

**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

Thank you for your interest in Blue Heron School at Squam Lakes Natural Science Center. Blue Heron School is a nature-based Montessori early learning center. The school combines a child-focused Montessori approach with daily outdoor experiences in a stimulating learning atmosphere. Children have freedom to explore their own interests, both outdoors and inside and become independent and self-confident. Participants learn to be responsible for themselves and their environment and to treat others with respect, forming a close and supportive community.

Blue Heron School is committed to the Montessori approach to early childhood education and to extended time outside every day. Outdoor time allows opportunities for spontaneous exploration and interaction with Science Center naturalists on a wide variety of topics.

Your child will be part of a class of three to six year olds where he has the opportunity to be both a learner and a mentor. At Blue Heron School, your child is in the care of dedicated teachers, who follow the individual developmental stages of each child and encourage him to advance at his own pace.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have additional questions not addressed by this handbook.

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 Nature-based and Montessori Philosophies

The Montessori Method is an educational approach that uses observation of the child's development to create an environment appropriate for that child at that stage. Nature-based early learning centers provide daily outdoor exploration and free play while also integrating the natural world throughout the curriculum. These combined approaches with structured and open-ended activities (physical, social, creative, and academic) meet children's developmental needs while inspiring them to care for others and the natural environment.

A nature-based Montessori approach provides children with opportunities to learn about themselves, the world, and life. Experiences in the natural world meet children's developmental needs by encouraging fine and gross motor development, sensory experiences, and opportunities for social interactions and communication. By helping children to connect with the natural world, we hope to inspire a love of nature, foster an environmental ethic, and encourage a lifelong caring attitude. The trained Montessori educator observes each child, introduces materials and activities that meet the needs of the child and assists the child in meaningful interaction with interesting and appropriate activities.

Maria Montessori based her method on her observations and understanding of the child as he is, not as adults imagine he might or should be. The Montessori method allows each child to learn the way she learns best and easiest: by doing things herself. Dr. Montessori designed a total environment to help each child develop as a complete human being. She saw the role of the teacher as one of directing activity and facilitating each child's interactions in the classroom and outside in nature. Within appropriate limits, your child chooses work that appeals to her own inner interests. She exercises her sense of freedom and spontaneity; she feels joy and enthusiasm in

learning because she is doing what she wants to do instead of what someone else tells her she must do. The child teaches himself through his use of specially designed Montessori materials. The work options are attractive and child-sized materials are self-correcting; that is, if a child makes an error, he can see it by looking at the material itself. Because the child can choose her own work and do it at her own pace, the child has many opportunities for success; the classroom is non-competitive. Gradually, the child builds a strong sense of independence and self-confidence as her skills increase. He learns to work alone sometimes and other times with others, taking turns and collaborating with his friends.

Children engage in self-directed and purposeful activities indoors and outside. Themes and concepts from the natural world are used throughout the curriculum. Because the organization of a Montessori program supports independence, responsibility, and social life, there is a natural match between the Montessori style of learning and the experiences of children in a nature-based early learning center as they explore their world.

The classroom and outdoor spaces are attractive places where your child is free to discover his world and build his mind, body, and spirit. Nature permeates the children's experiences. Nature-based activities happen indoors and outdoors; in whole groups, small groups, and individually; as planned teacher-facilitated activities, child-initiated interests, and spontaneous pursuits; in the play areas and throughout the Squam Lake Natural Science Center grounds. This variety of outdoor activities supports appropriate physical, cognitive, and social childhood development. The foundation of nature-based early learning is to foster children's emotional engagement with the natural world, developing into lifelong environmental literacy.

The Montessori and nature-based early learning approach provides a variety of different experiences:

- In Practical Life, the child learns how to care for herself and her environment.
- The Sensorial area allows her to use her senses to learn about the world. Here, the child learns to judge different heights, lengths, weights, colors, sounds, smells, shapes, and textures.

- The Math area provides a concrete introduction to counting, quantity, and basic mathematical functions using a variety of 1-10 activities and materials illustrating and teaching math concepts.
- In the Language area, the child practices skills that precede writing and reading, learns about letters, and gradually begins to read the written word and to express himself through writing. Of course, the use of language, both oral and written, permeates the entire Montessori classroom.
- Through outdoor activities children use all of their senses to explore the natural world and use spoken and written language and art to record experiences.
- Making observations and discoveries, the child learns to:
 - Satisfy his natural curiosity
 - Hike on trails and climb on logs
 - Appreciate the beauty of nature
 - Understand natural processes
 - Use all five senses to explore and understand self and the relationship to the natural world
 - Build understanding of themselves, as they relate to others and to the natural world
 - Experiment
 - Communicate about nature in spoken and written language
- Other learning areas include geography, science, art, music, and large motor skill activities. Projects in the classroom are based on the children's experiences with living things in fields, forests, and wetlands.

