IPSWICH RIVER WILDLIFE SANCTUARY
NATURE PRESCHOOL
PARENT HANDBOOK
2019-2020

A Program of Mass Audubon’s Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary
Located at
Endicott Wildlife Sanctuary
346 Grapevine Road
01984

Karen First Director
kfirst@massaudubon.org
Dear Families,

Welcome to Ipswich River Nature Preschool, a program of Mass Audubon’s Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary.

We know that choosing a childcare program is an important decision for your family and we view your trust in us as a privilege.

At Ipswich River Nature Preschool, we feel that good communication is the foundation for building a strong community. Please feel free to call or e-mail us with any questions or concerns.

To reach our office at Endicott Wildlife Sanctuary on Grapevine Road, please call: 978-237-0108. If we are unable to take your call, we will return your call as soon as possible.

We carry cell phones and field radios when outdoors to communicate with each other and emergency services if necessary.

To reach Director Karen First or teachers Leah Robbins, Heather Cushman, Karen Chemel, Rachel Grinstead-Babson or Gigi Ghriskey by e-mail, please use these e-mail addresses:

kfirst@massaudubon.org, lrobbins@massaudubon.org, hcushman@massaudubon.org, nghriskey@massaudubon.org, rgbabson@massaudubon.org, kchemel@massaudubon.org

Registrars Diane Dixon and Rebecca Spencer can be reached at IRNPreschool@massaudubon.org 978-237-0108. Our Fax# is 978-720-8361.

Warm wishes,

Karen First
Karen First
Director Ipswich River Nature Preschool
Table of Contents

Mass Audubon 3
Statement of Purpose 3
Goals of the Program/Philosophy 3-4
Non-Discrimination Policy 4
Licensure 4
Organizational Structure/Staff Responsibilities 5
Background Record Checks/Volunteers 5
Program Schedule 6
Sample Daily Schedule 7
Beginning Preschool 7
Daily Supplies/What to Bring/Snacks, Lunch, Clothing 8
Weather and Closings 9
Birthdays 9
Transportation/Arrival/Departures 10
Extended Hours 10
Late Pick-Up 10
Field Trips 10
Enrollment and Admission 11
Children with Disabilities 11
Withdrawal Fees and Payments, Re-enrollment 11-12
Communication 13
Participation/Records/Advisory Committee 14
Child Guidance 15-16
Health and Safety/Emergency Procedures 17-21
Policy for Illness Exclusion 21
Ticks 22-23
Controlling Infection/Diapering and Toileting 23-24
Plan for Mildly Ill Children/First Aid 24
Medications 24-25
Plan for Individual Health Needs 25
Transportation 26
Release Forms 26
Referrals 26
Termination 27
Abuse and Neglect Policy 28
Staff Observations, Orientation and Grievances 28
Transitions 29
Donations of Recycled Materials 29
Mass Audubon

The Ipswich River Nature Preschool is a nature preschool offered by the Massachusetts Audubon Society; a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the nature of Massachusetts through conservation, advocacy and education. Mass Audubon works to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. Together with more than 100,000 members, we care for 35,000 acres of conservation land, provide school, camp, and other educational programs for 225,000 children and adults annually, and advocate for sound environmental policies at local, state, and federal levels. Founded in 1896 by two inspirational women who were committed to the protection of birds, Mass Audubon is now one of the largest and most prominent conservation organizations in New England. Today we are respected for our sound science, successful advocacy, and innovative approaches to connecting people and nature. Each year, our statewide network of wildlife sanctuaries welcomes nearly half a million visitors of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds and serves as the base for our work. To support these important efforts, call 800-AUDUBON (800-283-8266) or visit www.massaudubon.org. Become a member and enjoy an array of family programs, special events and summer day camp programs at the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary as well as exciting programs at 19 staffed sanctuaries across Massachusetts.

Mass Audubon Ipswich River and Endicott Wildlife Sanctuaries

The Ipswich River Nature Preschool is a program of The Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary in Topsfield. Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary is one of Mass Audubon's largest sanctuaries, with nearly 2,000 acres. The Ipswich River Nature Preschool is located at the 40 acre Endicott Wildlife Sanctuary in Wenham. Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary staff support the preschool in many ways. Administrative staff over-see and manage the business aspects of the preschool and educators and naturalists enrich our programming with nature based curriculum materials and their expertise in nature education. Students enrolled in the Ipswich River Nature Preschool have the opportunity to visit the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary for seasonal field trips such as maple sugaring, vernal pool observations, and ponding. To contact the Ipswich River Sanctuary in Topsfield to ask questions regarding the preschool or to find out about the sanctuary's programs and events call 978-887-9264 or email ipswichriver@massaudubon.org.

Statement of Purpose

"In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught." ~ Baba Daioum, Senegalese Environmentalist

The Ipswich River Nature Preschool exemplifies Mass Audubon’s longstanding belief that nature is a rich source of inspiration and learning for children and their families. As Mass Audubon’s fourth nature based preschool, The Ipswich River Nature Preschool was founded to provide young children on the North Shore with early educational experiences that foster the development of the whole child and a lifelong relationship with nature. With the guidance of attentive early childhood and nature educators, children who are allowed the time to fully engage with the natural world will build memories that will last a lifetime.

Goals of the Program

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

1. Provide children with a safe environment to grow, learn, and respect people and nature
2. Connect children to nature to develop a lifelong passion for the environment and its stewardship

Philosophy

At Ipswich River Nature Preschool, we understand that young children learn best through purposeful and productive play. Outdoor play experiences provide children with opportunities to practice the social and intellectual skills of planning, problem solving, decision making, and collaboration. Recent studies confirm
that children are spending less time engaged in these types of vigorous outdoor play. The lack of time in nature has been linked to childhood obesity and attention deficit disorder.

Our curriculum grows out of our belief that a child’s innate sense of joy and wonder is nurtured by meaningful and frequent time spent outdoors. While interacting with nature at Ipswich River Nature Preschool, children’s questions and observations provide the road map for short and long term investigations and projects that integrate math, science and literacy.

We draw inspiration from educational theory and practice that is rooted in inquiry and a constructivist approach. Developmentally appropriate practices and standards such as Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (NAEYC), and The Creative Curriculum are incorporated as resources and educational guideposts, as we support both children’s deep thinking and the development of age-appropriate skills.

