

# Boston Nature Center

## PATHWAYS TO NATURE PRESCHOOL



### **2018-2019 FAMILY HANDBOOK**

*Pathways to Nature Preschool is licensed by the  
Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC).*



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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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### **Vision Statement**

The vision of Boston Nature Center's *Pathways to Nature Preschool* is to nurture and develop a diverse group of environmental stewards to develop an appreciation and respect for nature, while recognizing that the urban environment is part of the natural world.

### **Mission Statement**

The Boston Nature Center's *Pathways to Nature (PTN) Preschool* will serve a diverse community of students, ages three through five, primarily from surrounding Boston neighborhoods. PTN provides age-appropriate, experiential, and inquiry-based activities, which adhere to the practices of MA standards, in a nurturing learning environment through a focus on structured and unstructured outdoor play. PTN encourages child-led inquiry and respect for our students as learners and their ability to construct their own knowledge.

### **Philosophy**

*Pathways to Nature's* philosophy is to provide a safe, supportive, warm and friendly atmosphere for children, parents, and staff. The program strives to meet each child's needs socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. The preschool recognizes each child as an individual and attempts to balance the individuals' needs with those needs of the group. *Pathways to Nature* acknowledges children of different ages, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as their learning styles and stages of development. The result is an engaging, interdisciplinary curriculum for our young learners.

*Pathways to Nature* provides a high quality nature preschool for children ages 3 through 5 years old. It is our belief that learning should be fun and engage the wonder and awe of nature. Each day children will discover the natural world through activities fostering independence, academic and emotional/social growth. *Pathways to Nature* recognizes the various needs of children of different ages, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds, learning styles and stages of development to create a safe, engaging atmosphere of outdoor play and exploration.

### **Goals of the Program**

*Pathways to Nature* offers an educational and nurturing program that is hands-on and inquiry-based. The goals of *Pathways to Nature* are to:

1. Provide children with a safe environment to grow, learn, and respect people and nature (all living things),
2. Connect children to nature to develop a lifelong passion for the environment and its stewardship,
3. Help children recognize and understand the natural world as part of their urban environment.

It is the responsibility of the educators to create and implement a flexible program that offers a variety of supervised activities to enhance children's appreciation of nature, environmental educational and STEM learning. The program places a high priority on child-centered exploration and thematic, inquiry-based learning to reach across curriculum areas of literacy, mathematics and science. A child's interests and learning styles will have a large influence on specific activities. It is the program's responsibility to ensure compliance with the overall preschool goals and to reflect input by families.

Activities include:

- ✓ Science experiments and observations
- ✓ Use of blocks, manipulatives, and loose parts
- ✓ Language, literacy, math and STEM activities
- ✓ Art and music experiences

- ✓ Interactive puppet play and story time
- ✓ Healthy cooking and food tasting experiences
- ✓ Movement and games to promote physical fitness
- ✓ Imagination Stations for self-guided learning
- ✓ Up-close encounters with live animals
- ✓ Activities to foster social and emotional growth in young children such as building positive relationships, developing empathy and concern for others, and learning to recognize and regulate emotions.

### Non-Discrimination Policy

*Pathways to Nature* is a nature preschool offered by Mass Audubon; a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the nature of Massachusetts through conservation, advocacy and education. Mass Audubon is committed to a policy of non-discrimination in providing service to children and their families without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, veteran status, military service, genetic information, gender identity, family structure or any other category protected under applicable law. Mass Audubon will make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with known disabilities, in accordance with applicable law.

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## LICENSURE OF THE PROGRAM

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*Pathways to Nature* is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. The BNC is in compliance with the design standards for building accessibility in 521 CMR (Architectural Access Board). *Pathways to Nature* ensures access of persons with disabilities either by compliance with the design standards set by the state's Architectural Access Board or by compliance with the physical access requirements in 102 CMR 7.06.



Copies of policies on staff background checks, health care, and discipline are available, upon request. Families may also contact EEC for information regarding the program's regulatory compliance history.

Department of Early Education and Care - 1250 Hancock Street, Suite 120-S, Quincy, MA 02169  
Phone: (617) 472-2881 - Fax: (617) 472-2722

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## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

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1. The **Sanctuary Director** is ultimately responsible for all Boston Nature Center activities. The Director is the direct supervisor of the Preschool Director, Property Manager, and the Office Manager.
2. The **Office Manager** of the BNC is responsible for keeping accurate files of the participants' financial accounts, and communicates with the Preschool Director on issues of payments and debts.
3. The **Property Manager** of the BNC serves as the Unit Safety Officer, and is responsible for the implementation of the Safety Manual and for overall risk management at the BNC. The Property Manager is also responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of areas used by preschool.
4. The **Preschool Director** has the primary responsibility for the preschool. The Preschool Director supervises staff and offers guidance and support as needed. The Preschool Director is the primary



contact in the event of an emergency and the direct contact with parents/guardians, interns and volunteers involved in the program.

5. **Lead Teachers** support staff and are responsible leading the development and implementation of the curriculum for the group in conjunction with the Preschool Director. The Lead Teacher's duties include, but are not limited to: curriculum design and implementation, teaching and facilitating activities, behavior management, classroom maintenance, and emergency management procedures.
6. The **Preschool Teachers** work as a team and are responsible for creating and implementing the curriculum for each age group in partnership with the Lead Teachers. Their duties include, but are not limited to: curriculum design and implementation, teaching and facilitating activities, behavior management, classroom maintenance, and emergency management procedures.