Peace Education

*Preventing conflicts is the work of politics.
Establishing peace is the work of education.*
~Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori was twice nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for her work including peace education in academic curriculum. Peace education is practiced

throughout the Montessori classroom. When disagreements arise, children at Montessori schools are taught to work things out by listening and talking to one another, practicing non-violent conflict resolution. The ability to be comfortable communicating comes as the child practices voicing and listening to concerns, achieving compromise, and making decisions. The classroom environment disallows the presence of materials, behaviors, speech, or writing that promotes violence in any form. Care for the preservation of the natural environment and all living things are natural extensions of the peace curriculum. It is expected that the school and parents will work together to support the teaching of peace.

We maintain a calm atmosphere with clear expectations from everyone. Optimal learning occurs when there is freedom for discovery learning, enough structure to allow everyone to learn, and physical and emotional safety.

Admissions Guidelines

Blue Heron School has a mixed age class of three to six year-olds. Children must be no younger than two years, nine months old when entering in September. Only children who are fully toilet trained (must be successfully out of diapers and pull-ups), will be considered for admission. Admission will be determined after consultation between the family and the Blue Heron School Director.

Procedure for admission:

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

Squam Lakes Natural Science Center is an equal opportunity organization and all decisions to admit children 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.

2011-2012 Calendar

2011

Orientation Week	September 6 – 9
First Day of School	Monday, September 12
CLOSED Parent Teacher Conferences	Friday, October 7
CLOSED Columbus Day	Monday, October 10
CLOSED Veterans Day	Friday, November 11
CLOSED Thanksgiving	November 23 - 25
CLOSED Staff Retreat	Wednesday, December 14
CLOSED Winter Holidays	December 23 - January 2

2012

Return from Winter Holidays	Tuesday, January 3
CLOSED MLK Day	Monday, January 16
CLOSED Presidents Day	Monday, February, 20
CLOSED Winter Vacation	February 27 - March 2
CLOSED Parent Teacher Conferences	Friday, March 9
CLOSED Spring Vacation	April 23 - 27
CLOSED Memorial Day	Monday, May 28
Last Day of School Year	Friday, June 8

Sample Daily Schedule

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

8:30 Arrival at the outdoor play area.

9:00 Meeting- may be indoors or out. This meeting includes greeting songs, show and tell, weather, calendar, and introduction of new activities.

9:30 Work time - may be indoors and/or outside. The classroom is structured with shelves of nature, creative and academic activities, including Montessori materials. Children move freely in the space, choosing activities that are interesting and appropriate for their level of development. The teacher acts as a guide, introducing materials and assisting with interactions between children. On some days children start their day outside, often with a naturalist. Children eat snack when they are hungry during this period.

11:00 Group time-indoors or out. This gathering is for songs and group large motor activities such as games, music, yoga, and stories.

11:30 Lunch time-inside or out.

12:00 Outdoor Adventures. Activities include time for unstructured play, guided explorations with nature, and science themes and presentations.

1:00 Departure from the outdoor play area.

8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

8:30 Arrival at the outdoor play area.

9:00 Meeting- may be indoors or out. This meeting includes greeting songs, show and tell, weather, calendar, and introduction of new activities.

9:30 Work time-may be indoors and/or out. The classroom is structured with shelves of nature, creative and academic activities, including Montessori materials. Children move freely in the space, choosing activities that are interesting and appropriate for their level of development. The teacher acts as a guide, introducing materials and assisting with interactions between children. On some days children start their day outside, often with a naturalist. Children eat snack when they are hungry during this period.

11:00 Group time-indoors or out. This gathering is for songs and group large motor activities such as games, music, yoga, and stories.

11:30 Lunch time-inside or out.

12:00 Outdoor Adventures. Activities include time for unstructured play, guided explorations with nature, and science themes and presentations.

1:00 Extended Day. Open-ended activities indoors or outside include games, songs, and projects.