The philosophy of the Ipswich River Nature Preschool 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. Ipswich River Nature Preschool 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.

Non-Discrimination Policy
Ipswich River Nature Preschool does not discriminate in providing service to children and their families on the basis of 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 if reasonable accommodations can be made.

LICENSURE OF THE PROGRAM

Ipswich River Nature Preschool is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. The Endicott Wildlife Sanctuary is in compliance with the design standards for building accessibility in 521 CMR (Architectural Access Board). Ipswich River Nature Preschool 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 (Licensing Authority):
Tim Donahue, Licensor
360 Merrimack Street, Building 9, Third Floor
Lawrence, MA 01843
Phone: 978-826-1324
Below are the responsibilities of the staff members in the Ipswich River Nature Preschool. All staff and volunteers are required to provide a work history, three references, and to pass a criminal and sexual offender background check.

1. **The Sanctuary Director, Amy Weidensaul** is ultimately responsible for all Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary programs. She is the direct supervisor of the Youth Education Manager.

2. **The Youth Education Manager, Kimberly LoGrasso**, at Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary directly supervises the Preschool Director and serves as a liaison between the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary and the Preschool.

3. **The Administrative Assistants, Diane Dixon and Rebecca Spencer** are responsible for keeping accurate files of the participants’ financial accounts, and communicates with the Preschool Director on issues of enrollment, payments and debts.

4. **The Property Manager is Robert Buchsbaum**. Robert oversees the Endicott Wildlife Sanctuary property and is the direct supervisor of the caretaker.

5. **Lyle Smith** is caretaker of the Endicott Wildlife Sanctuary and oversees snow removal, mowing and landscaping as well as many of the maintenance responsibilities for Ipswich River Nature Preschool building.

6. **The Preschool Director (Program Administrator), Karen First**, 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.

7. **The Preschool Teachers, Leah Robbins (LT) Gigi Ghriskey (T), Heather Cushman (T), Karen Chemel (T) and Rachel Grinstead-Babson (LT)** are responsible for creating and implementing 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, and emergency management procedures.

**Background Checks**

All staff, substitutes, and volunteers who come regularly to the preschool are required to complete background record checks through MA DEEC.

**Volunteers**

*The Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary* is fortunate to have a dedicated pool of volunteers who support the mission of Mass Audubon in a variety of ways. Volunteers support the preschool program by gardening, answering phones, and assisting teachers in the classroom and on the trails. Long term volunteers with The Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary receive background checks and must attend an orientation. **Volunteers are never left alone with children.**
**Ipswich River Nature Preschool** is not in session on holidays, vacations, and teacher planning days posted below. A weekly schedule will be posted and available to all families.

### 2019- 2020 Holiday, Vacation and Teacher Planning Schedule

Your registration is for the school year (September-June). Tuition rates are not pro-rated for days/weeks when the child is absent from school due to holidays, vacations or illness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday September 3th</td>
<td>Small Group Classroom Visit Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday September 4th</td>
<td>First Day of School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 14th</td>
<td>Closed for Columbus Day Holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 11th</td>
<td>Closed for Veteran’s Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 28-29th</td>
<td>Closed for Thanksgiving Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 23th - -- January 1st</td>
<td>Closed for Winter Holiday (School resumes January 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 20th</td>
<td>Closed for Martin Luther King Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 21th</td>
<td>Closed for Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 17-21</td>
<td>Closed for February Vacation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 16 ----</td>
<td>Closed for Professional Development (Mass Audubon ECE Gathering)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 20-24th</td>
<td>Closed for Patriot’s Day and Spring Vacation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25th</td>
<td>Closed for Memorial Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 5th</td>
<td>Last Day of School (no lunch bunch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8th</td>
<td>Moving on to K ceremony at IR (time tbd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 9th</td>
<td>Moving on to K ceremony at IR (time tbd)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**DAILY SCHEDULE**

The daily schedule may change depending upon the weather, or the range or type of activities planned for that day.

**Sample Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-9:00</td>
<td><strong>Early Morning Drop-off:</strong> Classroom activity stations, reading with a teacher, outdoor play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 9:45</td>
<td><strong>Morning Exploration:</strong> Arrival and activities based on children’s interests and seasonal happenings. Morning exploration may take place indoors or outdoors. Children sign-in and answer a morning question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45 – 10:15</td>
<td><strong>Morning Meeting:</strong> Greet friends, movement games, go over schedule and activities for the day, story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 – 10:30</td>
<td><strong>Snack/Bathroom</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 – 11:45</td>
<td><strong>Small group outdoor investigations</strong> (Literacy, Math, the Arts, Science)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45- 12:00</td>
<td><strong>Closing Circle and Story</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 – 12:30</td>
<td><strong>Dismissal and Transition for Lunch Group</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 – 1:00</td>
<td><strong>Outdoor Play/Dismissal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00-1:45</td>
<td><strong>Extended Day Rest and Reading</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-2:15</td>
<td><strong>Snack/Project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15-3:00</td>
<td><strong>Outdoor Investigation</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preschoolers use several areas at the Endicott Wildlife Sanctuary: mainly the Endicott Sanctuary House, the grounds immediately surrounding the preschool, the trail system, and the gardens of the Endicott Wildlife Sanctuary.

**BEGINNING PRESCHOOL**

Visits for parents and children to get to know their teachers and the learning environment will be scheduled before school begins. The teachers and Director are happy to help with transitions in any way we can. Children sometimes cry or show distress when saying good-bye to parents. Teachers understand and have experiences with this reaction. Children are generally soothed within a short period of time. It usually helps to have a specific good-bye routine to follow, i.e. a story read by mom or dad, a kiss, or a wave at the good-bye window. It is usually easiest for the child if the parent is sure to leave without lingering once the good-bye ritual has been completed, this helps decrease the child’s anxiety and establish the consistency of the routine. Young children can sense when their caregivers are feeling ambivalent about leaving. When parents confidently reassure their child by saying, “You will have fun and learn so much today!” they are sending a powerful message to their children that they trust the teachers who will care for them. Please share any techniques that you find soothing to your child with the teachers. We find the discussions between parents and teachers about these issues helps to solve them. After a difficult separation, teachers are glad to check in later in the morning with a parent by phone or e-mail to let them know that their child has settled into school activities.
DAILY SUPPLIES: WHAT TO BRING EACH DAY

Snacks and Lunch
Please provide your child with a snack and a lunch if they stay for lunch bunch every day. Examples of healthy snacks include protein (cheese sticks, yogurt, tofu or cold cuts), fruits and vegetables, and whole grains. Food should be non-perishable as we have limited refrigerator space. Insulated snack/lunch bags work well with ice packs if food needs to stay cool. We request that children bring a labeled water bottle that will be sent home to be washed every day. We are not able to heat food. Reusable labeled containers, cloth napkins and utensils are also strongly encouraged. We are nut free, so please refrain from sending nuts or peanut butter for lunch or snack. All lunch/snack containers should be taken home every day. The preschool will have available snacks/fruits and lunches that will supplement children lunches if needed. Families must notify the preschool of any food allergies in the Health History form. Please cut grapes in half if you choose to send them with your child for snack or lunch. Children are encouraged to peel and take small bites from cheese sticks to prevent choking.

