



Smith Urban Nature Preschool FAQs

Application Process & Tuition

[How old do children need to be?](#)

[How do I apply? What is your admissions timeline? When will we receive admissions decisions?](#)

[What is the cost of tuition?](#)

[What is the cost of before and after care?](#)

[Do you offer tuition assistance? How do you determine eligibility?](#)

[Which holidays do you close for?](#)

[Does my child need to be potty trained to attend?](#)

[What is your criteria for admissions?](#)

[Do you have a sibling priority policy?](#)

[Do you waive the application fee for multiple applicants from the same family?](#)

Schedule, Program, Student Support, Staff

[What are your program dates and hours?](#)

[What is your child to staff ratio?](#)

[Are there half- and full-time options?](#)

[What do drop-off and pick-up look like?](#)

[What are your routines around snack and lunch?](#)

[Will there be nap time?](#)

[What is your approach to learning? Do you follow a specific curriculum?](#)

[What will a typical day look like?](#)

[What will outdoor time look like? How much time will kids spend outside?](#)

[What if it's rainy or cold?](#)

[What does safe, outdoor play look like?](#)

[How do you approach learning differences?](#)

[What if you can't provide the support that a child needs?](#)

[What are your staff qualifications?](#)

[Are the classrooms mixed age?](#)

[Is there a summer option?](#)

Parental Roles & Responsibilities

[What materials will I need to provide?](#)

[What role will/can parents play in the preschool?](#)

[Will there be parent/teacher conferences?](#)

Health & Safety

[What about food allergies?](#)

[What about bee sting allergies?](#)

[What if a child gets hurt?](#)

[I've heard that Lyme disease is a risk if you play outdoors. How will you address that?](#)

[Do you have a COVID policy for students and families? Will children wear masks when outside?](#)

Are there half- and full-time options?

No, we offer a full-time option only, which runs from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. We offer before-care starting at 7:30 a.m. for \$9/day. We offer free after-care until 6:00 p.m. Parents/guardians are welcome to pick up any time between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m.

What do drop-off and pick-up look like?

Families will bring children into the classroom or morning meeting area by 9:00 a.m. where they will be greeted by the staff. Families will sign their children into the program on a daily attendance sheet. As determined by the

CDC and Health Dept, we will also have COVID protocols in place, such as temperature checks and daily health screenings.

Children will only be released to the families/guardians and individuals named in the child's files as approved for pick-up. Families will come in and sign their child out on the daily attendance sheet. Families and guardians must notify SUNP staff of any changes to the list of approved adults picking up their child. Children will not be released to unauthorized persons.

Our day ends at 3:00 p.m., but we also provide free after-care until 6:00 p.m. Parents/guardians are welcome to pick up any time between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m.

What materials will I need to provide?

Certain articles of clothing and equipment are needed by the children at school. They will be brought to school on the first day and remain at school throughout the year. Please check the list carefully and be sure all are labeled:

- Two complete sets of clothing (including underwear and socks). Check often to make sure that clothing items are stocked and are seasonally appropriate as well as still fit your child.
- Pair of labeled waterproof rubber boots to keep at school for rainy days as well as water exploration. Snow boots are recommended for the winter months. Organized rain gear drives or swaps may occur throughout the year.
- Lunch, snack(s), and reusable water bottle, provided by families daily.
- Each child should bring 3 CLEAN MASKS DAILY.

What are your routines around snack and lunch?

Mealtimes are a special time for building relationships and developing connections while engaging in conversations among children and teachers. Children will gather for a snack in the morning and afternoon. We also encourage children to drink throughout the day and ask that families bring a reusable water bottle for their child each day. This should be taken home at the end of every day to be washed and sanitized. Please be sure to label all water bottles and food containers.

Children in our program eat lunch with their teachers and peers. We make a strong effort to introduce healthy eating habits and ask families to send a simple, well-balanced lunch for their children. Please let us know if your child has any dietary restrictions or food allergies.

Please do not send any food that needs to be warmed or reheated in a microwave. Also, we may not serve children under the age of 4 hot dogs (whole or sliced), whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, or raw carrots as they present choking hazards. These are recommendations provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Will there be nap time?

