

Charter and Operational Document for the Béla Bartók Hungarian School and Pre-School (Boskola)

Mission Statement

To provide a regular venue for children of Boston-area families of Hungarian descent or interest that promotes learning and instills a love for the Hungarian language and culture in a relaxed and playful environment; and which promotes and strengthens friendships within the Hungarian community.

Name, Location, Meeting Times

Name: Béla Bartók Hungarian School and Pre-School of Boston (Boskola)

Location: Follen Community Church, 755 Massachusetts Avenue, Lexington MA 02420

Contact Information:

- The maintenance and expansion of critical contacts pertaining to Boskola is the responsibility of the school principal.
- Web site: <http://www.boskola.org>
- Mailing lists:
 - boskola@yahoogroups.com (open to all enrolled families)
 - boskola_tanacs@yahoogroups.com (restricted to administration and Governing Council)
- Email: boskola@boskola.org
- Meeting times:
 - Nominally every other Saturday; specific dates dependent on church schedule
 - Pre-school and school hours: 9:45 – 12:00
 - Library: 12:00 – 12:30
 - Scouts: 12:15 – 14:30

Organization and Finances

Boskola performs its mission within the purview of the non-profit Hungarian Society of Massachusetts (HSM). Proceeds from tuition fees and charitable donations are bookkept by the HSM in a separate account, the disposition of which is determined solely by the Boskola Governing Council. Payments, deposits, withdrawals, and budgeting are performed by the school principal in accordance with the lesson plans of Boskola teachers and in cooperation with its leadership. An annual report on the school's finances is presented at the end of the school year by the principal, to be approved by the Governing Council.

Registration for the academic year is administered by the school principal and is done on an annual basis. Tuition is set by the Boskola Governing Council before the start of the academic year, the total of which may be paid in semiannual increments either in cash or by check. Families with multiple children enrolled in the program are eligible for discounts, and those with financial difficulties may be eligible for reduced tuition. The latter is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, with the goal that no interested child be excluded from the program for financial reasons. Tuition fees are waived for children of (volunteer) teachers, and members of the HSM receive a discount. Contributions to the school above and beyond the tuition fee may be considered tax-exempt charitable donations, although in accordance with the tax code, the tuition fee itself may not be.

Members of Boskola are defined to be those individuals whose child(ren) attend school on a regular basis and/or who participate in the school's work and activities. The principal of Boskola and all of its teachers are unpaid volunteers who perform their work solely for the satisfaction of nurturing Hungarian children. Boskola welcomes new members, particularly trained teachers, artists, folk artists, and musicians, to participate in furthering the mission of the school. Acceptance of any new volunteers is subject to the approval of the Governing Council.

Friends also help to further Boskola's mission, where a friend is defined as any individual or organization not directly involved in teaching and/or whose children do not attend the school, but who/which seeks to support the school's mission through donations or pledges. Boskola welcomes diverse forms of support, grants, and gifts; as well as the development of any scholarship funds for the benefit of its students.

In accordance with the laws of the United States of the America and the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all Boskola participants (members, friends, etc.) are guaranteed equal rights and non-discrimination on the basis on sex, race, language, religious/political persuasion, or ethnicity.

The Boskola Governing Council

The Boskola Governing Council is the decision-making entity for the school.

Members of the Governing Council include:

- The principal of Boskola
- The teachers of Boskola
- Representatives of the school's Parent-Teacher Association (2 individuals)
- One delegate from the HSM

Responsibilities of the Boskola teachers include teaching classes, development of the curriculum, and selection/procurement of textbooks and supporting materials. At the beginning of the school year, the teachers hold a parent-teacher conference to introduce the planned syllabus, and another conference is scheduled at the end of the year at which they report on the year's accomplishments.

The Governing Council's mandate is for one year, from the school's opening convocation to its closing ceremonies.

Other responsibilities of the Governing Council:

- Maintaining contact with other official and partner organizations, such as the Hungarian Scout Association in Exteris, the HSM, and other Hungarian schools;
- Supporting the curriculum put forth by the teachers;
- Organizing school celebrations and field trips;
- Ensuring the school's physical venue;
- Obtaining substitute teachers, if necessary;
- Communicating and collaborating with the Parent-Teacher Association;
- Organizing supporting activities (e.g. contests, scholarships, donations, mailing lists, web sites, the school library, correspondence, etc.)

Governing Council Operational Schedule:

- Monthly or bi-monthly working meetings,
- Semiannual, scheduled General Meeting of all Boskola members, with official minutes available for review,
- Ad-hoc working meetings to address any urgent issues,
- In the event of an issue that cannot be solved by the Governing Council, a Special Meeting of all Boskola members.

Boskola General Meeting

The topmost governing body of Boskola is the General Meeting of all its members. Its purview includes:

- Amendment of the charter
- Acceptance of the annual report

General Meetings are held as needed, but not fewer than twice per year (scheduled meeting). A quorum of at least half the membership must be present in order for votes to be taken, and motions may be passed by a simple majority. Each family unit is accorded one vote.

The Parent-Teacher Relationship

The existence of a productive, collaborative relationship between parents and teachers is a prerequisite for successful teaching. Methods of collaboration include but are not limited to keeping in contact and being responsive to needs via e-mail as well as actively helping with preparation (e.g. setting tables for lunch, cleaning up after classes, procurement of materials, etc.) This support enables the teachers to focus their time and energy on their classroom preparations.

It is the responsibility of the parents to notify teachers of their children's absences.

