

Blue Heron School
at
Squam Lakes Natural Science Center



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If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.

~Rachel Carson

Welcome

At Blue Heron School there is no such thing as bad weather. We are a nature-based, Montessori, early learning center where children enjoy the outdoors every day, year-round. Our school follows the Montessori philosophy; introducing language, math and other academic concepts with concrete materials. We provide daily outdoor time in the forests, trails, and streams of the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center. The prepared environment of the classroom and varied outdoor experiences encourage children to become self-confident and independent. Children learn to be responsible for themselves and their environment and to treat others with respect. Through all the weather, indoors and out, we are a close and supportive community that welcomes families of all kinds.

There is no description, no image in any book that is capable of replacing the sight of real trees, and all of the life to be found around them in a real forest.

~Maria Montessori

The Blue Heron School Philosophy

At Blue Heron School, Montessori educational philosophy and the nature preschool approach are woven together to create a unique early childhood program. Montessori teachers prepare the school environment to support children's development with carefully selected activities and guidance from the teachers. Children choose their own activities, and teachers act as facilitators, observing the children's interests, mastery, and social interactions. Nature preschools engage children in the natural world through daily outdoor exploration and free play. At Blue Heron School these approaches blend together to minimize the boundary between indoors and out. Children go outdoors every day, for unstructured play and guided discoveries with a teacher or Science Center naturalist. Children bring their discoveries inside and extend their experiences with activities in art, language, math, science, geography, and more. Using both natural and Montessori materials, and following the interests of the children, teachers create activities in the classroom to introduce and strengthen traditional academic concepts. Children develop their abilities to observe, question, and describe. They build on their experiences in nature and develop an emotional connection with the natural world.

Because social learning is also important at Blue Heron School, there is always time for social interactions. Through stories, discussion, and modeling, teachers show children how to respectfully work and play with others. Children learn to resolve differences as they take turns speaking and listening. They learn compassion and understanding for others. Teachers guide children to become responsible, caring members of a community. Maria Montessori said, "Preventing conflicts is the work of politics. Establishing peace is the work of education." She was twice nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for her work, and included peace education in the academic curriculum. Peace education is practiced throughout the Montessori classroom. Care

for the preservation of the natural environment and all living things are natural extensions of the peace curriculum.

Children are able to come to Blue Heron School when they are three years old and benefit most when they stay for the full three years: two years of preschool and one of kindergarten. Children between three and six years old are all together in the same classroom. Returning children know the school routines and works and help new students learn what to do. Older children mentor the younger ones and younger children learn by copying their older friends. Kindergarten children enjoy being community leaders. New children enjoy having older students help them. Children grow physically, academically, emotionally, and socially through experiences and activities that integrate and support all areas of personal and social development.

We encourage caregivers to utilize our extensive library to learn more about the Montessori and nature-based philosophies. When home and school philosophies are aligned it provides the most consistency for the child. We will also provide resources for parent education throughout the year.

Blue Heron School 2023-24 Calendar

Orientation days August 29, 30 & 31

First Day of School Tuesday, September 5

CLOSED Parent Teacher Conferences Friday, October 6

CLOSED Indigenous People's Day Monday, October 9

HALF DAY Voting Day, Tuesday November 7-Everyone departs at 1:00, additional Parent Teacher Conferences in the afternoon

CLOSED Veterans Day observed Friday, November 10

CLOSED SLNSC Annual Staff Retreat- Tuesday, November TBD

CLOSED Thanksgiving November 22-24

CLOSED Winter Holidays December 22-January 1

Return from Winter Holidays Monday, January 2

CLOSED MLK Day Monday, January 15

CLOSED Winter Vacation Monday-Friday February 26-March 1

CLOSED Parent Teacher Conferences Friday, March 15

CLOSED Spring Vacation Monday-Friday April 22-April 26

CLOSED Memorial Day Monday, May 27 Last Day of School Wednesday, June 12

Sample Daily Schedule

8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

8:30 Arrival at the outdoor play area.

9:30 Morning meeting for good morning songs, sharing, and introduction of new activities.

