

# EXPLORING NATURE

## SUMMER OUTDOOR LEARNING PROGRAM (OLP)

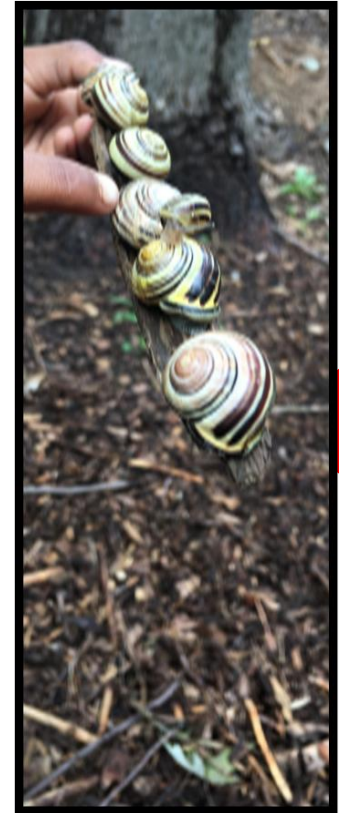
### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### DEAR OLP FAMILIES

Thank you for joining the University of Guelph Child Care and Learning Centre's Outdoor Learning Program (OLP). We are looking forward to exploring with your child(ren) this summer! This letter provides a bit of an overview of what to expect for your time with us in OLP.

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Exploring Nature: Outdoor Learning Program is a seasonal, inquiry-based program that is designed to provide children ages 4 to 8 years old with meaningful opportunities to explore, connect with, and learn in nature. Time spent with nature has been shown to have dramatic benefits for children's social, psychological, and physical well-being. Through this learning program, led by our Registered Early Childhood Educators and Ontario Certified Teachers, we aim to help children strengthen their connection with the natural world and foster a reciprocal relationship with the environment. During this program, children will spend most of their day learning in the forest areas around the University of Guelph campus, both inside and outside of the Arboretum. The program has been designed to connect with and support the Ontario Science and Technology Curriculum for Grades 1 to 4.



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Phone: 519-824-4120 Ext. 52682

# More Information

This program is designed to offer responsive outdoor programming that meets the criteria for public school-aged curriculum. We know that the outdoor environment is a powerful educator; as such, we aim to connect with the land regularly and are guided by nature's affordances. Our pedagogical commitments are such that we allow our learning to unfold organically in response to the lifecycles, habitats, and weather patterns we encounter. Although our "base camp" is hosted behind Alumni House at the Child Care and Learning Centre, we intentionally explore various areas of the Arboretum and the University of Guelph campus to interact with diverse plants, animals, habitats, technology, humans, and more. We have a community agreement (code of conduct) that includes respect, purpose, and permission when engaging with the natural world and each other. We operate from the knowledge we hold related to the benefits of unstructured play, risky play, loose parts play, constructive/destructive play, barefoot play, and water play. We also believe that there are rich learning experiences afforded by many weather conditions, including rain, heat, and mud, and we ask that children arrive prepared to be outdoors in these conditions. However, we monitor our activity in relation to temperature, humidex, thunder, lightening, wind, rainfall, air quality, and air pollution to make daily adjustments to support each child's health and safety. We hope that knowing this information ahead of times helps to determine if our program is a good fit for you and your child(ren).



This year you will have the option of registering for a daily plant-based lunch and snacks or packing litterless lunches and snacks. If you would like to have lunch/snacks included, please include this in the registration or add it after by May 4, 2026.

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# PREDICTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

## Curriculum Focus and Learning Experiences and Encounters

### Understanding Earth and Space Systems – Air and Water in the Environment

- Air and water are major parts of our environment.
- Living beings need air and water to survive.
- Our actions affect the quality of air and water, and its ability to sustain life.

### Understanding Life Systems – Habitats and Communities

- Plants and animals are interdependent and adapt to meet their needs from the resources available in their habitats.
- Changes to habitats can affect plants and animals and the relationship between them.
- The well-being of plants and animals are interconnected and interdependent.

