

Irvine Nature Center believes strongly that children need time playing and exploring outdoors now more than ever as the world navigates the COVID-19 pandemic. We are committed to making our programs safe for children and staff and their families. To do so, we consult the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the Baltimore County Health Department (HD).

No list of restrictions, guidelines, or practices will remove 100% of the risk of exposure. However, all families and staff are crucial in keeping our community safe and reducing the risk of exposure through these policies and procedures. More than ever before, our program strives to create a community in which all care for one another: students, staff, and all their families.

It is imperative that all caregivers are aware of and follow all procedures. **Please share these Guidelines and any appropriate program Handbook with all individuals responsible for picking up or dropping off your child as well as those listed on your Emergency Contact sheet.** Please keep in mind that these guidelines will be updated as needed based on local transmission trends, vaccination rates, official guidance or state/county regulations, and as evolving science dictates.

All policies apply to all ECE programs (Nature Preschool, Little Birds, and Earth Friends Outdoors) unless otherwise specified.

OUTDOOR CLASSES

Nearly all activities will occur outdoors to increase engagement in nature and to decrease the likelihood of any spread of disease. Except during inclement weather (see below), classes will hold drop off, class gathering and play times, circle/ Call to Council, snacks, meals, and dismissal outdoors.

Little Birds Caregiver and Child Classes
 All Little Birds classes will meet on the deck to the side of the Nature Center or in Fern B during inclement weather.

Nature Preschool The Nature Preschool has exclusive use of the Outdoor Classroom (OC) and picnic grove area (behind the OC) as their Class Groves most of the morning, Monday-Friday. The OC opens to the public at 11:30 and the picnic grove area at 12:30. Later in the year, classes will likely switch their Grove areas. Please note, full-day classes will attempt lunch outdoors as much as possible and be indoors for rest daily.	Class & Schedule	Location
	Maples (MWF, 9-2)	OC/upstairs classroom
	Hickories (MWF, 9-12)	picnic area/ downstairs classroom
	Walnuts (T/TH, 9-2)	OC/upstairs classroom
	Sycamores (T/TH, 9-12)	picnic area/ downstairs classroom

Earth Friends Outdoors Forest Explorers, Animals of Irvine, and the drop-in Bauer Explorers classes use the Glen outside of the Woodland Garden as their Class Grove. All older classes of Earth Friends Outdoors use an area just off the Bauer Drive (BD), on the other side of the amphitheater as their Glen or Class Grove. Please note, the Outdoor Classroom and the picnic	Class & Schedule	Location
	Animals of Irvine (M, 9:30-12:30)	Glen/Fern A
	Forest Explorers (T, 9:30-12:30)	Glen/Fern A
	Tuesday Trekkers (10-11:30)	Trail head
	Bauer Explorers (drop in, T, 1:30-3:30)	Glen/ Fern A
	Nature Lab (T, 1-4pm)	BD glen/ Under Deck
	Forest Explorers (W, 9:30-12:30)	Glen/Fern A
	Science in a Trail Bag (W, 9:30-12:30)	BD glen/ Under Deck
	PM Forest Explorers (W, 1:30-4)	Glen/ Fern A
	PM Science in a Trail Bag (W, 1:30-4)	BD glen/ Under Deck
Forest Explorers (TH, 9:30-12:30)	Glen/ Fern A	

area is closed to the public until 11:30/12:30 daily. Instead, if you are staying on campus while your child attends class, please enjoy the trails!

Inclement Weather

In the event of thunder, lightning, strong winds that result in the closing of trails, or prolonged periods of torrential rain or excessive cold or hot temperatures, we will move class out of the elements. For class locations, please see the charts above. Little Birds classes may start their classes indoors on colder days due to the more sensitive nature of its younger participants. Please note that since we will still be outside on cold, hot, or rainy days as much as possible, please read the recommended gear list and supply the recommended items. For information about weather-related closures or delays, please see Make-Up Days and Long-Distance Learning.

