

LEAP



Lincoln Extended-day Activities Program

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Application to License Hartwell C Pod

**Submitted to Buckner Creel,
Administrator for Business and Finance, Lincoln Public Schools**

February 28, 2014

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Visit our new website: <http://lincolnleap.wordpress.com/>

Introduction

On behalf of the Lincoln Extended-day Activities Program (LEAP) Board of Directors, staff and families, we are pleased to submit the following application for the licensing of Hartwell Pod C. As we enter into our thirty-third year on the campus of the Lincoln Public Schools, we are energized by the addition this academic year of new families, activities and resources to our program and by the prospect of strengthening our partnership with the Lincoln Public Schools, our neighbors on the school campus and the town.

Following please find our thoughts on the LEAP program's proposed use of Pod C. We believe LEAP possesses the attributes that the Lincoln Public Schools are looking for in an occupant of the building and welcome further dialogue with you about our qualifications for continued use of the facility.

We'd like to call your attention to numerous positive developments that have taken place over the course of the current academic year. A snapshot that we believe speaks to our focus on program quality, safety and affordability includes:

- Currently engaged in the licensing renewal process with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
- Sharpened focus on safety training and procedures
- Balanced the LEAP budget
- Sustain a lower staff-to-child ratio than is required by the Commonwealth in order to allow greater attentiveness to safety and to supporting the interests and activities of individual children
- Enjoy a 15 percent increase in enrollment over the previous academic year
- Offer a balanced approach to education and recreation with the goal of supporting academic as well as social and emotional development of children
- Benefit from a collaborative relationship between staff following the restructuring of the LEAP organization and a newly active board of directors
- Provide stability to children through long tenure of core staff, with four employees who have been with LEAP for more than 10 years
- Support education with highly trained staff, many of whom have college degrees or other training relevant to the education of children, as well as with an infusion of new programs and technology
- Engage in a strong and ongoing collaboration with METCO
- Created a discounted fee structure for all Lincoln Public School employees and consistently implement it
- Provide financial aid to families as needed
- Evaluating fee structure with the goal of delivering better value to all LEAP families
- Launched a new website, <http://lincolnleap.wordpress.com/>, to enable better, more timely communication with parents

Overall, we believe these and many other substantive changes enhance LEAP and make it a safe, dependable and affordable choice for Lincoln families who require after-school care for their children.

We look forward to receiving any questions or comments you may have about our application and thank you and the Lincoln School Committee for the time and consideration you have given your ongoing evaluation of our town's after-school program.

Licenses and Certifications

Every other year, LEAP takes part in a comprehensive audit required for certification by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. LEAP is currently in the process of renewing its two-year license.

Per Commonwealth requirements, in addition to an application form and fee, LEAP completed and submitted the following documents and accounts of policies and procedures to support the licensing process. (Fuller descriptions and details associated with this list are available at <http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/eec/2014/20140122-required-docs-provisional-licensure.pdf>.)

- Request for background records checks to determine compliance with background record checks
- Background record check policies
- Tax certification statement form to verify that all applicable taxes have or will be paid
- Evidence of completion of orientation
- Forms maintained in children's records
- Parent information (parent handbook)
- Enrollment procedures and non-discrimination statement
- Plan for referral services
- Plan to avoid suspension and termination
- Evacuation/emergency contingency plan
- Ownership papers (names and addresses of all owners, officers and directors)
- Personnel policies (if applicable)
- Plan for volunteers/student interns (if applicable)
- Plan for staff orientation
- Plan for staff meetings (if applicable)
- Plan for staff supervision
- Transportation supplement form for program owned or operated vehicles
- Transportation plan if applicable
- Designation of administrative authority form provides current designation of person in charge on a daily basis and administrative plan
- Staff schedule form
- Staff records checklist
- Toileting and diapering policy (if applicable)
- Integrated pest management plan
- Required inspections, including building inspection certificate indicating approval for the number and ages of children in care; documentation of fire inspection; detailed lead paint inspection report and compliance letter (for programs serving children younger than 5 years of age); and the following, as applicable: health inspection, well water or public water supply test results, swimming pool and indoor pool roof inspection certificate
- Indoor/outdoor space sketches detailing requested licensed space
- Financial documentation, including a projected budget for one year and evidence of three months operating cash on hand
- Health care policy
- Health care consultant agreement form
- Plan for transition of a child

Evidence of Insurability

LEAP is insured through the broker Philadelphia Insurance Companies (phone: 610-617-7940; address: One Bala Plaza, Suite 100, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004). LEAP carries three separate insurance policies, which are as follows:

- 1) Our insurance policy for public liability for bodily injury and property damage is comprehensive, covers up to \$1,000,000 and is provided by U.S.I. Insurance Services LLC (phone: 781-938-7500; address: 12 Gill Street, Suite 5500, P.O. Box 4043, Woburn, MA 01801). This policy was renewed on November 11, 2013, and expires on November 11, 2014. The policy number is PHPK1097867.
- 2) LEAP's worker's compensation policy is provided by A.I.M. Mutual Insurance Companies (phone: 800-876-2765; address: P.O. Box 4070, Burlington, MA 01803). LEAP has used this plan since March 2009 without a claim made. The plan was recently renewed on November 1, 2013, and will continue until November 1, 2014. It covers bodily injury by accident (per accident) and bodily injury by disease (per employee) of \$100,000. LEAP also has a policy limit of \$500,000 for bodily injury by disease. The policy number is AWC-400-7007212-2013A.
- 3) LEAP retains a not-for-profit organization directors and officers liability insurance policy with U.S.I. Insurance Services as our provider. (The telephone number and mailing address for U.S.I. are the same as those provided in item number one above.) This policy includes coverage of up to \$1,000,000 for LEAP's directors, officers and employment practices. LEAP renewed this policy on January 17, 2014; the policy will continue until January 17, 2015. The policy number is PHSD912071. This is a "Flex Plus Five" policy.

Continuity of Operations

LEAP families and children benefit from strong stability among the program's staff. Additionally, we place a premium on assembling and maintaining a core group of staff members who work more than 20 hours a week because their commitment to and investment in the program have been factors in its long-term success. Moreover, we find that when children are in the care of the same staff members every day, they feel more secure in their environment. We are pleased to currently have six staff members who spend at least 20 hours each week at LEAP.

The tenure of our staff is also impressive. The program has four staff members who have worked at LEAP for more than 10 years and the remaining two staff who work more than 20 hours each week have been with LEAP for five years or more. LEAP's program director and operations director have been members of the LEAP staff for 12 and 11 years, respectively.

Remarkably, more than half of the people on LEAP's staff who will watch eighth graders graduate this spring have known those children since they were kindergarteners.

Even our newer employees, who are part-time workers, are familiar with LEAP because they began attending the program as kindergarteners and have returned to our program now that they are in high school.

Time in Operation

LEAP has been in operation since 1981. From its start until the mid-1990s, the program moved between the Smith and Brooks Schools, hoping for a more permanent location. Then, in September 1995, LEAP began its occupancy of Pod C.

Over the last 18 years, LEAP has worked to transform the facility into a comfortable, child-friendly space where they can play, complete class assignments and have a home-base on the school campus for after-school activities such as the Lincoln After School Music Program (LASMP), Recreation Department classes, soccer and theater.

LEAP's enrollment had been slowly declining over the past several years, but this year is up 15 percent and we are encouraged to note that while the program enrolled eight kindergarteners last year, this academic year we have 17. We believe this bodes well for enrollment over the coming years. A five-year enrollment history is as follows:

- 2009-2010: 95 students
- 2010-2011: 85 students
- 2011-2012: 80 students
- 2012-2013: 75 students
- 2013-2014: 86 students

The 2009-2010 year represented LEAP's recent peak in enrollment since the time when the move from half-day kindergarten to full-day removed 15 to 20 children from the program. In that academic year, we saw a particularly large group of eighth graders leave the program for high school.

Over the next two years, we expect our numbers to grow beyond our current 86 as enhancements to LEAP's program make it more attractive. As previously noted, we are also working to provide better value for the fees, which we believe will make LEAP a more attractive option for more Lincoln families.

References

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Dr. Hobbs provided the following letter:

February 27, 2014

Dear Jennifer, Tom, Tim, Jen, Al, and Perdita,

I am pleased to write you a letter in support of LEAP's continued tenancy in Pod C.

In the past year, the board and staff of LEAP have worked together to tighten up programs and procedures that needed attention and to implement interesting new programs. LEAP has always been a good place for students to have down time and to play with friends in a context that was looser than school. The number and kinds of projects that children had access to was healthy and interesting to a wide variety of ages and kinds of children.

As LEAP has adjusted to a new organizational structure, the level of program has also been changing. The staff is experimenting in good ways with finding ideal configurations for students to work and play. A new wood working shop has now appeared and gives students a chance to have a hands-on experience with something that is no longer offered in school programs. In addition, staff has reached out to Magic Garden to create a relationship between older and younger students.

