



Step Ahead

KINDERGARTEN & PRESCHOOL

Step Ahead Kindergarten and Preschool

12 Elm Street

Braintree, MA 02184

stepaheadkp@gmail.com

Tax ID # 81-2770823

Parent information sheet. Please keep for future reference.

Welcome to Step Ahead Kindergarten and Preschool. The first day of school will be on Monday, September 9, 2024. **Please make sure all enrollment forms and physicals are submitted by July 1, 2024.** Please make sure all forms are filled out completely and signed. We must have all forms and a copy of your child's current physical and immunizations or they will not be allowed to begin school until we have them on file. **Tuition payment #1 is due, in full, by July 1, 2024. Failure to submit payment on or before July 1, 2024 will result in your child being placed on the waiting list for an available opening.**

Our school hours are as follows:

Full day: 8:00 am- 2:20 pm

Extended day: 7:30 am- 5:00 pm

Administration

Director and Administrator: Nancy Coose

Assistant Director: Samantha Coose

Teachers: Nancy Coose, Samantha Coose, & Marissa Varroso-Coose

Assistant Teachers: Sharon Joyce, Vanessa Lewis, Meg Linskey & Catherine O'Sullivan

All staff members are required to pass a Background Record Check which includes a CORI, SORI & fingerprints

Step Ahead is licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care

1250 Hancock Street

Quincy, MA 02169

617-472-2881

Arrivals, Dismissals and Recess

Arrival time for students is 8:00 am, extended day students may arrive at 7:30 am. Students should not arrive to school later than 8:30 am unless authorized by the director. All students must be accompanied into the classroom by an adult. Coats and backpacks may be hung on the hooks in the hall nearest to the classroom. All students are dismissed from either their classroom, or from the outside play yard to an adult that is authorized on their release form. If an adult is not listed, a letter from the parent authorizing release is mandatory. The adult must present a picture identification, and the child must be familiar with this person. We do try to dismiss from the play yard, weather permitting. **Parents must wait outside the play yard for staff to dismiss their child to them safely. The parking lot is a busy area at dismissal time. Parents are required to hold their child's hand while crossing the parking lot to their vehicle.**

Snack

Children must bring a morning snack from home. Please send a light, nutritious, peanut-free snack. The extended day children will receive a snack and drink in the afternoon. The snack consists of crackers, pretzels, fruits and vegetables to name a few. If you would like to send in a snack to celebrate a special occasion at school, please speak to your child's teacher.

Lunch

All children will need to bring a lunch and a drink from home. Please make sure to pack utensils that may be required. Please try to avoid an abundance of sweet snacks. Fruits of any variety, vegetables, cheese snacks, pretzels, salads or low sugar treats make good substitutions. Packing one food from the five food groups makes for a balanced and nutritious lunch. We do not allow heat up lunches- thermoses work well to keep food warm. **Please do not send your child with "peanut" products as we try to accommodate those with allergies.**

Rest Time

We offer quiet time/rest activities to all our students. If you would like your child to have a longer, teacher-supervised rest, please let us know. Children may bring a blanket from home at the beginning of each week. Blankets need to be taken home at the end of the week to be laundered.

Student Clothing

Each student must keep a complete change of clothes in their backpack at all times. If your child needs to change clothes, and you do not have an extra set, we will call you to pick them up. Please be sure that all clothing is labeled with your child's name. We do go outside for recess every day, weather permitting. Your child will need to have suitable clothing for the weather conditions.

Transportation

Step Ahead does not provide transportation to or from school. Parents are responsible for bringing their children to and from the program. **All children must arrive and depart from the program in mandated safety seats for their age and size as required by the State of Massachusetts.** Step Ahead provides transportation only for field trips in the form of a school bus. Parents will be notified in advance when students will be taken off the premises.

Toileting Plan

All children are taken to use the bathroom at regular times and on an as needed basis. If your child is in the process of being toilet trained, but wears a pull-up or diaper, **please have two changes of clothing and diapering necessities in their backpack at all times.** Our staff, for this use, will maintain a clean, safe and private area. After the change, the area will be disinfected and both the child and staff member will wash their hands with liquid soap and warm water.