### Understanding Life Systems – Growth and Changes in Plants

- Plants have distinct characteristics.
- There are similarities and differences among various types of plants.
- Plants are a primary source of food for humans and are important for the planet.
- We need to protect plants and their habitats.

### Understanding Earth and Space Systems – Soils in the Environment

- Soil is made up of many living beings and non-living matter.
- There are different types of soils that are important for different purposes.
- We can have both a negative and positive impact on the soils within the environment.



# PREDICTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

## Curriculum Focus and Learning Experiences and Encounters

### Understanding Structures & Mechanisms – Strong and Stable Structures

- Structures have both form and function.
- Different forces can act on structures and have an impact on them.
- Structures need to be strong and stable to be useful.

### Understanding Matter and Energy – Properties of Liquids and Solids

- Materials that exist as liquids and solids have specific properties.
- Liquids and solids interact in different ways.
- Some liquids and solids can be harmful to us and the environment.

### Understanding Matter & Energy – Light and Sound

- Light and sound are forms of energy with specific properties.
- Light is required to see.
- Technology innovations involving light and sound have an impact on the environment.

### Understanding Life Systems – Growth and Changes in Animals

- An adaptation is a characteristic body part, shape or behaviour that helps an animal survive in their environment.
- There are differences and similarities among different kinds of animals.
- It is important for us to protect animals and the places where they live.

# SAMPLE MENU (OPTIONAL WITH REGISTRATION)

Week 1	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>AM SNACK</b>	<b>Whole Wheat Soft Apple Breakfast Cookies</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Strawberry Granola Bars</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Whole Wheat Wow Butter Sandwiches</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Muffins</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Pumpkin Seed Granola Bars</b>  Fresh Fruit
<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>Spaghetti Bolognese</b> <i>With Whole Wheat Pasta</i>  Green Lentils, Onion, Celery, Carrot And Tomatoes, Peas  Fresh Fruit	<b>Rice Jollof</b> <i>With Nigerian-Inspired Marinated Tofu</i>  Baked Plantains, Shredded Cabbage Salad  Fresh Fruit	<b>BBQ Black Bean Burgers</b> <i>With Sweet Potato And Carrots</i>  Whole Wheat Buns, Baked French Fries, Roasted Beet Ketchup  Fresh Fruit	<b>Red Lentil Dal</b> <i>With Fire-Roasted Tomatoes, Carrots And Celery</i>  Brown Rice, Seasonal Vegetables  Fresh Fruit	<b>Quinoa Ranch Bowl</b> <i>With Homemade Ranch Dressing</i>  Garlic Chickpeas, Shredded Carrots, Steamed Broccoli, Red Peppers  Fresh Fruit
<b>PM SNACK</b>	<b>Whole Wheat Bread</b>  Avocado Spread, Raw Vegetables	<b>Whole Wheat Bagel Crisps</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Whole Wheat Zucchini Muffins</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Navy Bean And Spinach Quesadilla</b>  Whole Wheat Tortilla, Raw Vegetables	<b>Smoothie Popsicles, Wow Butter Sandwiches</b>

Week 2	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>AM SNACK</b>	<b>Whole Wheat Muffins</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Toasted Coconut and Strawberry Granola Bars</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Whole Wheat Soft Apple Breakfast Cookies</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Pumpkin Seed Granola Bars</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Whole Wheat Muffins</b>  Fresh Fruit
<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>Baked Falafel</b> <i>With Garlic Tahini Sauce, Fattoush</i>  Fresh Fruit, Soy Milk	<b>Garlic Ginger Fried Rice</b> <i>With Tofu, Corn, Carrots, And Peppers, Steamed Broccoli</i>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Three Sisters Stew With Pinto Beans</b> <i>Corn And Butternut Squash, Wild Rice Blend</i>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Red Lentil Pizza</b> <i>With Whole Wheat Pizza Crust And Plant-Based Mozzarella Cheese</i>  Hummus And Vegetables, Fresh Fruit	<b>Lime Salsa Tacos</b> <i>With Soy Crumbles In Lime Salsa With Whole Wheat Tortilla, Roasted Corn, Iceberg Lettuce And Plant-Based Cheese</i>  Vegetable Soup, Fresh Fruit, Soy Milk
<b>PM SNACK</b>	<b>Whole Wheat Beet Brownie</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Smoothie Popsicles, Wow Butter Sandwiches</b>	<b>Hummus and Raw Vegetables</b>  Whole Wheat Pita	<b>Tropical Green Smoothie Popsicles</b>  Whole Wheat Wow Butter Sandwich	<b>Toasted Coconut And Date Powerballs</b>  Fresh Fruit