Tooth Brushing
If children stay for lunch, staff will assist children with brushing their teeth after they have eaten lunch, unless parents sign a tooth brushing waiver. We provide a tooth brush and children will bring toothpaste to be stored at school.

Clothing and other Items

“There is no bad weather just bad clothing” – Old Scandinavian saying

Due to the nature of our explorations and adventures at the Ipswich River Nature Preschool, children need appropriate clothing in order to fully enjoy their experience. Please be aware that the children will be outdoors daily (rain or shine). Exceptions are: temperature below 15 degrees, high winds, cold, drenching rain and thunderstorms. We recommend lightweight one piece rain/wind suits called muddy buddies (http://www.tuffo.com/muddy-buddy/) Aside from weather appropriate extra clothes that are stored at school, we request that all other gear goes home each day. Back packs are not required for walks, but may work well for bringing belongings to school.

- 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
- A rain jacket, rain pants and rain boots
- Snow pants and boots
- Winter coat, gloves/mittens, hat, scarf
- A water bottle
- A hat and sun block
- Insect repellent
The preschool will have extra clothing on hand if needed in emergencies. Please be sure to label all supplies/clothing with the child’s name. Books from home to read at school are always welcome, but children should not bring toys to school. We also welcome nature treasures such as interesting rocks, shells, driftwood, pine cones and acorn caps.

**Weather and Closings**

Sun block and insect repellent (see p.22) are strongly recommended; staff will be on hand to assist children with re-application is necessary. Please apply these when weather appropriate, before school in the mornings. We can apply insect repellants to shoes and socks, but not directly on skin. These items are required to be in their original containers, with a label indicating the name and age of your child. In the case of inclement weather, Ipswich River Nature Preschool will follow the lead of the Hamilton/Wenham Elementary Public Schools. If Hamilton/Wenham schools close due to weather, so will Ipswich River Nature Preschool. Preschool closings will also be recorded on the school’s phone message and announcements of closings made through the group e-mailing process. In the case of a Hamilton/Wenham delayed opening, we may delay until 9:30 a.m., but please check communications from the Director. Parents will be informed of any successive closings on a day to day evaluation through the group emailing process. If you have any questions please speak with the Preschool Director.

**Birthday Celebrations**

Each child’s birthday is recognized at school by the presentation of a card and a gift made by a small group of classmates that reflects the child’s interests. Summer birthdays will be scheduled throughout the year. Blue Jay children will receive their special “nature name” from their friends on their birthday celebration day. Parents are welcome to join us for their child’s birthday celebration. For environmental and safety reasons, we ask that parents do not bring balloons to school. Families are also always welcome to donate a book to the preschool library in honor of their child’s birthday. A wish list of books is posted in the parent information center.

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**TRANSPORTATION/ARRIVALS/PICK-UPS**

**Arrival**

_The Ipswich River Nature Preschool_ does not provide transportation to preschool. Children must arrive with 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. Please drive very slowly down the drive from Grapevine Rd., especially during busy pick up and drop off times. We also urge caution while entering and exiting Grapevine Rd. There are spaces in the front of the building for brief drop off. Teachers will load children into cars for the noon dismissal. Parking spaces along the side of the building near the garage are reserved for Mass Audubon regional scientists. We also encourage families to use additional parking spots next to the public walking trail. After parking, turn off your engine. Do not allow your child to run to a car to greet a friend. We ask that children hold a grown-up's hand while crossing the parking lot. For siblings awake or sleeping in the car, please team up with other parents to watch each other’s children at drop off and pick up time. Please do not leave children unattended in your car at any time.

Arrival time is 8:00 am for early morning care and 9:00 am for regular arrival. Prior to these times teachers are busy preparing the classroom. If a child is to arrive late, please notify the preschool. Attendance is taken and all children must be accounted for by 9:30 a.m. Families must notify the preschool by phone, e-mail or with a note in advance whenever a child will be absent. 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.

**Departure**

Staff will bring children to their cars for dismissal. Parents should plan to arrive between 11:55 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. If you would like to get your child instead of waiting in the dismissal line, please park at
the trail head and walk up to sign out your child. All children must be picked up or signed out by 12:10 pm, unless enrolled in the lunch bunch program. On the Release Form, families authorize which persons are 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 to them. 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.

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.

**Extended Hours**

Extended care hours until 1:00 p.m. or early morning drop off at 8:00 a.m. are optional for an added fee. The fee is $13 per hour per day. Registration for the extended option can be done during enrollment to secure space. The additional fee is included in the tuition payment. A parent who requires an unexpected late day needs to notify the school a minimum of one day in advance to inquire about availability. Please make requests to add extended time by e-mailing the Director and copying IRNPreschool@massaudubon.org. The payment will be invoiced with the next tuition payment. Enrollment is limited and requests are processed in the order they arrive. Families can enroll in early am or lunch bunch on a yearly, or term basis as space allows. The three terms are September–November, December-March, and April-June. If space is available, children may join extended care on an add-on basis with 24 hr. notice. This is meant for occasional drop-ins. If you are using extended care on a regular basis, we ask that you commit to enrollment for a term or the year. This is necessary for billing purposes and to adequately plan for staffing.

**Late Pick Up**

Families must enroll in the extended day program in advance and include payment with tuition payments unless days are added on with notice. Two staff members remain with any child not picked up by 12:10 pm or 1:10 pm. 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 $13 fee for any time after 12:10 or 1:10 pm. If the child has not been picked-up by 1:30 pm and the Ipswich River Nature Preschool staff has not been called or parents or emergency contacts are unreachable, a staff member will consult with the police.