Illness

If your child is sick with any contagious illness, please keep him/her at home. If your child becomes ill during the school day, a parent or other authorized adult will be contacted. A child absent with a communicable disease requires a note from their doctor upon their return to school. A child who has vomited, has diarrhea or a temperature above 100 degrees must be kept home for at least 24 hours. Also, a child must be symptom free, **without medication**, before returning to school. **Children who have had a close contact exposure to a Covid 19 positive individual and/or test positive for Covid 19 will be required to follow the most current CDC testing and/or quarantine protocols recommended at that time.**

Progress Reports

Progress reports will be distributed to each student twice per year. The first report will be sent home in January, and the final report will be sent home in June. Parents are welcome to schedule a meeting with their child's teacher to discuss the report. Parents are also welcome to schedule an appointment any time of year to discuss issues or concerns they may have.

Weather Related School Cancellations

Step Ahead is closed for weather related issues when Braintree Public Schools are closed. Step Ahead is open when there is a delayed opening in Braintree Public Schools, but we may also have a delay in opening. If you are unsure on weather related issues, please feel free to call the school for a recorded message. The school phone number is 781-356-8318. Information will also be sent via email, on our Facebook page and is also available on most of the local news networks.

Intake Procedures

Step Ahead notifies the public through ads, social media and word of mouth. An annual open house is held in January for all prospective parents and students. This allows anyone interested in the program to visit the facility, meet the staff and have any questions answered. Parents are also welcome, and encouraged, to visit the facility at their convenience. Upon completion of the registration form and registration fee, the parent will be given a packet

with forms and policies that will complete the child's registration. Prior to the start of the school year, Step Ahead will hold an orientation for all incoming students. Orientation will be held on Thursday, September 7, 2023.

Discrimination

Step Ahead will not discriminate on the basis of the following: physical and/or mental disabilities, toileting status, race, religion, national origin, cultural heritage, political belief, sexual preference or marital status.

Tuition

Registration fees and tuition are non-refundable.

Tuition is to be paid in 10 monthly installments. Yearly tuition fees are divided into 10 payments due on the first of each month. Payment #1, which is non-refundable, is due on or before July 1, 2024. **Failure to submit payment, in full, by July 1, 2024 will result in your child being placed on the waiting list for an available spot.** Tuition that is 5 or more days late will be assessed a \$20.00 late fee. Tuition that is 7 or more days late will be subject to suspension from the program until an acceptable payment plan is agreed upon with the director. Tuition may be paid by cash, money order or personal check. Returned checks will be charged a fee of \$25.00.

If you are leaving the program before the culmination of the school year, you must give a 30 day notice of intent to leave. You are also responsible for paying the tuition during the 30 day notice.

Tuition must be paid during all absences. The only vacations for which tuition is not paid are outlined in the school vacation schedule. **If you leave for an extended absence, such as a family vacation, tuition must be paid.** If tuition is not paid, your child will not be allowed to return to school until it is paid in full and if space is available. Spots will not be held for extended absences unless tuition is paid in advance.

We staff our classrooms according to the number of students enrolled each day. Once you have chosen your schedule, you may not delete or change any of your days. You may add a day with the consent of the director if there is availability. If a holiday/snow day falls on the day your child is scheduled to attend school, you may not exchange it for another day.

The one-time registration fee applies to all students that complete the school year. Disruption of the school year nullifies the one-time registration fee. Students that leave the program during the school year and return the following year will be charged an additional registration fee.

Please note: There is no reimbursement or substituting of days for illness, family vacations or snow days. If Step Ahead is required to close due to unforeseen circumstances (i.e. Covid 19 exposures and/or transmissions), tuition must be paid. If Step Ahead is required to close by the State of Massachusetts for an extended period of time due to unforeseen circumstances (i.e. Covid 19), tuition must be paid for the first 30 days of closure.

Early Drop Off & Late Pick Up

Early drop off and late pick up fees will be assessed to all families when applicable. Our full day students are dismissed at 2:20 and our extended day session ends at 5:00 pm. If you are going to be late, it is imperative that we receive a phone call so that we may prepare the child. Early drop off and 5:00 pick up are available on an as needed basis as well.

Early Drop Off & Late Pick Up Fees

Early drop off (7:30-8:00) is \$5.00 per morning.