The communication with parents has also increased in positive ways. There is a newly minted LEAP website that parents can follow to get up to the minute information. Procedures are clearly communicated and are uniformly applied.

The tone of the space is in a very healthy place as well. Children are engaged in activities and adults are interacting in good ways. The high school students who work at LEAP add a really nice "older sibling" dynamic while fully participating in the more supervisory pieces as well. Overall, the program is in a good place. The board had made good and important changes and things are moving forward in a very positive way.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch with me.

Sincerely,

Sharon Hobbs

Staff Training and Experience

Of the six employees who work at LEAP for 20 hours or more per week, four have earned bachelor's degrees:

- LEAP's program director earned her B.A. in education and an associate's degree in art; she also has a certificate in outdoor leadership.
- Our kindergarten coordinator has her B.A. in child development and organizational planning, with a minor in child education.
- The program's middle school and intern coordinator received his B.A. in physician education and is a certified teacher.
- Our project specialist has a B.S. in one of the social sciences.

In addition:

- Our operations director is a fixture with the Recreation Department's Summer Day Camp program, so is a familiar fact to many Lincoln children throughout the full year.
- A part-time employee in her third year with the program holds her undergraduate degree and is working toward her master's in school counseling.
- Our second and third grade coordinator has completed some college. At LEAP, his focus is helping children grow in confidence and learn life skills through sports and active games. He also volunteers in the Lincoln community to support children in sports.
- Five high school students, all of whom were enrolled at LEAP as younger children, work part-time at LEAP. Some of these students also work as counselors at the Lincoln Summer Day Camp, so have been demonstrated an interest in and talent for working with younger children.

As noted, the program has four staff members who have worked at LEAP for more than 10 years, including our two directors, and the other two staff members who spend more than 20 hours each week at LEAP have been with us for at least five years. We believe this allows the program to enjoy the continued benefit of past training and experience working with children in Lincoln.

Staff members are required to have First Aid training, including CPR, and staff who work 23.5 hours per week or more must complete 20 hours of additional training each year. Staff are encouraged to enroll in sessions that are of personal interest to them and that they put to immediate use for enrichment sessions at LEAP. A few examples of staff selections include marine biology at Woods Hole (<http://hermes.mbl.edu/education/>), non-violent crisis intervention at the Crisis Prevention Institute (<http://www.crisisprevention.com>), sewing lessons and leather-making classes.

LEAP staff are also required by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to take five online courses, which include:

- "51A Mandated Reporter Training" on recognizing child abuse and neglect
- "An Introduction to Early Education and Care in Massachusetts"
- "Look Before You Lock," regarding safe transportation of children
- "Medication Administration: The Five Rights"
- "USDA Nutrition"

Staff meetings must now begin with a discussion of safety, without exception, and staff are required to attend.

Between meeting Commonwealth training requirements as part of our recent successful licensing process, focusing on retaining a core group of employees who work at least 20 hours a week at LEAP, and hiring part-time workers who are dedicated to child education or who have direct experience as children with our program, we believe LEAP has demonstrated a strong focus on training employees and on hiring those with relevant experience.

Staff/Child Ratio

The Commonwealth requires a ratio of at least one staff member for every 13 children, but LEAP has elected to maintain a ratio that we believe is more favorable to the children in our program—one staff member for every nine children.

While this slightly increases our costs, we believe it allows children to break into smaller groups to explore interests and to engage in projects that require more supervision, such as woodworking, computer programming and enameling.

Critically for Lincoln families, our staffing ratio permits employees to walk individual children to and from music lessons, athletic practices on the school campus or sometimes as far away as Pierce Park, Scout meetings, Recreation Department programs and activities at school such as theater rehearsals. If we staffed at the minimum level, staff members would not be able to continuously break away from larger groups to see to the safe and timely delivery of children to their various activities.

LEAP Program

LEAP's mission is to provide the children of working parents with a nurturing after-school program that offers diverse opportunities for educational enrichment, exploration, and development of social skills. The program's philosophy is to contribute to the social and emotional development of Lincoln's children through a balance of recreation and educational support.

Self-confidence, self-respect and self-expression are encouraged by LEAP staff, as are responsibility, decision-making, respect for others and for the program's materials. Through structured recreational activities and free choice activities in a safe, supervised environment, there are opportunities for socializing, unwinding and releasing energy, as well as time for doing homework and, if desired pursuing additional academic interests. All activities are tailored to each child's age, personality and skill levels.

