

# Family Engagement Field Guide

**An Evaluation of Family Engagement for BNC  
Summer Learning Program 2012 and  
Recommendations for Future  
Implementation**

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**Project of New Sector Alliance  
Summer Fellowship 2012**

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## Section 1: Checklists

### 1.1: Pre-Program Checklist

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- Set date for Family Orientation Night
- Send families fliers about Family Orientation
- Prepare agenda and materials for Family Orientation Night
- Call families as an introduction, to confirm students' participation, and to encourage families to attend orientation
- Identify specific family needs (i.e., language barriers, transportation, etc.)
- Compile templates needed for the first day of the program (Good Deed Bead charts and materials, student progress reports)
- Family-friendly signs and decor in cottages
- Prepare communication folders
- Prepare behavior management system

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## 1.2: Weekly Program Checklist

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### Every Week:

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- Create and distribute take-home activity
- Complete weekly newsletter
- Complete progress reports for each student to take home on Fridays
- Update Smug Mug
- Print weekly photographs and display in cottages
- Make “Good News Phone Calls” (at least two per Explorer throughout five weeks)

### Week 1:

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- Send home “Phone Call Availability” forms and record responses in call log

### Week 2:

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- Begin planning Family Showcase for week 3 (see Section 2.14 for details)
- Create and distribute student invitations for Family Showcase

### Week 4:

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- Begin planning Final Celebration for week 5 (see Section 2.14 for details)
- Create and distribute student invitations for Final Celebration
- Invite future 4th grade teachers to Final Celebration

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### 1.3: Daily Program Checklist

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- Greet families at drop-off and pick-up
- Collect communication folder in the morning, and ensure folders go home at the end of the day
- Instruct students to pick up their bracelets for “Good Deed Beads” upon arrival
- Guide students in completing “Good Deed Bead” chart at the end of the day

## Section 2: Details, Evaluations, and Recommendations

### 2.1: Pre-Program Phone Calls

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Three weeks before the program start date, begin making calls to families who have committed to attending the program. The purpose of the call is to confirm that the student and family is still intending on participating in the program and to follow-up on mailed invitation to orientation. Use the phone calls as an opportunity for families to RSVP to the orientation. The phone calls also serve as an opportunity to fill in gaps of missing student information, such as immunizations and health forms, and to identify special family needs. Special family needs include language barriers and transportation arrangements.

Note: It is important to begin this process three weeks before the program start date in order to contact waitlist families if enrolled students drop out of the program.

Recommendations: Make note of special family needs and begin arranging accommodations as soon as possible before the program start date (see notes on general recommendations regarding Cultural Competency).

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### 2.2: Pre-Program Orientation

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Materials:

Family Expectation slips  
Golf pencils  
Poster of evening agenda  
Refreshments: Pasta, salad, drink, utensils

Agenda:

**6:30-7** : Arrival, refreshments, and mingling

*BNC staff supervised children playing in the Nature Nook. Adult family members were encouraged to fill out slips of paper on the table, answering the question, "What are your expectations for your Explorer for the summer?"*

**7-7:05** : Staff and student introductions

*All participating students present stand up, say their name and school affiliation. All staff does the same.*

**7:05-7:15:** Jean Dorcus, BNC Education Manager, and Brian Fleming, Summer Explorers Program Coordinator, review behavior and discipline policies with families. Children may return to Nature Nook with supervision.

*Families all receive copies of behavior and discipline policies. Absent families receive copies in the mail within the next week.*

**7:15- 7:25:** Overview of Family Engagement tools and plan

**7:25-7:30:** Q&A session

**7:30-8 :** Visitors should continue to mingle and enjoy refreshments. Staff should continue to engage with families on a personal level.

Attendance: All family members of participating students were invited to attend Family Orientation Night from 6:30-8 PM, two and a half weeks before the program start date. Families received a flier in the mail. Eighty people from 25 of the 30 participating families RSVPed, mostly when BNC called families to confirm participation. About 40 people attended from 14 families. Follow-up calls were made to families who RSVP but did not attend; families reported illness and family emergencies as cause for absence.

Recommendations:

- Pass questions around to families on a clipboard, in addition to leaving papers on the table. Doing so enables staff to engage with families and ensure a higher response rate.
- Consider requesting families to write child's name on paper. Encourage all families to complete a slip. Request that families who do not attend fill out the slip on the first day of the program. Use the personalized information to: 1. Clarify group target goals and 2. Check in with families at the end of the summer that expectations were met.

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## **2.3: Family-Friendly Signs and Décor**

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To make both families and students feel more welcomed and comfortable at the Explorer's Program, cottages displayed appropriate signs and décor. Fellows created a "Welcome Summer Explorers" poster that included the first names of all incoming explorers, and a "Book Recommendation" poster where students could complete a "book recommendation slip" and suggest books to other Explorers. Also included in décor were classroom and theme appropriate posters collected from the Boston Nature Center main building. Additionally, throughout the summer, weekly photographs were printed and posted around the cottages, allowing visitors to see more details of the weekly program.