Late pick up for full day program (until 3:00) is \$5.00 per day; after 3:00 (until 5:00) is \$25.00 per day.

After 5:00 pm there is a \$30.00 per quarter hour (15 minutes) fee or any fraction thereof for late pick up.

*****Three (3) or more late pick ups after 5:00 may be subject to removal from the program at the discretion of the Director*****

Additional Lunches

Pizza lunch is offered each Friday for a cost of \$5.00. Pizza lunch includes 2 slices of pizza, dessert and a drink. Pizza lunch is optional. Children who opt to bring their own lunch from home are always welcome to do so.

Avoidance of Termination

Before dismissing a child from the program, Step Ahead shall take the following steps: Meet with the parents to discuss options other than suspension or termination that will allow the child to remain in the program; offer referral to parents for evaluation, diagnostic or therapeutic services; and pursue options for supportive services to aid the program including consultation and educator training.

If the program dismisses the child, Step Ahead will put in writing the reason(s) for the dismissal and all the steps taken to resolve the issues. A meeting with all parties, including the director, shall be held prior to the termination. When a child is leaving the program voluntarily or involuntarily, the staff shall have a plan to help the student depart with as much comfort as possible.

Step Ahead Schedule

Step Ahead will have the following scheduled closings:

October: Indigenous Peoples Day 10/14/24

November: Veteran's Day 11/11/24

November: Half day 11/27/24 – all children will be dismissed at 11:45 am

November: 11/28-29/24– closed for Thanksgiving break

December : Christmas Show 12/20/24- All children will be dismissed following the show

December: Winter school vacation 12/23/24 through 1/1/25

January: Martin Luther King Day 1/20/25

February: February school vacation 2/17/25 through 2/21/25

April: 4/18/25 Good Friday

April: April school vacation 4/21/25 through 4/25/25

May: Memorial Day 5/26/25

June: Last day of school 6/11/25

Input and Communication Plan For Parents

Parents are welcome to visit Step Ahead whenever they wish. Any input pertaining to either the child or the program is welcome. Progress reports will be issued in January and June. If you wish to have an extended conference with your child's teacher, you may schedule an appointment. All parents shall be kept informed of their child's progress verbally as the year progresses. If significant developments arise during the year, the parent shall be notified immediately either verbally or in writing.

All information in your child's records is privileged and confidential. If you wish to have your child's records released to anyone not directly involved in Step Ahead, written consent must be given. If you wish to obtain your child's records at the end of the year, you may do so upon written request. This request shall not be delayed for more than 2 business days. All parents have the right to request to add or delete information, comments or any other relevant data to the child's records. If this is in conflict with school policy, the parent has the right to a meeting with the licensee to make their objections known. The licensee shall render a decision, in writing, within one week after the conference stating all reasons for the decision. The decision shall be put into effect immediately.

Child Guidance

Child guidance shall be consistent and based on the understanding of the individual needs and development of the child. The licensee shall discipline in a positive manner so as to set limits while building good self esteem and character. Redirecting the child to an acceptable task or activity while speaking in a normal tone and setting limits are acceptable methods used to develop happy and confident children. A child that is unable to curtail unacceptable behavior may be asked to find a quiet spot in order to engage in a structured activity within view of the staff. If the behavior cannot be remedied in this fashion, the parent may be asked to come in for a conference. The following is prohibited:

- (a) Spanking or other corporal punishment of children;
- (b) Subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, abusive treatment including any type of physical hitting inflicted in any manner upon the body, shaking, threats or derogatory remarks;
- (c) Depriving children of outdoor time, meals, or snacks; force feeding children or otherwise making them eat against their will, or in any way using food as a consequence;
- (d) Disciplining a child for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet; forcing a child to remain in soiled clothing or to remain on the toilet, or using any unusual or excessive practices for toileting;
- (e) Confining a child to a swing, high chair, crib, playpen or any other piece of equipment for an extended period of time in lieu of supervision; and
- (f) Excessive time-out. Time out may not exceed one minute for each year of the child's age and must take place within a staff member's view.

