent curriculum is a dynamic process in which teachers and students develop and explore knowledge together. The curriculum is not pre-defined, but it is created from within the child and the environment. As an example, a little girl in my class had taken a family trip to a big city. She was fascinated with the tall buildings and she brought this interest into the class by sharing a photo album. We saw this as a learning opportunity and started providing new types of building blocks and materials, giving the children challenges to re-create the buildings in the photos. Children became frustrated when their block structures fell. This frustration created a positive 'tension' that kept children's interest and helped them to discover how to build structures that were more stable. We integrated math and science and literacy and public speaking. In the end we created a gallery of the different structures and held a special exhibit for the parents and community.

Core Routines

In any field of knowledge there are core routines that will build essential skills in order to master that field. There is a set of routines that are used in our curriculum that we have learned through Wilderness Awareness School (founded by Jon Young). These core routines that we are implementing foster a competence in the natural world, and an understanding of balance within nature. These core routines build awareness of the world around us in a variety of ways.

These routines include:

Thanksgiving

- ⚙ We will spend time each day bringing awareness to the things in our lives that we are thankful for.

Expanding our senses

- ⚙ Our ability to hear, see, taste, smell and feel can be expanded greatly. For example, we will put on "Deer Ears" to focus on sounds, and we'll put on "Owl Eyes" to expand our visual perception. Again, these routines are taught through games and ride on the motivation that comes from within the child.

Sit spot

- ⚙ Learning to sit in a quiet way, in the same location, over a period of time, using all the senses to observe the natural world.
- ⚙ Is it hard to imagine your 3 year old sitting quietly and just observing? This routine is first taught through games and through play. As the child matures, the

skill will also mature.

Questioning

- ⚙ Questioning is used to increase awareness and attention to specific identifying information. This type of questioning often encourages children to form their answers in their own mind without saying them out-loud, so that other learners can form their own knowledge.

Animal forms

- ⚙ Children learn to move as different animals, learning new ways of moving for strength and flexibility as well as identifying the strengths of each animal.

Exploring field guides

- ⚙ Here is where we often start when we look for answers to our questions...which often leads us to more questions.

Journaling

- ⚙ Each child will keep a journal with their own drawings and observations (adults will help write).

Story of the day

- ⚙ The whole group participates in this sharing of experiences. The 'story' is told verbally but may be written with pictures and words to expand children's literacy skills.

Orienting to the Natural Cycles

Each part of a day, or each part of a year, or each part of a life cycle has its own energy. If you were to choose a point on a compass to place the sunrise, or the Spring thaw, or a child's birth, you would probably place them in the East. Each element of a natural cycle can be mapped to a direction of a compass, and this is how we guide our planning, instruction and reflection process. We will provide more information about this concept to anyone who expresses interest.

Parent Involvement

Parent interaction and involvement is valued and encouraged. These children need a village and you, as parents, know your child better than anyone else. If you are interested in volunteering in your child's class, please contact Matty or Rees. We will have many opportunities for all parents to be involved at different levels. Regular brief communication between teachers and families can take place at the start and end of each school day. In-depth communication can take place in person, over email or phone calls during non-class times. The teachers at Dancing Sol will monitor children's progress during the year and parents can expect to participate in a parent/teacher conference to share observations, highlight child strengths and identify learning needs.

Schedule

Class meets from 8:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. each day. Doors will open at 8:40. Additional child care hours can be arranged individually and are subject to space availability. Please talk to Matty about child care needs.

Deposit

A \$100 deposit is required to hold your child's space in the class, payable with a completed registration form. This deposit is applied to the last month of tuition if at least two weeks notice is given. No portion of the tuition deposit shall be refunded if the child is withdrawn within the first 30 days of enrollment.

Tuition

Tuition will be due on the first working day of each month. The basic rates will apply:

M/W/F session: \$305/month

T/Th session: \$205/month

Mon-Fri session: \$460

Tuition is a flat rate from September-May regardless of vacations, holidays or snow days. June's tuition is 50% of the usual amount. Tuition can be paid by cash or personal check made payable to **Dancing Sol**.