# SAMPLE MENU (OPTIONAL WITH REGISTRATION)

Week 3	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>AM SNACK</b>	<b>Whole Wheat Tea Biscuits</b> <i>With Chia Jam</i>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Whole Wheat Wow Butter Sandwiches</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Strawberry Granola Bars</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Whole Wheat Soft Apple Breakfast Cookies</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Whole Wheat Muffins</b>  Fresh Fruit
<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>Whole Wheat Pasta Salad</b> <i>With Seasonal Vegetables and Marinated Tofu</i>  Fresh Fruit, Apple Sauce	<b>Chickpea Stew</b> <i>With Sweet Potatoes, Carrots, Cauliflower, and Brown Rice</i>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Shepherd's Pie</b> <i>With Soy Crumbles and Mashed Potatoes</i>  Whole Wheat Rolls, Fresh Fruit	<b>Black Bean Chili</b> <i>With Whole Wheat Cornbread, and Seasonal Vegetables</i>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Chickpea Shawarma Wraps</b> <i>With Whole Wheat Tortilla, Diced Tomato, Cucumber, Chopped Iceberg Lettuce and Garlic Dill Tahini Sauce</i>  Vegetable Soup, Fresh Fruit
<b>PM SNACK</b>	<b>Black Bean and Pepper Quesadilla</b> <i>Whole Wheat Tortilla</i>  Raw Vegetables	<b>Pumpkin Seed Granola Bars</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Cocoa Banana Powerballs</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Hummus and Raw Vegetables</b>  Whole Wheat Pita	<b>Baked Pakora</b> <i>With Mango Chutney</i>  Fresh Fruit

Week 4	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>AM SNACK</b>	<b>Pumpkin Seed Granola Bars</b>	<b>Whole Wheat Soft Apple Breakfast Cookies</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Strawberry Granola Bars</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Whole Wheat Muffins</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Pumpkin Seed Granola Bars</b>  Fresh Fruit
<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>White Bean Macaroni and Cheese</b> <i>With Whole Wheat Macaroni, Blended White Bean Sauce, and Peas</i>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Swedish Meatballs</b> <i>With Soy Crumbles and Quinoa, Mashed Potatoes and Mushroom Gravy</i>  Fresh Fruit, Soy Milk	<b>Creamy Tomato Coconut Milk Curry</b> <i>With Tofu, Brown Rice, Seasonal Vegetables</i>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Red Lentil Pizza</b> <i>With Whole Wheat Pizza Crust And Plant-Based Mozzarella Cheese</i>  Hummus And Vegetables, Fresh Fruit	<b>Black Bean Burrito Bake</b> <i>With Quinoa, Corn, Peppers and Fire-Roasted Tomatoes, Seasonal Vegetables and Fresh Limes</i>  Fresh Fruit
<b>PM SNACK</b>	<b>Blueberry Kale Smoothie Popsicles, Whole Wheat Wow Butter Sandwiches</b>	<b>Hummus and Raw Vegetables, Whole Wheat Pita</b>	<b>Whole Wheat Muffins</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Whole Wheat Rhubarb Crumble Bars</b>  Fresh Fruit	<b>Whole Wheat Baked Tortilla Chips</b> <i>With Guacamole</i>  Raw Vegetables



## PEDAGOGICAL COMMITMENTS

We are excited to announce that this summer we are experimenting with a fully integrated and responsive curriculum! We are expanding upon our "Sample Weekly Program Plan" to offer pedagogical approaches that are more philosophically aligned with forest school land-based learning. This summer, our learning experiences will be planned through integrated and responsive processes depending on encounters, habitats, weather, and tools used, rather than prescribing a curriculum unit for the week.