9:45 Work time when children move about freely, choosing activities that are interesting and appropriate for their level of development from shelves of nature, creative, academic activities and Montessori materials. The teacher acts as a guide, introducing materials and assisting with interactions between children. Some days children start their day outside, often with a naturalist. Children eat snack when they are hungry during this period.

11:15 Group time to gather for songs, large motor group activities such as games, music, yoga, and stories.

11:45 Lunch time.

12:15 Outdoor time for unstructured play.

1:00 Departure from the outdoor play area.

Note: outdoor time periods are adjusted for weather conditions but children will go outside every day. Meetings, work time, and lunch time happen inside or outdoors.

Sample Extended Day Schedule

1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

1:00-3:30 Return to classroom. The kindergarten group and preschoolers separate at this time. Both groups have stories, rest, and independent activities. When rest is over, it is time for a snack and drink, a group activity, and then more time outside. The kindergarteners work at a more advanced level, doing more complicated activities, exploring outdoors with a naturalist, and integrating math and language into their interests.

Admissions Guidelines

Blue Heron School has a mixed age class of three to six year-olds. Children must be two years, ten months or older when entering school in September and fully toilet-trained (successfully out of diapers and pull-ups). Application and acceptance will be determined after consultation between the family and the Blue Heron School Director.

All children attend five days a week, 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. A longer day option, until 3:30 p.m., is available. All kindergarten children are expected to stay until 3:30 p.m. During the afternoon, children have a quiet time, a group activity, and time outside. Parents may choose the longer day option between one and five afternoons a week and may change the schedule by the month as family needs change.

Admission Procedures:

- Parents meet with Blue Heron School Director and visit the classroom
- Parents complete a contact information form
- Upon acceptance, parents complete and submit:
 - enrollment forms
 - documentation of an annual physical exam and immunizations
 - first non-refundable payment

Squam Lakes Natural Science Center is an equal opportunity organization and all admission decisions are made regardless of gender, race, religion, national heritage, physical or mental disabilities, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic. However, Blue Heron School reserves the right to cancel a child's enrollment based on problems such as irresolvable classroom issues or failure to pay.

Need based scholarships are available upon request.

Tuition

Blue Heron School partial tuition may be paid as one full payment or ten monthly payments. The initial tuition payment is due with enrollment. The other nine payments are due on the first of each month, September-May. The first tuition payment for returning families is due no later than August 1. In the event of an unforeseen departure from the program, four weeks advance notice is requested.

Blue Heron School offers a 10% tuition discount to siblings enrolled concurrently. There is no tuition credit for holidays, vacations, or inclement weather closings. Blue Heron School offers a need-based scholarship for students. Please contact the director for more information.

It is understood by the school and the family that all new students are enrolled on a four-week trial basis. If the child is not ready for the program or the program does not meet the child's needs, the school reserves the right to end the child's enrollment.

Blue Heron School reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child based on non-payment of tuition or lack of consistent attendance. A student is considered to be withdrawn if a tuition payment is 60 days or more past due. Regular attendance is important for children and the school community. A child who is absent for more than two weeks in a month without prior notification will be considered withdrawn. Timely arrival and departure is important for children. A child who is late more than five times a month without prior notice will be considered to be withdrawn.

Each Blue Heron School family receives an annual complimentary Squam Lakes Natural Science Center membership while enrolled. There are no additional fees for supplies and materials. There may be additional costs for certain activities during the school year.

Arrival/Departure

It is important that children arrive and depart on time with other students. Children who arrive late often find it difficult to integrate into the group and interruptions can be disruptive during activities. Prompt pick-up at the end of the school day is important for children as they transition to the next activity. A teacher greets each child at the drop off area at 8:30 a.m. and takes children to their cars at the end of the session. Children should be dressed appropriately (in rain/winter gear) upon arrival. Often parents pull over in the science center parking lot to allow their children to get dressed before getting into the drop off line. There is space for two cars at a time to pull up to be greeted by teachers. Parents should notify the school as soon as possible if a child will be late or needs to be picked up early.