Whenever indoors, staff will do their best to distance students and windows will be kept ajar to increase air flow. A note about ventilation: in Fall 2020, Plasma Air Needlepoint Bipolar Ionizers were installed in Irvine's HVAC system to meet CDC guidelines and to provide a supply of sustainable, clean, uncontaminated air.

VACCINATION

As of October 13, 2021, Irvine Nature Center requires all staff and all ECE volunteers and interns to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Individuals with an approved medical or religious waiver can opt out of vaccination and instead submit weekly COVID-19 test results. Staff are offered paid leave to get the vaccine or any recommended boosters. At this time, all Irvine staff have been fully vaccinated.

There currently is no requirement for program participants or their caregivers to be vaccinated, but all those eligible are strongly encouraged to do so, **especially students 5 yrs and up**. One of the strongest protections we offer our children and other people's children is for all individuals in our child's lives to be vaccinated. **Plus, if your child is fully vaccinated against COVID-19, it may result in less time in quarantine after an exposure or exclusion if someone at home is ill or exposed. Please see p. 4-5 for details.** For information about where to get a vaccination, please visit the [Baltimore County Health Department website](#).

If your child develops rare but possible vaccine side-effects that are also on the COVID-19 symptom chart (see p. 5), they will need to be tested or get a doctor's alternate diagnosis **only if the symptom lasts more than 24 hours**. This is to rule out the possibility that they had COVID at the time of vaccination. You CANNOT contract COVID-19 from the vaccination. Children must still be fever-free without the aide of medication for 24 hrs to attend.

CLASS COHORTING

Classes will not mix during class times. All classes will act as cohorts, not sharing spaces at the same time (including bathrooms).

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Little Birds

At 10am, staff will welcome families at the foot of the stairs to the deck. Upon checking that an online health screening was completed (see below), the child and their caregiver will head up the stairs to wash hands and then join the class in play. If you arrive before the start of your class, feel free to visit the Aviary or the trails near the building. Please note, the exhibit hall is currently closed, and the Outdoor Classroom is reserved for the Preschool until the end of Little Birds classes.

For the safety of our unvaccinated children, arrival and pick-up procedures for Nature Preschool and Earth Friends Outdoors classes include a staggered arrival to promote social distancing. Families will be assigned an arrival group but may swap with another family if a different time is preferred. **It is imperative that you arrive during your assigned window to ensure you do not have a lengthy wait to drop off your child.**

Nature Preschool

Staggered arrival is broken up into 3 windows: 8:30-8:45, 8:45-9, and 9-9:15. Once parked, caregivers escort students to their class's cubby room. Full-day classes head to the classroom entrance outside the front of the butterfly house. Half-day classes head down the stairs and under the deck to the entrance to the lower cubby room. A staff person will greet families and check that an online health screening was completed (see Health Screening below). The caregiver and child will then enter the cubby area to put away lunch and rest mats (full-day classes) and any extra clothes before using the bathroom, washing hands, and gearing up for outdoor play.

Staff will monitor the number of individuals in the cubby room to ensure social distancing. Please note, 1) non-student family members must limit their time in the building to less than 15 minutes. 2) The adult and any siblings accompanying the child must pass the health screening. All exclusion rules will apply to any individual entering the building.

Caregivers will then walk their child to their Class Grove (the Outdoor Classroom or the picnic area). The picnic area is accessible by walking around the Outdoor Classroom, through the amphitheater. Caregivers may not linger in the Class Groves. Please say goodbyes just outside the Groves.

Dismissal for full-day classes will occur outside their classroom door. Caregivers are asked to stay outside of the vestibule area as teachers dismiss students a few at a time. Please move quickly out of the path so that more families may pick up their children. Half-day classes will dismiss from their Grove area to families in the amphitheater.

Earth Friends Outdoors

Staggered arrival is broken up into 2 windows: 9:15-9:30 and 9:30-9:45. Once parked, caregivers must walk their child to their Class Grove (the Glen or Bauer Drive Grove). **Caregivers may not send students to the Grove unattended** as teachers must check that the online health screening (see Health Screening below) was completed. Caregivers may not linger in the Class Groves. Please say goodbyes just outside the Groves.

