



# Parent Handbook



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## **About Blue Lake Preschool**

**Welcome to Blue Lake Preschool!** Blue Lake Preschool is a board-governed non-profit organization dedicated to enriching the lives of children and their families in the Roaring Fork Valley. The following handbook should answer most of your questions regarding the policies and programs that make Blue Lake Preschool so valuable for families. If you have any questions that are not covered in this handbook, please do not hesitate to speak with the Center Director. We want you to be happy with your decision to choose Blue Lake Preschool as the place for your child to learn and grow!

**Our Mission and Philosophy** Blue Lake Preschool is a quality preschool that is dedicated to nurturing and empowering young children to learn and grow in a safe and challenging environment. We believe in creating a setting for children that will foster positive self-esteem and prepare them for a successful, long-term, educational experience. Studies continually conclude a consistent routine, quality teachers, and lower student-teacher ratios are a strong foundation for providing an enriched classroom environment for our children. We pride ourselves in hiring teachers who are compassionate, enthusiastic, and dedicated to their role as a professional in early childhood education. We provide funding for our teachers to take additional college courses and reserve three in-service days where the school closes to enable teachers to work in their classrooms and attend trainings. Blue Lake Preschool is continually rated by Qualistar and you can find those results as well as helpful information on selecting childcare that is right for your family at Qualistar.org.

### **Goals**

#### **For the Child**

- Maximize our teachers' personal involvement with each child by maintaining a teacher – child ratio lower than published requirements by the state.
- Provide opportunities for interacting with other children and developing social skills.
- Encourage safe appropriate play that contributes to the developmental needs of the child.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful play that will help empower the child to explore their abilities to communicate, investigate their environment, and express themselves.
- Cultivate an appreciation of the natural treasures of the Roaring Fork Valley with local field trips and by inviting local organizations to visit our school.

#### **For the Parent**

- Children will be cared for in safe, nurturing environment by a professional, compassionate, staff.
- We will be available to meet with parents regarding their child's growth and development.
- Support "commuting hours" often necessary for parents in the valley.
- Foster a family atmosphere by joining together for community picnics, carnivals, and local events.

#### **For the Community**

- Participate and involve families in local events.
- Enhance the value of the surrounding communities by providing a high-quality childcare and preschool.
- Contribute to the growth and development of the future citizens of the community.

**Licensing** Blue Lake Preschool is licensed by the State of Colorado. We are inspected regularly to ensure that we meet or exceed health, safety, and other state requirements. Blue Lake Preschool is an equal opportunity provider. We accept applications for admission and employment without regard to race, religion, gender, national origin, color, creed, physical or mental disability, sexual preference, or any other protected status.

## **Age Groups**

***Infants (6 weeks to 18 months) Three teachers for ten children (State ratio = 1:5)***

The infant time period is perhaps the most significant period of development. Children begin learning at birth so we have trained caregivers to assist in this important stage of development. We encourage babies to communicate by playing games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake. Our curriculum supports a child's need to be nurtured and loved by caring adults. Through holding, singing, and talking to your child, we give individualized care and attention that helps develop the foundation for language and learning. Feeding, sleeping, and other activities are all individualized and will compliment your schedule at home.

***Waddlers (12 - 30 months) Two teachers for eight children (State ratio = 1:5)***

The transition from the infant room to the waddler room is one of the most exciting! Children are adjusting to a similar schedule by eating, napping, and playing together. The teachers in the waddler room are great at combining both small and gross motor activities to give the children in this class a variety of activities to stimulate their bodies and minds. The children are able to spend much time outside on the playground and they often get out for walks around the lake.

***Toddlers, (1½ to 3 years) Two teachers for ten children (State ratio = 1:6)***

Our toddler teachers listen and talk with each child and try to anticipate individual needs. There are fun things to see and touch and do. Since children learn through playing and exploring, we provide them with a wide range of activities throughout the day. We provide cooking and art experiences using a large variety of textures and substances. Language, self-help, and potty-training skills develop during this period. Toddler activities also help develop small and large muscle skills.