**siblings and Other Children at Pick-Up**

If families bring other children to the preschool when they pick up their children, they are responsible for their care. Children should not be left unattended.

**Field Trip Procedures**

Children may attend occasional field trips to Mass Audubon’s Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary in Topsfield in order to attend seasonal happenings such as maple sugaring and pond explorations with their teachers. Families are notified of these field trips in advance and signed permission slips must be returned the day before each trip. Educators are equipped with first aid kits at all times as well as the child’s emergency information. When we have a field trip to Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, children will be dropped off and picked up at Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary by parents or guardians from whom we have written permission. Staff is available to help arrange carpooling. During the field trip children will wear nametags with contact information. Children are welcome to join us on a field trip if scheduled on a day that they don’t attend, but must be accompanied by a parent or caretaker.
Admission

Registration for Ipswich River Nature Preschool is on a rolling admission basis. All applications are processed in the order they arrive. Families who have completed an application will receive notice of acceptance, a current draft of the parent handbook and a tuition information. Current families are guaranteed a space for the following year, but schedule options are filled by the order in which applications are received. Once the $500.00 non-refundable deposit is returned, a space is secured for your child. If there is space, additional days may be added to the child’s schedule upon request.

Requests to decrease the number of days enrolled in the program must be made before the deposit is paid. All families are required to complete and return all aspects of the forms in the registration packet. The packet includes:

- Developmental History and Health Information
- Current Physical (signed by physician)
- Record of Immunizations
- Proof of Lead Screening
- Mass Audubon Release and Waiver forms

Children with Disabilities

Ipswich River Nature Preschool does not discriminate in providing service to children and their families on the basis of 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 if 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,
- 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, she will notify the parents 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 declining 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
- Toilet training is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment

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

Each family is responsible for the yearly tuition regardless of their child’s weekly attendance. There will be no reduction in tuition for days missed or days that school is closed. Should a child be withdrawn, the Director will try to fill their space, but until this is accomplished the parents remain financially responsible for the remaining tuition.

Re-Enrollment

A child may re-enroll in the preschool. Re-admission will depend on availability of space in each schedule option and the child’s history in the preschool. Requests must be made to the Preschool Director. We do our best to accommodate families who request a third year for their child, but there may be a cap on the number of spaces available for a third year.

Fees and Payments

An application fee of 75.00 is required in order to process applications for new children. This is a onetime fee per child. Families returning for a second year are not required to pay an application fee.

Tuition can be paid in full at the beginning of the school year, or in three installments (August 15th, December 15th and March 15th, or closest business days). We can also set up a monthly payment plan, in 10 installments, if needed. For billing purposes, annual or the three installments are much preferred.

All installments should be paid with the credit card information held securely at the office, and will be automatically applied on the 15th of the month payment is due (or closest business day after). Credit card details should be provided, at the start of the school year, to the Preschool Administration Office at 346 Grapevine Rd, which is staffed every morning (except Friday) by registrars Diane Dixon and Rebecca Spencer. staff will be happy to help with any questions regarding payments. Please call the office at 979-237-0108 for more information.

Paying Online
You may now pay tuition fees securely online by creating your own Mass Audubon account. Please ask the Preschool Admin Office staff at 978-237-0108 if you have any questions. www.massaudubon.org/payments

Checks
If you need to mail or drop off a check please let the office know. A check drop box has now been located in the hallway for your convenience, rather than handing to the Director. Please make checks payable to Mass Audubon. Checks may be sent to the Admin Office, Ipswich River Nature Preschool, 346 Grapevine Rd, Wenham, MA 01984.

Late Fees
A late fee of $25.00 per week will be imposed if credit cards are declined or payment is not received. Please let the Preschool Admin office know as soon as possible if credit card information has changed. Delinquent accounts may result in your child not being able to attend school, please contact the Director or the preschool office staff.

Sibling Discount
We currently offer a discount of $125.00 for families who enroll more than one child.
Extended Day
Early a.m. from 8-9am and Lunch Bunch from 12-1pm are charged at $13.00 per hour. Please sign up at the beginning of each term. Payment by term will be charged to the credit card on file. A late fee of $12 will be charged for pick up after 12:10 and 1:10.

Financial Aid
Limited financial aid awards will be available for the 2018-2019 school year. Financial Aid forms are available from the Director as soon as applications are available.

Tuition Payment Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Total Tuition</th>
<th>Deposit</th>
<th>Annual Payment less deposit</th>
<th>3x Year 15 Aug / 15 Dec / 15 Mar</th>
<th>10x Monthly installment (Agreed with Director)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 days Tues Thurs (1/2 day)</td>
<td>$4,097</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$3,597</td>
<td>$1,199</td>
<td>$360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 days Mon / Wed / Fri (1/2 day)</td>
<td>$5,419</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$4,919</td>
<td>$1,640</td>
<td>$492</td>
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<td>5 days Mon- Fri (1/2 day)</td>
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<td>$500</td>
<td>$8,360</td>
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<td>$836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 days Tues / Thus Full day</td>
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<td>$500</td>
<td>$7,691</td>
<td>$2,564</td>
<td>$769</td>
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</table>
COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

The Ipswich River Nature Preschool 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 and E-mail

Ipswich River Nature Preschool encourages open communication with families. Confidential issues should be addressed to the Preschool Director. If a parent/guardian needs to contact an educator or their child during preschool hours, s/he may call or e-mail the Preschool Director. For concerns, face to face conversations are always preferred. The Preschool Director checks messages when possible during the morning. 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. Families can expect a response to a call or e-mail from their child’s teacher or the Director within 24 hours and usually sooner.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Staff will check in with new families during the first month of school to share information on transitions to the program. Twenty minute conferences are offered during the month of November and a spring conference with teachers by phone or in person is available by request in order for parents and teachers to share their observations, questions or concerns. Conference sign-up schedules are posted two to three weeks prior to conferences. The Ipswich River Nature Preschool Director and teachers are also happy to meet with families when concerns or questions arise.