Recommendations:

Be sure to prepare the cottages with signs for the first week, in order to most effectively begin the summer with a comfortable and welcoming tone. Update photographs weekly, at least, to continue to engage families in the program space during drop-off and pick-up.

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## 2.4: Prepare Communication Folders

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### Materials:

Folders

Transparent Sleeve (to hold Good Deed Bead chart)

Good Deed Bead Charts

Communication Folders were an outreach tool used primarily to distribute general information for families. This included: Good Deed Bead Charts, Progress Reports, Family Showcase information and letters, fieldtrip information, flyers, the Weekly Newsletter, or any other family-oriented information. Students were expected to take the folder home each day, review it with their parent or guardian, and return the folder back to class the following day. Students used this folder to update their Bead Chart form on a daily basis. Staff should use this folder to distribute family-oriented information. Each folder should be prepared by labeling each folder with a student's name and including a copy of the Good Deed Bead chart,

### Recommendations:

The Communication Folders reinforced engagement by maintaining the expectation of daily family involvement.

- Some complications arose as some students never returned their folders; however, stressing the importance of the folder early in the program could be a potential solution to minimize this effect.
- It would also be worthwhile to note any language barriers families may have and adjust the content of the folders accordingly.

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## 2.5: Behavior Management System

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### Materials:

Beads and Bracelets

Good Deed Bead Chart

Summer Explorer's Expectations Sheets

Plastic Bins (one bin for each group to hold that particular group's beads)

"Good Deed Beads" is a behavioral management tool that operates by rewarding students for good behavior. The system is designed to reflect a student's daily performance, as students earn beads by exhibiting good behavior throughout the day. "Good Behavior" was defined as appropriately following expectations and performing behaviors listed on the

“Summer Explorer’s Expectations<sup>1</sup>” chart, or by acting in ways that were generally helpful, kind, and/or considerate.

Students chose either a bracelet or necklace to wear throughout the day (alternatively they could also attach their bracelet or necklace to their belt loop), and added beads onto the bracelet or necklace as they acquired them.

Students who earned 6 or more beads throughout the day received “Bonus Choice Time”<sup>2</sup>. Consequently students who did not earn at least 6 beads were asked to sit out and reflect. Staff did not establish a maximum number of beads that a student could earn, but the bead log sheet capped at 12.

At the end of every day—generally right before bonus choice time—students individually logged the number of beads they had earned on a chart in their communication folder, which was sent home daily, and afterwards put their beads in their designated group’s plastic bin. By sending bead charts home every day, families were able to keep up-to-date on their child’s general trends of daily behavior and performance.

#### Evaluation:

We designed the system to positively reinforce students’ good behavior. The system was more effective for some students than for others. For example, the bead system guided many students to stay focused and on task throughout the day. Many students benefitted greatly from the positive recognition. Other students who consistently earned low bead counts expressed low self-esteem, making statements such as “I’ll never earn enough beads” or “I never do anything right”, etc.

The bead system was generally very effective for the majority of students. However, it can be overly intensive for staff to be regular and consistent in reinforcing desirable behavior.

#### Recommendations:

- *Bead Distribution:* It can be tasking for staff to consistently reinforce desirable behavior, leading to students who deserved to earn “bonus choice time” not earning enough beads. One option to reconcile the challenge is for staff to be sure to give beads at the end of each period to students who followed all of the Camp Expectations. Staff can additionally give beads for exceptional behavior throughout the day.

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<sup>1</sup> Summer Explorers Expectations: 1. We treat all living things found at the BNC with respect and kindness. 2. We follow staff requests. 3. We walk indoors and on the trails, and stay with a staff member for safety. 4. We listen when someone is talking to us. 5. We keep our hands, feet, objects, and name calling to ourselves.

<sup>2</sup> Bonus Choice Time: extra time before afternoon dismissal during which students could choose from an assortment of activities.

- *Bead Loss*: Students would claim that they “lost” their beads. We did not redistribute lost beads and advised students to be more careful.
- *Sharing*: There were several instances in which students gave their beads to other students. Although we encourage sharing in the program in general, we prohibited bead sharing, and shared beads were confiscated.
- *Hoarding*: Students occasionally retained their beads at the end of the day so that they could start the next day with a high number. We recommend tighter staff control over the bead bins at the end of the day, and also keeping bins out of reach of students during the day.
- *General*: After piloting the behavior program, we recommend implementing it in the future, but anticipating the challenges we faced. To reconcile the challenges regarding student bead honesty, set clear expectations regarding bead loss, sharing, and hoarding at the beginning of the summer, and provide group reminders if the problems arise.

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## 2.6: Take-Home Activities

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Once a week, staff create and distribute a take-home activity for students. The activity is designed for students to complete at home with a family member. Activities each week reflect that week’s particular theme, (e.g., the word and theme of the week). Templates of previous activities are included in the templates section.

The activities are not mandatory, but students should receive at least one bead or other reward for completing the activity with a family member at home and returning it the next day to the Explorers Program.