Therefore, each unit of the curriculum is explored throughout the summer, as we encounter it, which will offer long-term and re-emerging exploration of each curriculum strand. Our educators engage in pedagogical documentation and reflective practice to demonstrate how our experiences and encounters connect to the Ontario Science and Technology Curriculum for grades 1 to 4. Educators are intentional about choosing which areas of the Arboretum to visit and what types of inquiries can be taken up.



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## CODE OF CONDUCT

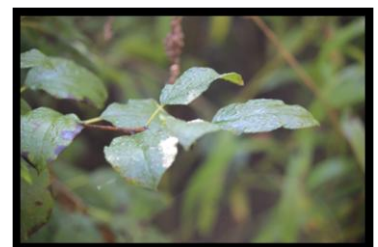
We want everyone in the program to feel like they belong and are important contributors to the learning community, including the children. Together, we strive to uphold the following values within our program:

**RESPECT:** Respect includes paying attention to our bodies to know our limits, using respectful words and actions with our peers, abiding by the boundaries and rules set by educators, and caring for the physical environment in which activities are held. **PURPOSE:** Being intentional about our decisions means knowing that humans impact nature, and aiming to mitigate the harms of our actions, whether intentional or not. In OLP, the educators purposely make decisions related to the curriculum, risk-benefit analyses, holistic health and well-being, and experiential affordances. We encourage the children to purposely make decisions related to playing with their peers, handling plants, choosing trees to climb, and resolving problems collaboratively. **PERMISSION:** Establishing permission to engage with other living beings is important to communal well-being. In OLP, we ask permission from ourselves and each other prior to making contact, entering a space, or sharing materials. **PARTICIPATION:** If a child exhibits behaviours that are disruptive and unsafe, our educators engage in collaborative conversations and problem solve strategies with both the child and the parents/guardians to encourage appropriate behaviours and expectations. If a child continues to engage in unsafe or disrespectful behaviour that poses a risk of harm to themselves or others, the CCLC reserves the right to discontinue the child's participation in the program. Our goal is for this program to be a positive and meaningful experience for all who are involved.



## BENEFITS OF RISKY PLAY

As part of this learning program, children will physically explore the natural environment at a level that is comfortable for them. Often times, these explorations will include climbing trees, balancing on logs, and moving and lifting large sticks. The children in this learning program will not be helped to reach a height that their body is not yet ready for, but will be encouraged to independently explore within their own comfort level and strength under the supervision of the educators leading the program. While furthering their relationship with nature, the children will learn to take and manage risks that will improve their self-esteem and sense of self-worth. Risk taking has been shown to provide tremendous benefits for children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. By taking risks, children learn how to make choices for themselves, approach challenges, solve problems, overcome adversity, and adapt when a situation does not unfold as expected. With the benefits of risk taking in mind, note that as children engage in risk they may experience scrapes and bruises from time to time. Engaging in risky play does not mean that "anything goes", but rather that children will be encouraged to take risks that are appropriate for their physical and cognitive developmental levels. While playing within our on-site outdoor learning space, children may also engage in some barefoot exploration as well as water-based play, if they choose. Studies have shown that barefoot exploration can improve balance, posture, bodily awareness, and use of their senses. In order for this program to provide a safe, secure, and engaging experience for all of the participants, children will need to be able to independently follow direction and have comfort with exploring.



## DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP INFORMATION

- Children's health will be monitored by CCLC staff upon arrival and throughout the day. Unwell children must stay home, or will be sent home, in accordance with the CCLC's Child Health Policy.
- Drop off occurs between 8:00 am and 9:00 am and pick up occurs between 4:00 pm and 5:00 pm each day of the program. This year, the program is hosted behind Alumni House at the University of Guelph.
- If a child is being dropped off late or picked up early, please call the CCLC at 519-824-4120 ex 52682 to let us know since many of our days include adventures to the Arboretum.
- Please allow for extra time to sign in on the first day of the program.
- Parking – please use Parking Lot 15 for drop-off, so that families with younger children at the CCLC can use our parent parking spots.
- Upon arrival, go to the "OLP Sign In" area which is the larger fenced in green space at the front of the Child Care and Learning Centre (gate is beside the Arboretum Rd and East Ring Rd intersection.) If it is raining, drop off and pick up will be in the CCLC portable classroom near the back of the building.
- Parents/Guardians or authorized persons must sign their children in and out. Please Note: Photo ID will be required if an alternate person is picking up your child.