***Brave Badgers (2 ½ to 4 years) Two teachers for 14 children (State ratio = 1:10)***

We provide a safe environment for the children to have fun, explore their creativity, and make friends. We feel that building self-esteem is vital for them to grow and mature. We encourage this by respecting them as individuals and assisting them in problem solving, self help skills, and effective communication. A child may join this room even if they are not potty trained. We provide encouragement through consistency and positive reinforcement. We believe that the classroom belongs to the children and should be structured in a way that caters to their needs and interests. Science, art, dramatic play, math & manipulatives, blocks, music, and language centers are permanently set up in the classroom. The children are free to move around and explore their interests without time limitations. We want your child to look forward to and feel confident about being a part of our big, exciting world.

***Rockin' Raccoons (4 to Kindergarten) Two teachers for 16 children (State ratio = 1:12)***

The Pre-Kindergarten room provides an environment that helps children prepare for kindergarten emotionally, socially, and intellectually. We stress cooperation and respect for one another, and we practice making good decisions and taking responsibility for our actions. We continue to promote play, songs, and art as a way to learn. We introduce letters and numbers, and plan games and art projects related to them. We help students write their names and recognize letter sounds. During the year we go on many exciting field trips including the library, ACES, the dentist's office, the fire station, and Rock Bottom Ranch.

***BLAST (After School / Vacation Days / Summer Camp)***

Children who attend elementary school can take the bus to Blue Lake after school — we have our own buses that we use to pick up the children from school. We also offer on a sign-up basis, the option to attend BLPS during the public school holidays that we are open. The goal of our after school program is to enrich and complement your child's school day experience. Our emphasis is on group and interpersonal skills. We strive to encourage children to use cooperation and approach all situations with constructive dialogue and mutual respect. In the summer we offer a day camp that includes swimming, rock climbing, nature walks at ACES, and other various outdoor activities. We also care for this group during many of the public school vacations with exciting and fun field trips and activities such as making pizza, making snowmen, and snow forts. It is a great opportunity for your child to make friends and continue the learning process while they are out of school.

## **Classroom Policies**

**Discipline** Learning self-control is just a normal part of growing up. We believe that it is our responsibility to help all children learn to resolve their own conflicts. We encourage them to use their words to let another child know how they feel. A teacher will gently guide the child through this process so that it is in the child's power to resolve the situation, building on their abilities to interact socially. Most situations can be handled by redirecting a child to another, more appropriate activity. This approach is called positive redirection. Our discipline policy is for the purpose of learning and does not involve corporal or physical punishment.

**Daily Schedules** Our schedules are meant to be a guide and are flexible. While we keep the routine the same, times may vary depending on the interests of the children. We stay with an activity for as long as it works for the group. All activities are planned to accommodate the range of abilities and ages in a particular room. Movies are reserved for rare special occasions only.

**Potty Training** To get through this phase in development, teamwork is the key. We'll make every effort to coordinate our program with the one you start at home. We will not start any toilet training until you decide the time is right. (Most children will start around two years of age.) When you do decide we will ask that you supply us with an ample amount of clothing for when accidents do happen. If your child has just started toilet training, he or she may still wear a diaper at rest time.

**Rest Time** After hours of exciting, educational, and fun activities your child needs rest. The State mandates a rest time of at least one hour. We provide the cot and a sheet. We ask that you bring in a labeled blanket from home and wash it every week.

**Outside Play Time** Children are always learning. We consider the outdoors an extension of our classroom. Outdoor spaces and equipment are designed for active play and exploration to provide your child with good exercise, fresh air, and different learning activities. Even when we head outside, supervision is a top priority. Please note that sunscreen must be authorized and will be provided by BLPS.

