

Nia House's Air Quality Policies

This document is subject to updates. Updated on August 2023

NIA HOUSE'S AIR QUALITY POLICY

GOOD
AQI 0-50

All outside activity is a go!

MODERATE
AQI 51-100

Outside activity is ok;
teachers will monitor
children.

UNHEALTHY FOR
SENSITIVE GROUPS
AQI 101-150

School day may shorten to a
mid-day pick-up.

UNHEALTHY
AQI 151-200

The Toddlers will offer a half
day. Primary may offer a full
day.

Consecutive unhealthy days
may result in school closure.

VERY UNHEALTHY
AQI >200

School will close.

Nia House staff will monitor the Air Quality Index (AQI) throughout the day using ratings and descriptions from the [EPA](#) and our own senses to inform our decisions regarding whether to keep school open, stay indoors, go outside with low impact play, or play freely.

If the AQI is unhealthy, Nia House (Eve or Stacey) will send an email by 7am to notify whether school will be closed/half day.

In all circumstances, teachers will watch for sensitivity and may decide to be more restrictive than the depicted guidelines, but not less restrictive. If we see that your child is being affected by the air quality, we will contact you to pick them up. We also understand and support individual family decisions to pick children up early or keep them home in these circumstances.

FAQ'S:

Given that it is fire season with more smoky days likely, what is NH's air quality policy?

We monitor the Air Quality Index (AQI) throughout the day using ratings and descriptions from the [EPA](#) to inform our decisions regarding whether to keep the school open, stay indoors, go outside with low impact play, or play freely. Please note that the AQI is highly changeable depending on the wind and the life of the fires, so the forecast can sometimes be different from the [real time index](#) (Purple Air, AQ&U). This policy is meant to support and complement Nia House's Parent Handbook.

Will NH consider offering indoor-only school days? NH will bring children into school when air quality is unhealthy, and will try to offer indoor-only half days to toddler-aged children. Nia House will offer as much full day indoor programming to the primary

classrooms as possible. Our current plan for unhealthy air days is-

- HALF DAY INDOORS- Toddlers
- FULL DAY INDOORS- Primary

This plan is an effort to offer as much stability and care to our community as possible. We are uncertain on the sustainability of this plan and are offering it as a temporary trial. Thankfully, this season of poor air quality is also temporary, and once behind us we can resume "typical" programming practices.

Why can't NH commit to offering full-day indoor school, every day, despite the air quality? Good question. Outside time is critical to our staff and children's safety and well being. Additionally, one big reason you all (parents and staff alike) chose NH is due to the peace, order and beauty of the classrooms, and the grace of the staff. If our classroom spaces are "misused" on days when children's energy naturally exceeds the boundaries our physical indoor space, much of the beauty we all treasure is disturbed, and we run the risk of turning our Montessori classrooms into "romper room" style childcare, which is not our (parents and staff alike) long-term vision of our school's programming. Group childcare is beautiful, exuberant and peaceful. If we disturb the balance, it will have negative long-term implications for the grace of our teachers and the behavior of your children. Essentially, we need a cafeteria or multipurpose room, similar to what programs in extreme weather regions build in order to meet the gross motor needs of young children. We honor children's needs for intense proprioceptive and vestibular movements that support their concentration, order, coordination and independence, the direct aims of Montessori early childhood programming, and we acknowledge that we cannot physically meet those needs in our current classrooms during full-day care. We are committed to offering as much full-day programming as possible for all children, as noted in the "Indoor Programming" section above. If several days of unhealthy air quality and indoor programming takes a negative toll on the classrooms, children and teachers, we may limit services.

Why does NH choose to shorten days because of the wild fire smoke?

NH teachers will strive to offer as much inside time as possible, and are working to brainstorm constructive and successful programming for children inside during our orange and possibly red zone days. NH may shorten our days (half day pick up schedule) if the AQI (Air Quality Index) rises during the morning to the red zone (Unhealthy). If AQI is in the orange zone (Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups), the school day may be shortened to our mid-day pick up schedule, according to staff discretion. Unhealthy air quality for sensitive groups requires us to close all of the windows and doors at our school, as well as severely limits outside time for children. Outside time is critical to our program's success and our staff and children's safety.

Does NH have have filtration systems installed?

We run [AIRTHEREAL](#) purifiers with HEPA filters in all our classrooms, and recently added additional [COWAY](#) HEPA purifiers and fans, so each class/ space has 2 purifiers.

If an AQI of 150 or above is forecast by the EPA for the following school day, will NH be closed on this day? If the AQI forecast is unhealthy, we can all anticipate a half day indoors for the Toddlers . Primary will have an indoor full day schedule. We will confirm school hours at 7am on the day of based on the early morning AQI. Consecutive unhealthy days may result in school closure.

Will NH credit tuition if closure each month is more than 4 days? Yes, NH will offer each family a credit of 25% of monthly tuition if the school is closed between 4-7 days during a calendar month. The credit will appear and can be used for the following month's tuition. The credit will expire at the end of the fiscal year (June 30th), and will graciously be accepted as a tax-deductible contribution, if unused.

Will NH offer distance learning if school is closed for AQ?

Yes! Nia House will host a short (10-15 minutes) morning meeting with songs and stories. [Here are some ideas for Montessori in the home](#) to keep your child(ren) busy at home. More- [here is a presentation on bringing Montessori language curriculum home](#). This will take preparation, so plan ahead for smokey air days.