Progress Reports

Families/guardians will receive a narrative progress report in January and both a developmental checklist and updated portfolio in the spring. Families of a child with special needs, or a child who receives supportive services, will receive written reports on their child’s progress every three months. The report will be based on teacher observations and documentation of the child’s progress in a range of activities. The first report includes a narrative that paints a picture of the child as learner and a developmental checklist that spells out learning guideposts in the areas of cognitive development, gross and fine motor abilities, literacy, numeracy, science, social/emotional development and life skills. One copy of reports will be given to the family and one will be kept in the child’s record. Families are welcome to discuss the reports with preschool staff. 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 and staff with any comments or questions they have on their child’s experience at the Ipswich River Nature Preschool.

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
- Family breakfasts or open houses
- A note, letter, notice or newsletter sent home
- Formal conferences between staff and parent/guardian, especially when a concern cannot be properly addressed by an informal discussion or notes
- September parent information sessions
- Classroom documentation that includes photos, and children’s conversations and questions
Children’s individual portfolios, sketchbooks and journals that contain evidence of each child’s important milestones and learning over time

Posted notices on the Family Information Bulletin Board

Parent Participation

Families are encouraged to visit Ipswich River Nature Preschool. Parents/guardians may visit the program at any time without prior notice while their child is in attendance. Families are encouraged to share their presence and their gifts and passions with us. Please let us know if you would like to read or tell a story, share a family tradition, chaperone a field trip, or help out with an art or gardening project. Families should contact the Preschool Director if they are interested in these opportunities. Additional opportunities for community building include family potlucks, outdoor weekend work mornings and special events and presentations.

Notification to Parents

The Ipswich River Nature Preschool 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 (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

Ipswich River Nature Preschool 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.

Parent Committee

Each fall The Preschool Director will solicit parent volunteers who can commit to regularly attending the Parent Committee meetings and sharing the notes with the larger parent body. All interested parents are invited to attend if interested. The Advisory Committee will assist with fundraising to support financial aid and help plan community wide parent events such as family potlucks, outdoor work days other gatherings.

Records

All records for children will be reviewed and updated annually by preschool staff. Health records, the transportation permission form, and 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 on the parent identifies. The Ipswich River 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 Ipswich River Nature Preschool for at least five years.
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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Child Guidance

Philosophy

The objective of child guidance policy is to assure a respectful, safe, comfortable and nurturing environment for all children enrolled in Ipswich River Nature Preschool. This positive approach is based on the belief that all children will:

- Develop a sense of belonging to a group/community
- Recognize responsibility for exhibiting appropriate behavior and demonstrate a concern for their own safety and that of others,
- Understand and follow Ipswich River Nature 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
- Have and display proper courtesy to and respect for other children and adults

Further, it is the philosophy of the Ipswich River Nature Preschool that the most effective child guidance strategies are those that prevent negative behaviors or stop them before they escalate into more serious problems. Ipswich River Nature Preschool staff use positive child guidance strategies such as:

- Contribution from all children in the development of community guidelines
- Developmentally appropriate expectations for young children
- 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
- Clarifying what the consequences will be if the inappropriate behavior continues

Child Guidance Guidelines

To foster growth and independence, children are guided and encouraged to follow rules and resolve conflicts 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 Ipswich River Nature Preschool 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 teaching expected behaviors through class discussions, role plays, books, social stories and puppet shows. Teachers are actively involved in setting limits and, at times, restricting or prohibiting certain behaviors. Teachers help children distinguish between feelings and behaviors and develop language to express these feelings and needs. Children and staff review the rules, the positive outcomes for following the rules and the logical consequences for inappropriate behavior. Consequences may include:
• A reminder of the rule
• A reminder of the rule and brief discussion with a teacher
• A reminder of the rule and a short break from the group (if needed).
• A reminder of the rule and child is not permitted to participate in the next activity, but engages in a discussion with teacher
• When possible, a teacher will talk with the child to determine a logical consequence that aims to solve a problem or remedy a difficult situation (for example, a child may be asked to check in with a friend whose feelings or body is hurt and ask them what they need to feel better, or clean up materials that have been thrown on the floor)
• A meeting with the Preschool Director and notification to parents to discuss and reflect on behavior
• A phone call or meeting with the parent/guardian to develop and implement a behavior plan for home and school. Review the need for referrals.

Taking a break from an activity is a short cool-down time to re-group. It is always followed by a caring interchange with a teacher as the child re-enters the group. Taking a break is not used to banish a child from the group, but rather as a chance for the child to re-claim inner control in order to resume activity.

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 and parents will be notified.

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.

No child will be confined in a crib, high chair, playpen, or any other piece of equipment in lieu of adult supervision at any time.

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. *Ipswich River Nature Preschool* 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.
**HEALTH and SAFETY**

*Ipswich Nature Preschool is a peanut and tree nut free preschool!*

Our health care consultant is Diana Raphael R.N.

**Health Documents and Requirements**

In order to ensure the health and safety of all children, *The Ipswich River Nature Preschool* 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. Per Department of Early Education and Care Regulations, the preschool will maintain a list of the children who have documented exemptions from immunizations and families of these children will be notified and the child excused from attending if a vaccine preventable disease is introduced into the program.

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 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.

**Health and Safety Manual**

*Ipswich River Nature Preschool* maintains a Health and Safety Manual that details all medical and non-medical emergencies, situations, procedures, and policies. The policies included in the safety manual are also included in this parent handbook. All staff receives a copy of this manual and is required to read it and adhere to its policies. In brief, the Safety Manuel 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 missing child,
- 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,
- Mass Audubon’s policies an child abuse and neglect, and
- Plan for implementation/monitoring of infection control.
PROCEEDURES FOR EMERGENCY AND ILLNESS

Fire Drills/Evacuation
Emergency Evacuation Plans will be posted at all exits.
During an emergency evacuation the Director or Lead Teacher will be responsible for taking the attendance information and for leading the children out of the building. Assistant teachers and other staff will assist in the evacuation and check for stragglers.

The Director will make a visual inspection of each classroom before exiting the building.
All classrooms, once evacuated, will meet by the trail head parking and wait for the go ahead by the Director before re-entering the building.

The preschool will maintain a daily attendance list that is current. Staff is responsible for signing children in and out of the center by arrival and departure times. The attendance list will be kept on the top of the cubbies and be readily accessible in case of an emergency evacuation. The lead teacher is responsible for taking the attendance list and for accounting for all of the children in the class once they are safely out of the building.

