

Busy Beavers Parent Handbook

A Forest Program for 4-5 year olds

Busy Beavers is Beaver Brook's Drop-off Forest Program for 4-5 year olds. Busy Beavers is not a traditional child care program. Instead, it is a program which is focused on nature. For the 2020-2021 School Year Busy Beavers will spend 100% of the class time in the great outdoors!

Mission Statement

By providing preschoolers the opportunity to learn in a rich natural environment, our mission is to help children grow in emotional, physical and social resilience in order to develop families who are strong environmental stewards.

Hours

Busy Beavers is not a full time licensed child care facility. Busy Beavers is an occasional care program.

Class is held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30-11:30.

Health Policy:

- Should you or any household member have any of the following symptoms, we ask you to remain out that week and notify the center.
 - Fever of 100.4 F or higher, now or in the preceding 72 hours (or would have, but have used fever reducing medicine)
 - Cough
 - Sore Throat
 - Muscle Aches
 - Difficulty Breathing
 - New Loss of Taste or Smell
 - Upset stomach

In the interest of limiting the opportunity for transmission, we are taking the following precautionary measures:

Your household must remain out of the program if **any** member of your household has:

- A suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19

Daily Rhythm

8:20-8:40	Arrival (kids should arrive dressed for the weather)
8:40	Welcome Circle
9:00	Hike and Trail Activities
10:00	Potty Break, Snack Prep, Circle Games in the Open Air Barn
10:20	Snack Time
10:40	Play in Natural play space
11:00	Clean up
11:10	Closing Circle in the amphitheater
11:30	Pick up

Drop-off Routine

We recognize that drop-off can be a difficult transition for many children. In order to help all children with this transition, it is helpful to have an organized and consistent routine that we all follow.

- 1. Please park in the back left parking lot behind Maple Hill Farm. We will meet at the large tree at the bottom of the stairs to the barn.**
- 2. Children should arrive dressed for the weather because from the start we will be spending all of the day outdoors.**
- 3. Leave your child's gear bag in the large metal wagon and their well marked water bottle in the red wagon (the red wagon will be taken on our forest hike)**
4. After saying "good-bye" to their grown-up children will be escorted into the garden
5. We will leave on our activities promptly at 8:40 am each week, please arrive on time.

Pick-Up Routine

At 11:30 children will be picked up in the garden. Please remember to visit the Garden Room on your way out to grab your water bottle and gear bag.

Curriculum

The Busy Beaver Forest Program will follow an “Emergent Curriculum” pedagogy. The curriculum will follow the changes of the season as well as the interests of the children in the program. Another important feature of the program would be a focus on “loose parts” play. Loose parts are objects which do not have a specified purpose. Children are able to use them in a great variety of ways to invent their own play.

The teacher to student ratio will be under 1:6 children.

Sick Policy

Due to the “outdoors in all weather” nature of our program, it is important that we all strictly observe the sick child policy. Busy Beavers follows the state requirements with regard to health requirements. Parents will provide health information upon registration. If children have exhibited any of the following symptoms in the past 48 hours it is important that they be kept home: fever over 100.5, vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, lethargy, or rash. If symptoms occur while your child is at Busy Beavers, the parents will be called. Please pick your child up promptly.

Weather

As the saying goes, “there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”. Busy Beavers will go outside for the majority of the school day regardless of snow, rain or wind. We will only stay inside if the weather is dangerous. Dangerous is defined as weather where the wind chill is below 15 degrees, lightning is present or the winds are above 25 mph. In addition if the Hollis

Brookline Public Schools close due to weather or road conditions, we will also close.

Toileting

Participants must be fully toilet-trained.

First Aid

Teachers will have a first aid kit with them at all times. All teachers will have up to date First Aid and CPR certification. Minor injuries such as scrapes and abrasions will be handled by teachers. Teachers will inform parents of injuries and care at the time of pick up or, if deemed to be appropriate, via text message. If emergency care is required, 911 will be called and alerted to the group's location. Office personnel and parents will be contacted as soon as possible.