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## PROGRAM SCHEDULE and CALENDAR

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*Pathways to Nature* operates year-round and is not in session on holidays, vacations, and teacher professional development days noted on the calendar that follows. The weekly schedule and curriculum is posted in each building and available electronically to all families. While the weekly schedule will remain consistent, the daily schedule may change depending upon the weather, children's interests or the range of activities planned for that day.

### Sample Schedule with Suggested Timelines

Time	Activity
8:00-9:00	<b>Arrival and Learning Stations: Choice Time</b> <b>ALL CHILDREN ARE EXPECTED TO ARRIVE BY 9:00 A.M.</b>
9:30 - 9:50	<b>Morning Circle: greet friends, calendar activities, weather, stretches/songs</b>
9:50 - 10:15	<b>Wash hands. Snack</b>
10:15 - 12:30	<b>Thematic outdoor learning - lesson and outdoor exploration</b>
12:30 - 1:00	<b>Wash hands. Lunch with friends!</b>
1:00-1:15	<b>Brush teeth. Ready to rest</b>
1:15 - 2:15	<b>Read-aloud and rest</b>
2:30- 3:00	<b>Snack/Free Play</b>
<b>Extended Day Program:</b>	
3:30 - 6:00	<b>Indoor/Outdoor Activities/Choice Time</b>

Preschoolers use several areas at the BNC including the *Pathways to Nature* buildings (450 B/C Walk Hill St.), the grounds immediately surrounding the preschools, the trail system, the Nature Nook, the George Robert White Environmental Conservation Center, and the Gazebo at the Community Garden.



# Pathways to Nature Calendar 2018-2019

**3** [Labor Day](#) - Closed

**8** Family Picnic

**10** PTN/BTN First Day

**19** Family Potluck

**29** Rockin with Raptors

SEPTEMBER 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	<b>3</b>	4	5	<b>6</b>	7	<b>8</b>
9	<b>10</b>	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	<b>19</b>	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	<b>29</b>
30						

MARCH 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	<b>29</b>	30
31						

**15** Preschool PD Day - **Closed**

**16** Family Enrichment 10:30-11:30am

**29** BNC Staff Mt 4-5pm **NO Extended Day**

**8** [Columbus Day](#) - Closed

**13** Family Enrichment 10:30am-11:30am

**25** Preschool PD Day - Closed

OCTOBER 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	<b>8</b>	9	10	11	12	<b>13</b>
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	<b>25</b>	26	27
28	29	30	31			

APRIL 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	<b>3</b>	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

**3** Preschool PD Day - **Closed**

**11** Family Potluck

**15** Patriots Day - closed

**16-19** PTN Closed

**10** Family Enrichment- Mapping BPS

**15** Preschool PD Day - Closed

**21** No Extended Day

**22-23** Thanksgiving - Closed

NOVEMBER 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	<b>10</b>
11	12	13	14	<b>15</b>	16	17
18	19	20	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

MAY 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	<b>9</b>	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	<b>27</b>	28	29	30	31	

**9** Preschool PD Day - **Closed**

**27** [Memorial Day](#) - Closed

**5** Preschool PD Day - Closed

**Dec 24- Jan 2** - Preschool Closed

DECEMBER 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	<b>5</b>	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	29
30	<b>31</b>					

JUNE 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	<b>6</b>	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	<b>21</b>	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

**6** Preschool PD Day - **Closed**

**19** Family Potluck

**21** Last Day - Daring Dragonflies

**1** [New Year's Day](#) - closed

**2** Preschool Re-opens

**18 + 19** Parent/Teacher Conferences. - **Closed**

**21** [M.L. King Day](#) - Closed

**31** Family Potluck

JANUARY 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
20	<b>21</b>	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	<b>31</b>		

JULY 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	<b>4</b>	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

**4** [Independence Day](#) - Closed

**18** [Presidents Day](#) - Closed

**14** Preschool PD Day - Closed

FEBRUARY 2019						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	<b>14</b>	15	16
17	<b>18</b>	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

AUGUST 2018						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	<b>23</b>
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

**23** Last Day Busy Bees/ Curious Crickets **No Extended Day**



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## DAILY SUPPLIES: WHAT TO BRING EACH DAY

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### Snacks and Lunch

*Pathways to Nature* is a **NUT-FREE zone**. Families must notify the preschool of any food allergies in the Health History form provided at time of application. We reserve the right to add additional food items to this list should it become necessary.

Please provide your child with at least two snacks and a lunch every day. Food should be non-perishable as we are unable to refrigerate or reheat any lunches. All lunch/snack containers should be taken home every day. We encourage a zero-waste approach to food. Please pack lunch in reusable or recyclable containers and include an ice pack as we often eat outdoors. Composting is available for food scraps.

The preschool will have extra snacks/fruits to supplement children lunches if needed. Staff will assist children with brushing their teeth after they have eaten lunch. The *Pathways to Nature* program provides the toothbrushes labeled with each child's name and toothpaste (Tom's non-fluoride strawberry).

### Vitamin Supplements

If your child requires vitamin supplements during the day, staff will keep the vitamins in a lock box. They must be in the original container with the child's name on it. The staff will administer the vitamin according to the directions on the container, unless authorized otherwise in writing by a licensed health care practitioner.

### Clothing and other Items

Due to the nature of our explorations and adventures at the Boston Nature Center, children need appropriate clothing in order to fully enjoy their experience. Be aware that the children will be outdoors daily in all kinds of weather (cold/rain/snow/sunshine).