Ipswich River Nature Preschool conducts emergency evacuation drills every month at different times of the program day as determined by the Director.

The Director will maintain documentation of the date, time, and effectiveness of each drill in the Fire Drill Log. This documentation will be maintained for five years.

In the event of a fire or other emergencies necessitating the evacuation of students and the closure of school, the following procedures will be followed:

Staff and children will walk to the public trail parking area, down the drive way in front of the school to the trail parking area. If the front door exit is not accessible, staff and children will exit from the large motor activity room and gather at the garage to the house. Parents or emergency contacts will immediately be called to pick up their children. Staff members will remain with their children until all have been picked up. No children or staff will re-enter the building until it is deemed safe and secure by emergency response personnel. If teachers determine that sheltering in place is the safest and best option, teachers and children will go inside the building to the front hallway outside of the large motor activity room and remain there until emergency personnel arrive.

For larger crisis, and if it is safe to do so, children and staff will evacuate to the nearest designated emergency town shelter, The Bennet Center located at Gordon College, 255 Grapevine Rd, Wenham, MA 01984. In the event of an evacuation, the Director or her designee would contact the Wenham Fire Department by cell phone. Wenham fire/police would assist in transporting children to the emergency town shelter. At that point children and staff will be included in the Town of Wenham Emergency Response Plan coordinated by the Fire Department. Parents will be notified by the Director or her designee.
Lockdown (Silent Safety Drill)

- An announcement will be made 3 times: “This is a lockdown. Secure your space.” If out on trails, lead students to building.
- Teachers gather all students in immediate area into the building to gather quietly in the hall in front of the large motor activity room.
- Lock all doors, if possible.
- Pull down shades, turn off lights.
- Situate students away from windows and doors on the floor and keep them quiet.
- Secure student information binder and take attendance.
- Do not open door or allow anyone to leave unless told by the Director or police.

Shelter in Place

- An announcement will be made 3 times: “We are having a shelter in place. Please stay inside the building.”
- Teachers gather any students who are outside the classroom or building and bring into the school to gather in the indoor hallway.
- Close all windows and lock outside doors.
- Proceed as normal without going outside until notified by the Director.

Severe Weather

- An announcement will be made 3 times: “Severe weather. Please go immediately into your classroom.”
- Gather any students and staff who are outside the classroom or building and bring indoors.

Missing Child

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff will ask children to stand with their designated teacher and attendance will be taken to ensure that no other child is missing. If outdoors, children are taken back to the main building.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, bathrooms, etc. but does not search beyond that until additional help arrives. Staff will use field radios or cell phones to communicate with each other.
- Director will call 911 to notify Wenham Police; log time called and provide student information and photo.
- Director will contact parents or guardians of student.
- The Pre-school Director contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- The Pre-school Director contacts Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary and reports the incident.
- One teacher stays with group, one teacher looks for child, and the Director meets police and parents, until additional support arrives and/or child is found.
- The incident is documented. Incident report is sent home to child’s family, signed by parents, and filed in child’s file. Incident report is also filed with Marlene Smith in Mass Audubon’s business office.
Emergency Health Care Procedures

Plan for Injury Prevention

To prevent injury and to ensure a safe environment, the staff member who opens each classroom is responsible upon arrival each day for monitoring the environment and for the removal of any hazards. Any needed repairs or unsafe conditions should be reported to the Director. Electrical outlets will be covered when not in use and window shade cords will be fastened out of reach of children. The Director and staff will monitor the outdoor trails and play areas and remove any hazards.

No smoking is allowed on the premises. Toxic substances, sharp objects, matches and other hazardous objects will be stored out of the reach of children.

Children are asked to hold hands with a buddy, parent or teacher when crossing the parking lot.

A first aid kit and emergency contacts and telephone numbers for the children will be taken on all walks and field trips.

Staff Medical Training

All Ipswich River Nature Preschool staff is certified in CPR and First Aid. Only staff certified in CPR and First Aid will administer first aid. All staff is trained in Emergency, Health and Safety guidelines. Ipswich River Nature Preschool staff members are oriented to all areas, as well as all the rules and safety regulations pertaining to these areas.

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 staff when they are out on the trails. Larger kits and additional equipment are located in the large preschool classroom.
- Parents will be notified by the Preschool staff of all minor injuries by e-mail and at dismissal. Parents will also receive a copy of incident reports.

Serious injuries

- Staff will not move seriously injured persons.
- Staff will call the Wenham 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 child in the ambulance, and will stay with the child until a parent or guardian arrives.
- The child’s file will be taken, including permission forms and insurance information.
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 under direct supervision of a teacher. The preschooler will be provided with books, snack and beverage if he/she should desire them. Staff will phone the child’s family to inform him/her 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, staff will call the parents/guardians and ask them to pick up their child immediately. Because outdoor activity is the focus of our program, children need to be well enough to spend time outside when they come to school.

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 of 100.4 degrees  
- Earache  
- Vomiting  
- Red eyes with discharge  
- Pain accompanied by redness/fever  
- Skin eruptions  
- Sore throat, Continuous Cough  
- Unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or other signs  
- Of serious illness

Children with a viral infection will be allowed to return when their fever returns to normal. Children with bacterial infections will be allowed back after 24 hours on antibiotics or after time period designated by a pediatrician.

THE CHILD MUST REMAIN OUT OF SCHOOL FOR 24 HOURS FOLLOWING BEING SENT HOME FOR A FEVER!

Plan for Infectious Diseases

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

The Preschool Director will contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health immediately 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. The Preschool Director must report all serious injuries and treatments (i.e., stitches) requiring a visit to a physician’s office or the hospital to the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, within 3 business days of the occurrence using the EEC Injury Report Form. Included in this report will be the hospital report (if applicable), and copies of the First Aid cards for staff involved. A copy of this report will also be provided to the parent and placed in the child’s file, in addition to being entered into the Central Log.

If parents have any concerns regarding the child’s health, please feel free to discuss them with The Ipswich Nature Preschool Staff or the Preschool Director.

Ticks
Lyme disease is the most commonly reported tick-borne disease in Massachusetts. By learning how to limit their exposure to deer ticks, children can reduce their risk of infection. The deer tick, which is very small, carries the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. Deer ticks go through three life stages as they develop: larva, nymph, and adult. Nymphs and adults can transmit Lyme disease, while larvae cannot. Nymphs are approximately the size of a poppy seed, and adults are about the size of a sesame seed. American dog ticks do not carry Lyme disease; however, they do carry other less common diseases, so they should be avoided as well.

