



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q: What kind of school is Will Smith Zoo School?**

A: Will Smith Zoo School is a nature-based preschool for children aged three to five. Students spend at least 70% of their day outside engaging in a rich play environment. Will Smith Zoo School brings together the tenets of high-quality early childhood education and environmental education, with a focus on connecting young children to animals and nature for the benefit of both the child and the natural world. Inspired also by the Reggio Emilia approach, the preschool follows an emergent curriculum philosophy guided by the principles of the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Daily field trips to the zoo offer the child rich experiences in animal and plant interaction, global awareness, nature play, and the many ways the zoo community works together.

### **Q: How can I put my child on the waitlist?**

A: To secure your child's spot on the WSZS waitlist, please create an account and complete the Waitlist Form at the following link:

<https://www.myprocare.com/Default/Index?aWtuPTI2MjI5MDU5MTMmc2NoSWQ9Mg==>

### **Q: What is a NAEYC Accreditation?**

A: NAEYC is the National Association for the Education of Young Children. In March 2020, Will Smith Zoo School became a NAEYC Accredited Early Learning Program. Programs with this accreditation promote high-quality early learning and follow specific guidelines to ensure students' success.

### **Q: What classes are offered?**

A: We offer 2-, 3-, and 5-day classes. 2-Day classes are on Tuesdays and Thursdays. 3-Day classes are on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. 5-Day classes are Monday through Friday. Classes are grouped into 3-4-year-olds and 4-5-year-olds.

### **Q: What are the hours of operation?**

A: The school day is 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. For an additional fee, we offer extended care from 8:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. to 5:30 P.M. Please be advised that Extended Care may not be available when registering, as the limited spaces are provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Q: What is the cost to enroll my student?**

A: To secure a new student’s spot for the upcoming school year, there is a non-refundable registration fee of \$45. The 2-day program costs \$440/month plus an additional \$80 if enrolled in extended care. The 3-day program costs \$660/month plus an additional \$120 if enrolled in extended care. The 5-day program costs \$1,100/month plus an additional \$200 if enrolled in extended care.

**Q: Do we accept under-immunized students?**

A: All enrolled students must meet the vaccination requirements for their age group, or have a plan in place to receive required vaccinations. Our school requires students to be immunized to meet the Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for Child-Care Facilities. Will Smith Zoo School will accept any student that is under-immunized with one of the following affidavits signed and submitted.

- Affidavit signed by a physician stating that the immunization poses a significant risk to the child or a member of the child’s family or household; or
- Affidavit signed by the parent or guardian stating the immunization is declined for reasons of conscience, as outlined in [Health and Safety Code §161.0041](#).

**2023 - 2024 Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for Child-Care and Pre-K Facilities**

This chart summarizes the vaccine requirements incorporated in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 25 Health Services, §97.61-97.72. This chart is not intended as a substitute for consulting the TAC, which has other provisions and details. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is granted authority to set immunization requirements for child-care facilities by the Human Resources Code, Chapter 42.

A child shall show acceptable evidence of vaccination prior to entry, attendance, or transfer to a child-care facility in Texas.

Age at which child must have vaccines to be in compliance:	Minimum Number of Doses Required of Each Vaccine							
	Diphtheria / Tetanus / Pertussis (DTaP)	Polio	Hepatitis B (HepB) <sup>1</sup>	<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) <sup>2</sup>	Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) <sup>3</sup>	Measles, Mumps, & Rubella (MMR) <sup>1, 4</sup>	Varicella <sup>1, 4, 5</sup>	Hepatitis A (HepA) <sup>1, 4</sup>
0 through 2 months								
By 3 months	1 Dose	1 Dose	1 Dose	1 Dose	1 Dose			
By 5 months	2 Doses	2 Doses	2 Doses	2 Doses	2 Doses			
By 7 months	3 Doses	2 Doses	2 Doses	2 Doses	3 Doses			
By 16 months	3 Doses	2 Doses	2 Doses	3 Doses	4 Doses	1 Dose	1 Dose	
By 19 months	4 Doses	3 Doses	3 Doses	3 Doses	4 Doses	1 Dose	1 Dose	
By 25 months	4 Doses	3 Doses	3 Doses	3 Doses	4 Doses	1 Dose	1 Dose	1 Dose
By 43 months	4 Doses	3 Doses	3 Doses	3 Doses	4 Doses	1 Dose	1 Dose	2 Doses

↓ Notes on the back page, please turn over. ↓

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**Q: Are meals provided, or do the students bring their own food?**

A: Lunch is not provided and must be brought by the student. We offer one snack during the school day. A second snack is provided to students staying in extended care after their designated rest period.

**Q: What are the teacher to student ratios?**

A: Our ratios are one staff member to eight students. Each class has two staff members for 16 students. All of the classes are mix-aged to allow them to learn at their readiness and play with students at their social age.

**Q: What are the requirements for my student to attend?**

A: Children must be at least 3 years old by the date of planned admission, and no older than 5 years old by August 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year session (not yet eligible for public kindergarten). They must be using the toilet independently by the child's first day of class. To hold a student's spot, the registration and supply fees must be paid. Prior to the start date, an immunization record and medical appraisal must be submitted along with the enrollment packet.

**Q: How does the school and teachers communicate with families?**

A: Emails are frequently sent to families from administrative staff and teachers. Classroom Newsletters are sent to families at the end of units. The school and teachers use Procure Parent Engage to make class specific announcements and share pictures/videos. We frequently hold family workshops to communicate the philosophy and invite families to experience parts of our school day. Family Conferences are held before school starts and at the end of the school year. Meetings with staff can be requested if necessary.

**Q: How are children assessed?**

A: We assess students through observation on school readiness guidelines set by Texas Education Agency and on nature connectedness. Our Learning Outcome Assessments review key skills for success in the Pre-K environment and are tied to the recommended Texas Pre-Kindergarten Standards, and overall Kindergarten readiness skills. Our Nature Based Assessments review our three tenants: Compassion, Resiliency, and Innovation. These are the three pillars of our program and areas we strive to develop with each student.