Classes will hold their closing gatherings in their Class Groves. All caregivers must park in the Irvine lot and pick up their child at their child's Class Grove. Caregivers may not enter the Class Grove or classroom and instead must wait for teachers to dismiss their child to them

Late Pick Up and Changes in Adult Picking Up Your Child

Children will only be released to authorized individuals identified in Preschool enrollment paperwork or registration information. If your child is going to be picked up by someone other than an emergency contact person or a guardian, please inform teachers via a written message before class that day. Please note, it is more important than ever that students are picked up on time. In addition to normal duties, staff now have additional cleaning and disinfecting to do every day. Please send a message on brightwheel (see Communication below) if you are running late. Irvine reserves the right to charge a late fee of \$15 per child for the first 15 minutes and an additional \$1 per minute after that. Thank you!

HEALTH AND EXCLUSION POLICY

Since the release of the CDC and MSDE revised guidelines in late February/early March, we have elected

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS COVID-19 GUIDELINES

to relax some of exclusion rules to be more closely in line with CDC guidance. Please note, if local COVID positivity or hospitalization rates rise, we may return to previous, stricter policies for exclusion. Due to the ability for vaccinated individuals to still transmit COVID-19 and the unvaccinated status of nearly all participants in some programs, Irvine has adopted a stricter policy for vaccinated individuals than that suggested by health officials. Please see below and the following page.

The very best thing you can do to ensure the health of other students and staff and help classes continue to operate is to keep yourself and/or your child home if anyone in your household is unwell.

All families must promptly inform the Director of Early Childhood Education if a student/staff or their family member tests positive for COVID-19, is notified of an exposure, or develops any symptoms of COVID-19. Failure to promptly inform the Director may result in the unintentional spread of disease, a prolonged closure (per the Health Department requirements) and possible termination or dismissal from Irvine Programs. **Individuals must inform the Director immediately if their child is absent for any health reason (above and beyond the list of COVID symptoms, as listed on the following page).**