**Personal Items** At Blue Lake Preschool your child will be playing with fun, educational toys every day. Therefore, we ask you to keep your child's toys or personal items at home for fear of loss or breakage. Occasionally there are "show and tell" and sharing times that when your child can bring in an item as long as it is safe and it is labeled with his or her name. If your child is missing an item, please notify us immediately. Although we'll be more than happy to look, we cannot be held responsible for lost or damaged items. Items that pose a real or imaginary danger to other children are not allowed at school at any time. We also request that toy guns, swords, and action toys and figures be left at home as they may promote aggressive behavior.

**Field Trips and Adventures** Throughout the year (and almost daily in the summer) we plan field trips for the older classes and invite specialists into the school for younger classes. Trips have included adventures to the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies in Aspen, Rock Bottom Ranch, the Basalt Library, the Hot Springs Pool, ice skating and hockey at the ARC, the Fiorest Service, and the fish hatchery just to name a few! School visits include a weekly Zumba class, the Eagle County Sheriff, and visits from ACES and the Roaring Fork Conservatory. We will use our buses and RFTA to get to these destinations, and often for the kids, the bus trip is as exciting as the destination! For all trips, parents will be asked to sign a permission slip to keep on file. All field trips will be posted ahead of time to enable parents to prepare. If a child arrives after their group has left the school, the parent may bring the child to the location of the group. In case of emergency teachers will administer first aid and will immediately call for assistance. Teachers carry cell-phones for this reason. Many of these activities require an additional, nominal fee which will be charged to your account. We post notices to announce this, and post the schedule for these visits in our monthly newsletter. If you want your child to join these trips but are concerned about the extra costs, please contact the director.

## **Parental Involvement**

***Parent and Teacher Partnership*** As part of our promise to provide the kind of care and education you want for your child, we feel you should be involved every step of the way. That's why we encourage you to visit anytime and join us for field trips or special family events at the preschool. In addition to your initial visit and meetings at your request, we schedule parent teacher conferences every year so that we can discuss your child's progress with you. We publish a monthly newsletter with school news and events that are happening within the center. Please check our parent boards for lesson plans, daily schedules, and other important classroom and school information. Infants, Waddlers, and Toddlers receive individualized daily reports that explain how your child ate and slept during the day and what activities they did. Being an active, involved parent in your child's school is a commitment that pays off time and again!

***Clothing*** Because a full day at Blue Lake can include activities such as singing, painting, dancing, eating, and playing, both indoors and outside, your child should wear comfortable, washable clothes, as well as rubber-soled and closed-toe shoes while at school. Even during the winter we try to get outside as much as possible. On snowy days we ask that you provide appropriate snow clothes for your child. We also ask that you bring a change of clothes, just in case. To avoid losing a favorite sweater or jacket, we ask that you label all clothing that might be taken off or changed during the day.

***Religion*** We provide care for children from families with various backgrounds and beliefs. For this reason, we do not teach religious doctrine, but we have designed our learning programs to teach love, caring, and respect for others no matter what their religious affiliation.

***Parent Volunteer Hours*** In order to provide a quality program we need the help of the entire school community. We require that each family contribute a **minimum** of 16 hours of volunteer time per school year. Eight hours must be completed by the end of February and the additional eight by the end of August, or when you leave for the summer. With this assistance we have rebuilt playgrounds, run successful fundraisers, and made numerous improvements to the preschool that would have otherwise been impossible. We keep an ongoing list of volunteer opportunities or we invite you to be creative and suggest some of your own ideas. Perhaps you can arrange a field trip to your office (doctors, dentists, construction sites, fire station, etc.) or come and teach a class about a hobby of yours. Please contact the director with your ideas and/or if you aren't sure what opportunities exist. If you are unable to fulfill your volunteer hours, you will be charged a fee for each hour that is not completed. Any unfinished hours will be billed on your March and August invoices.

***Your Donations are Tax-Exempt!*** Blue Lake Preschool is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 educational organization. This means contributions made by you, your extended family, and your work place qualifies for a standard non-profit tax deduction. Please consider donating to our school and/or asking your employer to match any donations you make. Your child will benefit directly.