- Closed-toed shoes
- Clothing that can get dirty or wet
- An extra change of clothes (including underwear)
- Extra pair of socks and shoes
- A light jacket or sweater
- Rain jacket, rain pants and rain boots
- Snow pants and boots
- Winter coat, gloves/mittens, hat
- Water bottle,
- Hat
- Insect repellent

*"There is no such thing as bad weather...only inappropriate clothing"*

– Norwegian, Sir Ranulph Fiennes

The preschool will have extra clothing on hand to supplement the wardrobe of the children in emergencies.

**BE SURE TO LABEL all supplies/clothing/footwear with your child's name.**

Children should **NOT** bring toys to school other than what they may need to comfort them for nap.

### Weather

Sun block and insect repellent are strongly recommended and should be initially applied by the drop-off adult; staff will be on hand to assist children in re-application during the day. *Pathways to Nature* will supply sun block (Blue Lizard brand) but parents are responsible for supplying the insect repellent that works best

for their child. Insect repellent is required to be in its original container, with a label indicating the name of your child.

### **School Cancellations**

In the case of inclement weather, *Pathways to Nature* will follow the lead of the Boston Public Schools for the first day. Parents will be informed of any successive closings on a day-to-day evaluation through the group emailing process. Boston schools may close for severe cold and have the added problem of children needing to wait outdoors for buses. That is not the case for our children. If roads are clear and staff is able to drive safely, the preschool will open. We will try to make that determination the evening before, but New England weather does not always give us that freedom. If you have any questions please speak with the Preschool Director.



### **Rest Time**

During the day, children will have a rest/quiet time. *Pathways to Nature* will provide each child with a rest mat and a nylon bag to store your child's ONE sleeping aid ("lovie") and/or small blanket. Do not bring sleeping bags, pads or pillows as storage is limited. At the end of your child's week, the bag must be taken home, items washed and returned.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

For birthday celebrations, children are allowed to choose the "special snack" for the day. Staff will provide choices that meet dietary requirements of all children. Please speak to your child's teachers for specifics.

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## **TRANSPORTATION/ARRIVALS/PICK-UPS**

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### **Arrival**

**Arrival time is from 8:00 am to 9:00 am.** *Pathways to Nature* does not provide transportation to preschool. Children are transported by a family member, a person pre-authorized by the family or a private transportation company. All adults must accompany the child into the building to sign them in for the day.

For legal and safety purposes, sign-in and pick-up MUST include the adult's name and time of drop-off and pick-up.

If a child using a private transportation company does not arrive:

- Staff will contact parent/guardian to inform them of the child's absence.
- **It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to contact the transportation company to determine the child's whereabouts.**
- If the staff cannot reach a parent or guardian by telephone, or any of the other emergency contacts on the child's Emergency Information Card, staff will contact the police.

Attendance is taken and all children will be accounted for by 9:30 a.m. Families must notify the preschool by phone, or email whenever a child will be absent due to illness or unexpected circumstances. If a child fails to arrive and the staff has not been notified of the absence, the staff will call the family at the phone number(s) listed on the emergency forms.

### Late drop-off

**Arrival time is from 8:00 am to 9:00 am.** Late drop-offs are disruptive to your child's and the other students' routine, and because of this, children should not arrive at preschool later than 9:00 a.m. The first two arrivals after 9:30 am will result in a written reminder to the family. On the third occasion, parents/guardians will be asked to meet with the preschool director. A fourth late arrival after the meeting will result in a family being turned away for the day.

Specific circumstances, such as your preschooler's doctor appointments or school visits, are valid reasons for being late and we ask that you notify a staff member a minimum of 24 hours before the appointment, letting us know your expected time of arrival, but no later than 11:00 am. We are often out on the trails, but teachers will leave a note with calling instructions as to their location.

### Departure

**Pick up time is by 3:30 pm.** All children must be picked up and signed out by 3:30 pm, unless enrolled in the extended day program. On the release form found in the enrollment form, families authorize who is allowed to pick up their children from the program. Any changes or additions must be made in writing. Any newly authorized person unfamiliar to staff will be asked to present adequate identification before a child is released. If there is anyone who should **not** pick up a child from the program (including anyone designated pursuant to 209A State of Massachusetts or other court restraining orders), families must notify the Preschool Director in writing.

Families bringing other children to the preschool when they drop-off or pick-up a child, are responsible for their care. Children should not be left unattended.

We value parent input and expression of your concerns, but informal conferences with parents/guardians should wait until a discussion can take place without distracting the staff member from dismissing another child and without violating a child or family's privacy. If the discussion topic cannot be adequately addressed at check-out time, the Preschool Director will arrange with the parent/guardian a time to continue the discussion on the phone, in writing or in a conference.

### Indoor Pick-up Policy

Families not utilizing our extended day program should be aware of our end of the day procedures. When pick-up is indoors, the classrooms can get overwhelming and very busy and while we do our best to group the children waiting for their grown-ups together, we ask that families who have collected their children please not linger any longer than necessary in the classrooms or the coat area. This end of day transition can be difficult for children either not wanting to leave or children still waiting to see their grown-up. The children also know that toys and games are put away for the day and that when their grown-up arrives it is time to leave. We do not encourage staying for "5 or 10 more minutes" We appreciate your cooperation and if you find that your child is having some difficulty leaving, please feel free to ask a teacher to help.