## ABSENCES

If your child is unable to attend the program on any day, please call the University of Guelph Child Care and Learning Centre by 9:00 am at 519-824- 4120 x52682. Children must not be sick in order to attend the program each day. Please call the above number with any messages that you have regarding your child during the day

## HIGH-RISK MEDICAL PLANS

If you have identified your child as having an anaphylactic allergy or medical condition, we will be emailing you a form to complete. This form will need to be returned prior to your child attending the program.

## WEATHER AND AIR QUALITY

We believe in the rich learning experiences afforded by many weather conditions, and it is likely that children will experience daily encounters with rain, heat, and mud, so please ensure your child(ren) come dressed to explore in all weather. We consider several factors when making decisions to move our program indoors. For example, we monitor temperature, humidex, thunder, lightning, wind, heavy rainfall, air quality and air pollution (through the air quality health index) daily to make these decisions. We also monitor how the children are experiencing these conditions, and use several strategies to remain safe outdoors, including access to the shade and sheltering of the forest, water breaks and water play, monitoring children's moods, and encouraging activities that help regulate children's physiology in the various weather conditions.



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## BACKPACKS

Children should be able to comfortably carry their backpack throughout the day. They will have a cubby where they can leave the majority of their things, but will likely need to carry their water bottle with them. In past years, some children and families have found it beneficial to have a smaller backpack that the child uses for hikes and a larger bag that they keep the majority of their items in within their cubby, but this is not required.

- 2 reusable water bottles
- A litterless and nut-free lunch and 2 snacks (packed separately) if you did not order food
- Hat (& sunglasses, if desired)
- Sunscreen (please apply in the morning prior to coming to OLP and have a bottle for their backpack for them to reapply after lunch)
- Bug spray (without eucalyptus)
- Weather appropriate clothes – be prepared for weather changes throughout the day (bring rain gear everyday). You are welcome to leave it in your child's cubby for the session.
- Appropriate footwear for exploring in the forest – sneakers, boots; No sandals or flip-flops
- Full change of clothing (extra socks, underwear, pants, shirt, sweater)
- A swimsuit or clothing that they are comfortable getting wet in (in case of water play on hot days).
- Any required medication (i.e., EpiPen, puffer, etc.) \*\* Please do not bring any valuables or toys from home\*\*



## RISK MITIGATION

We practice some risk mitigation strategies for the plants and animals we come in contact with. We are close to a honeysuckle bush whose berries can be toxic if ingested. No children consume the berries but we have allowed play with the berries on the ground. We always wash our hands before eating snack and lunch, but something to consider is handwashing before leaving OLP to reduce residue transfer. We also come in contact with various species like the Hickory Tussock Moth which can result in a rash if touched. We again follow the suggested protocol of washing hands/skin with soap and water. There is poison ivy in some areas that we visit and so we wash any potential contact areas abrasively with soap and water to remove the oil. We also may encounter ticks in our excursions, and so we conduct tick checks and clothes/skin wiping. We are letting you know so that you can encourage the same practices or let us know of additional practices to consider as we continue to be immersed in nature. Please help us keep an eye out for any potential reactions while your child is at home as well.



# CHILD HEALTH POLICY FROM CCLC (APPLIES TO OLP)

## Health and Safety Information

### Assessing Children's Health

Children are assessed for signs of illness upon arrival and monitored throughout the day.

A child must go home, or stay home when:

Temperature of  
37.5°C to 37.9°C  
99.5°F to 100°F  
with one or more  
additional symptoms:  
A child who is not  
managing well must go  
home.