Individuals may NOT participate if	Until ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they <i>or any household member</i> tested positive for COVID-19 	quarantine is completed according to Health Department Guidelines.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they had prolonged contact with an individual with confirmed COVID-19. CDC defines prolonged contact as w/in 6feet for at least 15 min. 	<p>Little Birds: if child was exposed, a full 10 days after last exposure have passed. If caregiver was exposed and vaccinated, then able to return so long as they consistently and properly wear a mask. If unvaccinated, they must present a negative test taken 5 days after exposure and then consistently and properly wear a mask, inside and out for 10 days after exposure.</p> <p>Nature Preschool: *if vaccinated and able to consistently and properly mask, able to return *if unvaccinated, a negative test result 5 days after exposure and it has been 8-10 days since last exposure. Dependent upon ability to properly and consistently wear a mask for 10 days, inside and out.</p> <p>Earth Friends Outdoors: *if vaccinated and able to consistently and properly mask, able to return *if unvaccinated, a negative test result 5 days after exposure and wear a mask for 10 days, inside and out.</p> <p><i>Vaccinated participants are strongly encouraged to get a PCR test 5 days after an exposure.</i></p> <p>*Vaccinated staff will be permitted to return masked and MUST have a PCR test completed 5 days after exposure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a <i>household member</i> has had prolonged contact with an individual with confirmed COVID-19. 	<p>If the participant/staff is vaccinated: may attend class so long as the individual with known exposure is symptom free.</p> <p>If the participant/staff is unvaccinated: after the exposed individual submits a negative COVID test conducted 72 hrs after exposure AND that individual completes the HD recommended quarantine AND that individual is symptom free.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they exhibit any symptom below. <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; color: green; margin: 0;">COVID-19 SYMPTOMS*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever of 100.4 degrees+ • Sore throat • Cough • Difficulty breathing • Nausea or vomiting • Diarrhea • New onset of severe headache • New loss of taste or smell <p>*For chronic conditions such as asthma, symptoms should represent a change from baseline and a doctor’s note must be supplied listing this as a previously diagnosed condition. For Preschool students, this must appear on the health intake form.</p> </div>	<p>If no known exposure (one of the below)...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A) a negative test result for the sick individual is issued AND symptoms have improved, no fever for 24hr w/out medication AND applicable criteria in the Communicable Criteria have been met. B) a doctor’s note for the sick individual is provided documenting symptoms are due to specific alternative diagnosis AND other criteria listed in (A). C) at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND no fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication AND improvement of other symptoms. <p>If known exposure (one of the below)...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A) a negative test result is issued AND quarantine completed according to MDH and local guidance. B) a doctor’s note is provided documenting symptoms are due to specific alternative diagnosis AND quarantine completed according to MDH and local guidance. C) at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND no fever for at least 24hrs w/o medication AND improvement of other symptoms AND quarantine completed according to MDH and local guidance. 						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A household member exhibits any of the symptoms above. 	<p>If the participant/staff is vaccinated: may attend class so long as there is no known exposure and they themselves are symptom-free.</p> <p>If the participant/staff is NOT vaccinated: see the box above.</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are awaiting test results due to symptoms or known exposure. (regardless of vaccination status) 	<p>negative test results are issued.</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A household member is awaiting test results due to exposure or symptoms 	<p>If the participant/staff is vaccinated: may attend.</p> <p>If the participant/staff is NOT vaccinated: until negative results are given.</p>						
<p>If individuals have any of the following non-COVID related symptoms they may not attend:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td>*Fever of 100 degrees or more</td> <td>*Unexplained rash (until cleared by a doctor)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>*Infectious pink eye (until cleared by doctor and on antibiotics for 24 hrs)</td> <td>*Head lice (until treated)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>*Green or yellow runny nose if paired with other symptoms</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Individuals must be fever/vomiting/ diarrhea free for 24 hours w/out the aid of medication.</p>		*Fever of 100 degrees or more	*Unexplained rash (until cleared by a doctor)	*Infectious pink eye (until cleared by doctor and on antibiotics for 24 hrs)	*Head lice (until treated)	*Green or yellow runny nose if paired with other symptoms	
*Fever of 100 degrees or more	*Unexplained rash (until cleared by a doctor)						
*Infectious pink eye (until cleared by doctor and on antibiotics for 24 hrs)	*Head lice (until treated)						
*Green or yellow runny nose if paired with other symptoms							

Please note, all tests **must be PCR tests. Rapid tests will NOT be accepted.**

Health Screenings

Every individual attending or working an ECE class must complete a health screening prior to joining the program or starting work. This includes staff, students, caregivers and siblings assisting with Preschool drop off, and all Little Bird caregivers. These will be self-administered by staff and families before arriving at Irvine using the brightwheel app. If a non-regular caregiver drops off a child, staff will conduct a health screening upon arrival.

The screening questions are the same for all programs; exclusion rules are different per program and vaccination status (see above). Therefore, it is imperative that you reach out to Katie about any and all health concerns promptly so she can clear your child for return to class. Waiting until class time or the morning of may result in your child not being cleared in time to attend class that day.

Any individual who fails the health screening will be prompted by the app to contact ECE administration. Administration will follow up with you to gather information. If you believe there was an error, please reach out to Katie or Moriah. Please see p. 10 for contact information. If your Preschool child is unable to attend due to symptoms, **exposure**, or a positive test, they may not seek care at another center.

When Symptoms Develop After Drop Off

If an individual develops symptoms consistent with a COVID-19- like illness or typical exclusionary symptoms during class, they will be sent home without exception. A child with symptoms will be isolated from the rest of the class until they are picked up. **Children must be picked up within 30 minutes if they are ill.** Please ensure that the emergency contact information is up to date.