### Late Pick-Up

Two staff members remain with any child not picked up by 3:30 p.m. One staff member will call the family and emergency backup telephone numbers. The staff maintains a log of late pick-ups and parents will be charged a \$15 fee for **any pick-up** between 3:30pm and 4:00pm. After 4:00pm if a child still has not been picked up, the family will be charged \$1 a minute. If the child has not been picked-up by 6:00 pm and the preschool staff has not been contacted or has failed to contact all available emergency numbers, a BNC staff member will contact the police.

### Extended Care

Extended care hours (3:30 pm-6:00pm) are optional for an added fee. Please contact the preschool director if you are interested in signing up for the extended day program. Enrollment is billed in advance and included with the payment at the beginning of each month. Occasional **drop-ins for extended care are not allowed** since enrollment is limited and program is staffed accordingly.

### Field Trip Procedures

*Pathways to Nature* children may attend occasional field trips to other cultural organizations or green spaces. Families are notified of these field trips in advance and signed permission slips must be returned by the day before each trip. Educators are equipped with first aid kits at all times as well as the child's emergency information. A contracted school bus transportation company transports the children and staff during field trips. No trip is longer than 45 minutes away from the Boston Nature Center. During the field trip children will wear nametags with contact information for *Pathways to Nature* only.



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## ENROLLMENT

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### Fees and Payments

*Pathways to Nature* provides a twelve month program, (September-August). **There are no tuition adjustments for vacations or days away from the preschool.** The cost of the preschool is based on a sliding scale and **payable by the fifth of each month.** To apply for a sliding scale fee, families must fill out a financial aid application and provide documentation of the family's adjusted gross household income (page one of current 1040 tax form). Families are expected to pay one month's tuition as a non-refundable deposit with the application. Checks should be made payable to the Boston Nature Center. Please note that one month's tuition is required as a non-refundable deposit and will be credited to the last month's tuition. If a family registers a child after the first of the month, payment of the tuition deposit is due in full prior to the child's start date. In order to receive a refund (less the deposit) for months paid in advance, you must notify the Preschool Director in writing of any registration changes thirty days in advance.

Tuition is payable by check, cash or credit card. Please call the main number (617-983-8500) to leave a credit card number for automatic payment during the first week of each month. You will be sent an electronic confirmation when the card is charged. Tuition rates are NOT pro-rated for days/weeks when the child is absent from school due to holidays, vacations or illness. Months containing three weeks of preschool sessions are also not pro-rated.

### Admission

To register for *Pathways to Nature*, children must be or turn three years old in the month of September. All applications are processed in the order they arrive. A waiting list is formed when enrollment exceeds the preschool's capacity. Families from Mattapan or receiving subsidies are placed on a priority list.

All families are required to complete and return all aspects of the forms in the registration packet including:

- Health and Enrollment form
- Current physical (within one year) Proof of lead screening

- Mass Audubon Release and Waiver forms
- Record of immunizations

Sliding scale information accurate as of July 2018

### Monthly Tuition Schedule

	5 Days	3 Days	2 Days
Under \$48,000	\$ 652	\$ 412	\$275
48,001-75,000	\$ 900	\$ 623	\$415
75,001-100,000	\$1200	\$ 825	\$550
100,001-130,000	\$1500	\$1035	\$690
130,001 +	\$1700	\$1170	\$780

### Extended Day Option

5 days per week	\$300 per month
4 days per week	\$240 per month
3 days per week	\$180 per month
2 days per week	\$120 per month
1 days per week	\$60 per month

### Children with Disabilities

*Pathways to Nature* does not discriminate in providing service to children and their families on the basis of economic limitations, race, ethnicity, cultural heritage, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, physical or mental abilities or limitations, or marital status. Children with disabilities are welcome to join the program providing reasonable accommodations can be made.

If a child with disabilities applies to the program, the staff (with parent input) will identify in writing the specific accommodations required to meet the needs of the child including:

- Any change in the child’s participation in regular program activities,
- The size of the group to which the child may be assigned, and
- Any special equipment required to assist the child.

If the director decides that reasonable accommodations cannot be made for the child to participate in the program, parents will be notified in writing within thirty days. The notification will include the reason for the decision and will notify the parents that they may request that the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care review the program’s decision. A copy of the notification will be kept by the preschool.

Before accepting or refusing to admit a child with disabilities from the program, the Preschool Director will consider the following:

- The nature and cost of the accommodations,
- The ability to secure funding or services from other sources,
- The overall financial resources of the program,
- The number of personnel employed by the preschool,
- The effect on expenses and resources, or the impact otherwise of such an action,
- Whether the required accommodation alters the fundamental nature of the program
- Toileting needs will **not** be considered in the decision.

When a child with disabilities is accepted into the program, the Preschool Director will serve as the primary liaison. The liaison will coordinate care with service providers and will communicate with the child’s parents, service providers, and other educators. With parental permission the program will contribute to the development and review of the child’s program plan in cooperation with the Local Education Authority (LEA), Early Intervention Program and/or other health and service providers.

### Withdrawal from the Preschool

A child may be withdrawn from the preschool with a thirty day written notice to the Preschool Director. The tuition paid for the month in which the child is enrolled at the time of the withdrawal will not be refunded.



Pre-paid tuition payments for additional months past the date of the child's last week will also not be refunded.

### **Re-Enrollment**

A child may re-enroll in the preschool. Re-admission will depend on availability of space and the child's history in the preschool. Requests must be made to the Preschool Director. We do not guarantee spaces without a completed registration form and a deposit.