Gear List

Because your child will be going out in all kinds of weather, it will be *very important* that they have the proper gear. We find that with the proper gear kids can be comfortable, engaged learners in all kinds of weather! Here is what you need:

Face mask (at least 2)

Snow pants: bib-overall type are preferred

Winter coat: well insulated and with a hood

Rain Suit: Oakiwear, Tuffo or Polarn O. Pyret that can fit over your child's winter coat and snow pants. Rain gear is critical! Here in the Northeast cold wet weather can be expected at any time during the year. Wet clothes do not insulate well. Polarn O. Pyret offers Outdoor School participants a 20% discount. Ask your teacher for additional information.

Boots: Tall Bogs, Oakiwear, Mucks or Kamik neoprene waterproof thermal boots -- your child will need to wear these boots to every class (Fall, Winter, Mud season, and Spring).

Base Layer: fleece, or wool or silk-wool blend thermal underwear

Mittens: at least 2 pairs of high wrist or elbow length insulated, waterproof mittens (L-Bows, N'Ice Caps, Snowstoppers, Polarn O. Pyret and Puddlegear are recommended brands). We suggest one pair of rain mittens and at least one pair of snow mittens.

Socks: at least 2 pair calf length thermal socks made of fleece, polyester or wool (one to be worn and one in the gear bag)

Hats: Balaclavas (hood hats) are best as they stay on well and protect the neck and face. Be sure to pack an extra hat in your gear bag.

Storage Tote: you will want some kind of storage for your gear. You'll be taking your gear to and from school each week-- because we know your kids will want to use it in between classes! Make sure to go through the check-list to make sure you have everything each week.

A complete change of clothes

*** note on cotton: cotton is very absorbent and make a poor insulator when wet, therefore it is not a good choice for preschool outdoor gear***

Risky Play

Taking risks and learning to assess one's own abilities is a vitally important skill. In a world of smooth sidewalks and flat level floors, a world of comfortable couches and heat that is pumped into rooms at the perfect temperature, it's all too common for kids to miss out on risky play. But by its very nature, the outdoors provides such opportunities. Busy Beavers will allow children to engage in *reasonable risk*.

Child Development experts have identified 6 types of risky play that children need to experience in order to develop risk assessment skills and good physical coordination.

1. Climbing and playing with heights: Busy Beavers may practice walking on logs, jumping from stumps, and climbing on rocks.
2. Speed: Busy Beavers will have the chance to run and roll down hills, and go sledding when the conditions allow.
3. Tools: We will start with nature's tool (sticks, rocks, branches, etc.) and hope to move on to learning to use hammers and nails in the future.

4. Nature Elements: Water play in the late Spring. We may add learning about campfire safety in the fall.
5. Getting "Lost": Games such as Eagle eye and running ahead to the next "Beaver Pause" sign.
6. Rough and Tumble play-- This last one is currently not actively encouraged due to the risk of COVID 19, however we recognize that it is an important normal child behavior and try to gently redirect the children's play.

Children will be encouraged to think through risks involved in things such as learning to walk on logs or rocks. Children will be supervised at all times and guided through the process of risk assessment. The following questions will be used to help children learn this process (we recommend that parents also used these questions to provide continuity):

1. Why might you want to do this activity? (benefits?)
2. How might we (or nature) get hurt doing this activity? (risks?)
3. How can we keep ourselves, others, and nature be safe doing this activity? (mitigation)

Some risks are, of course, too great for the children to decide on their own. Teachers will conduct risk and hazard assessment prior to the children's arrival each day. Know hazards, those risks which are too great to be assessed by the children will be addressed by the teacher. If you have questions regarding risky play please reach out to staff. We are happy to provide more information and research as well as discuss specific questions.

I, _____, the parent/ or guardian of _____
have read and understand the policies for the Busy Beaver's Forest Program.

Signature _____

Date _____

Phone Number _____