LEAP is open to all students enrolled in the Lincoln Public Schools or who are residents of Lincoln. LEAP does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or marital status.

Brief descriptions of some of our programs follow.

Educational Activities

- **Tutoring**—LEAP staff have long helped students with homework, but the board is currently working with LEAP staff to put in place a more structured program to serve families who would like additional academic support for their children.
- **Increased collaboration with Magic Garden**—Last year, LEAP initiated a "reading buddy" program that allows children from our program to take supervised visits to Magic Garden to read a chosen book to the preschoolers. This program is modeled after the kindergarten/third grade reading program at Smith School. The feedback from Magic Garden teachers and from LEAP students has been strongly positive.

- **Technology upgrade**—In the fall of 2013, LEAP secured 15 new computers for use by the students. By not only expanding access to computers, but improving their quality, LEAP is now able to support all children who need to use a computer to complete homework assignments. In the past, children would often need to wait for turns, or would be challenged by older, slower technology.
- **Einstein's Workshop**—LEAP's technology upgrade has allowed the program to initiate a collaboration with Einstein's Workshop (<http://www.einsteinsworkshop.com/>), a local company founded to help children "explore the creative side of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)." LEAP is currently organizing a session of Wednesday afternoon classes to help students learn an MIT-created introductory programming language.
- **Spanish tutoring**—A Concord Carlisle Spanish teacher is beginning to offer kindergarteners and first graders Spanish lessons while they are at LEAP. This is included in the program's normal monthly fee.
- **Increased collaboration with Drumlin Farm**—LEAP is working with Drumlin Farm's Kris Scopinich to bring a week of farm-related opportunities, such as visits from animals, to LEAP.
- **Visits from special speakers**—LEAP now regularly hosts talks with parents and other guest speakers on particular topics. A couple of the recent sessions have included one on science experiments with a parent who is a college professor and a presentation on the Galapagos Islands.
- **Visits from librarians from the Lincoln Public Library**—LEAP has long borrowed books from the library in order to increase the diversity of reading materials for children, but has also begun to coordinate periodic visits from librarians to read and discuss particular stories with the students.

Collaboration with METCO

LEAP remains dedicated to fostering a close working relationship with METCO. We have combined forces to provide the Lincoln students from town and from Boston with monthly field trips. LEAP also hosts monthly "stay and play" visits for Boston children who would like to spend the afternoon with a friend while under the supervision of LEAP staff.

School Vacation Programs

During the February and April school vacations, LEAP offers Vaca-Playdays for children in grades kindergarten through five from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Vaca-Playdays is open to all Lincoln students, not just those who are already enrolled in LEAP. We also offer programs on teacher training days.

Following are schedules for typical days at LEAP:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday

- 3:00-3:45 p.m.: Meeting, snack and homework
- 3:45-4:10 p.m.: Free play
- 4:15-5:15 p.m.: Organized activity
- 5:15-6:00 p.m. Clean-up, quiet time and prepare to go home
- 6:00 p.m.: Parents' pick-up deadline

Wednesdays

- 12:45 p.m.: Lunch
- 1:15-1:45 p.m.: Recess
- 1:45-4:00 p.m. Club activity or field trip (descriptions appear below)
- 3:45-4:00 p.m.: Snack (on Wednesdays without field trips)
- 4:00-4:35 p.m.: Homework
- 4:35-5:15 p.m.: Organized activity
- 5:15-6 p.m.: Cleanup, quiet time and prepare to go home
- 6:00 p.m.: Parents' pickup deadline

On three of the four Wednesdays each month, students participate in a teacher-led "club" activity of their choice, such as arts and crafts, hiking, puzzles or organized sports such as soccer or capture the flag. Depending on the weather, there may be sledding or a trip to Codman Pool. If the weather is expected to be warm enough for swimming, parents are notified ahead of time and asked to supply a bathing suit and towel.

One Wednesday a month, LEAP offers an optional, off-campus field trip to age-appropriate destinations. For example, younger children may go to One Stop Fun while older children go snow-tubing at Nashoba Valley Ski Area. Field trips depart at 1:45 p.m. after the children eat lunch and return by 4:00 p.m. Admission costs are included in LEAP's monthly fee.

LEAP's ratio of staff to children permits us to offer an array of Wednesday afternoon programs and to let students choose their favorite. It also enables us to create separate field trip experiences for younger and older students, and to permit those who want or need to remain in Lincoln for music lessons or other activities to do so with appropriate supervision.

