



Outdoor Nature Program FAQ

Q. WHY NATURE OUTDOOR AFTERSCHOOL?

A. Nature afterschool, are a special breed of enrichment classes. A growing body of research shows that frequent play in nature stimulates children's developmental domains, including their cognitive, creative, physical, social, and emotional, and spiritual development, preparing them to succeed in school and life.

Nature afterschool has all the same child development goals that more traditional schools have. Still, they also are committed to accomplishing those goals through experiences in and with nature and have an added goal of helping children begin to develop care and concern for the natural world. Nature afterschool offer children frequent experiences to learn and play in nature and have a compelling impact on child development and well-being while laying the foundation for environmental literacy and stewardship values. Childhood is a critical time to provide opportunities to spend time playing outdoors, building upon children's inherent curiosity and love of nature. Studies show that environmental stewardship is born from an emotional connection to nature, which often develops during childhood. Over 35 years of studies worldwide show that the single most prevalent influence on adult stewardship values comes from unstructured, frequent childhood play in wild settings.

Q. WHY AN OUTDOOR AFTERSCHOOL DURING COVID?

A. Three Reasons to Choose an Outdoor Afterschool during COVID

More and more research show that outside in nature is the safest place to be during the pandemic, and as a result, parents are increasingly looking for outdoor-based childcare options. Arts and Athletics Outdoor Nature Afterschool operates almost entirely outdoors, and studies show that children are healthier and get less illness when participating in nature-based childcare.

Arts and Athletics' low-ratio (5 children to 1 adult) childcare model reduces the likelihood of the transmission of COVID.

Being a small program with small groups, Arts and Athletics offer more reliability for ongoing childcare by reducing the likelihood that our school will have to close for one or more days due to a student or instructor testing positive for COVID.

Q. WHY ARTS AND ATHLETICS?

A. For more than twenty-five years Arts and Athletics have been part of the upper westside community. Arts and Athletics Afterschool has been committed to engage and work with



families to provide high-quality enrichment classes as well as academic support for children at PS 9, PS 84, PS 166 on Manhattan's Upper West Side. In addition to our school-based programs, we also offer a variety of classes for parents and children (6 months to 3 years) at our studio at the corner of 88th Street and Columbus Avenue.

Q. WILL THERE BE ACADEMICS?

A. Yes. Arts and Athletics integrates academic and social curriculum into each day, through experiences grounded in nature. The afterschool program strives to help children achieve educational goals, development and goes beyond these to include the many benefits of immersion in nature.

Q. WHAT IS THE TEACHER: CHILD RATIO?

A. Arts and Athletics is an intentionally small program limited to 10 children per grade. Group sizes are limited to 10 children with ratios of 5 children to 1 adult.

Q. WHERE IS THE PROGRAM LOCATED?

A. As we begin thinking about opening in the Fall, safety is our number one priority. Arts and Athletics is planning for several different scenarios number one being "In-Person Learning" and taking afterschool outdoors! Regardless of what the future brings, we are dedicated to your child and their continued academic growth and social-emotional well-being. By going outdoors, students will discover new places outside of their school and learn new and exciting things during different seasons. All of our outdoor classes will be held in Central Park, given it is the closest and largest park to our school, therefore helping us reinforce social distancing rules.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS ON A RAINY OR SNOWY DAY?

A. We will follow the saying there is not such a thing as bad weather, only bad clothes!

For children, rain and snow can be as much fun as a sunny day, as long as they are dressed appropriately. Arts and Athletics will engage in learning outdoors on rainy and snowy days, so please make sure to always pack a waterproof layer for your child.

Children in attendance the outdoor afterschool programs are expected to participate in all planned activities. Only severe weather conditions prohibit this activity. For example, during thunderstorms, rain, sleet, excessive snow, or high winds extreme cold under 30 degrees or higher than 100 degrees or state emergency, we may cancel the outdoor program. A newsletter will be sent to the parents weekly with weather expectations and materials the children may use so parents can plan for the week.

