

**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. There's no such thing as bad weather at Blue Heron School, 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, and provides daily outdoor time in the forests, trails, and streams of the 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, forming a close and supportive community.

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. In the classroom environment, the

presence of materials, behaviors, speech, or writing that promotes violence in any form is discouraged. Respect, compassion, kindness, and helpfulness are recognized and encouraged, which creates a kind, supportive community. Care for the preservation of the natural environment and all living things are natural extensions of the peace curriculum.

Blue Heron School's environment supports children, their curiosity, and their drive to independence. The Montessori classroom has areas for practical life, art, nature and science, peace, geography, sensorial, math, and language. The school environment is carefully prepared with developmentally appropriate hands on activities and Montessori materials that are interesting and attractive. Children move around freely as they engage in self-directed and purposeful work. Because children choose and engage in activities and work at their own pace, they have many opportunities for success, in a non-competitive community. Children build a strong sense of independence and self-confidence as their skills increase. Experiences in both the natural world and the classroom provide opportunities for fine and gross motor development, sensory experiences, exploration, and mastery.

At Blue Heron School children begin at three years old, or just before their third birthday, and benefit most when they stay for three years: two years of preschool and one of kindergarten. Ages are mixed within the classroom. Returning children know the school routines and help new students. Older children mentor the younger ones and younger children learn by copying their older friends. In their third year children enjoy being community leaders. Children grow physically, academically, emotionally, and socially through experiences and activities that integrate and support all areas of personal and social development.

Admissions Guidelines

Blue Heron School has a mixed age class of three to six year-olds. Children must be two years, nine 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
 - 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.

Sample Daily Schedule

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

8:30 Arrival at the outdoor play area.

9:00 Morning meeting for good morning songs, sharing, and introduction of new activities.

9:30 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.

11:00 Group time to gather for songs, large motor group activities such as games, music, yoga, and stories.

11:30 Lunch time.

12:00 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, and integrating math and language into their interests.

Tuition

Blue Heron School partial day tuition may be paid as one full payment or ten payments. Tuition is non-refundable. Tuition for the extended day option is additional, payable by the month. The extended day cost will be pro-rated for children who stay fewer than five days a week. Families may change the extended day schedule for their child by the month as needed.

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, but is payable at any time. 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.

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.

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; additional documentation (license, *etc.*) will be required.

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.

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, accessed on television on Channel 9 or on WMUR's website.

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. 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.

Health

Children should be kept home if they have symptoms of illness such as sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, eye infection, or other illness, or for a fever of 100 degrees F or more. 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 at 603-968-7036 or blueheron@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.

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. They will be readmitted when they have been treated and are found to be nit free.

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.

Blue Heron School staff will not apply insect repellent but parents may do so prior to arrival.

Sunscreen

Blue Heron School staff will not apply sunscreen but parents may do so prior to arrival.

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.

Food

Children bring their own lunches and snacks every day. Their food should be packed in insulated containers with an ice pack. 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.

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.

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.

Parents are welcome 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.

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 sign a media release for use of images of their children or choose to share photographs on social media. Please consider their privacy.

Holidays and Birthdays

Holidays

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.

Birthdays

Children celebrate their birthdays at a special group time at school. For that special time, please send all or some of these three things: a note explaining how your child was named, a few highlights of your child's life, and a photo of your child as a

baby. We will make an exception to our nutritional guidelines, if the birthday child chooses to celebrate with cookies.

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.

Clothing

Children are involved in many 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 so children should wear comfortable play clothes. For independence in toileting, children need clothing that is easy to take off and put on. Children need comfortable shoes such as sneakers for running, jumping, and climbing. Sandals with closed toes and heel straps are acceptable for warm weather – flip flops are inappropriate. Children should be able to manage both indoor and outdoor 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. 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 at school and worn throughout the day in the classroom. Please choose slippers that are non-commercial and simple, rather than animal shapes or those 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, and so on, choose items without commercial, cartoon characters, or super heroes.

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.