Late Fees

The monthly tuition payments are due on the first day of the month. Any payments not made within 5 days from the due date are subject to a late fee of \$25.00. If tuition is not paid by the 15th day of the month, the child will not be invited back to class until tuition is paid in full. Please note: tuition credit is not given due to absence. If tuition is not paid by the end of the month, the tuition deposit is retained, and subsequent re-enrollment will entail payment of past due tuition, and an additional \$100 deposit, and is subject to space availability. Please note: a \$25.00 returned check fee will be charged for NSF returned checks.

Additional Childcare

Additional childcare hours may be arranged on an individual basis. Additional childcare costs \$7/hour with a minimum increment of 1/2 hour.

Materials Fee

We charge an annual materials fee of \$25 which will provide the following:

- ⚙ Special art materials & supplies that will be used throughout the year
- ⚙ Nature journal

Field Trip Fees

We will schedule one or two field trips during the year that match the class' curricular focus. These trips are dependent on parent transportation and parent participation. Depending on the total cost of these trips, we may charge an additional fee to participate in these field trips. You will be notified of the additional fees required to participate in these field trips within a reasonable amount of time prior to the trip.

Withdrawals

Parents may withdraw a child from the program at any time. After the first 30 days, a two-week notice is required to recover your deposit. Parents wishing to withdraw their child, but who fail to provide a two-week notice will forfeit the deposit that was paid upon enrollment. Withdrawal and subsequent re-enrollment will entail an additional \$100 deposit, and is subject to space availability. No portion of the tuition deposit shall be refunded if the child is withdrawn within the first 30 days of enrollment.

Late Pick Up

We understand that there are unforeseen events and emergencies that may arise in your schedule. If for any reason you should be delayed when picking up your child, please call and inform us that you will be late as soon as you possibly can. If you do not arrive at the scheduled pick up time, we will begin calling the emergency contacts that you have provided to pick up your child. We will charge \$10/per half hour for late pick up.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Dancing Sol admits all children regardless of race, color, nationality, disability or religious background. We encourage diversity and strive to support families' cultures and backgrounds.

Food

If your child has nutritional requirements that are not compatible with the snacks we provide, we ask that you provide us with alternative food. Please provide this food 'ready to eat' in containers marked with your child's name.

⊗ *If your child is allergic to any food, please make sure the instructors are aware of it, as well as identifying the allergy on the registration form.*

If your child wants to celebrate a birthday and wishes to bring a snack, please let the instructors know at least one day before the special day, so that we may create time for the celebration. Our health and safety requirements dictate that food must be purchased and kept in the original package to minimize food contamination. We apologize that we cannot have you bring homemade food.

Illnesses

The Oregon Health Department prohibits childcare centers from admitting children who show any of the following symptoms:

- ⊗ Fever over 100 degrees taken under the arm (same as 101 oral)
- ⊗ Diarrhea (more than one incident in a day)
- ⊗ Vomiting
- ⊗ Nausea
- ⊗ Severe cough
- ⊗ Unusual yellow color of skin or eyes
- ⊗ Difficult breathing or wheezing
- ⊗ Complaints of severe pain
- ⊗ Skin, eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping, or pus-filled
- ⊗ Stiff neck and headache with one or more of the symptoms listed above.

For the protection of all the children, your child should be kept at home if s/he shows any of the above symptoms. Parents should exercise every caution and keep their child home should other unusual symptoms occur. If a child has been exposed to a contagious disease they should be kept at home and *the fact of their condition should be reported to the school.* (Strep throat, pinworms, viral infections, infected areas and or swollen glands, measles, mumps, chicken pox, scarlet fever, etc. are among those conditions considered "highly contagious"). If a child becomes ill during the day, s/he will be isolated and parents will be contacted and asked to take the child home at the soonest convenience. We are prohibited by law from caring for sick children.