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## **COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

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*Pathways to Nature* considers families as partners in the education of their child enrolled in the preschool. Families are encouraged to read this handbook, which supplies information on the purpose, administrative organization, and services provided by the preschool. While educators are responsible for the development and implementation of the curriculum, they will encourage and pursue two-way communication.

### **Telephone Calls**

*Pathways to Nature* encourages open communication with families. Confidential issues should be addressed to the Preschool Director. Should parents need to contact an educator or their child during preschool hours, they may call the Preschool Director or the main office. Families should indicate the best times and numbers to return the calls and the staff will make every effort to return the call at an appropriate time.

### **Progress Reports**

Families/guardians will receive a progress report three times a school year (October, January and June). The report will be based on teacher observations and documentation of the child's progress in a range of activities and include specific samples when possible. One copy will be given to the family and one will be kept in the child's record. Families will be invited to meet with the preschool staff to discuss the report. Staff will use progress reports to adapt the program to the children's individual strengths, interests, and needs as well as to ensure that the goals of the preschool program are being met. Significant developments or challenges will be documented and brought to a family's attention as soon as they arise. Families are encouraged to contact the Preschool Director with any comments or questions they have with their child's experience at the Boston Nature Center.

### **Other Communication**

- Informal discussion (initiated by parent/guardian or by staff) at drop-off or pick up time, whenever such discussion will not interfere with the safe and smooth arrival or dismissal of other children and will not violate a child's or family member's right to privacy,
- A note, letter or email between staff and families,
- Formal conferences between staff and parent/guardian, especially when a concern cannot be properly addressed by informal discussion or notes,
- Enrollment in the on-line communication blog exclusive to *Pathways To Nature* families
- Posted notices on the Family Information Bulletin Board, and
- Notices or newsletters sent home.

### **Notification to Parents**

*Pathways to Nature* will notify parents/guardians for the following reasons:

- Any injury which is beyond minor first aid (immediately, as well as in writing within 24 hours),
- Any emergency administration of non-prescription medication (immediately, as well as in writing within 24 hours),
- Minor first aid notes (at the end of the day),



- Any allegation of abuse or neglect involving their children while in our care (immediately, as well as in writing within 24 hours),
- Any change in educators (prior to or as soon as possible),
- Any special problems and significant developments arise (immediately, as well as in writing within 24 hours),
- Whenever a communicable disease or condition has been identified in the program (in writing within 24 hours),
- Any change in program policy or procedures (in writing seven days prior),
- The introduction of animals into the program (in writing seven days prior),
- The use of herbicides or pesticides (in writing seven days prior).

### Family Input

*Pathways to Nature* welcomes input from families and invites families to share their views and ideas during Family Open Houses or during visits at other times. We may conduct periodic surveys and the other modes of communication described above in order to gain more insight into your child's experience.

### Visiting/Volunteering

Families are encouraged to visit *Pathways to Nature*. There are several volunteer opportunities for families throughout the year, such as: demonstrating a special skill or talent, conducting special gatherings for families and children, reading stories, helping with crafts and special days. Families should contact the Preschool Director if they are interested in these opportunities. By law all volunteers must have a background check (CORI/SORI) before spending time at the preschool; this process can take up to two weeks to be completed.

### Records

All records for children will be reviewed and updated annually by preschool staff. **Health records, the enrollment form, a current 1040 tax form, and Mass Audubon waivers must be updated by families annually.** A parent/guardian may review a child's records to add or delete information at any time. Parents/guardians may request (in writing) a copy of the child's records for any person the parent identifies. No charge will be asked for copies. The *Pathways to Nature* Preschool is licensed by MA Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC). We are required to provide them with information contained in children's records. EEC does not remove the records from the premises and observes confidentiality. All records/files including attendance will be maintained by the Boston Nature Center for at least five years. Records of evacuations (fire drills) will be maintained for five years. A child's record is privileged and confidential; no information from those records will be distributed to any unauthorized persons.




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## HEALTH and SAFETY

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### Health Documents and Requirements

In order to ensure the health and safety of all children, BNC requires that families complete a Health History for each child annually.

We require all families to include the child's annual physical examination and updated immunizations. The requirement for immunizations will be waived if the child's family objects on the grounds that they conflict with their religious beliefs. In such a case, families must submit the proper verification form from the child's physician.

The Health History includes the family's contact numbers, pertinent medical history of the child, and any allergies; a consent form that allows the child to receive emergency first aid and transportation to a specific hospital in emergencies; and a release form that lists any of the persons authorized to take the child in an emergency and/or at the end of the day.

Information about your child is confidential. However, it is important that all pertinent BNC staff know of any existing medical conditions in order to best serve a child in an emergency.

Any written consents will be valid for the current year unless otherwise informed by the legal guardian in writing.

## **Safety Manual**

The Boston Nature Center maintains a Safety Manual that details all medical and non-medical emergencies, situations, procedures, and policies. All BNC staff receive a copy of this manual and are required to read it and adhere to its policies. A copy of the safety manual is located in the preschool. Upon request, families may review the Safety Manual.

In brief, the Safety Manual includes:

- emergency telephone numbers,
- procedures to follow to care for a sick child or an emergency, including information on method of transportation,
- notification of parents,
- policy if parents cannot be reached,
- procedure for using and maintaining first aid supplies,
- plan for evacuation,
- plan for fire drills,
- plan for mildly ill children,
- policy for dispensing medication,
- plan for meeting individual children's health needs,
- identifying allergies,
- protecting children from exposure to foods, chemicals, or other allergens,
- plan for injury prevention,
- plan for management of infectious diseases,
- plan for implementation/monitoring of infection control.