Absences

Regular attendance at school is important to children's academic and social progress. Tuition will not be refunded for missed school days. If your child will be absent, please notify Blue Heron School as soon as possible.

Transportation

Only family and friends listed on the registration form under parent or guardian, emergency contact, and authorized pick-up will be allowed to pick up a child during or after class. For those who carpool, please make sure each authorized adult is listed. All drivers will be asked to show photo identification upon their first visit to the school.

Blue Heron School will only transport children in vehicles or vessels with prior notice and a signed field trip permission form. For certain field trips parents may be asked to assist with driving and chaperoning (with additional documentation).

Inclement Weather

Blue Heron School does not operate when weather and driving conditions are unsafe for children and their families. Delays and closures are listed under Blue Heron School in the WMUR School Closing listing. Parents will also be notified via text message after six am on the day of the delay or closure.

Health

At Blue Heron School children are often involved in high levels of activity in all weather conditions. If you feel that your child is not feeling up to being active outdoors please keep them home.

Children should be kept home if they have symptoms of illness such as:

Fever temperature of 100 or higher.

Respiratory Symptoms Difficult or rapid breathing or sever coughing. Child makes high-pitched croupy or whooping sound after coughing, and child is unable to lie comfortably due to continuous cough.

Diarrhea Defined as more than one unusually liquid (watery) bowel movement.

Vomiting More than one episode of vomiting within the previous six hours.

Nose/Eye Drainage: Thick mucus or pus draining from nose or eyes.

Appearance/Behavior: Child looks or acts differently, usually tired, pale, lack of appetite, confused, irritable.

Sore Throat: Sore throat, especially with fever or swollen glands.

Skin Problems: Rash undiagnosed or contagious. Infected sores with crusty, yellow, or green drainage which cannot be covered by clothing or bandages.

Itching: Persistent itching or scratching of body or scalp.

Cold Sores: Fluid filled blisters in mouth, on gums, or on lips, often with fever.

Head Lice Parents must notify the school if they discover their child has head lice. If there is a confirmed case, all children in the class will be screened. Students with head lice are sent home.

Children may return to school when they have been free of fever or symptoms for 24 hours. Please notify teachers when your child will be absent by emailing BHSstaff@nhnature.org.

Teachers are alert to symptoms of illness throughout the day. Parents or the designated emergency contact will be called to pick up children in the event of sudden illness. Childcare employees are legally mandated to report known or suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

Food

Children bring their own lunches and snacks every day. To provide a commercial-free place for children, please choose a lunchbox and food containers without commercial characters. Good nutrition plays an important role in children's physical, mental, and emotional health, and behavior. To increase children's awareness of food choices and promote sound nutritional habits, families are encouraged to avoid overly processed and packaged food, and refrain from sending candy, cookies, marshmallow fluff, soda, yogurts with artificial dyes, sprinkles, and so on.

Packing lunch and snacks in simple, character-free, reusable containers children can manage themselves will help them learn to reduce trash and to be independent at meals. Please do not send foods that need to be heated or refrigerated.

Blue Heron School children may occasionally share food supplied by school or other families, relating to activities, celebrations, or curriculum.

Food Restrictions and/or Allergies

Parents are expected to notify the school of any food restrictions or food allergies. Because some children have allergies, other parents may be asked to exclude certain foods. Children under three should not bring in choking hazards such as: hotdogs, pretzels, popcorn, chips, or nuts. Cut food lengthwise in small chunks.

Ticks/Mosquitoes

When seasonally appropriate, children should be checked for ticks. This can be a routine for children when bathing or getting ready for bed. Please send your children with bug spray already applied.

Sunscreen

Please send your children with sun screen already applied. We will reapply at lunch time if needed. Blue Heron School uses non-toxic mineral sunscreen. If your child has special requirements please let us know.

Holidays and Birthdays

Blue Heron School celebrates the changing seasons. Cultural holidays are recognized as they mark the annual cycle. Because holidays can be over-stimulating for young children, the teachers and children create simple, non-commercial, appropriate celebrations of holidays and avoid duplicating experiences children will be more ready to enjoy in elementary school.