Medicines

Prescription medicines and non-prescription medicines (children's pain reliever, antibacterial first aid cream, homeopathic remedies, and diapering ointment) to be given to your child must be handed to the staff person in charge. The parent must fill out the necessary information on the Medication Authorization form. Medication may be given under the following conditions:

- ⊗ The medication must be in its original container, labeled with the name of the child, the name of the drug, the physician, the dosage and instructions for administering the medication.
- ⊗ Non-prescription medication, such as Tylenol, sunscreen, etc., must be labeled with the child's name, instructions and dosage. Over the counter medications must also be kept in their original containers.
- ⊗ Syrup of ipecac may be administered if deemed necessary by the poison control operator.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical or dental emergency or accident, we will contact 911 and the parents of the child. Your authorization for the school to contact your family physician/dentist and to take whatever emergency medical procedures are deemed necessary is part of this agreement (*see registration form*).

Emergency Procedures

In case of an emergency (fire, earthquake, etc.) parents and or emergency contacts will be notified by telephone. In the event of evacuation, parents will be contacted and instructed to pick their children up immediately. In order for your children to be safe, it is vital that we have your current contact information on file.

Snow Days

Dancing Sol makes a decision to close for inclement weather based on the determination of the Eugene 4J school district. If the local public schools are closed due to bad weather and or hazardous road conditions, we will be closed as well. Our property is situated at about 1000 ft. in elevation so we sometimes get snow when there is rain in the lower elevations of Eugene. If you are concerned about the weather conditions, please call Dancing Sol and we will let you know what the roads look like up here.

Mandatory Reporting

Dancing Sol is obligated by the State of Oregon to report any suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect.

Guidance and Discipline Policy

The foundation of the guidance and discipline policy at Dancing Sol Early Childhood Program is to encourage positive behavior and social competence.

Our underlying assumptions:

- ⊗ All children want to feel a sense of “belonging”; they want to feel important and included.
- ⊗ All children desire positive attention from the adults around them; however, when they do not gain positive attention, they will seek negative attention.
- ⊗ All behavior is a form of communication. Children are trying to meet their needs (to gain attention, to obtain something, to avoid something). It is our job as teachers to understand what they need and to teach them a more appropriate way of getting their need met.

We put our greatest effort in *preventing* inappropriate behavior. Dancing Sol provides a supportive and nurturing environment where communication from each child is valued and encouraged. We create an environment where positive behavior is reinforced and where inappropriate behavior is not necessary. We teach children how to use words to express what they want, what they need, and how they feel. We teach them how to treat themselves and others with respect, and we facilitate verbal problem solving when children are in conflict.

Our class rules:

“The Three Rs”

- 1. Respect Yourself**
- 2. Respect Others**
- 3. Respect the Environment**

Even when all preventative measures have been put in place to encourage positive behavior, children will sometimes test the limits! Our response to inappropriate or negative behavior may include: redirecting the child’s activity, ignoring attention seeking behavior, discussing the situation with the child, and/or using firm, clear and concise language to instruct the child as to a more positive way to express her/himself. In situations when a child is having difficulty changing her/his behavior, and the above techniques have been unsuccessful, the staff will use a logical consequence. This may include removing her/him from the situation for a brief period of time. The teacher would then explain to the child what is expected in order to rejoin the activity.

In the event that a problem behavior persists, the teachers will keep in close communication with the child’s family in order to develop a comprehensive plan to improve her/his behavior. Dancing Sol will make a reasonable effort to support the child and change his/her behavior.

However, if the child’s behavior persists and endangers the safety of other children, or whose behavior is so disruptive that the teachers are unable to give appropriate attention to the other children in the program, Dancing Sol reserves the right to not allow the child to return to class. In this unlikely event, the deposit will be returned to the family and the childcare contract will be terminated immediately.