## **Health and Hygiene**

***Meals and Snacks*** Blue Lake Preschool provides breakfast between 7:30 and 8:30 in the morning. We also provide two nutritious snacks, morning and afternoon. We ask that you pack your child a healthy lunch that is kept cool in a thermal lunchbox with an icepack. We ask that you provide healthy food that addresses a child's nutritional requirements: plenty of protein, vegetables, and fruit. Please avoid candy and soda as these items will not be served at school. Please notify us of any food allergies your child may have. We will gladly work with you to try to accommodate your child's needs. If your child is an infant or waddler who is not yet ready for table food we ask that you supply all appropriate food until your child is ready for our breakfasts and snacks.

***Sick Children*** The health of our students is of great importance to us. To help reduce the spread of illness to other children, sick children (with diarrhea, or fever, for example) may not be brought to school. When you do keep your child at home please notify us. If your child becomes ill while at school we will call you and ask you to him/her up within the hour. In the event of a serious accident or illness, an ambulance may be called. To ensure your child's safety, we keep a file of names, addresses, and phone numbers of only those people you have authorized to pick up your child. In addition, we will also ask you to supply names and numbers of your family doctor and preferred hospital.

***Contagious Diseases*** Please let us know if your child has been exposed to any communicable diseases (strep throat, chicken pox, measles, mumps, pink eye, RSV, etc.) Exposure to communicable diseases must be posted to inform other parents and outbreaks must be reported to the Center for Disease Control. If a child is absent because of a contagious disease, he or she may not return to school without approval from a physician indicating that they are no longer contagious and are able to participate in our daily activities. The Center for Disease Control has released guidelines for vaccinating young children. We support the American Academy of Pediatrics in recommending you follow their guidelines regarding child immunizations. We will ask for an immunization record upon enrollment and every year thereafter.

***Administering Medication*** Your child may return to school as soon as your doctor determines that they are no longer contagious and are able to participate in our daily activities. Please ask for a Medication Release form if you would like us to administer medication to your child. **All medication, whether prescription or over the counter, must have a signed medication authorization from both your child's physician and the parent. We must also have a care plan in place with our nurse consultant before any medication can be given.** All medication administered by our staff must be in its original container. The medication authorization form will be completed when your child's medication is administered. Medication must be kept in a locked container.

***Children with Disabilities*** We have had some rewarding experiences integrating special needs children in our program. It is our policy to accept children in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), its regulations, and any other applicable local, state, and federal laws pertaining to the provision of services to those with disabilities. We review each child's situation on a case-by-case basis. Please discuss your child's needs with the director prior to enrollment.

***Hand Washing*** We want to help teach your child valuable personal skills. We require hand washing upon arrival at school, before eating, after bathroom visits, and at other appropriate times during the day. It is best for your child if this is practiced at home too!

## **Safety**

***Signing In and Out*** When bringing your child in each morning we require you to sign in. You must personally take your child to their teacher in their classroom. We will release your child only to parents or guardians with legal custody or persons over the age of 18 who are designated on your enrollment information. When you come to pick up your child in the afternoon we again ask you to sign out. Adults other than parents will be required to show ID. If you arrive after closing time we do charge a late pick up fee. If you are more than one hour late and we are unable to reach an emergency contact the police and child protective services will be called. Daily reminders are posted in the entrance, and notices and newsletters are available at the sign-in table. Please read the posted information as it pertains to the daily functions at school.

***Safe Release of Children*** Once enrolled at Blue Lake Preschool you will be given a code to enter the preschool. We ask that you do not give this code to any other person that may be picking up your child. Once that person rings the doorbell we will check their ID, have them sign your child out, and assist them in getting your child's belongings gathered. No child will be permitted to leave the preschool without an authorized adult. To ensure that Blue Lake Preschool is in compliance with any court orders pertaining to the custody of your child, we require a certified copy of a custody order. We keep this information confidential and solely for the safety of your child. If a new custody order is issued or if a restraining order has been issued against either parent, we will also need that information on file. It is our policy to remain neutral in all custody matters and we may not serve as a visitation site.