Ticks usually live in brushy or wooded areas. They can be active at any time of the year when the temperature is above freezing. Usually, a tick must be attached to someone for at least 24 hours to be likely to transmit Lyme disease. Not all ticks carry the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. The deer tick, which is very small, can carry the bacteria. Early Lyme disease has symptoms that usually occur between 3 and 30 days after a tick bite. A person infected with Lyme disease may get an expanding rash that looks like a bull’s eye, but this is not always the case. They may also experience flu-like symptoms such as fever, fatigue or aching muscles. Lyme disease can be treated effectively with antibiotics. People should contact their doctor if they experience any of the symptoms listed above, especially if associated with recent tick exposure. It is important that treatment be started early. Other tick borne diseases may have similar or different symptoms and need to be treated promptly.

At Ipswich River Nature Preschool we:

- Stick to main pathways or the center of trails when hiking
- Mow field at least bi-weekly, spread wood chips and rake leaf litter in outdoor play area
- Visually check children for ticks after time outdoors
- Help children dress to avoid ticks by wearing long-sleeved light colored shirts and long pants tucked into socks and a hat. This helps keep ticks away from skin and makes them easier to see. Please dress your child with socks that stay over pants or boots every day!
- If we find a tick embedded on a child we will call the parent, remove the tick if needed, and document the incident. If possible, we will also save the tick for identification. An Incident Report will be completed and a copy faxed to Marlene Smith in Mass Audubon’s Business Office.

Individuals who are concerned about exposures to chemicals should use the lowest concentration of DEET (not above 15% on children) that provides protection for the length of time they will be exposed to ticks or use bug repellants of their choice. Another option for tick protection during peak tick months in fall and spring is the use of permethrin treated clothing. The concentration of permethrin used to treat clothing (good for 70 washings!) is low enough to be found safe for use with children by the EPA. [https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/repellent-treated-clothing](https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/repellent-treated-clothing). Permethrin treated clothing can be purchased online or clothing can be sent to Insect Shield for treatment. [http://www.tickencounter.org/prevention/insect_shield_your_own_clothes](http://www.tickencounter.org/prevention/insect_shield_your_own_clothes).

The single most important thing that can be done to prevent Lyme disease (and other diseases spread by ticks) is for parents to check their child’s body for ticks every day after coming in from brushy or wooded areas. Ticks most often attach in the armpits, hairline, groin, legs, thighs, or in and behind the ears. Ticks are small, but they can be seen and felt on the skin. Ticks should be removed as soon as possible using a pair of fine point tweezers, grabbing the tick as close to the skin as possible, and pulling straight out with firm and steady pressure. Alcohol, petroleum jelly, or a hot match should never be used to remove a tick. Our goal is to help children stay healthy and still enjoy our time outdoors in nature!

For more information:
Additional tick control resources can be found in the tick section of the health care policy notebook posted in the parent information area and on these sites:
Massachusetts Department of Public Health [http://www.mass.gov/dph/tick](http://www.mass.gov/dph/tick)

Controlling Infection

Hand washing
Children are encouraged to wash their hands at the beginning of the day before signing in, after coughing, sneezing or touching their mouths or noses and before eating and after the using the bathroom, hand sanitizer is used when the sink is unavailable.

Sneezing and Coughing
Please encourage your child to sneeze and cough into their bent elbow to help control the spread of germs. Tissues are also located in the classrooms and carried in the backpack during walks.

Inhalers and EpiPens
Inhalers and EpiPens are required at the preschool every day if these medications are listed on the child’s physical. 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. The Ipswich River Nature Preschool collaborates with a local, independent Health Care Consultant as required by Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

Sunscreen and Bug Spray

_Ipswich River Nature Preschool_ does not supply topical non-medical solutions such as sunscreen or bug spray, so parents should supply their own if necessary. We recommend that parents apply these in the morning before school and teachers will re-apply sunscreen and insect repellant (on clothing only) if necessary. An effective repellent applied before school should last until 12:00 pick up! Repellants and sunscreens must be in the original containers, with a label indicating the name and age of your child and directions for application. (See p.22)
Plan for Diapering and Toileting

Children who are not toilet trained or are in the process of becoming toilet trained are admitted to our program. In our experience, even children who are trained have occasional accidents. When this happens, the process of cleaning up and changing clothes is handled in a matter of fact way that does not shame, humiliate or embarrass the child. Parents and teachers will maintain communication about children’s progress with this developmental milestone. If appropriate, please dress your child in diapers, not Pull-Ups to make assisting your child cleaner, faster and easier. Soiled clothing will also be double bagged and sent home. All children will be reminded to use the bathroom after snack and before we head out for a walk. Children are encouraged to use the bathroom as needed throughout the day and will be taken to the bathroom as quickly as possible.

Procedures for Using and Maintaining First Aid Kits

A first aid kit is located in the large classroom. It is stored out of reach of children and marked with a red cross for easy identification.

Portable first aid kits are taken in program backpacks on walks, outdoor play and gardening sessions, and field trips to Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary. These are kept in each classroom. The kit is supplied and maintained by the program director. Staff will notify the director when supplies need to be replaced.

Plan for Mildly Ill Children

Children who are mildly ill may remain in school if they are not contagious (refer to plan for infectious disease) and they can participate in the daily program including outside time.

If a child's condition worsens or, if it is determined that the child poses a threat to the health of the other children, or if the child cannot be cared for by the classroom staff, the Director will contact the child’s parent(s). The parent(s) will be asked to pick up the child. The child will be cared for in a quiet area, a classroom or in the Center's office by a teacher qualified staff member or by the Director until the parent(s) arrive to take the child home.

Any toys, blankets, or mats used by an ill child will be cleaned and disinfected before being used by other children.

