

Welcome to Nature's Lab!

Our Beginning

Nature's Lab was founded in 2018 based on Silvia's dream of creating a bilingual preschool that is based on the recent research demonstrating how children learn and develop best. The nature-based STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) curriculum was established based on this modern research which tells us that such programs significantly improve children's cognitive, emotional and motor skills development. At Nature's Lab we aim to create a fun learning atmosphere where children thrive, foster long-lasting relationships, and engage in a diverse series of dynamic child-focus learning activities.

The seed of Nature's Lab was sprouted in Silvia's heart during her master's Thesis work which revealed the benefits of outdoor play. This passion grew as she coached and evaluated child development programs throughout the state of California, noticing that many schools didn't take advantage of what research tells us works best for children. Through her years as a preschool/toddler teacher, coach/assessor, professor, and manager of Sacramento County's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for Early Learning programs Silvia has been greatly inspired by her wonderful mentors, teachers, and colleagues that were an integral part of her career, and who eagerly encouraged her to bring her dream to fruition.

Silvia's husband, Dr. Johnathon Anderson is a professor at the UC Davis Medical Center, with a PhD in molecular genetics and a former artist. His research lab focuses on developing stem cell-based therapeutics. His passion for teaching and STEAM education became a strong driver that helped Silvia craft Nature's Lab. Their young son, Luke, provided tons of additional inspiration and personally tested out all of the equipment and activities prior to their grand opening.

Nature's Lab is the culmination of the Anderson Family's love and passion for learning, discovery, and education. We are so excited to open our doors to the Nature's Lab accepting families that help build a strong community and long-lasting relationships.

"Every kid starts out as a natural-born scientist." –Carl Sagan

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide a dynamic child-focused learning atmosphere where children and families develop a sense of wonder and community in a safe, supportive and fun environment.

Nature's Lab is a bilingual, experiential play school that encourages children's natural curiosity and love for exploration, learning, research, and creativity. Our program exposes children to outdoor play, STEAM opportunities (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math), and age appropriate activities to meet their personal interests. Our Spanish bilingual program allows for advanced language acquisition opportunities and encourages global citizenship.

Our Play School

Nature's Lab is an in-home Bilingual school located in Carmichael, California. We offer individualized care for children between the ages of 1 to 5 years old and operate Monday through Friday from 8:00-4:30pm. Organic Snacks are provided for each session and frequently include ingredients grown in our own garden, and our own chickens.

Nature's Lab provides children a balance between dynamic and observation-based activities designed to meet each child's current emotional, social, physical and cognitive developmental stage. Our days are spent in our rich outdoor area, featuring a sand /water area, vegetable garden, dramatic play, science, library, loose parts, arts, math and engineering areas (with more areas planned for the near future). Children are encouraged to explore all areas based on their personal interests. However, each day there is a structured activity based on the current interests of the group. Participation in this activity is encouraged but not mandatory. We also have a peaceful quiet area for when children need a break to relax and process what they have been experiencing.

We provide a large body of loose parts materials to supports invention, divergent thinking, problem solving and encourage a sense of wonder to children. Loose parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. They are materials with no specific set of directions that can be used alone or combined with other materials.

Nature's Lab strives to build a strong community within and between our families. We want to model the values of service, support, and cooperation. This includes multiple activities for families to get together (nature walks, family night, etc.) and parent participation and volunteering of their unique skills to help make our school better.

Daily Schedules

The daily schedule is subject to change based on weather and individual interests.

<u>Full Day Session</u>	<u>AM Session</u>	<u>PM Session</u>
<i>Available M-W-F or T-Th or 5 days</i>	<i>Available M-W-F or T-Th or 5 days</i>	<i>Available M-W-F or T-Th or 5 days</i>
8:00am Arrival/Breakfast	8:30am Arrival	1:30pm Arrival
Structured Dynamic Play	Structured Dynamic Play	Structured Dynamic Play
Circle time	Circle time	Circle time
Yoga	Yoga	Yoga
Healthy snack	Healthy snack	Healthy snack
Child-focused STEAM learning	Child-focused STEAM learning	Child-focused STEAM learning
Literacy focused	Literacy focused	Literacy focused
11:30am Lunch	11:30am Child pick-up	4:30pm Child pick-up
12:00pm-2:00pm Nap time/ Quiet time		
Circle time		
Yoga		
2:30pm Child-focused STEAM learning	<i>Drop in option may be available.</i>	<i>Drop in option may be available.</i>
Healthy snack		
Literacy focused		
4:30pm Child pick-up		

Drop in option may be available

Monthly Tuition

Tuition is due on the first day of the month prior to care starting.

Years 1-2			
Sessions	2 Days	3 Days	5 Days
AM	\$300	\$410	\$695
PM	\$300	\$410	\$695
Full Day	\$550	\$795	\$1,300

Years 2-5			
Sessions	2 Days	3 Days	5 Days
AM	\$280	\$390	\$660
PM	\$280	\$390	\$660
Full Day	\$495	\$735	\$1,200

Drop-In	
Less than 4 hours	More than 4 hours
\$45	\$90

Sessions

We offer multiple session options to best accommodate your needs.