Yes. Each child will be assigned their own rest mat provided by SUN Preschool. Please provide a crib sized sheet and blanket labeled with your child's name. One comfort item (small stuffy or blankie) is also allowed. Children are not required to sleep. Those children who do not sleep will rest or read books.

What about food allergies?

Many children have food allergies. The prevalence of peanut and tree nut allergies, the most serious food allergies in children, has doubled in the past ten years. A life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis can occur even with the slightest exposure to an allergen. If your child has a food allergy, please let us know and complete an Allergy Action Plan, to provide guidance in prevention and outline steps to take in case of exposure. Smith Urban Nature Preschool and Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse are not peanut/nut-free facilities; however, if we have a child in a class with peanut or other severe food allergies, we may restrict certain foods from being sent into school for the safety of that child. In order to provide a safe environment for all our children, the following guidelines and steps are followed:

1. Children with allergies are supported in taking responsibility to be knowledgeable of their allergies and avoid foods containing a harmful ingredient.
2. When an individual food allergy care plan is in place, children, families, and SUN Preschool staff will all adhere and follow the set plan. If the plan includes restrictions of certain foods in class, all families will be

notified of this restriction and expected to adhere to it.

3. We ask that families remain flexible if special health accommodations come up during the school year. Our main concern is the health and safety of the children at school and with the help and support of all families, we can ensure a safe environment for everyone.
4. All children who are in class with a child who has a life-threatening allergy should wash hands after eating.
5. Children should not trade or share lunch, snacks or drinks.

What about bee sting allergies?

Families of children with known bee sting allergies must complete an Allergy Action Plan and submit it with their enrollment paperwork. If a child with an allergy is stung, we will implement the Allergy Action Plan and families will be notified. Any time an EpiPen is administered, our protocol is to follow it with a call to 911. If a child without a known allergy begins to develop symptoms of an allergic reaction after having been stung, Benadryl will be administered and 911 will be called. This is treated as a medical emergency and families will be notified.

What is your approach to learning? Do you follow a specific curriculum?

The Smith Urban Nature Preschool does not have one particular curriculum that it follows; instead, it pulls from a variety, using research and teacher expertise to inform programming. Our curriculum focuses on developing the whole child by promoting growth in physical, social, emotional, and intellectual areas. The core principles of our program were developed by students at the Jubilee School in Philadelphia, so we are truly a school designed by and for children. As we follow an emergent curriculum/project approach, our themes, projects, and studies will most often come from the ideas and interests of the children and the natural world.

We will maintain consistent communication with families about our program, both weekly updates and long-term work. Families will also be invited to conferences during the year to talk with teachers about their child's progress and learning.

What will a typical day look like?

Each day will look a bit different based on the weather and different ongoing projects. However, there will be some consistent components. Each day will include:

- Community circle
- Fine and gross motor skill development
- Time outdoors
- Art, music, and movement
- Sensory activities
- Math and science concepts
- Storytime and language concepts
- Whole group, small group, and individual time
- Snack and lunch
- Nap/rest time

Each week will also include time in the Playhouse and/or on the Playground.

What will outdoor time look like? How much time will kids spend outside?

Kids will spend time outdoors every day in a variety of spaces. We have a playspace connected to our classrooms where kids can gather, play games, do outdoor lessons and storytime, and other activities. In our nature space students will have opportunities for hiking, playing in the mud, and climbing trees and rocks under the guidance and supervision of their teachers. You can expect that your child will get dirty during these hikes. We will also spend time on the Playground.

In terms of time spent outdoors, this, too, will vary. We are lucky to have an outdoor space adjacent to the classrooms where we will spend time each day as an extension of our classroom. On a warm spring day, we may spend several hours outdoors.

At the outset of the year, we will gauge the children's comfort and experience with the natural world, then work to gradually grow and strengthen their outdoor skills such as hiking, observing, and exploring. Each day will include one to two nature explorations, weather permitting.

What if it's rainy or cold?

For weather-related emergency closings, we will make our own independent determination by 6:00 a.m. of the day in question. Emergency closings

notifications will be left on the school's outgoing voicemail message. When in school, we will still plan to be outside for some of each day, regardless of the weather, so students should dress accordingly. The preschool classrooms are heated/air-conditioned, so there will be enough indoor space to keep students happy, safe, and comfortable.

What does safe, outdoor play look like?