Governing Board and Parent Participation

In the summer of 2013, the LEAP Board of Directors restructured the management of the program and is currently taking a more active role in its governance. Our goal with this move has been to improve the program's quality and to reverse what had become a slightly negative budget trend. (LEAP's budget is now, for the first time in several years, balanced.)

LEAP's day-to-day operations are managed by two directors, one of whom focused on programming and staff and the other on operations and budget matters. They report to a parent-run board that is comprised of the following members:

- Daryl Miller, president—Tabor Hill Financial, company owner; financial advisor and consultant; fundraiser
- Curt Busto, treasurer—Comprehensive Environmental, staff engineer
- Laura Kempke, secretary—MSLGroup, senior vice president, public relations
- Marc Crosby—Business management, director-level client services and sales
- Adam Greenberg—Software developer and Lincoln Youth Soccer coach
- Andrea Greiff—NextPhase Search, owner, executive search
- Kevin Karty—Altisource Labs, vice president, analytics innovation
- Hathaway Russell—Foley Hoag, partner

Over the past year, the board and staff of LEAP have also relied on contributions from specialists in our community. We have benefitted from substantial assistance from:

- Sharon Lincoln, LEAP parent and *pro bono* legal counsel—Sharon is an attorney at Foley Hoag and specializes in non-profit law. She is helping the board update documents and improve our corporate governance.
- Laura Taylor, CPA—Laura has donated her time in multiple sessions to work with our director of operations to rework LEAP's budget in a way that we hope will allow us to stop increasing fees or to even slightly reduce them over time

Parents are continuously encouraged to express opinions and invited to all board meetings. During the 2012-2013 school year, we undertook a phone-based survey of parents to gather their specific feedback on safety, free play and academic enrichment at LEAP. During the conversations, we also solicited their general feedback on the program. Parents' comments on the three core areas were overwhelmingly favorable, but they also offered valuable suggestions that the board and staff are working to address.

Proposed Fee Structure

The LEAP board and director of operations are working in a concerted manner to address the program's fee structure. To this end, our first priority before the start of this academic year was reorganizing the structure of LEAP management, with the overarching goal of creating an environment where the program could begin to deliver better service and value to town families.

During the first half of the current academic year, the board and LEAP director of operations achieved a balanced budget. Now, we are now in a position to take advantage of our more stable financial platform to assess programs and fees and to direct our program to offer more value for less money, or reduced tuition.

At the outset of the school year, two teachers, including one from Hanscom, brought to the board's attention a discrepancy in fees assessed to Lincoln Public Schools staff. The board learned that some staff had arranged discounts, but others were unaware that discounts were available. In the fall, the board worked to create a single policy that is now uniformly in effect for school staff and provides a 25 percent tuition discount for any child of staff. This announcement was well-received by school staff and the new policy impacts 11 families and 15 children, or 18 percent of LEAP's enrollment.

As part of our effort to make LEAP affordable, the program provides financial aid of at least 25 percent to three other families.

Finally, we accept vouchers from Child Care Resources and Child Care Choices for three families with financial need. This impacts five children, who now receive after-school care at half of LEAP's current rates.

In sum, 27 percent of LEAP children receive at least 25 percent tuition relief.

Monthly Rates

Our regular monthly rates for the 2013-2014 school year are as follows:

\$150 registration fee (covers LEAP's per child cost of insurance)

Kindergarten

- 5 days: \$705
- 4 days: \$670
- 3 days, including Wednesday: \$605
- 3 days, not including Wednesday: \$510
- 2 days, including Wednesday: \$520
- 2 days, not including Wednesday: \$430

Grades 1 through 8

- 5 days: \$615
- 4 days: \$585
- 3 days, including Wednesday: \$510
- 3 days, not including Wednesday: \$410
- 2 days, including Wednesday: \$420
- 2 days, not including Wednesday: \$335

Interns (Grades 7 and 8)

- One day a week: \$195
- One day a week: \$215

Proposed Rent and Allowance for Capital Projects

The LEAP board suggests that the program's rent remain as specified with our proposed licensing agreement, although anything less will directly contribute to our ability to deliver more service to Lincoln families for less money.

Following is the recent history of LEAP's lease payments, which have increased three percent every year until last year:

- 2008-2009: \$25,000
- 2009-2010: \$25,740
- 2010-2011: \$26,522.50
- 2011-2012: \$27,318.18
- 2012-2013: \$28,137.72
- 2013-2014: \$28,000

Our maintenance and capital improvement costs have been 10 percent of the lease amount for the space. For example, our additional costs in 2012-2013 were \$2,813.77.