4:00 Departure from the classroom or outdoor play area.

Note: outdoor time periods are adjusted for weather conditions but children will go outside every day.

Tuition

Blue Heron School partial day tuition is either as one full payment of \$4,800 or as 10 payments of \$480 each for the academic year 2011-12. Blue Heron School full day tuition is either one full payment of \$7,200 or as 10 payments of \$720 each for the academic year 2011-12. Tuition is non-refundable.

The initial tuition payment is due with enrollment. The additional 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, 2011, but is payable at any time. In the event of an unforeseen departure from the program, four weeks advance notice is required.

Blue Heron School offers a 10% tuition discount to siblings enrolled concurrently and for staff (employee) children. There is no tuition credit for holidays, vacations, or inclement weather closings.

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 discontinue 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. Tuition should be paid each month.

Regular attendance is important for children and the school community. If a child is absent for more than two weeks in a month without prior and adequate notification, he or she will be considered withdrawn from the program.

Routine and frequent lateness is not acceptable and is not beneficial for the children. Therefore, if a child is late more than five times a month without prior and adequate notice, he or she will be considered to be withdrawn from the program. In cases of non-payment or non-attendance, the child's position will become open and available to the next family on the waiting list.

Each Blue Heron School family is required to be a member of the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center (at the level of your choosing). Please see the enclosed membership brochure.

There are no additional fees for supplies and materials. However, there may be additional costs for certain activities during the school year.

Transportation

Only people listed on the registration form under parent/guardian, emergency contact, and authorized pick-up will be allowed to pick-up a child during or after class. If you are carpooling, please make sure each authorized adult is listed on that document.

Any person not authorized to pick-up the child may not visit Blue Heron School without prior written arrangements with the custodial adult and the Blue Heron

School Director. All visitors or drivers will be asked to show photo identification upon their first visit to the school.

Blue Heron School will not transport children in vehicles or vessels without prior notification and a signed field trip permission form. For certain field trips parents may be asked to assist with driving and chaperoning, additional documentation (license, *etc.*) will be required.

Security

The safety and security of your child is of the utmost importance to Blue Heron School. In compliance with New Hampshire Child Care regulations, each child's daily arrival and departure is documented by staff. Additionally, only Squam Lakes Natural Science Center staff, volunteers, and student teachers who have undergone a background check will interact with the children at any times. Sometimes programs will be observed by state licensing personnel, SLNSC Trustees, outside teachers, students, *etc.*

Inclement Weather

Blue Heron School does not operate when weather conditions are dangerous for young children and their families. We follow the lead of the SAU 48 (Holderness Central School) regarding decisions to delay opening or close for the day. Blue Heron School will be delayed or closed when SAU 48 delays or closes for inclement weather. Please use Channel 9 (WMUR) for reference and look for the Blue Heron School listing.

Arrival/Departure

Timely arrival and departure is important for every child. When a child arrives late, he often finds difficulty integrating into activities. It is also disruptive for the rest of the class. The school day begins at 8:30 a.m. and each child is expected to be at school then. A teacher will come to the drop off area to greet each child in the morning and will also be there at the end of the session. If a child is going to be late, parents should notify the school as soon as possible.

Prompt pick-up at the end of the school day is important for the child, who is ready for his or her transition to the next activity. It is also respectful of the teachers, who schedule meetings, conferences, and academic planning after school.

Absences

Regular attendance at school is important to your child's academic and social progress. Should you choose to schedule vacations in addition to the school's planned holidays, your child will miss activities. Tuition will not be refunded for missed school days. If your child will be absent, you must notify Blue Heron School as soon as possible.

Health

Children must be kept home if they have symptoms of illness such as sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, or other illness or if they have a fever of 100 degrees F or greater. Children may return to school after they have been free of fever or symptoms for twenty-four hours. Please notify us when your child will not attend school at 603-968-7194 x 40 or blueheron@nhnature.org.

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

Head Lice

Parents must notify the school if they discover that their child has head lice. If there is a confirmed case of head lice identified in a classroom, all children in the class will be screened. Students with head lice are sent home from school and will be readmitted when they have been treated and are found to be nit free. A written letter that states that the child is clear of lice and is nit free, signed by a health professional on letterhead, is required before the child may return to school. If there are other family members with lice, we need to know that they are also clear of lice before your child returns to school.