### Recommendations:

- There was a noticeable trend that the further into the program we were, the fewer returns we received. The first week, nearly all of the students returned the activities completed, but this number drastically decreased in subsequent weeks.
  - One possible explanation is lack of incentive, and therefore lack of interest: because there was no consequence for not returning the activity and the reward was one bead, which students could earn at any point during the day, students had less incentive to complete the activity. If lack of incentive was truly the cause of decreased rates of completion, consider altering the reward for return (i.e., choosing from the prize box).
  - A second explanation is that the take-home activity from the first week was much simpler than the subsequent weeks. Specifically, students interviewed someone in their family for the first week’s activity. Subsequent activities were more active games that required more time, energy, and effort from the families, as compared to the interview.

- The take-home activity can be improved by using information collected from the activity in a group activity for the next day. For example, if students interview a family member about what type of animal and adaptation the family member would like as their own, students can compile all results and practice graphing data. The follow-up gives the take-home activity more purpose.

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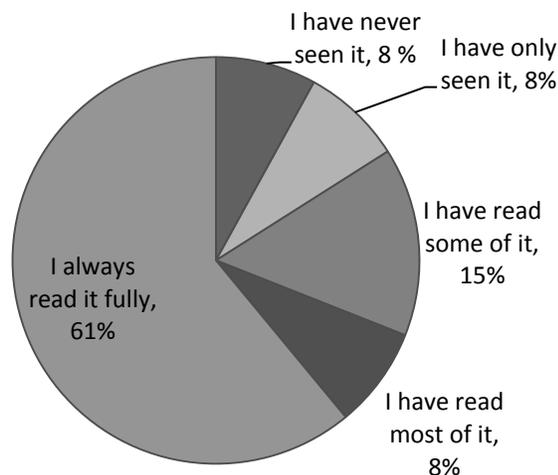
## 2.7: Weekly Newsletter

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For each week of the Summer Explorer’s Program, a newsletter is created and sent home on Fridays. The newsletter conveys two family engagement goals: (1) to keep families informed on the academics and activities of their Explorer in the program and (2) to encourage interaction and foster communication between families and Explorers by including various interactive aspects.

### Evaluation:

The Newsletters were well received by families. During the mid-program Family Showcase, families completed a survey about the family engagement tools.



The survey showed that 61% of families indicated that they always read the newsletters fully and only 15% indicated that they had either never seen the newsletter or never read it.

### Recommendations:

- Depending on the number of monolingual Spanish speaking families in the program, consider including a section of the Newsletter giving weekly highlights in Spanish.

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## 2.8: Progress Reports

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To strengthen family awareness of behavioral and academic performance, staff sent Progress Reports home at the end of each week. Progress Reports were designed to be short, simple, and concise so that (1) teachers could complete them relatively quickly (2) parents could easily understand them, and (3) they would contain important content. Every Friday, teachers completed the forms for each student in their subgroup with consultation and support from other instructors. Students took the reports home in their communication folders to be reviewed by parents.

Evaluation and Recommendations: During the Summer Explorers 2011 program, parents reported not feeling well-informed about their child's behavior and academic status at camp. Based on the absence of any such reports during the 2012 program, we assumed that the progress reports were effective tools in communicating performance to families. The forms could be improved by adjusting to language barriers accordingly. If one staff member is semi-fluent in Spanish, for example, that particular staff member can help to complete the progress reports for the Spanish-speaking families.

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## 2.9: Smug Mug

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We used Mass Audubon's Smug Mug account to create a Summer Explorer's album. Weekly newsletters featured a link to the album. Although there was no formal evaluation of Smug Mug's use in our program, we did not feel that the majority of the families used Smug Mug. It seemed to be more beneficial to post printed picture around our site and to include many pictures in the weekly newsletter. The cost of the time and energy needed to maintain Smug Mug exceeded the benefits of the online album.

### Recommendations

- We recommend focusing energy on stronger family engagement opportunities, rather than on Smug Mug.
- However, if you find that a new group of families can appreciate the online album, contact Mass Audubon marketing department for information about accessing the Smug Mug account.

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## 2.10: "Phone Call Availability" Form

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During the first week of the program, send home forms about phone call availability, found in the Field Guide Section 3. The form asks families to note when it is convenient for them to receive a phone call from the program. Staff should log responses in the call log.

### Recommendations:

Make options available to accommodate families who work during day hours. Be sure that, if needed, a staff member can call families in the evenings if that is a family's only available option.

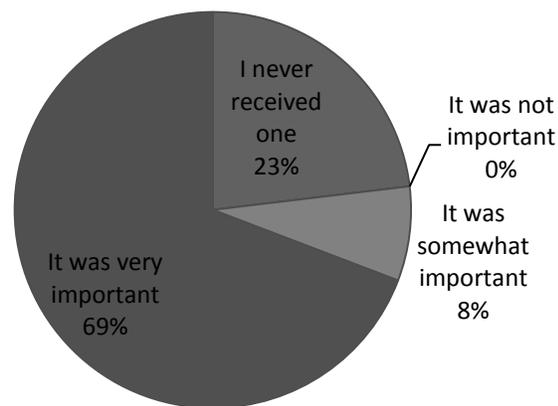
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## 2.11: Good News Phone Calls

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At least twice throughout the summer, staff should make “good news phone calls” home to families. In the phone calls, staff highlights behavioral and academic strengths of the student. Families love to hear specific examples or anecdotes, in addition to general praise.

