

Summer Camp FAQs

What are the summer camp hours?

Camp runs Monday through Friday with an early release every Wednesday afternoon. Hours can vary based on pick-up and drop-off locations. Please refer to the schedule below.

Location	Drop-off Time	Pick-up Time	Address
Charlestown bus* <i>*This opt-in service carries an additional transportation fee.</i>	8:00am	M, Tu, Th, F: 3:30pm W: 1:30pm	Warren Prescott School, Charlestown, MA
Westwood	8:45am	M, Tu, Th, F: 2:45pm W: 1:00pm	Westwood High School, Westwood, MA
Junior Camp (Trading Post)	8:45am	Monday-Friday: 1:00pm	Trading Post Hale, 80 Carby Street, Westwood MA

Where is the Trading Post located?

The Trading Post is Aspire's central location at Hale. The address to the entrance of Hale is 80 Carby St., Westwood, MA. Once you enter, follow the road for one mile (stay to the right when the road splits with a large parking lot to the left). After a sharp right turn, followed by a sharp left turn, you will arrive. The Trading Post is a log cabin with a green roof located on the right side of the road. Directly across from the Trading Post (on the left side of the road), you will see a dirt parking lot.

Do I have to sign up for the full 6 weeks?

Yes, participation in the full 6-week camp program is mandatory. Consistency is crucial to the success of our campers. We are a skills-based program that succeeds by creating a sense of group belonging and fostering connections between campers. If children come and go, it greatly impacts the success of the program, group process, and individual progress.

Can international families participate?

Yes. Aspire welcomes families who live outside the United States. We also welcome campers from other regions of the United States. Please note that English is the primary language used at Aspire. Please email us at mghaspire@mgb.org for more information about being an international or out-of-state camper.

What activities are offered at camp?

- Swimming (lessons and free swim)
- Boating
- Hiking/Nature Exploration
- Archery (for ages 9 and up)
- High Ropes Courses (for ages 9 and up)
- Low Ropes Courses
- Art
- Fishing
- Movement
- Music and Drama
- Science
- Gardening
- Late Night and Special Events

**What is the camper-to-staff ratio?**

Junior adventure camp ratios are 2 participants: 1 staff. Adventure Camp and Trailblazer's ratios are 3 participants: 1 staff. There is also an additional team of leadership staff available at all times on site.

What level of education and training does the staff have?

All Aspire summer staff have experience working with neurodiverse children of a similar profile to our campers in applied settings – many have post-secondary education and/or training in such areas as mental health, special education, speech and language, and occupational therapy. All staff take part in more than 40 hours of intensive pre-program training and orientation, as well as on-going professional development and individualized supervision throughout the summer.

Is this an “inclusion” camp environment?

No, Aspire campers are there to work on social, stress-management, and self-awareness skills. These goals are supported by both direct instruction in skill building and in-the-moment coaching to generalize the use of these skills across settings.

What types of special events or visiting exhibits happen during the summer at MGH Aspire?

Special events change year to year. All campers at Aspire participate in at least one visiting special event or exhibit each summer. In recent years, our campers have enjoyed a visiting zoo, create-your-own-story traveling puppet theatre and barnyard babies. Campers also have an opportunity to attend one Late Night experience with extra activity blocks, a pizza dinner, s'mores, and a movie. Adventure Camp Juniors may stay for a full day at camp.

What takes place during the Late Night?

After a full camp day, children participate in extra free swim and boating time. We have a pizza dinner, make s'mores, and watch a movie as voted on by campers!

Is there transportation available?

There is an optional bus service available from Charlestown, for an additional transportation fee. The bus pick-up is in Charlestown at the Warren Prescott School. At the end of the camp day, campers will leave Westwood, then return to the drop-off point back in Charlestown.

Are electronics or other personal items allowed?

No, camp is a technology-free zone. If participants bring any electronic devices, including cell phones, tablets, and personal gaming systems, staff will secure these items until the end of the camp day. Participants taking the Charlestown bus are permitted to bring and use technology during travel times, and this technology will be collected by group leaders upon arrival at Hale.

Is the camp nut free? How does the staff handle food allergies?

Aspire camp is “nut free.” We do not serve any nut products and we require that families refrain from sending any nut products with their children. However, the facilities we use do not require nut-free restrictions, and therefore we cannot guarantee a nut-free environment. We do our best to sanitize shared camper spaces and will discuss specific concerns/accommodations on a case-by-case basis.

Prior to Camp, Aspire staff review the health information of each child and make note of special diets or health concerns. A list of allergies and dietary restrictions is maintained at our camp site along with how to treat if a child has a reaction. Leadership staff are First Aid and CPR certified and participate in additional pre-camp training around allergen safety and management. Leadership staff receive additional healthcare training to maintain safety standards.

Is there a nurse on site?

There is a nurse and EMT on site at all times, both employed by Hale.

Is there aftercare available in the afternoons?

No, we do not have any aftercare options available at camp. Staff use the afternoons for planning, supervision, and ongoing professional development.

What happens on rainy days at camp?

Inclement weather does alter our daily schedule, although our goal is to minimize the change. At Hale we look to find alternative indoor programming such as art, cooking, board games, movement, or music. All activities focus on our core mission, rain or shine.

What do I need to pack in my child's backpack?

Please send the following to camp EVERY DAY:

- Backpack that fits participant's body size.
- Morning Snack (NUT FREE)
- Lunch (NUT FREE)
- Water bottle filled with water and ice (reusable bottle preferred).
- Appropriate attire and weather gear for the day, e.g., cool - sweatshirt, rainy - raincoat.
- Appropriate footwear for the day's activities. Generally, we recommend sturdy sneakers for walking or light hiking (sandals and open toes are not allowed).
- Swimsuit and towel, even if swimming is not on your child's schedule that day.
- One change of clothes and an extra pair of socks, to be stored throughout the summer in the event that a change is needed. Please label all clothing with your child's name.

Aspire staff are not liable for the loss or damage of the participants' items.

Please DO NOT send to camp:

- Participants should not bring personal sports or watercraft equipment, stuffed animals, toys, jewelry, trading cards, books, cameras, or electronic devices.
- Clothing should be developmentally appropriate and conducive to outdoor activities.
- Sunscreen: Please apply sunscreen, of at least SPF 30, to the participant's exposed skin prior to leaving home in the morning. We will provide additional sunscreen to be applied at camp if necessary, with parental permission. We encourage the use of hats, long sleeve shirts, sunglasses and lip balm to provide additional skin protection.
- Bug spray: Please apply bug spray to the participant's exposed skin prior to leaving home in the morning. We will provide additional bug spray to be applied at camp, if necessary, with parental permission. If participants need to use a different kind of bug spray than is provided, please give it directly to staff members, and they will be responsible for carrying and applying the family's preferred type of bug spray.

Items never allowed on site by participants, family members, or staff include alcohol, drugs, weapons, firearms, personal sports equipment, vehicles, and animals. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the program site at any time.