Ticks/Mosquitoes

When seasonally appropriate, we recommend that you check your child for ticks at the end of the day. This can be a routine you do with your child while she is taking a bath or getting ready for bed. Blue Heron School staff will not apply insect deterrents. If you desire, apply this to your child before drop off.

Sunscreen

Blue Heron School staff will not apply sunscreen. If you desire, apply this to your child before drop off.

Medication

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

Food

Children are required to bring their own lunches and snacks every day. The food must be packed in insulated containers with an ice pack. When making school purchases please choose a lunchbox and food containers without commercial characters. Good nutrition plays an important role in the development of a child physically, mentally, and emotionally. What children eat is reflected in their performance at school, both academically and socially. In order to increase children's awareness of food choices, we do not allow candy, cookies, marshmallow fluff, soda, yogurts with artificial dyes, sprinkles, etc. To promote sound nutritional habits, we encourage families to avoid overly processed and packaged food when packing snacks and lunches.

In order to be consistent with the mission of Squam Lakes Natural Science Center we strongly encourage use of reusable food containers and drink bottles. Also, for the opportunity to practice independence at meals please provide simple, character-free containers children can manage themselves.

Blue Heron School children occasionally may be offered an additional food item supplied by the school or by a family that relates to activities, celebrations, or curriculum.

Food Restrictions and/or Allergies

Parents are expected to notify the school of any food restrictions or food allergies. Depending on the nature of the allergies or restrictions for some children, other parents may be asked to provide snack alternatives or eliminate certain types of foods.

Parent Participation

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled on an assigned day in both spring and fall. Accommodations will be made if a parent is unable to plan a conference on the scheduled day.

Parents are welcome in the classroom to help with special projects, join field trips, or share special talents and experiences.

Communication between parents and staff benefits the children's educational experience. Parents should keep staff notified of significant events and changes in their children's lives. If you are aware of an unexplained change in your child's behavior, please discuss it with the teacher. She may have insights to share with you. We send the majority of our school's communication through email. If this doesn't work for you, let us know and we will provide you with a printed copy of the message.

Holidays/Birthdays

Holidays

At Blue Heron School we celebrate the changing seasons. Cultural holidays are recognized as they mark the annual cycle. At times, holidays tend to be exciting and, even, over-stimulating for young children. We downplay commercial aspects of holidays and avoid duplicating experiences children will be more ready to enjoy in elementary school. The community of Blue Heron School will create appropriate observances and celebrations throughout the year.

Birthdays

The school encourages you to celebrate your child's birthday at school. For that special time, we welcome you to send all or some of these four things: a note

explaining how your child was named, a few highlights of your child's life, a photo of your child as a baby, and a snack for the whole class. We will make an exception to our nutritional guidelines, if the birthday child chooses to celebrate with cake or cupcakes.

When planning parties outside of school, as a community we must be sensitive to each of the children's feelings, putting aside our own convenience. Please do not send party invitations or gifts for distribution.

Clothing

Children are involved in many types of activities while at Blue Heron School and should be dressed accordingly. Discovery learning requires freedom from restrictive clothing. This includes tight clothing, fancy dresses, and costumes that get in the way during active play. For independence in toileting, children need clothing easy to remove and put on. Children need comfortable, protective shoes with gripping soles for running, jumping, and climbing. Sturdy walking shoes, such as sneakers, are best. Sandals with closed toes and heel straps are acceptable for warm weather – flip flops are inappropriate. Children should be able to handle both indoor and outdoor clothing and footwear independently.

All children must have a change of clothes kept at the school for emergencies, including underwear, pants, shirt, sweater/sweatshirt, and socks. This extra set of clothes should be changed each season. Please include a reusable bag to transport clothes between home and school. Every child needs a pair of slippers or indoor shoes to be kept in the school to be worn throughout the day in the classroom. Please keep slippers and clothing design non-commercial and simple. Animal-type slippers are distracting in the classroom. Please do not send slippers/clothes that make sounds or represent commercial characters. Be sure to label all clothing with your child's name.

When purchasing supplies for school such as hats, backpacks, lunchboxes etc, choose one that does not have commercial or cartoon characters or super heroes.

Expect your child to go outside every day. Children should be adequately dressed for outdoor play for all seasons of the year. Simple clothing and footwear

which allows the child to dress independently is very important. Please provide your child with clothing he can manage himself. Clothing needs for each season include:

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

School Supplies

All equipment and supplies are provided by the 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 the teacher beforehand.