Children celebrate their birthdays at a special group time at school. For that special time, we ask that you send in: a note explaining a few highlights of your child's life, and a photo of your child from every year they have been alive. We will have your child prepare cookies for all of their classmates on the day of their school celebration.

When planning parties outside of school, please be sensitive to each child's feelings, putting aside convenience. Please do not send party invitations or gifts for distribution.

Parent Participation

Parent-Teacher conference days are scheduled in the spring and fall. Accommodations will be made if parents are unable to attend a conference on the scheduled day. Additional meetings may be scheduled by parents or teachers as needed.

Several times throughout the year we have special 'Family Fun Days.' This is a time for families to come into the classroom and see what their children have been working on. Children will often prepare some food and/or decoration for the event. Occasionally parents will be welcomed in the classroom to help with special projects, join field trips, or share special talents and experiences.

Communication between parents and teachers benefits the children's educational experience. Parents should notify teachers about significant events and changes in their children's lives. The majority of school communication from teachers takes place through email. Please contact the Director or teacher if you need alternative communication.

Clothing

Children are involved in many different types of activities while at Blue Heron School and should be dressed accordingly. Tight clothing, fancy dresses, and costumes can get in the way during active play. Children should wear comfortable play clothes that are easy for them to take off and put on independently. To provide a commercial-free place for children, please choose clothing without commercials, characters or super heroes.

Children need comfortable shoes such as sneakers for running, jumping, and climbing. Sandals with closed toes and heel straps are acceptable for warm weather – please don't send flip flops or shoes that light up. Every child needs a pair of slippers or indoor shoes to be kept at school and worn throughout the day in the classroom. Please choose slippers that are simple.

Children should be able to manage all clothing and footwear independently.

All children keep a change of clothes at the school for emergencies, including underwear, pants, shirt, sweater or sweatshirt, and socks. This extra set of clothes should be changed each season.

Be sure to label all clothing with your child's name.

Expect your child to go outside every day. Children should be adequately dressed for outdoor play in all seasons. Clothing and footwear which allow the child to dress independently are important. Outdoor clothing needs for each season include:

| Fall | Winter | Spring | Summer |
|--|---|---|---|
| Rubber/waterproof boots Rain jacket with hood Rain pants Fleece/sweatshirt Waterproof mittens Wool/Fleece socks | Snow pants Winter coat Waterproof mittens Scarf/Neck cover Hat/Ear covers Insulated Boots Wool/Fleece socks | Rubber/waterproof boots Rain jacket with hood Rain pants Sun hat | Rubber/waterproof boots Rain jacket with hood Sun hat |

School Supplies

All equipment and supplies are provided by Blue Heron School, including toys, games, art supplies, and more. There are no additional fees for supplies and materials. Please do not send toys, notebooks, stuffed animals, etc. with your child unless you discuss it specifically with a teacher beforehand. When purchasing supplies for school such as hats, backpacks, lunchboxes, and so on, please choose items that are easy for your child to carry and manage independently. Please do not choose items with commercial, cartoon characters, or super heroes. Please have your child practice using any personal belongings to encourage independence.

Security

The safety and security of children is important to Blue Heron School. In compliance with New Hampshire Child Care regulations, each child's daily arrival and departure is documented by staff. Only Squam Lakes Natural Science Center staff, volunteers, and student teachers (all undergo a background check) will interact with the children. However, sometimes programs will be observed by prospective parents, state licensing personnel, Science Center Trustees and staff, outside teachers, education students, or others. All doors at Blue Heron School are locked as part of our safety plan. Key fobs are available upon request and can be used during business hours only.

Medication

Prescription and over-the-counter medications, including allergy medications, should be discussed with the Blue Heron School Director and will be handled in compliance with New Hampshire state regulations.

Social Media

Squam Lakes Natural Science Center and Blue Heron School request families use discretion with social media. Be sure photos you post do not include other children. Not all families choose to share photographs on social media. Please consider their privacy.