Possible Quarantine & Closure

If we are informed of a *single* confirmed case of COVID-19 at Irvine, the affected class(es) will follow these procedures:

Little Birds	*All families informed	*Affected class will be closed for 10 days since exposure.
Nature Preschool	*All families informed	*Affected class will be closed and placed on quarantine for a minimum of 8 days, dependent upon testing 5 days after exposure. Class will then resume for those students who present a negative PCR COVID-19 test and who can consistently and properly wear a mask. *A class that was exposed will be required to wear masks indoors and out after an exposure until 10 days since exposure.
Earth Friends Outdoors	*All families informed	*Only unvaccinated individuals required to quarantine for 5 days after exposure and then must submit a negative PCR COVID-19 test. *All individuals exposed must wear a mask indoors and out for 10 days after an exposure.

We have elected a stricter quarantine rule for classes in which the majority or all of the students are ineligible for vaccine. Once a vaccine is widely available for children under 5 yrs, we may relax these policies.

If there is a COVID-19 outbreak (defined by the Health Department) in any particular class, the whole class will be quarantined per CDC and Health Department guidance.

In the two weeks after an exposure, it is imperative you keep the ECE informed if you or your child develops any symptoms.

Health Advisory Notification

When Irvine ECE is informed of a child or staff that developed a communicable disease or probable COVID, within 48 hours of attending class, Irvine will inform families in that child/staff’s class. This communication will be provided so that parents can monitor their children for any symptoms and to make informed decisions about their child’s attendance. Please note, Irvine will abide by all privacy laws and not divulge the identity of sick individuals.

TRAVEL & LARGE GATHERINGS

Irvine Nature Center no longer has any post-travel restrictions. However, the CDC strongly discourages all unvaccinated individuals from travel at this time. If you choose to travel, please carefully consider

your destination's rate of infection and the activities you engage in. Follow all CDC recommendations including wearing a mask and testing all in your travel party 5 days after your return to Maryland.

In addition, Irvine encourages families and staff to remember that participation in large gatherings (especially indoors) increases the risk of infection of not only yourself and those you are with, but all the other participants and staff in your class, especially those unable to be vaccinated. We strongly encourage families to get a viral test after attending a large gathering, even if they are not having symptoms, 3-5 days after the event.

SUPERHERO TOOLS- FACIAL COVERINGS, SOCIAL DISTANCING, & HANDWASHING

Irvine's ECE staff will refer to students, their families, and teachers as superheroes as they help keep one another healthy. Classes will employ 3 main tools as superheroes: **situational** face coverings, social distancing, and handwashing.

REVISED Universal Masking Requirement

As of March 12, Irvine Nature Center will lift its universal masking requirement **outdoors** as is in line with CDC, MSDE, and local health department guidelines. However, if our community level rises to high, we will re-institute a universal masking requirement outdoors.

Masks will still be required of all individuals exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 for 10 days after their last exposure, regardless of vaccination status. If your child is unable to wear a mask after an exposure, they will be required to stay home for the full 10 days.

At this time, we will continue to mask whenever indoors, regardless of vaccination status. This includes bathroom trips, indoor class time due to inclement weather, and during Preschool drop off. **All individuals over 2yrs old must mask for these times.** We will re-evaluate indoor masking by the end of March.

All individuals and families may continue to wear masks as they are comfortable. Staff will attempt to encourage children to wear masks outdoors if parents request, but please understand this will not be fail proof and it will be extremely difficult for children to wear a mask if all the other children are not required to.

Therefore, all students must have face coverings on hand daily. We recommend having at least 2 masks for Little Birds and 3-hour classes and 4 masks for full-day students. Any type of cloth or disposable face covering will be accepted, however, please consider how difficult they are to put on. We request all student face coverings have elastic straps that do not require tying. If a child's mask is on a tether, it must have an anti-choke mechanism on the back. **All face coverings must have the following on the inside of their child's mask 1) the child's name and 2) their class name.** We strongly encourage students to have a KN95 or KF94 mask on days we spend non-eating times indoors (inclement weather).