- Full day: 8:00am- 4:30pm
- Morning 8:30am- 11:30am *
- Afternoon 1:30pm- 4:30p *

**Extended hour may be available based on prior arrangement for an extra fee*

Payment Policy

If your child does not attend Nature's Lab due to vacation, illness, or any other reason, you are still responsible for paying tuition. There is a \$100.00 yearly, non-refundable registration fee that is due at enrollment and each April to keep your space for the following year. There is a \$50 or \$100 yearly, non-refundable materials fee that is due at enrollment and each August for part time or full time, respectively. Non- Potty- trained weekly fee of \$15 per week. Potty-trained is defined as being able to use the toilet with- out any assistance. There is \$25.00 fee per returned check. We can take online payment transfers, which is our preferred method of payment.

Late pick up fee:

- \$10/instance for less than 30 minutes late.
- \$20/instance for 30- 60 minutes late.

Supply List

Your will need to bring the following items and store them in your child's personal box at Nature's Lab Playschool. Please be sure to label all personal items with your child's initials.

- 2 changes of clothes
- Reusable Water bottle
- Sun hat and sunscreen
- Rain boots/Raincoat/Rain pants (during Winter/Spring)

Optional Recommended Items:

- Your child's comfort object (please do not bring play toys)
- A family photo to help them with feelings of separation

Forms Due Prior to Attending Nature's Lab

1. **Identification & Emergency Information.** This form is required each year so that we have your most current information on file, in case of an emergency. We encourage you to include an “*Out of State Contact*” for use in the event of a large-scale natural disaster (eg earthquake, etc)
2. **Child's Preadmission & Health History-Parent's Report.** This form contains personal information about your child's health history and personal habits.
3. **Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment & Transportation Agreement.** This form must be filled out and signed by the parent or legal guardian. Please remember to list any medication your child may be allergic to on the top portion of this page.
4. **Notification of Parents' Rights/Caregiver Background Check Process.** Please read the information on both these pages and sign the *Notification of Parent's Rights* page to acknowledge that you have received this information. These copies are for you to keep for your reference.
5. **Personal Rights Form.** Please read the information on this page and sign the *Personal Rights* page to acknowledge that you have received this information. This copy is for you to keep for your reference.
6. **Notification of Parent's Rights & Personal Rights & Demographic Info:** Upon reading the information on the preceding pages, please sign the sections that correspond to each of the pieces of information provided to acknowledge that you have been given copies of the documents for your reference. The demographic section is requested by the State of California Department of Health Services and is optional.
7. **Parent Contract.** *Please review this very carefully.* This document outlines contracted days and times, the participation requirements for the upcoming school year and other Nature's Lab policies. The participating parent(s) must sign, date, and return the last page of the contract to use along with the additional signatures.
8. **Agas and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3 & ASQ-SE-2):** Completed at enrollment and every 6 months. Your answers will help us get to know your child better and how we can support her/him best.

Attendance

Please call if your child will not be attending school on a scheduled day or if you will be later than the time his/her session starts.

Sign In and Out

There will be a sign-in/sign-out sheet at the entrance, as well as a communication log for last-minute notes or information. Please inform us of any change in contact information and include any information necessary for us to best support your child. If the information is personal, please be sure to speak with us before leaving the school.

Student/Family Roster

Each year we will provide you with our current roster. This is a great tool for getting to know each other and we encourage you to build connections with other Nature's Lab families. Families need a support system and can at times rely on one another for extra support with transportation and childcare that all families need from time to time.

Parent/Family Meetings

There will be three scheduled (*see calendar*) Parent Meetings this year. We understand how busy family life is and strive to make meeting with you as convenient as possible. In doing so, our meetings are group meetings in which we will provide important information and discuss topics of benefit for all. We will also have guest speakers from time to time. If your schedule cannot accommodate these meetings, please let us know ASAP so we can meet with you on an individual basis. Individual Family Meetings will be scheduled twice each year and others should be scheduled as needed.

Parent Participation

We ask for 6 volunteer hours per family, per year. These hours can be fulfilled in a number of ways. If you have a talent or specialized area of interest that you would like to share, please bring that to our attention. We have Parent Participation days where families can join to help us with school projects. Parent participation days are listed in the calendar but are subject to change based on ongoing school needs. (*see calendar*)

Illness Policy for Children

Your child should be kept at home if any of these symptoms arise:

- has a temperature
- has thrown up/had diarrhea in the last 24 hours
- has any contagious condition

If your child is diagnosed with a contagious condition, please inform us right away so we can inform the parents of children that have been in contact with your child and may be affected. Information about the child who has the contagious condition is kept confidential.

If a child gets sick while at Nature's Lab, a parent will be notified for early pick-up. If a child has a minor injury at school, such as a scratch, parents will be notified during pick up.

We take major precautions to prevent major injuries under our care. Ongoing supervision, consistent conversation with children about safety and risks, and offer an environment that meets most health and safety standards set by The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's Public Playground Safety Handbook. However, a major injury could arise, if so we will call 911 if necessary, and notify the parent immediately after.

Illness Policy for Nature's Lab Staff

We will contact parents as soon as possible if we are unable to open due to illness.