## **Emergency Health Care Procedures**

Families should be familiar with the following policies, which are taken directly from the BNC Safety Manual.

### **Tick Checks**

We encourage families to perform a tick check daily.

### **Minor injuries**

- Staff currently certified in first aid will administer first aid, relative to his/her skill level.
- First aid kits will go along with BNC staff when they are out on the trails. Larger kits and additional equipment (cold packs, bandages) are located at the preschool.
- Parents will be notified by the preschool staff of all minor injuries at dismissal.

### **Serious injuries**

- Staff will not move seriously injured persons.
- Staff will call the Boston Police/Ambulance (911) immediately. If police arrive before the ambulance, police officers take responsibility for the care of the injured person.
  - One staff person is assigned to wait for the police and/or ambulance so they can be taken to the scene.
  - Parents or guardians will be notified of the emergency as soon as medical help has been summoned.
  - One staff member will ride with the youth in the ambulance, and will stay with the youth until a parent or guardian arrives.

## **Notification of Parents/Guardians**

In the event of an emergency, parents will be immediately notified by the Preschool Director as to their child's situation. In the event that a family member cannot be reached at home or work, staff will use the emergency phone numbers listed on the child's enrollment form to contact the designated adult regarding the situation. The child will be transported by ambulance to a hospital for necessary treatment. If the parents choose to have their child transported to a specific hospital, they must do so in writing on their Emergency Information form. We will make their wishes known to the ambulance attendants, but the hospital destination is determined by the ambulance attendants/company.

## **Policy for Illness Exclusion**

Children who appear to be sick during preschool hours are isolated as much as possible from the group and are given a quiet area to rest. Preschoolers will be provided with books, snack and beverage if they should desire them. Staff will phone the child's family to inform them that the child is not feeling well. The child may return to the program when he/she feels well enough to participate in the daily activities of the site. If the child continues to feel ill, BNC staff will call the parents/guardians and request that they pick up the child immediately.

If a child has a contagious disease, he/she will not be allowed to attend the program until he/she is no longer contagious. Parents will be contacted to pick up their child if he/she should exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- Fever,
- Earache,
- Vomiting,
- Red eyes with discharge,
- Pain accompanied by redness or
- fever,
- Skin eruptions,
- Sore throat,
- Continuous cough

**Children with a viral infection will be allowed to return when they have been fever free for 24 hours. Children with bacterial infections will be allowed back after 24 hours on antibiotics.**

**The child must remain out of school until they are fever free for 24 hours.**

**Per the Boston Public Health Commission, your child has a fever when the temperature is above:**

- 99.6 degrees F measured orally
- 99.2 degrees F measured under the arm
- 100.5 degrees F measured in the ear/forehead

If your child has been exposed to a communicable disease or condition (i.e. chicken pox, head lice, etc.), please inform the Preschool Director so that all families may be informed.

**Vomiting** – If your child has vomited, they may return to school after 24 hours of being symptom free.

**H1N1:** If a child has a fever of 100 degrees or more and a cough or sore throat, that child has an influenza-like illness. The child should stay home for seven days after the symptoms start, or until the child is completely well for a day, whichever is longer. A child can return earlier if the family can provide a note from the pediatrician that the child was tested “negative for influenza A. “

The Preschool Director will contact the Health Care Consultant if any child is known to have any reportable disease. Any child with any of the Department of Health listed diseases will not be allowed to return to the program until the symptoms are gone, or we receive a written statement from your family physician stating that the child's health will not be harmed and the infection may not be transferred to any other child. Children who have had lice need to be certified lice-free before returning to the program.

If you have any concerns regarding the child's health, please feel free to discuss them with the preschool staff or the Preschool Director.

## **Policy for Dispensing Medication (prescription and non-prescription)**

The designated health supervisor in each class who is under the professional oversight of the health care consultant will be the only staff to administer prescription or non-prescription medicine. No child shall be allowed to administer his/her own medication unsupervised. If your child requires any medication while attending the program, please notice that a parent/guardian signature and the child's physician's signature are required.

#### Prescription Medication:

- Must be in the original containers with the pharmacy label (including inhalers, EpiPens)
- Completed permission forms from the family and the child's physician to administer the medication

#### Non-prescription Medication, (including Chapstick, lotions etc...)

- Must be in the original container
- Must have the name of the child on it.
- Completed permission forms from the family and the child's physician to administer the medication

### **Inhalers and EpiPens**

Inhalers and EpiPens are required at the preschool every day if these medications are listed on the child's physical.

If your child uses an Albuterol inhaler at home for occasion/seasonal colds, allergies or asthma symptoms, we require families provide an inhaler (to be kept at school) along with the appropriate paperwork to their child's teachers. If a child has a prescribed asthma inhaler or a prescribed EpiPen, the staff in charge of the group will carry the medication at all times and assist the child when needed.

**Medication note:** *According to state law, we cannot administer any medications, therefore, any assistance with EpiPen or Inhaler administration is done as a "Good Samaritan." The medication must have the full prescription label and any child age 5 or above is required to have been trained to administer his/her EpiPen. All regular staff members are certified in CPR and first aid and trained in EpiPen administration.*

Pathways to Nature collaborates with a local, independent Health Care Consultant as required by Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

BNC staff may use topical non-prescription ointments or creams while administering first aid. No medication shall be administered contrary to the directions on the original container unless authorized by a written order from the child's physician.