**Vomiting/ Diarrhea:**  
one episode with no  
reasonable  
explanation.

**Respiratory:**  
New or worsening runny  
nose or congestion without  
explanation.

**Rash:**  
unexplained rash or  
bumps.

**AND/OR**  
New or worsening cough,  
wheezing, or shortness of  
breath without  
explanation.

**Infection:**  
signs of redness,  
discharge or swelling of  
eyes, nose or skin.

**AND/OR**  
Sore throat.

Fever of 38°C (100.4°F):  
With a fever this high  
and over, the child needs  
individual care and  
attention, and must go  
home.

A child may return to the CCLC when:

Normal temperature of  
up to 37.4°C:  
after remaining fever  
free, without medication,  
for 24 hours.

**Vomiting/ Diarrhea:**  
48 hours after their  
last episode of  
vomiting or diarrhea.

**Respiratory: symptoms**  
have been improving for  
24 hours and there are  
no new or worsening  
symptoms.

**Rash/Infection:**  
a medical practitioner  
has cleared the child to  
return to child care.

While the CCLC is in Outbreak or Pandemic Status, a child may return:

Normal temperature of  
up to 37.4°C:  
after receiving two  
negative COVID tests 24-  
48 hours apart and  
remaining fever free  
without medication for 24  
hours.  
If the child is not tested or  
tests positive, they may  
return if fever free without  
medication for 24 hours  
and mask for 10 days from  
onset of symptoms.

**Vomiting/ Diarrhea:**  
48 hours after their last  
episode of vomiting or  
diarrhea.

**Respiratory:**  
**Congestion/ Runny Nose:**  
once their symptom has  
been improving for 24 hrs

**Rash/Infection:**  
a medical practitioner  
has cleared the child to  
return to child care.

**Cough/ wheezing/**  
**shortness of breath:**  
after receiving two  
negative COVID tests 24-48  
hours apart and symptoms  
improving for 24 hours  
without medication. If the  
child is not tested or tests  
positive, they may return if  
fever free without  
medication for 24 hours  
and mask for 10 days from  
onset of symptoms.



# HEALTH POLICY FROM CCLC (APPLIES TO OLP)

## Reporting Illness

If your child is ill, please call the Front Office at 519-824-4120 Ext. 52682 and leave a message stating your child's classroom, the nature of your child's illness, and if you have a doctor's diagnosis. It is helpful to the morning program if you are able to call by 9:00 AM. While the CCLC is in Outbreak status, the WDG Public Health Unit requires us to report the number of bouts of enteric illness any children have. Families must report this information to the Front Office each day that their child is ill.

## An Unwell Child

Children's health is monitored at drop-off and throughout the day while they are at the CCLC. Parents or guardians are contacted to pick up their child according to the requirements stated above. If parents cannot be reached, the emergency contact on file is called. Children must be picked up within 30 minutes. If necessary, children may be cared for in one of the administrative offices or an isolation room while waiting to be picked up. Parents or guardians are also contacted if a child seems unwell, has a slightly elevated temperature, or a mild rash developing. Parents may decide whether to pick up their child in these cases.

## Handwashing and Hygiene

Handwashing is critical in stopping the spread of illness and protecting severely anaphylactic children from exposure. Families are asked to ensure that all children have their hands and faces washed and teeth brushed before attending the CCLC and wash their hands once they enter the program in the morning. We appreciate your help in ensuring that your child washes their hands when they arrive.



## IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- We will be in touch about special events and arrival times. We will share our Padlet link via email/QR code as well.
- Please help us set expectations with your child around sunscreen and bug spray use.
- Please bring insect repellent with no eucalyptus due to an allergy.
- Please check your child for ticks.
- We have an indoor space as-needed.
- Please let us know when your child is absent.
- If you are parking a car during your child's drop-off, please allow enough time to walk from the parking lot near the arena to OLP each morning and to complete a safe drop-off routine.
- The program is closed at 5:00, so please ensure you are arriving for pickup before 4:59pm.
- We are here to play, learn, and grow!