Step Ahead supports children in the development of social competence by:

- (a) Promoting interaction and language use among children and between children and adults by talking to and with children frequently;
- (b) Encouraging children to share experiences and ideas;
- (c) Modeling cooperation, problem solving strategies and responsible behavior for children;
- (d) Assisting children in learning social skills such as sharing, taking turns and working together;
- (e) Encouraging children to listen to, help and support each other;
- (f) Providing guidance to assist children in resolving conflicts, finding solutions to problems and making decisions;
- (g) Helping children to understand and respect people different from themselves;
- (h) Helping children to learn to respect each other's possessions and work;
- (i) Helping children to learn effective ways to deal with bullying, teasing or other forms of intolerance.

Notification To Parents

The licensee must inform parents:

- (a) Immediately of any injury which requires medical care beyond minor first aid of any emergency;
- (b) Immediately of any allegation of abuse or neglect involving their child while in the care and custody of the licensee;
- (c) Prior to or as soon as possible following any change in educators;
- (d) At the end of the day regarding any minor first aid administered;
- (e) Whenever a communicable disease or condition has been identified in the program;
- (f) In writing seven days prior to the implementation of any change in program policies or procedures;
- (g) Prior to the introduction of any pets into the program;
- (h) Of the use of herbicides or pesticides prior to their use whenever possible.

Referral Meeting With Parents

The director shall schedule a meeting with the parent(s) to notify them of the school's concerns and will prepare a list of referral references. At the meeting, the director and/or teacher will provide a written or verbal statement including the reason(s) for recommending a referral for additional services, a brief summary of the school's observation related to the referral and any efforts the school has made to accommodate the child's needs. If the director and/or teacher feel that outside services and/or testing need to be considered, Step Ahead will offer instruction, according to the area the parent(s) reside in, on how to accomplish this. Step Ahead will also provide a written letter stating the reason for the referral. If parents next extra support, the school may contact, with the parent's written permission, the referral agency. The teacher and/or director will also be available to accompany the parent(s) to the team evaluation meeting.

Follow Up Referral

The director and/or teacher will, with the permission of the parent(s), contact the agencies and providers involved in the evaluation process. If it is determined that the child is not in need or ineligible to receive services, the school shall re-evaluate every three months to determine if another evaluation is needed.

Transitions Within the School

Transitions after the school year has begun and within Step Ahead may be made after a parent has been notified and agrees to the change. The parent(s), with the agreement of the Lead Teacher and Director, may also make these changes provided:

- (a) The change is discussed with the child;
- (b) The child visits the classroom for a period of time;
- (c) The visits are gradually extended;
- (d) The change is made on a permanent basis;
- (e) There is availability in the classroom to change.

Emergency Preparedness

During any emergency situation, one or all staff members shall carry their cell phones enabling them to notify the fire or police department. Our emergency plan includes:

- (a) All students shall be counted before leaving the building. The staff shall take the current attendance book with them along with emergency contact information for each class.
- (b) All students, with staff supervision, shall meet at the predetermined meeting area outside of the school building.
- (c) Students shall then be counted and verified through the current attendance book.
- (d) All students and staff shall be familiar with the designated evacuation routes posted in each room.
- (e) Communication with parents will be done immediately via a mass email chain. Parents will also be contacted by telephone if not reached by email.
- (f) Students with parents that cannot be reached will stay with one or more staff members.
- (g) All classes will have monthly fire drills.

Power outage: If Step Ahead loses electricity , classroom instruction and activities will proceed with natural light if possible. Parents will be notified if early pick up is necessary.

Loss of heat: Classroom instruction shall continue until the temperature drops below the acceptable temperature of 65 degrees. Parents will be notified if early pick up is necessary.

Running water: If the building loses water and cannot buy enough to supply the students and staff with drinking water and additional water for sanitary purposes, the parents will be notified and children will be dismissed.

Abuse and Neglect

Any form of abuse or neglect while in the care of Step Ahead is strictly prohibited.

Step Ahead and its staff operate the program in ways that protect children from abuse or neglect. Every staff member is a mandated reporter and must make a report to the Department of Children and Families whenever they have reason to believe a child in the program is suffering from serious physical, sexual or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon the child or from neglect, such as malnutrition, no matter where the injury was inflicted or by whom it was inflicted. The Department of Early Education and Care will be notified when a 51A has been filed alleging abuse or neglect. The Department of Early Education and Care will be notified when a report has been filed naming a staff member or person regularly on the child care premises as an alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect.

