



## APPLICATION PACKET


### *Welcome!*

Thank you for taking the time to explore PNS.

We know that choosing a new school means a lot of information and decisions - this Application Packet makes it easier for you to understand how PNS might be the right fit for your child and family by explaining:

- how children play, learn and thrive at PNS;
- how the PNS daily schedule runs, with flexible options for Extended Day and Summer Program;
- how PNS teachers and families work together through a cooperative structure;
- how the application and payment processes work;

### PNS at a glance...

PNS is a parent cooperative preschool	"Playing since 1947"	Mixed age classroom of 2.9 - 5 yr olds (max 20 children per day)	An emphasis on learning through play in the outdoor world	Children attend either 4 or 5 days per week
The standard school day is 8:30-12:30	Children eat a snack & packed lunch at school		Extended Day option until 3pm every day...	...Book & Pay in Advance = \$46/day Pay on the Day = \$51/day
Families from Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge, Somerville, Watertown...	Summer Program mid June to late July	Yearly Tuition Costs for 2025-26: 5 days \$14,330 4 days \$12,064	Fun PNS Traditions: Harvest Feast! Maple Sugaring! Butterflies!	Ask us about Financial Aid

## Our PNS Mission

Founded in 1947, Parents' Nursery School in Cambridge, Massachusetts is one of the oldest cooperative nursery schools in the country. PNS helps children build the fundamental social and emotional skills necessary to become lifelong learners. At PNS learning is developmentally appropriate and meaningful to children's lives. We are committed to supporting families by providing a place where children can safely expand their boundaries from home to the outside world.

Children at Parents' Nursery School:

- engage in **self-directed free-play**, facilitated by teachers and parent helpers;
- have ready access to and can explore the **natural outdoor environment** and are guided through seasonally based explorations in art, storytelling, singing, movement, nature-study and cooking;
- extend their **physical, emotional, and developmental boundaries** while supported by a community that maintains a **strong connection between home and school**.

At PNS we trust a child's innate curiosity to be the springboard for learning. Within every activity, there are opportunities for problem solving, critical thinking, joy, and humor. Through play and engagement with others, children learn to identify their feelings, advocate for themselves, view problems from multiple perspectives, and resolve conflict.

Parents' Nursery School values the development of a diverse community of adults and children. Together, we emphasize learning rather than teaching, and process rather than product.

## Curriculum & Philosophy

*Some thoughts from our PNS teachers...*



**Kristen Patrice   Gretchen Fonda**

The program at Parents' Nursery School (PNS) takes a developmental approach to the education of young children, helping them master the basic learning and social skills that form the foundation for all future learning.

Children between the ages of three and five need a safe environment where they have the time, space and materials to explore and discover.

Studies have shown that children's language and intellectual skills develop best when they are playing games of their own invention, rather than participating in activities dictated by adults. Thus the curriculum at PNS is entirely child-centered – the day is spent on things the children find interesting, rather than in things we might think they “should” be learning.

When you visit the school, look at it from a child's point of view. Children walk in and see a world of limitless possibility. They look around and begin to wonder, to imagine, and to question. What if we drape cloths over the big block structure, and turn it into a tent? What if we spend the whole day – or the whole week – outside digging a system of trenches and then filling them with water? (And what if there are five of us and only three shovels? Can we take turns in a way that's fair to everybody? Are there other things we could use to dig with?)

Sometimes prospective parents ask why the day here is not more structured. The fact is that a young child's life is already pretty structured, with mealtimes, bath time, bedtime, being told it's time to go to the store or time to leave the playground. We believe that the function of a preschool is to provide them with a place where, for a few hours a day, they can set the agenda.

Our job, as teachers, is to keep them safe; to encourage and stimulate but not to control; to help them learn by doing rather than simply telling them what we think they should know.

Children change and develop over the course of their time at PNS. For younger children, the first challenges are generally social – learning to get along in a group, to speak up and assert one's own needs, to respect others' words and choices, to gain independence while knowing that adult support is there if needed. Older children get to experience leadership – they know the ropes and are often very solicitous of younger children – and they tend to explore projects and materials in greater depth.

For all PNS children, there is a strong sense of ownership and mastery. This is their place. They choose how to spend their time and what to do with the materials offered. They put away their own cups after snack time, and they tidy up the school at the end of the day. They are proud when their parent comes in to parent-help, but also comfortable asking any adult in the school to tie their shoes, read a story, or help them get something down from a high shelf.

Overall, the children who go through PNS tend to develop independence, self-reliance, curiosity, and a joyful enthusiasm about school and learning. They learn to respect themselves and others, to make choices, and to solve disputes through negotiation. These, more than any others, are the skills that prepare them for kindergarten and for all the learning that follows.

## Cooperative Responsibilities and Benefits

Being a member of a cooperative is immensely rewarding and sociable, but it does also require time, effort and commitment. While our educational philosophy and curriculum are implemented and maintained by the director and the teachers, parents provide the labor and organization required to keep the school in a state of full enrollment, financial solvency, and physical repair.

That said, families' cooperative contribution is manageable - and compatible even with working parents' schedules. All families by definition have young children so everyone understands how hectic home-life can be, and families where both parents work appreciate the extra organization this requires, but PNS families make it all feasible through mutual support.

In order to help determine if our cooperative would work for you, please review the following summary of parent responsibilities.