***Procedure for Identifying Location of Children*** An accurate attendance sheet is kept throughout the day. A count of the children in each class is made at regular intervals. If a child is lost or missing the staff responsible will immediately inform the Director. If the child is not located within a few minutes the police will be called and the parents will be notified.

***In Case of an Accident*** We take every precaution to make sure your child is safe. Our ratios are below state regulations and we do frequent inspections and maintenance of the building, the playground, and our equipment. But because kids will be kids, accidents may happen. When they do, and we feel medical attention is necessary, we will call you or your designated contact. We recommend you call your health insurance company for reimbursement of the related medical costs. Just in case, we also provide supplemental accident insurance to reimburse you for any out-of-pocket expenses that are not covered by your medical or dental insurance.

***Community Disaster Policy*** To prepare for fire, severe weather, or disaster evacuation, we have regular drills and practices so your child can react in a safe and orderly manner. If an actual emergency requires evacuation of our center, we will notify you as soon as the children are safe. If the decision is made to cancel school due to weather (or any other unseen forces) local television and radio stations will be asked to announce Blue Lake's closure. Notification of these conditions will be reported by 6:00 a.m. the morning of the closure. Channel 9 news station will display our information on the bottom of their screen during the morning news and radio station KMTS 99.1 will make an announcement for us. We follow decisions made by the Roaring Fork School District for snow day closures. You can find immediate information on their closures by calling their Snow Line, 384-6075, at any time to hear a message in both English and Spanish.

## **Fee Policies**

In our effort to continue to provide the kind of care and education you want for your child, we are constantly improving our facilities and resources. For this reason, tuition fees are reviewed annually and are usually increased in the fall. Our fees and applicable rules are as follows:

**Registration Fee** A \$100.00 registration fee is collected prior to enrollment. If you choose not to attend Blue Lake Preschool we cannot refund the fee, as this money has been used to hold a space in a classroom.

**Tuition Fees** Tuition is due in advance, by the month. Monthly statements are emailed at the end of the previous month and tuition is due by the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. If you would like to pay bi-monthly arrangements must be made in advance with the director. Bi-monthly tuition is paid by the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

**Vacations, Sick Days, & Absences** If your child is out for any reason your normal tuition will still be charged. We do ask that you notify us by 8:00 in the morning if your child will not be at school for the day.

**Tuition Assistance** Tuition aid is available for residents through your local county. Blue Lake Preschool, with assistance from various Foundations, also offers a tuition assistance program. Please contact the director for information.

**Holiday Schedule** The following holidays are the days we are officially closed. If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, it will be observed on Friday or Monday. However you spend these days, we wish your family the best and safest of times: New Year's Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the Friday after, Christmas Eve through New Year's Day (families are not charged for this week), 3 Teacher In-Service Days to be announced.

**Late Pick-up Charge** Our hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30am to 5:30pm. Please make arrangements for your child to be picked up if you are unable to get to school in time. Any parent arriving after 5:30pm will be charged a late fee of \$5.00. An additional charge of \$1.00 for every minute after 5:35pm will be added. We request you pay the teacher who cared for your child directly at the time of pick-up.

**Maintaining a Positive Environment for all Children** Because we provide care and education in a group setting, we must be concerned for the welfare and safety of all our children and staff. When a particular child's or parent's behavior threatens the safety of or becomes abusive towards other children, we may disenroll the child immediately. Our priority is to provide a positive, cohesive group environment for all children.

**Reporting Personal Issues** Most problems are resolved by consensus through discussions with the director and any concerned parties. If you have a concern about your child and/or anything related to the operations of the school, please talk immediately with the director. If you are not able to resolve your concern, write a description of the grievance and request to present it to the board. The board will make every effort to resolve the issue, and reserves the right to arrange a meeting with a mediator chosen by the board. In this event, both parties will agree to abide by the decision of the mediator.

*Choosing a child care center is an important decision. Thank you for taking the time to visit Blue Lake Preschool and becoming familiar with our philosophy, goals, and policies. If you have any further questions about our program please contact the director or assistant director at the information below.*

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