Social Distancing

ECE staff will do its best to create social distancing between students in the following ways:

- Plan activities that naturally lend themselves to more social distancing
- Refrain from using communal sensory bins or serving family-style snack
- Use visual cues or markers to show students appropriate distance from one another
- Establish and encourage physically distant ways of showing affection and congratulations (ie air hugs, "long distance" high fives, and animal calls)
- Keep a wide 6ft+ distance from other groups and the public on Irvine's grounds

However, strict social distancing limits children’s play and social development. Children learn through interaction; positive, caring interaction is one of the very goals of early childhood education. In class, children will touch. When this occurs, teachers will encourage children to do so in the safest way possible, and instruct children to wash their hands after. There will be moments when people are close and staff will still physically comfort an upset child, assist with putting on and removing gear, etc. We will be the loving teachers we are and still have a developmentally appropriate and child-honoring practice.

Hand Washing

All individuals (including staff and children) must wash their hands frequently throughout the day and at the following times:

- Upon arrival (Earth Friends Outdoors and Little Birds families will use hand washing stations in the class gathering areas)
- Before and after putting on a face covering
- Before and after helping a child put on a face covering
- After touching face or ears
- Before and after preparing food or eating
- After using the restroom
- At appropriate transitions
- After touching another person.

All individuals will use a proper hand washing method using soap and water, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds before rinsing and drying off with a paper towel. When a sink and soap are not available, a hand sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol will be used under supervision of staff. If water and soap are not available after eating, a handwipe will be used to remove food residue prior to using hand sanitizer.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

ECE staff will follow CDC guidelines for appropriate cleaning and disinfection. All items will be cleaned between class use and at least daily. Frequently touched indoor surfaces and handwashing stations will be disinfected daily. All dishware and utensils will be washed in a dishwasher. When local infection rates have risen to the “high” level or after an illness in class, all surfaces and materials will be disinfected fully. If classrooms or inclement weather spaces are used by non-ECE programs, they will be fully disinfected by janitorial staff. An EPA registered cleaner and disinfectant approved for fighting COVID-19 will be used for all cleaning and disinfecting.

SNACKS AND MEALS

All snacks and meals will be served individually rather than family style.

Whenever individuals are eating, they will be required to maintain social distance. After eating, all individuals must properly wash their hands in order to limit the spread of allergens.

For non-Little Bird classes, please practice opening and closing containers with your child before the start of the year. Not only will this make them more independent, but it will help limit the amount of time teachers must be closer to students.

<p>Preschool In half-day classes, each family is responsible for providing a small snack for their child each day.</p> <p>In full-day classes, Irvine will provide snack for the class. Please disclose your child’s dietary restrictions prior to the start of class. We will accommodate your child’s needs as best we can, however, in some cases we may request that you provide a supplemental snack. If you are more comfortable with your child bringing a snack from home, you may do</p>	ECE Food Guidelines	
	All ECE programs are peanut free. Some children have life- threatening allergies to peanuts.	
	Students should bring snacks...	ECE Staff will not serve (parents may send for their child)...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that are peanut-free • high in good protein or energy • low in added sugar or desserts • in reusable containers rather than single-use packaging w/ any needed cutlery • that do not need refrigeration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meat products • products not made her at Irvine or in a licensed facility • whole grapes or tree nuts, raw peas, hard pretzels or chunks of raw carrots to children who are 3 yrs or younger
<p>Suggested Trail-Friendly Snacks: Fruits/vegetables Whole grain pretzels or crackers almond or cashew butter Granola Fruit/nut bars Dried fruit and peanut-free nuts</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What About Birthdays? If your child has a birthday during class and you would like to commemorate it, please contact program directors to discuss providing a special snack for the class.</p>	

so, but follow the guidelines above. If you would like to donate a snack to share with the class, we would love that! Please contact your child’s teachers for any specific guidelines.

Full-day students must also bring a bagged lunch from home daily. These will not be refrigerated.