Incident Reports

If your child gets a minor injury at Nature's Lab, we will notify you at the end of the day. You will receive a written incident report for bigger accidents. In the rare case of an emergency, you will be notified immediately.

Toilet Learning /Diapers

Please send your child with extra diapers. We provide consistent opportunities for your toilet learning child. We have two learning toilets available in addition to our standard toilet.

Learning to use the toilet comes at different times and in a different manner for each child, and every family has their own unique approach with their children. Nature's Lab staff can support you with this process.

We believe that learning to use the toilet is like learning to walk. It is a self-motivated process on the part of the child that we, as parents and caregivers, can observe and support from the sidelines. Often, during this time, children take small steps in this process before they make the big leap, and changes in their world can cause them to revert back. We feel this is very normal development that calls for love and patience from the adults in their lives.

Personal Box and Lost & Found

Each child will have an assigned personal box. Please write your child's initials on all their items including: water bottle, hat, boots, backpack or bag. A lost and found box will be located by the front door.

Group/ Circle Time

Children will be encouraged to participate in group/circle time, but it is not mandatory. Generally, as children grow older they develop a greater interest to participate in group activities and some days this comes easier to some.

Meals/Snacks

We provide Breakfast, morning and afternoon snack, and lunch depending on your child's enrollment session. We encourage students to try new foods, but do not insist that they eat. We also have a designated time where we all sit together and have a family style meal. We do our best to serve foods that appeal to young eaters, and generally have great success!

Approaching Conflict

Health and safety are our number one goal and we ensure that all children, families, and staff are appreciated and feel healthy, both physically and emotionally. To do this, we have established three basic rules:

- Open communication and modeling of how to voice needs and concerns.
- Being kind to others, including the pets and nature around us.
- Support taking time for ourselves when any of us feels like we need to regroup and relax.

When there is conflict between children, we give full attention to it. Our goal is to support children in finding their own solutions, while standing by offering suggestions, and modeling appropriate ways to communicate individual needs. This gives each child the opportunity to learn how to communicate with others under stress and regulate their feelings in ways that are safe and healthy for everyone.

For children of this age, it is developmentally appropriate to be exploring different ways of expressing themselves. For this reason, it is pivotal for their emotional and social development that all of their feelings are validated, while at the same time learning how to connect with others in positive ways. We consistently provide language to be able to share their emotions (example feelings of frustration, excitement, sadness, etc), and redirection as needed.

Communication with Families

Please communicate any questions or concerns you have regarding your child or our policies. In our experience, the more communication the better we can be, and we are always open to talk about any concerns or issues that might come up. Please email me

S.Anderson@NaturesLabSchool.com or set up a time for us to talk after children have gone home so I can provide my full attention.

Please allow 24 hours for a response to your inquiry. Thank you!

Nature's Lab Community

Our multi-age environment allows children to grow together as a "family". As they grow they use the space in new ways and develop long lasting relationships that serve them in their growth. We also setup times for activities to take place outside of the Nature's Lab environment such as family nature walks and other special events. Please keep an eye out for these opportunities. They will be listed in our calendar.

There are no "Bad Children"

It is inevitable that you may be triggered by another person's child or your own child's behavior or individual temperaments. This is normal and to be expected however it's important to realize and convey to your child that this is a place for all of us to learn and grow together. If your child expresses issues with another child try to remain neutral and express to them that their teachers

are here to support and help them communicate when their needs aren't met, or they need some space. If you have any concerns, please talk to Silvia Anderson so we can find ways to support healthy relationships between all children. Their "work" at this age is to play, explore and develop their social and emotional skills. Conflict is a natural part of this process and we need to model for them and convey to them that they are safe and capable of learning how to be together as a community.

No Media Encouraged

We prefer to keep our environment free of media. So no clothes, shoes, backpacks, water bottles or toys with media logos is greatly appreciated. We also encourage limiting every child's use of TVs, gaming systems and computers. In our experience it can negatively influence children's natural ability to play. If your child does watch TV and videos, please try to be conscious of the content and messages embedded in the shows and keep in mind the following recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics for media viewing:

Birth-18 months	Avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting.	No media use is recommended.
18- 24 months	If media is introduced choose high-quality programming and watch it with the children to help them understand what they're seeing.	Less than 30 minutes per day
2-5 years	Viewing of high-quality programs. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.	Less than 1 hour per day
6 years and older	Place consistent limits on the time spent using media, and the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.	At your discretion, making sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.

Nature's Lab recommends that your family shares media-free times together, such as dinner or driving, as well as media-free locations at home, such as bedrooms and to avoid watching commercials and advertisements. We encourage having ongoing communication with children about online citizenship and safety, including treating others with respect online and offline.

Parenting Resources

Zero to Three: <https://www.zerotothree.org>

NAEYC: <https://www.naeyc.org>

Sesame Street in Communities <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org>

Raising Children in Turbulent Times: <http://first5association.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Raising-Children-in-Turbulent-Times-Rona-Renner.pdf>

Reducing Challenging Behaviors During Transitions:

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/sep2018/reducing-challenging-behaviors-during-transitions>