We will be outside in various types of weather while always being aware of the children's health and safety. We follow weather alerts to determine safe temperatures for outdoor play and exploration. To ensure that children are protected in our outdoor space and in various types of weather, we follow these guidelines:

- Families are asked to send clothing to allow layering for cold weather outside play (appropriate snow boots and snowsuits will be essential for outdoor play during winter in colder conditions)
- Some clothing is not safe for outdoor excursions and play, such as open-toed shoes, flip flops, Crocs, and umbrellas.
- Teachers will ensure that all children have dry clothing when going outside in cold weather.
- Families are asked to apply sunblock to their child before arriving at school. We also ask that if a child needs it, sunscreen or sunblock can be brought to school to be reapplied in the afternoon. Each container of sunscreen or sunblock should be labeled with the child's name and will be stored appropriately.
- Teachers and staff will maintain trails and keep them free from hazards.
- Teachers will carry cell phones when outdoors.

Smith Urban Nature Preschool advocates playing outdoors as integral to children's enjoyment of their lives, their health, and their development.

Through play, children are creating their own culture, developing their abilities, exploring their creativity and learning about themselves, other people and the world around them. All children and young people need to play. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated. Children and young people determine and control the

content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas, and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

The role of our staff is to support all children and young people in the creation of space in which they can play. Our staff responds to children and young people playing based on current knowledge of the play process and reflective practice. Our staff chooses an intervention-style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All staff intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and wellbeing of children.

What if a child gets hurt?

Children who play actively outdoors frequently come home with minor scratches, bumps, and bruises. We treat these minor injuries with soap, water, and bandages for scratches, ice packs for bumps and stings, and loving care. The most common plant and insect hazards are poison ivy (causes an itchy skin rash if allergic), stinging nettle (gives a stinging, tingly sensation when touched, sometimes minor swelling at the site), and yellowjacket stings (mostly in the summer). We teach kids how to recognize poison ivy and stinging nettle. We typically do not call families if their child is stung (unless they are allergic), or gets bumps, bruises, or scratches, as they are simply a part of outdoor play, but we will notify families of the incident at pick-up.

If an accident, injury, or emergency should occur, we aim to learn from that experience and modify our policies and procedures if necessary. An Incident Report Form will be completed and given to families for any accident or incident occurring on our property and/or during one of our programs onsite or offsite. The original report will be given to the family or guardian and a copy will be kept on file.

If the injury is a life-threatening emergency medical situation, we will contact emergency medical services (911). If it is not a life-threatening emergency, we will determine appropriate next steps. In both cases, the child's family will be called. If we are unable to reach the families, we will try the other emergency contacts noted. If we are unable to reach the family or the emergency contact, we will contact the proper emergency personnel.

I've heard that Lyme disease is a risk if you play outdoors. How will you address that?

As part of the enrollment packet, families and teachers receive information about Lyme disease and the risk associated with our programs, including

information sheets and pictures of what to look for. Staff conduct tick checks with the children after walks, hikes, and at the end of the day. Families are an essential part of reducing the risk of Lyme disease and should make tick checks a daily routine, e.g. after returning home from school or before bedtime.

What role will/can parents/guardians play in the Preschool?

To be successful in achieving our educational mission, it is essential that families and the school work together cooperatively. The relationship between home and school works best when families understand our school's mission, share its core values, and support its programs, faculty, and staff.

Families will play an essential and positive role in the life of Smith Urban Nature Preschool. Not only are families necessary partners in educating their children; they support the program and its children through volunteer activities as well as educational and social events. Families are expected to work productively with teachers, staff, and administrators by communicating concerns openly and constructively. Families should stay informed about their child's progress and about important events in the life of the preschool. We welcome thoughtful questions and suggestions about these matters.

As a part of the application process, families will be asked to complete a Parent/Guardian Questionnaire. We ask that you take the time to carefully and thoughtfully complete this questionnaire as it is a valuable document that provides teachers with a detailed "snapshot" of your child and family. Please feel free to share any ongoing information about your child, as well as ideas to support your child's learning. We encourage families to raise any concerns and work collaboratively with the teachers to find solutions that teachers can incorporate into classroom practice.