Earth Friends Outdoors
Each family is responsible for bringing a small snack for their child each day following the ECE Food Guidelines on the previous page.

ITEMS FROM HOME- Preschool and Earth Friends Outdoors Students

All students need to bring a backpack and a full water bottle to and from class each day. Please consult your program’s welcome information and Recommended Gear List for details about other items to bring daily and extra clothes. Please plan to check your child’s bag daily for soiled clothes and gear!

MAKE-UP DAYS AND LONG-DISTANCE LEARNING

Irvine Nature Center reserves the right to cancel or end a class early due to emergency weather conditions based on concern for safety of families and staff. If inclement weather makes driving conditions dangerous, we will delay or cancel class. Irvine Nature Center determines its own closings and delays. Any decision to cancel or dismiss class early will be made by Irvine’s Deputy Director. Safety will always be our top priority.

If Irvine closes due to extreme weather, all ECE classes will be cancelled. If Irvine delays opening due to weather, please see the chart below for class start times. Dismissal times stay the same.

Delayed Opening	Little Birds	Preschool	Earth Friends Outdoors
till 10	no class	starts at 10:30	AM classes start at 10:30
till 11	no class	Full-day starts at 11:30, no half-day	AM classes cancelled

In the event of severe weather developing after arrival, Irvine Nature Center reserves the right to dismiss early to ensure the safety of students, their families, and our staff. Such early dismissal will be done only in extreme circumstances. In such an event, afternoon classes may be cancelled.

When weather is questionable, please check brightwheel for a message from the Director of ECE regarding class delays or cancellations. As always, please do not come to class if your location is not yet safe for travel. For any weather-related questions, please contact the Director directly. You can also check Irvine's website, www.ExploreNature.org, Irvine's social media pages, or tune in to WBAL or WJZ for a weather update.

Little Birds and Earth Friends Outdoors

Each class series has a built-in one-week period for a make-up due to a COVID or weather event. After that initial make-up week is used, we will make a reasonable attempt to provide distance-learning activities during a prolonged closure. After initial notification of a closure, you will receive additional information within 48 hours of the make-up day at the end of the session or any plans for long-distance learning during the period of closure. Long-distance learning *may* take the form of virtual class meetings or activities and resources sent to you virtually.

Please remember the one make-up day at the end of the program is the only one we have. Once it is used, there will not be another make up day and no refund will be given for weather-related closures.

Preschool

In the event of an unplanned closure, Irvine will make reasonable attempts to adjust the calendar and/or provide distance-learning activities. After initial notification, you will receive additional information within 48 hours of any plans for long distance learning during the period of closure. Long-distance learning *may* take the form of virtual class meetings or activities and resources sent to you virtually. Any changes to the calendar will take additional time to coordinate with greater Irvine Nature Center as it is a shared space with other programs. Please be patient with us as we try to navigate this.

Possible Refunds

If Irvine is unable to provide a make-up day due to a **class-wide** COVID- related event, families will be offered a discount of 50% of the tuition for the duration of the closure. Please be patient as Irvine Nature Center processes any refund as this may need to be arranged remotely if the whole center is closed. Due to the strong recommendations from health care professionals to limit the mixing of groups, we will **not** be providing individual students make-up days for missed classes due to illness or absence. Nor will a refund be awarded for such absences.

COMMUNICATION

We would like to reiterate the importance of honest, open, and timely communication about your family's health and exposure to COVID-19. We need your help to keep our whole community safe as well as to prevent any temporary closure of Irvine programs. All information will be kept confidential. We also realize that some of these new policies and procedures will impact regular communication with teachers. Therefore, we will be more reliant on technology to help us do so. We have adopted the brightwheel app to facilitate regular communication, check-in, and health screenings. Before the start of the class series, all ECE families must download the app on your phone so that we can quickly share critical announcements in regards to exposures, closures, and changes in health operations. It will save time and ensure everyone has up to date information. We will also use this app to share newsletters, photos, and all the excitement of our time with your children.