During the mid-program Family Showcase, families completed surveys about their satisfaction with the family engagement tools. The following diagram demonstrates that 69% of families who completed the survey reported that the “Good News Phone Calls” were very important, whereas no one reported that the calls were not important.



**Recommendations:** The first phone call should be made during the first or second week of the program. It is important to give families and students immediate feedback, while the energy of the program is still fresh. The second call should be made in the third, fourth, or fifth week, as it is appropriate.

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## 2.12: Greet Families at Drop-Off and Pick-Up

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Staff should be visibly present during pick-up and drop-off, actively greeting families and students. At least one staff member should be stationed at the door to the main entry cottage to greet and assist with the sign-in process.

**Recommendations:**

During the first week, it is very important to establish relationships and connections with families and students. This shows families that staff is available and considerate to families and their needs. A lot of information was exchanged between staff and families at this time.

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### **2.13: Daily “Good Deed Bead” Charts**

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The Good Deed Bead Charts are generally updated each day before Bonus Choice Time and dismissal. Teachers set aside a few minutes for students to update their charts individually. The chart displays all five weeks of the program, which are separated into daily columns. The students fill out the charts like a bar graph, shading in the number of blocks that corresponded to the number of beads they earned that day.

#### Recommendations:

To ensure honest recordings, staff should be actively involved in monitoring the daily completion of these forms.

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### **2.14: Mid-Program and Final Family Showcases**

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#### Materials:

Individual photographs of students

Construction paper and markers for invitations and passport covers

Fliers announcing events

Perfect Attendance awards (only for final celebration)

Character Awards for each student (only for final celebration)

Mini trophies from the Dollar Store for Perfect Attendance Awards (only for final celebration)

Both the mid-program showcase and the end-of-program celebration take place on Friday of their respective weeks. The Friday immediately preceding each event, students make invitations to give to their families. English and Spanish scripts are displayed to guide students’ invitation design. The Monday preceding each event, staff sends a flier home to families with more information about the event. Families are reminded of the events during drop-off and pick-up, and encouraged to attend. Families of students who take program-provided transportation receive special phone call reminders about the event during the week leading up to the event.

#### Mid-program showcase

During the week before the event, students make “passport covers” to hold their materials for the showcase. Each student received a printed photograph of himself or herself to glue onto the cover of a piece of construction paper folded like a book. Students decorate the

outside of the cover as the wish. Suggested designs include phrases such as “Passport,” “Welcome to Summer Explorers,” and “Citizen of BNC.”

The event took place from 3-3:30 and was purposefully informal and unstructured to allow families flexibility. Families enjoyed refreshments of fruit, cheese, crackers, and lemonade. Students guided their families through the exhibits according to their passport (see sample in Section 3) and received stamps on their passport from staff after completing each station.

### End-of-program celebration

The final celebration was more structured than the mid-program event, as it was a culmination of the entire summer’s work. The event opened with a circle activity planned by teachers as a showcase of what students had researched throughout the summer. After the activity, students received perfect attendance awards and character awards—all students received a laminated paper for their character award, and those who achieved perfect attendance were acknowledged with a small trophy. Students then guided families through the stations indicated on the passport, and collected their showcased materials to take home. Families also enjoyed refreshments of fruit, cheese, crackers, popsicles, and lemonade. Families were encouraged to take home any hanging photographs of their children.

### Recommendations

- Have a clear plan for students whose families do not attend. Be sure to have staff available for students to show their work to.
- Collect passports at the end of the mid-program showcase in order to have them available for the final celebration.
- Consider inviting 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers from both Haley and Young Achievers Schools to attend final celebration, in order to meet their future students.

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## **2.15: Family Feedback**

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Family feedback was an essential component of our Engagement Strategy. Opportunities for family feedback were available primarily through three different approaches: (1) “Good News Phone Calls”, (2) written surveys, and (3) in-person conversations. Email and electronic communication were occasionally used.

### I. Good News Phone Calls

The Good News Phone Calls were a major component of family feedback and played the dual role of both a behavior management and family engagement tool. The “Good News” aspects of the phone call inform parents of positive behavior and performance during the

program, and also note specific areas of improvement. Staff also asks families for any comments, questions, or concerns they may have with the program.

The phone calls were very positively received. During the first round of phone calls at least 17 parents expressed that their child was enjoying the program or was excited about it and at least 15 parents reported talking with their child at home about the program. Many parents also expressed appreciation of the call itself.

## II. Family Feedback Surveys

Three surveys were created for parent feedback. In order to receive the most returns, surveys were distributed during events where parents were already gathered.

### *1. Summer Explorer's Expectations Survey*

Distributed: June 21, 2012  
Event: Family Orientation Night  
Responses Collected: 12

Purpose: the intent of this survey was to demonstrate Summer Explorers staff interest and investment in meeting the goals and expectations of parents during the program. The Summer Explorer's Final Survey includes a follow-up question to conclude.

### *2. Parent Open House Survey*

Distributed: July 23, 2012  
Event: First Family Open House  
Responses Collected: 13

Purpose: the intent of this survey was to receive direct feedback on three of the major tools of the engagement strategy: the Newsletter, the Good News Phone Calls, and the Take-Home Activities. It was distributed during the First Family Open House as a station in the passport.