BNC does supply sunscreen for children. However due to the specific needs of children and susceptibility to insect bites, parents must provide their own insect repellent, in the original container, with a label indicating the name and age of your child and directions for application. Please instruct your child in the self-administration of these products. We will supervise the administration.

### **Staff Medical Training**

All full time BNC staff is certified in CPR and First Aid and only these staff members will administer first aid. All staff is also trained in Emergency, Health and Safety guidelines. BNC staff members are oriented to all areas, as well as all the rules and safety regulations pertaining to these areas.

### **Transportation Plan**

Children will be transported to the BNC by their parents/guardians or a person pre-authorized by the parent to drop off their child. Parents are encouraged to form carpooling systems.

Under no circumstances will staff be permitted to walk or drive children home or to other destinations. In emergency situations, staff will call 911 and if transportation is needed to a hospital, an ambulance will be used. No child will walk to or from the program unaccompanied.

In the Health History, Release and Waiver Form there is also a request for a list of authorized people to pick-up your child. Please include yourself as well as the person(s) you selected as contacts in emergencies, if appropriate. Only the individuals that you list in this part of the form will be authorized to pick-up your child from the program. You and every other authorized person that drop-off and/or pick-up your child will

need to sign-in and sign-out your child every day. Your signature and time of arrival and departure need to be recorded.

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## BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

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### Philosophy

The objective of behavior management policy is to assure a respectful, safe, comfortable and nurturing environment for all children enrolled in *Pathways to Nature*.

The positive behavior management approach is based on the belief that all children will:

- Recognize responsibility for exhibiting appropriate behavior and demonstrate a concern for their own safety and that of others,
- Understand and follow both Boston Nature Center and preschool rules,
- Accept responsibility for their behavior and for the consequences of behavior that disregards or endangers the safety of themselves or others,
- Have and display respect for the rights and property of others, and
- Have and display proper courtesy to and respect for other children and adults.

Further, it is the philosophy of the BNC that the most effective behavior management strategies are those that prevent negative behaviors or stop them before they escalate into more serious problems. BNC staff use positive behavior management strategies such as:

- Contribution from all children in the development of guidelines,
- Involvement from all children in daily group meetings, so that all children understand what to expect each day, and thus, how they should behave,
- Verbal review at the beginning of an activity of any behavior rules specific to that activity,
- Comforting any injured or unhappy children,
- Helping children gain a better understanding of desired behaviors,
- Attention by staff to ensure that every child is engaged in an activity, and
- Clarifying what the consequences will be if the inappropriate behavior continues.

### Discipline Guidelines

To foster growth and independence, children are guided and encouraged to follow rules and resolve challenges with each other. When necessary, a staff member will intervene and assist children. The staff member explains to the children why a particular behavior is not acceptable and helps the child to redirect the behavior.

The *Pathways to Nature* approach to children's behavior is to build positive self-esteem through actions that are motivated by self-control and understanding, not by fear of adult intervention or control. Discipline requires setting limits and, at times, restricting or prohibiting certain behaviors. It involves helping children distinguish between feelings and behaviors and developing language to express these feelings and needs.

If a child intentionally hurts another person or runs away from the group or staff member they will immediately be brought to the Preschool Director.

No child will be subject to abuse, neglect, cruel, unusual, severe or corporal punishment including: any type of physical hitting inflicted in any manner upon the body; punishments which subject the child to verbal abuse, ridicule or humiliation; denial of food, rest or bathroom facilities; punishment related to eating or not eating food.

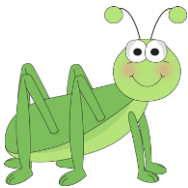
All incidents regarding behavior management must be documented by the staff and forwarded to the Preschool Director.

## Parental Involvement

Parents/guardians will be informed of any persistent behavior problems, and they are asked for their cooperation in dealing with persistent and/or severe misbehavior. *Pathways to Nature* suggests that families inform the educators of outside behavioral or family issues and other areas of concern that affect their child's behavior. Please note that due to our staff-to-child ratio, the program cannot accommodate children who need routine, on-going one-on-one support and attention. Parent/guardian conferences will be scheduled to discuss the problem and formulate a plan of action within a reasonable time frame. Children may be given a specific plan and conditions for continued participation in the program.

## Transition to a new group

Smooth transition into another group at the preschool is important to a child's safety and sense of well-being. For that reason, Busy Bees will move as a group to the Curious Crickets class. If, for an unforeseen reason, the preschool staff believes a child would do better in another group within the program, they will consult with the preschool director and the parents prior to any action. The preschool teacher will meet beforehand with the new teacher and will assist the child with the transition in a manner consistent with child's ability to understand.



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## RELEASE FORMS

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**Media:** Included in the application packet is a media release for each child. At no time will children be part of publicity, including photographs and participation in mass media without a signed media release on file. Families can choose not to sign the media release.

**Fund Raising:** At no time, will children be asked to raise funds for Mass Audubon. Parents will be informed of fund-raising events with participation being optional.

**Research projects:** At no time will children be screened or take part in a research project without consent from the child's family.

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## REFERRAL SERVICE

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BNC staff is mandated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to report suspected child abuse or neglect in accordance with MGL c.119, 51A. Please see Mass Audubon's Child Abuse and/or Neglect Policy and Procedures for more information.

BNC *Pathways to Nature* shall use the following procedures for referring parents and guardians to appropriate social, mental health, educational and medical services for their child, should the educators feel that an assessment for such additional services would benefit the child.