Teachers in the early childhood program will send out a weekly newsletter highlighting explorations and activities from the week. Every child has a folder in their cubby or mail bin where teachers place artwork and writing to be sent home, as well as important flyers and announcements. The teaching staff also regularly use email for reminders and announcements. If you wish to meet with teachers or the director at any other time, let us know and we can arrange it.

Family involvement is critical to the development of young children and to the success of their school experience. Family involvement includes:

- Attending orientation days, held in August, where you will meet the staff and learn what to expect for the coming year
- Volunteering for special days
- Participating in class as a reader or special snack provider
- Attending family activities, scheduled throughout the year
- Reading the materials and flyers sent home with your child
- Picking up and dropping off your child promptly at designated times
- Sending your child to school each day with the appropriate clothing and supplies

We also welcome families to become involved in Smith Memorial Playground events and activities outside of the early childhood program. We offer regular member events, education, art, and stewardship programs and volunteer opportunities for adults and children. Please check our calendar of events and webpage for details.

Will there be family/teacher conferences?

A significant way to increase the effectiveness of what we do is by communicating with families about their child's experiences in our program. We look forward to doing this in many ways through discussions and face to face conversations as well as family/teacher conferences. Family/teacher conferences provide the opportunity to talk with your child's teachers in a relaxed atmosphere, free from the distractions of drop-off and pick-up time. Conferences will be scheduled throughout the year and you can look forward to receiving more information about them when the school year begins. Open and honest communication between families and teachers allows for a happier and more successful experience for your child.

How do you approach learning differences?

Our early childhood program serves a variety of children ranging in abilities, interests, and developmental needs. While we do not specialize in serving children with learning disabilities or concentration disorders, we realize that all schools have children with limited learning difficulties or varying developmental needs.

While our emphasis is always on helping all children learn effectively, adjustments the program can provide are necessarily limited to those remedies contained within our existing capacities, resources, policies, and facilities. Modifications that can be made to accommodate the needs of a particular child must take into account the resources of the Preschool.

School staff will accommodate children with special individual needs during all activities, within reason, provided that these needs are communicated to our staff as soon as they are known and that it is within our capacity to provide the needed support. Families are required to provide staff with any information that they feel will help the Smith Urban Nature Preschool support their child. The teaching staff works with children who have learning differences documented by a formal evaluation (as outlined by an IEP, IFSP or other support documents). These services should support children who are able to succeed in the regular education program with minimal specialist support, through consultation and/or short-term interventions in a small group or individual settings. If the level of support a child needs to succeed in our program is greater than our resources, we will encourage that child's family to seek support services for their child. Our teaching staff will work with these specialists and each child's family to make the outside work meaningful to our curriculum.

What if you can't provide the support that a child needs?

It is our hope that every child enrolled in our program will complete their experience, but even with the care and support we give to every child, this is not always possible or ideal. There are times when even after receiving specifically designed educational support, children may continue to exhibit either a lack of developmental progress or a pattern of situational inappropriate behavior of such frequency, duration, or intensity that it disrupts that child's own learning or the learning of other children.

In these cases, the director may have to meet with the child's families to discuss alternative educational options. If the staff determines that the Smith Urban Nature Preschool is not an appropriate placement for the child, continued enrollment and attendance during the pending school year will be terminated, and/or enrollment for the next school year will not be accepted. In this event, we will work with the child's family to explore alternate appropriate placements whenever reasonably possible. Again, our goal is to serve all of our children and their families within the context of our available resources.

Do you have a COVID policy for students and families? Will children wear masks when outside?

Yes. We believe that our nature program and its offerings of time spent outside with caring adults and other children, especially now, is vital. It is also, however, of utmost importance to us that we are doing our part to keep our

families, teachers and community safe. We will be following guidelines set out by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as from the PA Department of Education, specifically the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). We will share these protocols with all families before the start of the school year. They will include information about a COVID-19 waiver that families will sign, policies with masks and hand washing, our cleaning protocols, and daily health screenings.

As of now (Spring 2021), we do not yet know if the CDC will recommend children wearing masks when outside next fall. We will communicate with families as soon as we have that information.

What is your child to staff ratio?

10:1. We have 1 staff member for every 10 children.

What are your staff qualifications?

Our lead teachers will have a four-year degree in education. Our assistant teachers will have at least an associates degree related to education.

Are the classrooms mixed age?