### *3. Summer Explorer's Final Survey*

Distributed: August 10, 2012  
Event: Final Family Open House  
Responses Collected: 0

Purpose: the intent of this survey was to gauge how engaged and informed families felt throughout the course of the program. Unfortunately, the structure of the final open house left no time for families to complete the survey, thus it was never distributed.

## III. Direct Contact

Every day of the program at least one staff member is present to engage families during both morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up. Staff sign-in students on the attendance sheet and actively engage in family interaction (refer back to family greeting). This provided opportunities for parents who were not readily available during the day to communicate with and offer feedback to staff.

Overall the three points of contact provided enough opportunities to contact and receive feedback from parents.

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## 2.16: Cultural Competency

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The Boston Nature Center is located in a very diverse area with a vast variety of cultures and languages; consequently cultural competency plays a vital role in any outreach strategy. Based on the Boston Nature Center's continued excellence in its commitment to cultural competency, ensuring that each family is given equal access to the same information and opportunities as others, it is of upmost importance to resolve the issues of language barriers in engaging with families.

### Recommendations:

The first and most crucial step in achieving cultural competency is identifying cultural needs very early in the program. Language barriers should be identified well before the program begins in the pre-program process. Once these barriers have been identified staff can then begin to assess the ways to accommodate these needs.

#### (1) Utilize staff

Although this seems like the simplest solution, it is nonetheless valuable. Identifying and utilizing the language capabilities of current staff can be invaluable to immediate language needs. This option requires being mindful of how much extra responsibility is added for staff members who have other responsibilities to attend to.

#### (2) Contact Organizations with Translation Services.

Organizations with such services do exist that assist in language translation and communication services. Seeking their cooperation and services is a valuable asset for language needs.

#### (3) Proactively Seek Alternative Contacts

There were many cases in which a student's parent or guardian may not have spoken English but an older sibling or close relative did. Identifying these alternatives can be incredibly valuable in transmitting information.

#### (4) Encourage Direct Child-to-Parent Translation

Oftentimes multilingual students were accustomed to regularly translating information. Encouraging this already available service can also be helpful for meeting immediate language needs.

#### (5) Translating Imperative Tools and Documents

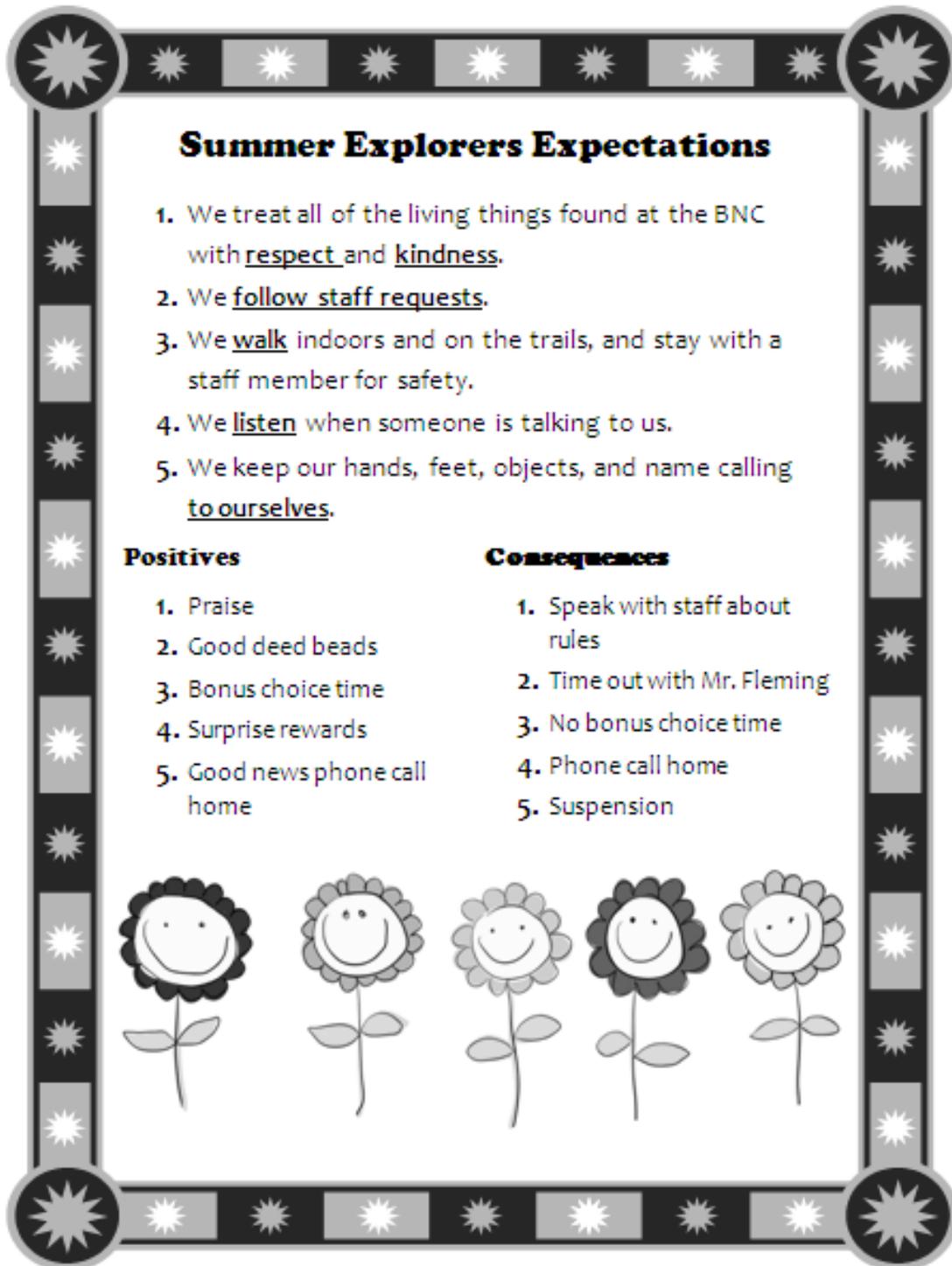
Certain documents with important information unquestionably needed translation. These included forms such as flyers and letters concerning information about the program, fieldtrips, and family showcases. However for other documents, full translations were less necessary given other commitments. Documents like the Weekly Newsletter would be too time consuming to translate entirely each week, however could include a section in another language. For these documents in which direct translation is not feasible, encouraging (4) direct child-to-parent translation seems the best alternative.