### Observation

If the Preschool Director and the Sanctuary Director agree, a Lead Teacher and Preschool Director will complete an observation report as suggested by MA EEC, and review the child's record prior to making a referral. This review will include contacting any possible sources of reliable information on the matter.

The Preschool Director will maintain a list of current referral resources in the community for children in need of social, mental health, educational or medical services.

### Referral Meeting

The Preschool Director will schedule a meeting with parents to notify them of the Boston Nature Center's concern and prepare a current list of possible referral resources.

At the meeting, the Preschool Director will provide to the parent a written statement including the reason for recommending a referral for additional services, a brief summary of the teacher’s observations related to the referral and any efforts the center may have made to accommodate the child’s needs.

Preschool staff will offer assistance to the child’s parents in making the referral. Parents should be encouraged to call or request in writing an evaluation. If parents need extra support, the BNC may, with written parental consent, contact the referral agency for them.

**Follow-up to the Referral**

The Preschool Director will, with parental permission, contact the agency or service provider who evaluated the child for consultation and assistance in meeting the child’s needs at the BNC.

**Professional Development Support**

Pathways to Nature may pursue professional development or any other in-service educator trainings to aid the staff in developing strategies to address particular behaviors.

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**TERMINATION FROM PRESCHOOL**

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**Steps to a Possible Termination**

*Pathways to Nature* recognizes the various needs of children at different ages and stages of development, and with those needs, children must be treated individually. However, children requiring routine, on-going one-on-one attention and direction specific to behavior issues may require a different setting. In the event of dismissal, liability for tuition payment will continue only as long as the child is enrolled in the preschool.

*Pathways to Nature* reserves the right to dismiss any child whose actions or behaviors jeopardize the overall health and goals of the program. Repeated failure to comply with guidelines and/or procedures will result in dismissal.

The family will be notified in writing of any issues leading to a child’s termination from *Pathways to Nature*. The following are the steps leading up to and culminating in termination:

	Leader Response	Consequences for Child
1 <sup>st</sup> step	Reminder of the expectation.*	Reminder of the expectation and possible consequences.
2 <sup>nd</sup> step	A reminder plus take a break.	Take a break. Child sits for a short time (3-5 minutes depending on age) with supervision.
3 <sup>rd</sup> step	Discussion with the child about the rules of program. Update the Preschool Director or Lead Teacher on the steps taken to date.	Take a break. Child sits for a short time (3-5 minutes depending on age) with supervision.
4 <sup>th</sup> step	Child will be brought to the Preschool Director or Lead Teacher for a discussion. The Preschool Director or Lead Teacher will write up the incident and speak with the family.	The family, Director, and Lead Teacher create a plan to help the child adjust to the expectations at home and at school.
5 <sup>th</sup> step	The Preschool Director and Sanctuary Director will discuss possible participant’s dismissal from the program.	Parents called. Guidelines reviewed. Possible dismissal.



\*If a child intentionally hurts another person or runs away from the group or staff member, they will immediately be brought to the Preschool Director or Lead Teacher. If, after steps 1 through 5, there is no mutually agreeable resolution of the issues that warrant termination, the Preschool Director, shall issue a written notice of termination.

### **Suspension**

Any child whose behavior seriously threatens the emotional or physical safety of themselves or others will be suspended immediately, upon the recommendation of the Preschool Director, for a period of up to two days. During the period of suspension, a further evaluation will be made to determine whether it is appropriate for the child to remain in the program. The Preschool Director, Lead Teacher, and parents/guardians will participate in this further evaluation.

Examples of behavior warranting immediate suspension include:

- Attacking another child or adult.
- Documented harassment of another child.
- Aggressive behavior that required an adult to physically restrain the child.
- Leaving the site or building without permission of the staff (includes staying on the sanctuary grounds or leaving the immediate vicinity of an outdoor activity without permission of a staff member).

The program reserves the right to allow provisional reentry into the program or to proceed with the termination of the child's enrollment. Conditions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Child and/or family participation in a counseling or treatment program.
- Implementation of a behavior management contract with preschool.

Liability for tuition continues through the term of suspension and does not end until the child is officially terminated from *Pathways to Nature*.

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## **GRIEVANCES AGAINST PROGRAM AND/OR STAFF**

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Complaints about the preschool (i.e. conflicts with children or a parent/guardian of children in *Pathways to Nature*, curriculum, schedule, situations regarding staff) must be brought to the attention of the Preschool Director, who shall attempt to resolve the matter. If the matter is not resolved to the family's satisfaction, the Preschool Director may bring the matter to the Sanctuary Director.

No disciplinary action will be taken against any employee without a hearing with the Preschool Director and the Sanctuary Director. Except in cases requiring immediate dismissal (outlined in the next section) an employee under disciplinary action will receive at least one written notice before dismissal.

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## **ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY**

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BNC staff is mandated by the State of Massachusetts to report suspected child abuse or neglect in accordance with MGL c119, s.51A. Staff report to the Preschool Director regarding suspected family abuse or neglect issues; the Preschool Director reports to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of EEC. The preschool is not required to notify families of these reports.

Criminal record and sexual offender record searches are conducted on all BNC employees and volunteers prior to their hiring date. All staff and volunteers are required to provide a complete work history for the previous five years plus three positive references from non-related persons. Families should report any suspected staff abuse to the Preschool Director, Sanctuary Director, the DCF or EEC