Signs of abuse:

1. Bruises or welts;
2. Burns;
3. Cuts, tears or scrapes
4. Head injuries

All observations of suspected abuse shall be documented in a notebook and kept on file with the director. The date, time and description of the abuse will be recorded. Any dialogue between the staff and child will be recorded. The staff member will sign the documentation.

If a staff member is accused of abuse or neglect, that staff member shall be removed from direct contact with children and placed on probation until such allegations are cleared.

Policy on Administering Medication

Administering medication shall be avoided if at all possible. If not, the following rules shall be strictly adhered to. Medications, whether they are prescription or non-prescription, shall be administered only with the written authorization from the parent. Prescription medication will require a copy of the prescription label as well as written authorization from the child's physician. **Medications, prescription or non-prescription, will not be administered at school as a first dose. The child must have been administered the medication prior to requesting Step Ahead to do so.**

1. Non-prescription medicines shall be administered with written authorization from the parent(s). A written authorization may also be required from the child's physician stating the dosage and the reason(s) for its use. The statement shall be valid for no more than one year from the date it was issued. You may obtain a medical consent form directly from Step Ahead.

2. Parents must be notified each time the medication is administered and a written record of this must be kept in the child's file.
3. Topical medications, such as sunscreen, petroleum jelly or other ointments, shall be administered with written consent from the parent(s). The staff must have a signed medical consent form listing the topical, non-prescription medication and the reason for its use. The consent form shall be valid for no more than one year from the date it was signed. The medication shall not be used in any other fashion that is contrary to the directions on the original container. Treatment for broken skin will require an authorization from the child's physician.
4. All medications shall be kept labeled in their original container with the child's name, the name of the medication and the directions for its dosage and usage.
5. The licensee shall maintain a written record of the administration of any medication, prescription or non-prescription, including topical medications, for each child. This shall include the date and time of each administration, the dosage, the name of the staff member giving the medication and the name of the child. All authorization shall become part of this file. Staff will also record missed doses, child refusals or errors in giving medication.
6. All medications shall be stored under proper conditions for sanitation, preservation, security and safety. All unused portions shall be returned to the parent(s). Note: any medications that require refrigeration will be stored in the refrigerator in the kitchen.
7. All medications, except for those deemed narcotics, will be kept out of reach of children. Narcotics will be locked up.
8. There must be one staff member trained and up to date in CPR/First Aid present at all times the children are in the care of Step Ahead.
9. One staff member must be present at all times and trained in medication administration. Each person who administers medications, including epinephrine auto-injectors, must be trained by a licensed health care professional and demonstrate, annually, to the satisfaction of the trainer, competency in the administrations of such medications. The licensee must ensure that staff members, including those that do not administer medications, receive training in recognizing the side effects of generic medications and adverse interactions among various medications and potential side effects of specific medications being administered in the group.

For allergies requiring and Epi-Pen we must have the following:

1. A medication consent form signed by the parent(s).
2. An Individual Health Care Plan filled out and signed by the parent and the child's physician.
3. An Epi-Pen in its original packaging with the prescription label/expiration date on it.
4. An Allergy Action Plan from the child's physician.

For allergies requiring an over the counter antihistamine (i.e. Benadryl):

1. A medical consent form signed by the parent(s).
2. The medication in its original container.
3. An Individual Health Care Plan filled out and signed by the parent(s) and physician.
4. If the antihistamine is to be used in conjunction with an Epi-Pen, an Allergy Action Plan from the child's physician must be provided.
5. All non-prescription medications must be in their original packaging and labeled with the child's name. A dosing spoon must also accompany the medication.

For inhalers or nebulizers:

1. A medical consent form signed by the parent(s). This form must be resubmitted and signed each time the dosage or frequency of treatment is altered.

2. An Individual Health Care Plan filled out and signed by the parent(s) and physician.
3. An Asthma Action Plan from your child's physician.
4. A complete inhaler.
5. Medication in its original packaging with the prescription label.

For short term medications (i.e. antibiotics):

1. A medical consent form signed by a parent(s) and the child's physician. Medical consent forms for short term prescriptions expire after two weeks.
2. Medication in its original container and prescription label along with a dosing spoon.

All medications should be given to the Director. Never leave medications in your child's backpack or lunch box!