Please send adequate clothing for the weather, remember to label all clothing. We will learn and explore the weather when it is raining, muddy, snowing, and have fun learning to live and



interact with the weather and nature elements. Teachers are expected and prepare to follow the children's desires and accommodate children if necessary.

Q. WHAT IF I DON'T WANT MY CHILD TO ATTEND EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK?

A. The research shows that children benefit the most from frequent and consistent experiences in nature. To this end, Arts and Athletics will follow

Q. WHAT IF I NEED CHILD CARE DURING THE HOLIDAYS?

A. Arts and Athletics offers full-day outdoor holiday camps

Q. HOW MUCH STRUCTURE WILL THERE BE?

A. The program aims to strike a healthy balance between predictable daily routines, group activities, teacher-led curriculum, and plenty of time for open-ended nature play and exploration.

Q. WHAT WILL MY CHILD DO?

A. Children at Arts and Athletics will spend their days playing, learning, exploring, running, jumping, digging, building, climbing, hiking, balancing, tumbling, skipping, observing, exploring, negotiating uneven surfaces, drawing, imagining, collaborating, storytelling, and making friendships. Each topic contains various activities such as Hiking, Bird Watching, Wilderness Adventure, Observational Drawing, Plant Life in Central Park, Landscape Drawing, Gardening, and Sports. Our program addresses all aspects of language: listening, speaking, vocabulary building, and a lifelong interest in nature and experiencing the outdoors.

Q. WILL MY CHILD COME HOME WET AND MUDDY?

A. Yes. Children love to experience whatever elements exist in nature, whether it's a snowy hill, a mud puddle, or a quiet meadow. Arts and Athletics staff allow children to play and learn by experiencing nature firsthand, which often leaves kids wet and muddy. We ask parents to dress children appropriately for the weather.

Q. WHAT CLOTHING WILL MY CHILD NEED?

A. Appropriate clothing that keeps children warm, dry, and protected from the elements is critical to their comfort and well-being. Clothing needs will vary according to season and weather conditions but generally should include the following:

- 1) rain or snow pants



- 2) jacket
- 3) waterproof boots
- 4) quality waterproof mittens
- 5) insulating hat or sun hat
- 6) multiple insulating layers

Q. WILL MY CHILD EVER BE UNSUPERVISED?

A. No. Children will never be unsupervised. Teacher ratios are maintained at 5:1 with always a minimum of 2 adults.

Q. DO STAFF HAS FIRST AID TRAINING?

A. Yes. All staff have first aid, CPR, Standard Precautions, and Medication Administration training and carry comprehensive first aid kits at all times.

Q. WHAT KIND OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT WILL THERE BE?

A. Arts and Athletics values building a strong, supportive, inclusive community between classmates, families, and staff. To this end, the program holds family events to celebrate nature and the changing seasons throughout the year to support nature's connection for the entire family. Arts and Athletics believes that a healthy, prosperous, meaningful sense of community within the program, cultivates the human relationship equally as crucial as nature connection.

This year Arts and Athletics will host small, socially distanced gatherings when it is safe to do so.

Arts and Athletics will send a weekly newsletter with weather and important announcements of the upcoming week. We will also send a monthly newsletter with activities, videos, and resources for families to use at home.

Q. WHERE CAN CHILDREN USE THE BATHROOMS?

Children must be fully potty-trained and be able to speak up for their needs. We've deliberately set these requirements because we want to promote our children's safety, health, and happiness.

To follow proper social distancing rules and ensure the well-being of the children and staff, we must adhere to hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection requirements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Health (DOH).

We'll be spending all the outdoor afterschool outside; please note that bathrooms may not be available. (we will use the central park bathrooms located by the tennis courts and 88th street location bathrooms)



- Students are encouraged to use the bathroom before leaving school/home
- Students must thoroughly wash their hands before entering the program and afterward.
- Students must maintain a minimum of 6 feet apart while waiting for the bathroom
- No more than one student at a time inside the bathrooms
- Hand sanitizer containing 60% alcohol or more must be available for students and staff when water and soap are not available.
- If necessary one staff will walk the children to the 88th street location to use the bathroom