## Section 3: Templates

Templates included below serve as a sampling and a reference to direct Field Guide users to the templates on the BNC server.

### 3.1: Summer Explorers Expectations

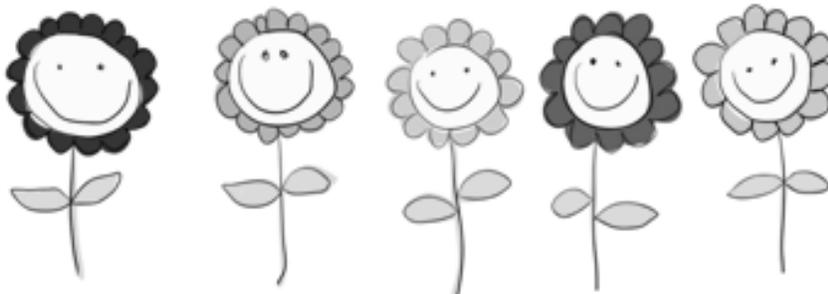
S:\Education\BNC Summer Explorers\2012\Expectations for Posting



## Summer Explorers Expectations

1. We treat all of the living things found at the BNC with respect and kindness.
2. We follow staff requests.
3. We walk indoors and on the trails, and stay with a staff member for safety.
4. We listen when someone is talking to us.
5. We keep our hands, feet, objects, and name calling to ourselves.

<b>Positives</b>	<b>Consequences</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Praise</li><li>2. Good deed beads</li><li>3. Bonus choice time</li><li>4. Surprise rewards</li><li>5. Good news phone call home</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Speak with staff about rules</li><li>2. Time out with Mr. Fleming</li><li>3. No bonus choice time</li><li>4. Phone call home</li><li>5. Suspension</li></ol>



### 3.2 : Good Deed Bead Chart

S:\Education\BNC Summer Explorers\2012\Family Engagement\Family

NAME \_\_\_\_\_



## My "Good Deed Bead" Charts



Week 1					Week 2					Week 3					Week 4					Week 5									
12					12					12					12					12					12				
11					11					11					11					11					11				
10					10					10					10					10					10				
9					9					9					9					9					9				
8					8					8					8					8					8				
7					7					7					7					7					7				
6					6					6					6					6					6				
5					5					5					5					5					5				
4					4					4					4					4					4				
3					3					3					3					3					3				
2					2					2					2					2					2				
1					1					1					1					1					1				
M	Tu	W	Th	F	M	Tu	W	Th	F	M	Tu	W	Th	F	M	Tu	W	Th	F	M	Tu	W	Th	F					
Weekly Total _____					Weekly Total _____					Weekly Total _____					Weekly Total _____					Weekly Total _____									

Campers earn beads each day for examples of positive behaviors and for following camp rules. Campers will chart their daily bead count. See how behavior changes day-to-day and week-to-week over the course of our Summer Explorer's program!

### 3.3: Sample Take Home Activity

S:\Education\BNC Summer Explorers\2012\Family Engagement\Family Engagement Field Guide Final\Tools\05 Take Home Family Activities\Activity Worksheets

# Chameleon Camouflage

Camper Name \_\_\_\_\_

You became experts at camouflage today, now it's time to test your skills.

Take your sneaky chameleon and find it a great secret spot to hide from predators.

Now get someone at home to try to find your sly creature!