Policy for Dispensing Medication (prescription and non-prescription)

The Director at the preschool who is under the professional oversight of the Health Care Consultant will administer prescription or non-prescription medicine. Staff must provide documentation that they have completed the one hour e-training 5 Rights of Medication Administration annually. 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. Please do not send prescription or non-prescription medications in your child’s back pack or lunchbox. Any unused medications will be returned to the child’s parents for proper disposal.
Prescription Medication:
- Must be in the original containers with the pharmacy label (including inhalers, EpiPens)
- Written permission from the family and doctor to administer the medication
- The first dose of medication must be administered at home by the child’s parent

Non-prescription Medication:
- Must be in the original container
- Must have the name of the child on it
- Written permission from the family and doctor to administer the medication

Plan for Meeting Individual Children's Specific Health Needs

During intake, parents will be asked to record any known allergies. This information will be updated yearly. All allergies or other important medical information will be posted in each classroom. Allergies list will be updated as necessary. All staff and substitutes will be kept informed by the Director so that children can be protected from exposure to foods, chemicals, pets or other materials to which they are allergic. Children will only eat the food that they bring from home and are not allowed to share food. Ingredients used in cooking activities will be checked for those that may cause allergic reactions of children in the program and activities will always keep the needs of children with food allergies in mind.

The names of children with allergies that may be life threatening (i.e. - bee stings) will be posted in both classrooms with specific instructions if an occurrence were to happen. The Program Director will be responsible for making sure that staff receives appropriate training to handle emergency allergic reactions.

Transportation Plan

Children will be transported to the Ipswich River Nature Preschool by their parents/guardians or a person pre-authorized by the parent to drop off their child. Parents are encouraged to form carpooling systems, and may call the Ipswich River Nature Preschool staff for assistance with arranging carpooling.

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.
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.

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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**REFERRALS**

*Ipswich River Nature Preschool* 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. This policy is posted with emergency procedures. *Ipswich River Nature Preschool* 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, the 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 *Ipswich River Nature Preschool* concern and prepares 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 *Ipswich River Nature Preschool* 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 *Ipswich River Nature Preschool*.

**Professional Development Support**
Ipswich River Nature Preschool may pursue professional development or any other in-service educator trainings to aid the staff in developing strategies to address particular behaviors.

**Referral Resources**

Early Childhood Partners of Hamilton, Wenham and Manchester provides support for families and children from before birth through school age. They provide access to comprehensive services, free screenings, child development information, and educational opportunities to support you in your role as your child's first teacher. If you have questions about your child’s development or are in need of support services, they can put you in touch with the appropriate community resources.

Lisa Cheney  
Early Childhood Partners/CFCE  
e.cheney@hwschools.net  
978-468-5489

Your town’s public school system is another important resource for special needs evaluations.

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**Termination from Ipswich River Nature Preschool**

**Steps to a Possible Termination**

The Ipswich River Nature Preschool 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.

A child would be terminated from the Ipswich River Nature Preschool only under the following circumstances:

1. When the staff has exhausted all resources and agrees that we are not able to meet the needs of the child as an integral member of the group.
2. When the parents decide that the Ipswich River Nature Preschool does not fit the identified learning needs of their child.

The Ipswich River Nature Preschool 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 the Ipswich River Nature Preschool. The following are the steps leading up to and culminating in termination:

- Face to face meeting with the child’s teacher(s), director, and parents
- Explanatory letter written to parents by director (copy to be retained by Ipswich River Nature Preschool)
- Appropriate “closure” activities and conversations take place in the child's class with peers and teachers to achieve the most positive outcome regarding self-esteem and understanding for all concerned.
*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.

**Suspension:** It is not the *Ipswich River Nature Preschool’s* policy to suspend children for any reason.

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**STAFF ORIENTATION, OBSERVATIONS AND GRIEVENCES WITH STAFF**

**Plan for Staff Orientation**

The Director will meet with the staff during staff orientation days, the week prior to the opening of school, to review all policies and procedures.

**Plan for Staff Observation and Supervision**

The Director will meet with each teacher to discuss two individual teaching goals for the school year. Because the director is also part of the teaching team, she will have many opportunities to informally observe educators. The Director will conduct a formal observation of each educator every other month. Staff will then meet with the Director to discuss progress on goals and the Director's observations of the teacher's interactions with children. Documentation of observations of meetings are kept in each educator's files. The Lead Teacher/Director will follow this observation and evaluation model with her supervisor, the youth education manager at *Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary*.

**Grievances**

Complaints about the preschool (i.e. conflicts with children or a parent/guardian of children in, *Ipswich River* curriculum, schedule, and 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 Youth Education Manager.

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

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**ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY**

*The Ipswich River Nature Preschool* 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 the *Ipswich River Nature Preschool* employees prior to their hiring date. All staff are required to provide a complete work history for the previous five years plus three positive references from non-related persons. Volunteers are never left unmonitored with children. Families should report any suspected staff abuse to the Preschool. For more information on Mass Audubon's extensive policies on child abuse and neglect, please see the Health Care Policy posted in the parent center.
TRANSITIONS

_Ipswich River Nature Preschool_ supports children and families in making a smooth transition to kindergarten or next schools by completing any required information pertaining to the child’s development and sharing this information with other schools or programs as requested by the parent. _Ipswich River Nature Preschool_ makes every effort to become familiar with kindergarten programs in the towns of the families we serve. In order to help children process and prepare for a transition to a new school or new school year, teachers work with the children to create a good-bye book and a meaningful celebration during the final weeks of school.

Materials

“**Often when you think you’re at the end of something, you’re at the beginning of something else.**”

~ _Fred Rogers_

Families are welcome to contribute to our materials collection of beautiful stuff! We can use:
- Cardboard wrapping paper and carpet tubes
- Styrofoam fruit or vegetable trays
- Yarn and string
- Wood scraps, spools
- Tree stumps and tree cookies of all sizes
- Fabric scraps
- Clean white flat sheets
- Wooden dowels, Popsicle Sticks
- Baby food jars
- Old calendars and magazines with nature photos
- Plastic bottle caps
- Plastic squeeze bottles
- White or clear plastic ice cube trays
- Seashells
- Shoe boxes, Greeting card boxes
- Wood clothespins
- Cardboard and clear plastic egg cartons
- Ribbons, wire
- Plastic grocery bags
- Buttons
- Cardboard jewelry boxes, toilet paper rolls
- House plants, divided perennials, vegetable starts
- Gardening trowels and adult sized shovels
- Old CD’s, keys, nuts and bolts
- Baskets without handles
- Measuring cups and measuring spoons
- Wood picture frames
- Envelopes of all sizes