

Aleph Academy  
Teva Nature Classroom  
Supplemental Information



Welcome to our Teva Classroom! Teva is an immersive outdoor program for children age 3-5 years old. Due to the nature of the program, it has its own unique set of policies and procedures in addition to those in our Parent Handbook.

### **About the Program**

Our Teva program brings together the best of Europe's Forest Schools coupled with the Reggio inspired approach. Children will spend their morning interacting with their classroom teacher and fellow students in our Natural Playscape. Interactive provocations will foster inquiry based learning, scientific discovery, and school readiness in an authentic outdoor environment. Teva is the first outdoor preschool program in Northern Nevada.

Forest schools in Europe and the increasing popularity of nature preschools in the United States have shown both psychological and physical benefits. There are proven benefits for children who spend large blocks of time outside. A small sampling of some of the current research is listed below.

### **Research and Beliefs**

A growing body of research is finding a remarkable range of positive impacts from frequent, unstructured play in rich, diverse, natural settings that cover the entire realm of holistic child developmental areas: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, creative and spiritual. The benefits of outdoor learning include:

- Supports multiple domain development: Connecting with nature helps your child develop socially, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. (Kellert, 2005).
- Supports creativity and problem solving skills: Children who play outside have more active imaginations and are more likely to be able to solve a complex problem than peers who spend most of their time inside. (Kellert, 2005)
- Enhances concentration and lessens ADD-like behaviors: Daily exposure to nature increases a child's ability to focus, enhances their cognitive ability, and significantly lessens symptoms of ADD in children as young as five (Kuo and Taylor, 2004).
- Improves academic performance: Schools that use outdoor classrooms and other forms of nature-based education show significant student gains in social studies, science, language arts, and math. (American Institutes for Research, 2005).
- Improves nutrition: Children who grow their own food are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables and a well-balanced diet. They are also more likely to continue healthy eating habits throughout their lives (Morris & Zidenberg-Cherr, 2002).
- Improves social relations: When children are free to explore and engage in unstructured play outdoors (both by themselves and with others), they are smarter and better able to get along with others. (Burdette and Whitaker, 2005).
- Reduces stress: Green plants and vegetation reduce stress among highly stressed children. Locations with greater number of plants, greener views, and access to natural play areas show more significant results (Wells and Evans, 2003).

- Improves eyesight: More time spent outdoors is related to reduced rates of nearsightedness, also known as myopia, in children and adolescents (American Academy of Ophthalmology, 2011).

## **Daily Rhythm**

Teva utilizes our natural environment as well as the interests of the children to create a fluid and rich learning experience. Teva class uses their two dedicated spaces- our outdoor natural playscape and Teva studio, to serve as a backdrop for the interests and explorations of the Teva students. Teva students spend as much time as they can outside, while still having a beautiful space indoors to pause and reflect.

## **Program Readiness**

Teva is a mixed age classroom for children age 3-5. We require that children be fully toilet proficient to attend Teva. We will use the toilet inside the circle room while outdoors. While the Nature classroom focuses on independence and self sufficiency, the teacher will help with clothing changes and sunscreen application as needed.

## **Inclement Weather**

Teva is a primarily outdoor program and we plan on being outside in virtually all weather. Children that are dressed appropriately will have a successful day in our program.

Teva children will not be outside if it is unsafe for your child. This includes but is not limited to unhealthy Air Quality, lightning storms or other events beyond our control. In the event that the Teva group cannot be outside, we will utilize our Teva Art Studio downstairs.

Please remember that Aleph Academy follows the Washoe County School District weather schedule. If the District schools close or have a delayed start due to the weather, so will Aleph Academy. You will be updated by email regarding delayed starts and weather closures as we receive notifications from the District. There is no refund given for weather closures.

Since Aleph's calendar does not always coincide with WCSD, if they are closed for vacation and inclement weather occurs, we will send out an early morning email if our status is closed or delayed. While Aleph makes every effort to remain open, the safety of our students and staff is paramount.

## **How to Dress**

The success of your child's time in an outdoor classroom depends on how prepared (s)he is for the weather. It is the parent's responsibility to dress your child appropriately. Since the weather can drastically change on any given day in the High Sierra's we recommend dressing your child in layers and coming to school prepared. Please check the weather each morning. For the safety

of your child, if your child is not dressed appropriately, they will not be allowed to participate and will be sent home for the day.

### **Cold Weather**

We recommend dressing your child in layers. As the day heats up, children can remove layers and still be comfortable outside. The following clothing is required during our cold weather months:

1. Snow pants- These need to be waterproof. We recommend pants or pants with suspenders as they are much easier to get off when using the toilet.
2. Winter coat- warm and waterproof
3. Waterproof gloves or mittens- we recommend over the elbow mittens to help your child stay dry
4. Hat- to cover your child's ears from the cold
5. Face mask- (optional but highly recommended), a balaclava also works to keep your child's face warm
6. Socks- thermal socks keep toes warm. For extra warmth, some children may want two pairs of socks layered on top of each other.
7. Snow boots- These will be for outside use only. If your child is staying for our afternoon program, please send along another pair of shoes to be worn inside.

We also recommend that children come dressed in a base layer, with a separated top and bottom to be worn under your child's clothing. This allows for easy toileting. The base layer helps the body stay warm if the outer clothes get wet.

### **Warm Weather**

While our playscape has shade structures, please remember that your child is outside for a large part of his/her morning and will need proper protection from the sun.

1. Full length long sleeve rash guard-This should cover your child's entire body and helps protect children from sun exposure. Rash guards are great because they can get wet and dry quickly.
2. Sun Hat- covering the neck and having a brim for shade
3. Water durable shoes- shoes will get wet and dirty and should be able to withstand mud play. Closed toe shoes are best to prevent debris from getting inside.

### **Sunscreen**

All children should have sunscreen applied before coming to school. We will reapply sunscreen every two hours.

## **What to Keep at School**

Every child has a storage locker both inside and outside. Their locker should have two complete changes of regular clothing, individually placed in a ziplock bag. All items must be labeled with your child's name. Bags should include a shirt, pants, underwear and socks as well as a pair of waterproof gloves during the winter months. Children who are enrolled in a full day program should bring shoes and clothing that they can change into when they transition to Aleph classrooms.

Any additional things brought to school need to be kept in a weatherproof zipped up backpack in your child's cubby.

## **Learning Laboratory**

We are super excited to have your child be a part of Teva! Our Teva classroom is a constantly evolving learning laboratory where children are actively engaged in their environment. Please remember that these are specific policies for our Teva classroom. All other policies are in effect and can be found in our Parent Handbook.