How long did it take to find the Chameleon? \_\_\_\_\_

What kinds of objects did the Chameleon camouflage into? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



### 3.4: Sample Newsletter

S:\Education\BNC Summer Explorers\2012\Family Engagement\Family Engagement Field Guide Final\Tools\03 Family Newsletter

#### FRONT

 **Mass Audubon** Boston Nature Center 500 Walk Hill Street, Mattapan, MA

**Theme of the Week**  
Adaptations of animals that live in  
**water**



**Week 4** Summer Explorers Weekly

**Puzzle Corner**   
Unscramble these words to reveal key words related to aquatic animals.

1. NPOD  
-----
2. BRAC  
-----
3. ICAQATU  
-----
4. OATCS  
-----



### Carson Beach & Lake Hibiscus

Carson Beach is a public beach in the South Boston neighborhood of Boston. On Wednesday, Summer Explorers visited Carson beach to observe coastal animals such as spider crabs, mussels and sea grapes.

On Thursday we walked to Lake Hibiscus located in the Forest Hills Cemetery. At Lake Hibiscus Summer Explorers observed pond habitats. They collected animals such as frogs, water beetles, water scorpions and even tadpoles!

Explorers wrote in their science journals about the challenges that both the pond and coastal animals experience living in these aquatic habitats.

Word of the week: ***Aquatic***



**Summer Celebration**

Families and friends are invited to join the Summer Explorers to celebrate the completion of a wonderful summer program! Experience some of our favorite daily activities, and celebrate the Explorers' achievements!

**Where:** 450B Walk Hill St., Mattapan, MA.

**When:** Friday, August 10<sup>th</sup> (last day of program)

**Time:** 2:45pm–3:45pm

**Light refreshments will be provided.**



**Catch a Quote!**

**Explorers' highlights of the week**

"I loved holding a crab in my hand at Carson Beach!"

This week at camp I found a spider crab shell!"

because we got to touch animals in the water. We caught a tadpole!"

"I liked math this week; it was cool! My favorite parts about camp are math and recess!"



Answers to Puzzle Corner

1. Pond
2. Crab
3. Aquatic
4. Coast

The Boston Nature Center "Summer Explorers Program" is a summer learning partnership between Mass Audubon's Boston Nature Center, Boston Public Schools, and Boston After School and Beyond.

This Newsletter was produced by three fellows from the AmeriCorps New Sector Summer Fellowship in Social Enterprise Program: Christina Kirk, Zoe Tabachnick, and Jamara Wakefield.

### 3.5: Progress Reports

S:\Education\BNC Summer Explorers\2012\Family Engagement\Family Engagement Field Guide\_Final\Tools\07 Weekly Progress Reports

Camper's Name \_\_\_\_\_

	Needs Improvement	Met Expectations	Exceeded Expectations	Comments
Academic Progress in Math				
Academic Progress in Reading and Writing				
Academic Progress during Scientific Investigations				
Positive interactions with peers				
Behavior				

### 3.6: Phone Call Availability Form

S:\Education\BNC Summer Explorers\2012\Family Engagement\Family Engagement Field Guide Final\Tools\01 Good News Phone Calls to Families\PDFs

#### Summer Explorers Phone Availability Form



Explorer Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

We are excited to tell you that have a wonderful group of Explorers this summer! We will periodically be making "Good News Phone Calls" to let you know about your Explorer's great participation, behavior, and enthusiasm. Please indicate below the best time to reach you for "Good News Phone Calls."

Phone Call Availability

Morning (7 – 11 AM)	Afternoon (12 – 5 PM)	Evening (6 – 8 PM)

Preferred Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

**HAPPY EXPLORING!**

### 3.7: Passport Activities for Family Showcase and Final Celebration

S:\Education\BNC Summer Explorers\2012\Family Engagement\Family Engagement Field Guide Final\Tools\04 Open House Tools

#### MID-PROGRAM PASSPORT ACTIVITY

<b>Station #1</b>	<b>Ms. Teixeira's Room</b>
<b>Exhibit Dens</b>	
<i>Parents write something that you learned about:</i>	
1. Your students animal	STAMP
2. Another Students animal	

<b>Station #2</b>	<b>Ms. Harris' Room</b>
<b>Math Station</b>	
<i>During Math students pick an existing problem they have written or write/select a new problem. Students then write a reflection about what they have learned in math so far.</i>	
STAMP	<i>Write the answer to the math problem that your student wrote here:</i>

<b>Station #3</b>	<b>Main Cottage Big Room</b>
<b>Science Station</b>	
<i>Using your child's science journal identify one animal and the adaptation your child has studied and write answer below.</i>	
STAMP	Answer:

<b>Station #4</b>	<b>Main Cottage Hallway</b>
<b>Family Information Station</b>	
<i>Complete the family survey and return to staff member</i>	
STAMP	<b>Congratulations</b> Student Name: & Adult Name: completed their passport mission together on Friday July 27, 2012.

# FINAL CELEBRATION PASSPORT ACTIVITY



## Station 1: Math Problems

Explorers have written a multiplication problem about the animal they have studied. Families, solve the problem together and record the answer below.

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STAMP HERE



## Station 4: Portfolio of Writing Samples

Explorers have assembled a portfolio of their best writing. Families, record why your Explorer selected 1 piece of work as his or her "best work."

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STAMP HERE

## Station 2: Research Animal Flip Books



Explorers have assembled their research into index cards on a ring. Families, record 1 adaptation and 1 detail about the animal's habitat below.