### Parent Helping

One parent from each family may volunteer for a Parent Helping opportunity from 8:30am-1pm approximately once every two months. You take an active role in classroom activities, and clean up the school at the end of the morning session. It's also a great chance to get to know your child's favorite activities at school and meet their classmates more properly. Caregivers or other family members cannot be substituted for parent helpers - the one exception to this is if a designated grandparent commits to being the regular parent helper. Families will also provide a simple, weekly snack for approximately 20 children once every two-three months.

### Parent Job

Every family has a Parent Job and works cooperatively within our job system to make sure our school functions optimally on a daily and long term basis. Expect a time commitment of approximately two hours per week during the year and a significant increase at specific times during the year – Fall Festival, After Dark Fundraiser Party etc. Every attempt will be made to match parent skill sets and schedules to job descriptions. Some jobs will require schedule flexibility during the day. All jobs will require coordinating with other members of the cooperative and time will need to be set aside for planning meetings or other joint ventures.

### Community Meetings

One parent from each family attends mandatory evening community meetings once every six weeks. Typically meetings are 7:30-9:00 pm at school. Children are not permitted. Expect to attend up to two additional orientation meetings in the first six weeks of school.

### School Events

Active participation in special all-school events is required of all cooperative members, e.g. the Fall Festival. Tasks could include baking for a bake sale, running a craft activity, soliciting local businesses for auction items, helping with set-up and clean-up of the event, spreading the word on social media etc. Attendance, while not mandatory, is encouraged at other school events such as bi-annual potluck dinners, After Dark fundraiser auction, and the Harvest Feast.

## **Fall & Spring Work Days**

Attend two work days to help keep our school looking beautiful and safe for the children. One person from each family works from 9am to 12pm depending on the amount of work. Children are not permitted at school on work days. Tasks might include: painting, gardening, cleaning or small carpentry projects.

## **Co-op Communication**

Information is shared via email, notices in family mailboxes and signs posted at school. In order to ensure the smooth running of the school, parents must keep themselves up to date with the flow of communication in the cooperative and read messages daily.

## **Intermittent Community Support**

Occasionally, co-op members will be asked to help out above and beyond these requirements. In the case of teacher illness, family emergencies or school-wide admissions or fundraising endeavors, parents will be asked to volunteer their time and energy to fill in as needed.

## **Benefits**

- You get to be actively involved in your child's preschool experience.
- Your child's community also becomes yours. Wonderful (often lifelong) friendships are formed among children, parents, and families.
- You have a built-in support network of parents who are committed to the same ideals in the education of young children.
- There is deep satisfaction in knowing that you are an integral part of forming and supporting your child's school and his or her first educational experience.

## **Admissions Policy & Process**

We value diversity within our school community and do not discriminate on the basis of race, disability, sex, ethnic and national origin, religion, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or family lifestyle in the administration of admissions and educational policies and financial aid programs.

Our admissions goal at Parents' Nursery School is to maintain a balance of boys and girls, and of three and four year olds; and to increase the diversity of our school community. Whenever possible, priority is given to siblings of current and former students, and to children who will help diversify our student body.

**Tuition** for the 2025-26 school year is:

- \$14,330 (5 days)
- \$12,064 (4 days)

For **Extended Day** (until 3pm, available every weekday), there are 3 options for signing up:

- 1. Annual Advance:** After enrollment, schedule Extended Day on fixed day(s) to @ \$46 /day guarantee a space throughout the year (must be the same day(s) each week; payable as part of your tuition payment plan)
- 2. Drop-In:** When dropping your child off at PNS, simply sign him/her up @ \$51 /day on a list for that same day and pay the total number of Extended Days at the end of the month

*(Each school year we expect an inflationary rise in Standard Day tuition and Extended Day tuition.)*

For the **Summer Program** (8:30-12:30 M-F from mid June to late July, plus an optional Extended Day option Mon-Thurs until 3pm), sign-up and payment for weekly places takes place in the Spring.

Admission to the school is open to children who will be **at least 2 yrs 9 months old by Sept 1st** of their intake year. If places are available during the academic year, children may be admitted once they turn 2 yrs 9 months. Toilet training status is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment.

Families interested in applying for admission to Parents' Nursery School **must tour the school** before submitting their application. *(Tours are given on weekdays - please contact [pnsadmissions@gmail.com](mailto:pnsadmissions@gmail.com) to schedule)*

**Financial Aid** is available *(to apply, please check the box on the Application Form or contact our Administrator Lynne Standish for more info: [parentsnurseryschool.director@gmail.com](mailto:parentsnurseryschool.director@gmail.com)).*

All applications received by **March 1** will be considered together. Applications received after that date will be reviewed as space allows.

We will let families know their admissions status in mid-March. Any children who we are unable to accept at that time will be placed on an active waiting list.

For successful applicants, the **next steps** in the enrollment process are:

- By April 1: Confirm your child will enroll at PNS and submit enrollment deposit (\$500)
- By May 1: Submit tuition deposit (cost of first two months' tuition)
- By mid June: Complete & submit PNS Summer Packet (includes standard requests for medical summary/proof of immunizations, descriptions of your child's preferences and needs, any allergies, emergency contact details etc)

## Application Form

Our application form is available online [via this link](#). For any questions about this application or the school in general, please just ask: [pnsadmissions@gmail.com](mailto:pnsadmissions@gmail.com)

A non-refundable, non-deductible application fee of \$50 must accompany the application form. Application fee by Paypal at <http://www.parentsnurseryschool.net/admissions> If this is difficult for financial reasons, please check 'yes' below for a Financial Aid application.