Who to contact when and a handy reference of numbers is on the following page for easy reference.

WHO TO CONTACT

If you have questions or concerns about your child’s day: your child’s teachers using brightwheel.

If you feel that your concerns are not being addressed or if you have questions about policies:

- If a Little Bird of Preschool family, please contact the Director of Early Childhood Education and The Nature Preschool, Katie Rooney.
- If an Earth Friends Outdoors family, please contact the Head of Homeschool programs, Stephanie Holzman, or the Director of Early Childhood Education, Katie Rooney.

If you are unsure if your child should attend due to possible symptoms or a possible exposure: contact the Director of ECE directly.

If your child is going to be absent for any reason: contact the Director of ECE directly. We must document all absences. **Please report any and all illness or questions about exclusion directly to her.** She can be reached in the following ways:

- On brightwheel (for issues related to health and safety, she will respond at any time on the app)
- Mon-Fri: 10-2 Office phone (443) 738 9223

If this is a pressing matter such as an illness, please do not delay. **If you are leaving a voicemail please include your name, your child’s name and class, and your phone number.** In all messages about health concerns, please be specific and provide appropriate dates, symptoms, and whether or not there was a known exposure to anyone in the household. Thank you. *If you are uncomfortable sharing specific health details over brightwheel for your child’s teachers to see, please first send a brightwheel message asking Katie to call you and include your number.*

For questions about tuition payment or to update credit card information: contact Education Program Coordinator, Moriah Munsch. Our tax identification number is 52-1231286. Preschool families may make a credit card payment online using [this link](#).

For grievances to which you feel you have not received a satisfactory response: contact the Director of Education or the Deputy Director of Irvine.

If you are running late or there is a change in pick up for your child that day: contact your child’s teachers via brightwheel.

If an urgent matter arises during the school day: call Katie directly or contact her through brightwheel.

Contact Information

Katie Rooney Director of Early Childhood Education & The Nature Preschool	RooneyK@ExploreNature.org M-F 10-2, Office: (443) 738 9223
Moriah Munsch Education Program Coordinator	MunschM@ExploreNature.org (443) 738 9215
Stephanie Holzman Head of Homeschool Program	HolzmanS@ExploreNature.org (443) 738 9221
Brian Rollfinke Director of Education	RollfinkeB@ExploreNature.org (443) 738 9212
Courtney Sagal Deputy Director of Irvine	SagalC@ExploreNature.org (443) 738 9224

AGREEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

I/we, the guardian(s) of my/our child(ren), _____
_____ have read and understood all policies and procedures in the ECE Programs COVID-19 Guidelines.

_____ I/We agree to inform the Director of Early Childhood Education promptly if anyone within our household tests positive for COVID-19, is informed of a confirmed exposure, or has developed COVID-like symptoms as defined by the local health department and to comply with any required absence from Irvine Nature Center programming.

_____ I/We agree to keep my child(ren) home if they show any signs of disease as described in the ECE Programs COVID-19 Guidelines and to promptly contact the Director of Early Childhood Education so that appropriate steps can be taken to ensure the health and safety of staff and participants per Health Department recommendations.

_____ I/We agree to stay in contact with the Director of Early Childhood Education during any required self-quarantine and provide any requested doctor’s note or proof of negative test result prior to returning to class after such a quarantine.

_____ I/We agree to honestly answer with fidelity all questions asked during the daily health screening at drop off.

_____ I/We understand that caregivers will not be permitted to linger in classrooms or gathering areas of classes.

_____ I/We understand that I and any individuals with me over the age of 2yrs old must wear a face covering during drop off and pick up, if I enter the building, or participate in class.

_____ I/We agree to pick my child up within 30minutes of being notified if they develop symptoms during the school day.

_____ I/We understand that the policies outlined in the COVID-19 Guidelines are subject to change and it is critical that I read any and all revisions when they are made.

GUARDIAN SIGNATURE DATE

GUARDIAN SIGNATURE DATE