Yes, our classrooms are mixed age. Research has shown that academic and social skills improve for all students in mixed-age classrooms. In addition, mixed-age classrooms mimic family structures and neighborhood groupings, as well as help to teach leadership among the older children.

What are your program dates and hours?

Smith Urban Nature Preschool is a full-day program that runs from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. We offer before-care starting at 7:30 a.m. for \$9/day. We offer free after-care until 6:00 p.m.

The first day of school is August 31, 2021, and the last day of the school year is June 17, 2022. An optional summer session will be available for families who choose to continue through the summer.

What holidays do you close for?

Smith Urban Nature Preschool observes the following holidays and will be closed accordingly (For calendar dates, please see School Year Calendar on our webpage):

- Labor Day
- Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Election Day

- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Winter Break (See School Year Calendar)
- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Chinese New Year
- Presidents' Day
- Spring Break (See School Year Calendar)
- Eid-al-Fitr
- Memorial Day

Does my child need to be potty-trained to attend?

Yes, all students need to be fully potty trained and able to use the bathroom independently to attend Smith Urban Nature Preschool. We understand accidents occur with preschool children. The extra set of clothing you provide will be used if an accident does occur.

What is the cost of tuition?

Base monthly tuition is \$1500 per child to be paid on the first of each month from September through June. Please read [below](#) for questions about tuition assistance.

What is the cost of before and after care?

We are a fully-day program that runs 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Before-care begins at 7:30 a.m. for \$9/day. After-care runs until 6:00 p.m. There is no charge for after-care; it is included in the tuition.

How old do children need to be?

Smith Urban Nature Preschool serves children ages 3-5. Children must be at least 3 years old and not older than 5 years old by September 1 of the year they will enroll.

How do I apply? What is your admissions timeline? When will we receive admissions decisions?

The application is available at www.smithplayground.org/preschool. Families who are interested should complete and submit the application with a \$50 application fee via our webpage. The application fee may be paid in one of the following methods:

- "Pay Now" button on our webpage
- Venmo (@SmithPlayground1899, memo SUN application)
- Check (payable to "Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse")

- Request a fee waiver (email preschool@smithplayground.org; you will receive an email with a waiver code, which you will enter on the application)

Once your application has been received, we will reach out to schedule two meetings: a virtual Parent Visit, which is an opportunity to meet with one of our Founding Directors, as well as a Classroom Visit, which is an opportunity for us to meet your child and see your child in action. Each of these visits will be approximately 30 minutes.

We will begin sharing admissions decisions in June of 2021. Enrollment will be offered on a rolling basis per availability.

The enrollment contract and deposit (\$750) are due two weeks from the offer of enrollment. The deposit will be reduced or waived if you are eligible for tuition assistance.

Do you offer tuition assistance? How do you determine eligibility?

We have a tuition assistance program. Families who have a household income equal to or below 3X the current Federal Poverty Guidelines are eligible. For more information, visit www.aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines. If you are interested in applying for tuition assistance, we ask that you complete the Financial Information section of the application and submit financial documentation. Any information shared will be kept confidential within the SUN Preschool Finance Committee. The enrollment deposit of \$750 will be reduced or waived if you are eligible for tuition assistance.

What is your criteria for admissions?

SUN Preschool values diversity of all types and is looking for a wide range of applicants. We are excited to create a diverse classroom of students from all backgrounds, temperaments, abilities, and play styles. Our admissions decisions are primarily based on availability, not aptitude; however, we aim to create a well-balanced classroom by all criteria.

Do you have a sibling priority policy?

Yes, we prioritize a family's preference to have siblings attend the same program, whether siblings are applying concurrently for the same admissions year or a younger sibling will be applying for a future admissions year. If you are applying for more than one child in the same admissions year, we will waive the application fee for the second and all subsequent applicants.

Do you waive the application fee for multiple applicants from the same family?

Yes, if you are applying for more than one child in the same admissions year we will waive the application fee for the second and all subsequent applicants.

Is there a summer option?

Unfortunately, we will not have availability for SUN Preschool students to join *Camp Read* for Summer 2021. However, SUN Preschool students and siblings of eligible ages will be given priority to register for Smith's 2022 summer programs through March 1. After March 1, summer programs will be offered to the general public.