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STAMP HERE

## Station 5: Other Explorers' Work



Families, look at work that is not your Explorer's and write one interesting fact about that Explorer's animal below.

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STAMP HERE



## Station 3: Clay Model of Research Animal

Explorers made clay models of their research animal. Families, record 1 adaptation that can be seen on the model.

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STAMP HERE



## Station 6: Collect Take-Home Packets

Congratulations on completing a successful summer exploration! We hope you have enjoyed your experience and have learned a lot. Enjoy the rest of your summer, and best of luck in 4<sup>th</sup> grade!

Please collect a packet of materials to take home to remember your experience at BNC!

STAMP HERE

### 3.8: Family Surveys

S:\Education\BNC Summer Explorers\2012\Family Engagement\Family Engagement Field Guide Final\Tools\02 Family Surveys

#### MID-PROGRAM FAMILY FEEDBACK SURVEY

##### Family Open House Survey!

Your feedback is incredibly important to us. Please circle the response or responses that best describe your experience.

##### The Weekly Newsletter

I have never seen it

I have only seen it

I have read some of it

I have read most of it

I always read it fully

Other (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

##### Good News Phone Calls

I have never received one

It was not important

It was somewhat important

It was very important

I would like to receive more

Other (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

##### One-Shot Activities

I have never seen one

I have never completed one with my Explorer

I have completed one with my Explorer

I have completed more than one with my Explorer

Other (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you have any additional thoughts or comments about the Summer Explorers Program so far, please use the space below

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# END OF PROGRAM FAMILY FEEDBACK SURVEY

## Summer Explorers Parent Survey

Please circle the response you believe best describes your experience.

### 1. I felt *informed* about what my child was doing in the program

Strongly disagree    Somewhat disagree    Neutral/No Opinion    Somewhat Agree    Strongly Agree

### 2. I felt *engaged* in my child's experience with the Summer Explorer's Program

Strongly disagree    Somewhat disagree    Neutral/No Opinion    Somewhat Agree    Strongly Agree

### 3. The Summer Explorer's Program

Did not meet my expectations    Met my expectations    Exceeded my expectations

We would love to hear your thoughts! If you have any additional comments or concerns about the Summer Explorers Program, please use the space below.

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Thank you for your participation and have a great summer!!

## Section 4: Conclusions

### 4.1: Tool Implementation and Program Length

Based on tool implementation, documentation, feedback, and evaluation, we propose how this may be applied to programs beyond the five-week BNC Summer Learning Program. We have categorized our core tools based on their compatibility with either short-term or long-term programs. Short-term programs are defined as those lasting one week or less, and may include week-long camps or day-long programs. Conversely, long-term programs may include a multi-week camp or a full school year.

The following family engagement tools can be modified to be implemented in a *short-term program*:

- Newsletter
- Good Deed Beads
- Take-Home Activities
- Open Houses

Newsletters, in some modified capacity, can be an effective way to give families an overview of the content students or campers cover in a short-term program.

Good Deed Beads will likely be an effective way to keep students or campers engaged throughout the day, while also serving as a measure for communicating to families about their students' performance.

Take-Home Activities can be especially effective in engaging families for a short term program, as it provides an opportunity for students to actively share the program with their families at home.

Open Houses can be modified appropriately to suit the needs of the length of the program. A full day program can invite families to participate in the last hour, and a week-long program can invite families to a closing event at the end of the week.

Note that not all of the aforementioned tools may be effective for every program. Program planners should use their discretion in terms of choosing and adapting family engagement tools appropriately.

The following family engagement tools can be modified to be implemented in a *long-term program*:

- Newsletter
- Good Deed Beads
- Progress Reports

- Open Houses
- Take-Home Activities

The aforementioned tools can be used according to instructions including in the Field Guide, modifying as necessary according to specific program needs.

## 4.2: Tool Implementation and Impact of Use

We also identified two different categories to define the impact of the family engagement tools. *Standalone* tools are those which engage families on an instance-by-instance basis, and do not necessarily need more than one use of the tool to be effective. *Long-term impact* tools are those which require consistency and regularity, and whose impact extends beyond the immediate use of the tool.

The following *standalone* tools are effective on an instance-by-instance basis and do not necessarily produce any culminating results:

- Newsletter
- Communication Folder
- Open Houses
- Take-Home Activities

The following *long-term impact* tools create a result that impacts beyond the immediate use of the tool:

- Good Deed Beads
- Progress Reports
- Good News Phone Calls
- Open Houses

Each tool can be modified to specific programs needs. Specifically, we have identified Open Houses as a tool that can impact as a standalone or long-term. The Summer Explorers 2012 Open Houses provided activities that built upon each other from one Open House to the next, providing a long-term impact. However, BNC Summer Camp Open Houses that exist on a weekly basis stand as their own events. Both types of Open Houses are effective based on individual program needs.

Note that even if a Good News Phone Call happens only once, it still has a *long-term impact* due to the relationship fostered between the program and the family. We found Good News Phone Calls to be the most impactful source of family engagement, as it supports a strong connection between the program and the family, encouraging further engagement in the future.