

DEAR PARENTS,

Your child will soon have an opportunity to participate in a residential outdoor school program. This letter attempts to answer some of the questions parents usually ask. Please feel free to ask us about any other concerns you may have about the program. Outdoor environmental education uses the out-of-doors for learning experiences that cannot easily take place in the classroom. Students and teachers learning outdoor awareness in this extended classroom can use the experience to help in their understanding of the natural environment, their school subjects, and the way people live. The program includes activities such as examining life in lakes and swamps, investigating weather, Colonial and Native American skills, and confidence building group challenges. A variety of field walks, classes in all subjects, and evening activities insure an exciting, stimulating experience.

SUPERVISION AND STAFF: Students are supervised 24 hours a day. In addition to the classroom teachers and chaperones accompanying each visiting group, Nature's Classroom has a permanent staff residing on site consisting of a director, environmental teachers on 1:12 ratio, and a nurse, EMT or health staff person on call at all times.

HEALTH AND SAFETY: There is no requirement that students undergo a medical examination before attending Nature's Classroom. The program is physically intensive, however, and you may wish to consult your physician if there are any concerns that should be brought to the attention of the staff. Such guidance will assist them in planning the program of activities with the students. Please note any special health concerns on the Nature's Classroom medical forms. The forms **must** be completed before a student can attend. Health and safety are our most important objectives! A fully staffed and equipped hospital is less than 30 minutes away from all of our facilities. Every student is covered by insurance while attending the program.

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT: A clothing and equipment checklist is furnished. Particular care should be taken in supplying ample footwear and pants, as students frequently participate in activities in wet areas. Clothes should be chosen for comfort and durability, rather than style. Please add or delete items appropriate for the season (gloves, hats, parkas, etc.)

FOOD AND LODGING: Meals are prepared by a permanent cooking staff and are served family style. Special dietary needs should be noted on the medical forms. Students, visiting teachers, and chaperones are lodged in winterized dormitories and cabins. Parents are welcome to visit any of our Environmental Education Centers and to view the facilities; such visits, however, should be made before or after your child's experience, preferably midweek. The physical facilities are always open, so a weekend visit might be possible. You must call the site and make an appointment with the Program Coordinator before coming.

TELEPHONE: The telephone is **not** available for the students' use, and parents are asked not to call students **except in case of an emergency**. The Nature's Classroom telephone number is **508-248-3739**.

MAIL: Mail is most appreciated by students, but to be safe, allow **4 days** for delivery. Mail posted midweek may not reach Nature's Classroom until Friday after the group has left (please make sure there is a return address in case we need to send it back). Please include the name of both the student and the school to assist delivery. Mail should be sent to **Nature's Classroom, 19 Harrington Road, Charlton, MA 01507**.