Parent-Teacher Association (SZMK)

The SZMK is the entity that embodies the rights and responsibilities of Boskola parents, meeting as needed, but no fewer than twice per year.

The SZMK provides a mechanism to develop strong ties between the parents and the school, to represent and discuss parents' views and opinions, and to exchange information between parents and the school. Successful academic development of the students cannot be achieved without parental support; the SZMK helps create the requisite environment for this success. Additionally, it plays an active role in organizing school events, such as Carnival, the ball, and the poetry contest.

The SZMK may also take the opportunity as needed to organize enrichment events for younger children and parents, such as playgroups, Hungarian conversation/tutoring, and library services, which do not interfere with the mainline programming and are consistent with Boskola's mission.

Finally, the SZMK ensures compliance with the rental agreement, such as organizing cleanup duties and ensuring proper and appropriate use of the facilities.

Teaching Philosophy

Membership in Boskola is entirely voluntary. It is not part of any official school system, either American or Hungarian, and as such no coursework completed under its purview may be counted toward credit in any other private or public institution.

Boskola accepts all pre-school through school-age children.

All teaching is performed exclusively in the Hungarian language.

Boskola Policies

Academic Year

Classes meet nominally every other Saturday from September through June, with specific dates determined by the rental agreement. The school year starts with the opening convocation and ends with the closing ceremonies.

Official holidays celebrated by Boskola include Christmas, Carnival, Easter, and Mother's Day.

Boskola may occasionally also participate in national holiday celebrations organized by the HSM.

Curriculum

The curriculum is developed by Boskola teachers in accordance with the school's charter. As Boskola has no official connection to any Hungarian or American scholastic organization, its goals and curriculum are determined solely by the local Hungarian community rather than by any external requirements.

Boskola's curriculum for school-age children is particularly weighted toward the acquisition of critical skills and knowledge related to Hungary that is not readily obtained elsewhere, such as:

- A strong understanding and correct usage of the Hungarian alphabet;
- Fluent Hungarian reading and writing, development of composition skills, and broadening of Hungarian vocabulary;
- Mastery of Hungarian grammar and spelling,
- Development of interest in the classics of Hungarian children's and youth literature;
- Promoting Hungarian letter writing and the development and nurture of Hungarian contacts and friendships made during trips to Hungary;
- Analysis of the major works of Hungarian literature, music, and fine arts;
- Introduction to the major events and personalities of Hungarian history;
- Exposure to the natural treasures and resources of Hungary;
- Understanding the basics of Hungarian architecture, folk art, and folk music;
- Enlivening the crafts and traditions unique to important Hungarian holidays.

The Boskola Pre-School's core values and mission includes:

- Development of the community; nurture, preservation of, and familiarization with Hungarian traditions; strengthening of language skills,
- Offering an age-appropriate curriculum in a family-style, nurturing environment through games and the arts (music, dance, storytelling, poetry, dramatic play, children's folk games).

Tuition

Tuition fees are established based on membership in the HSM. Non-members are subject to a higher tuition rate.

Classes

The enrollment numbers determine how Boskola students are divided into classes. Some classes may be comprised of a single age group, others of multiple age groups but with similar language proficiency.

Transfer between classes may be done only with the mutual agreement of the affected teachers.

Enrollment Requirements

Children must be a minimum of 3 years old and must be toilet trained in order to enroll in pre-school.

School-aged children must demonstrate a minimum level of age-appropriate knowledge of Hungarian, as assessed by Boskola teachers.

Also required for enrollment is a signed agreement by parents to follow the guidelines set forth in the Boskola Collaborative Statement.

Dismissal

Disruptive or dangerous behavior during classroom or group activities constitutes grounds for dismissal of a student. In this eventuality, there is a refund given of the prorated tuition fee. A teacher may initiate a recommendation for dismissal, which would then take place only with the approval of the school's Governing Council.

Registration

Families may register for the following academic year in May through the final session of the previous year. In reasonable cases, it may be possible to register up to the beginning of the first session of the new academic year.

Boskola Specific Aims

The primary goal of Boskola is to provide the foundation for an understanding of Hungary and the Hungarian language; a specific aim is to plant the seeds of knowledge and love of Hungarian in children's hearts so that they may grow into a strong sense of belonging to the Hungarian community. Boskola aims to be an institution where serious study and play combine to provide children of diverse ages the lifelong lessons afforded by a study of the Hungarian language and culture.

Boskola aims for children to develop a true affection for the roots of the Hungarian nation, so that they study of their own volition rather than because they have to meet the expectations of parents or guardians.

It is *not* currently part of the goals of Boskola to:

- Offer credit or serve as a substitute for any part of the American school system;
- Teach Hungarian to those who have no knowledge of the language, either because they have not learned it or because they have forgotten it;
- Teach subjects not related to Hungarian (e.g. mathematics, physics, biology, etc.). It is outside the scope of Boskola to provide either teaching or tutoring in any of these subjects.

Relationship Between Boskola and the Hungarian Society of Massachusetts (HSM)

Boskola's activities take place within the framework of the non-profit Hungarian Society of Massachusetts (HSM), a tax-exempt organization per the Code of Federal Regulations Title 26, Section 1.501(c)(3)-1. Proceeds from tuition fees and charitable donations are held by the HSM in a separately administered Boskola account. The use and apportioning of these funds is determined solely by the Boskola Governing Council.

One representative of the HSM Board of Directors also has a seat on the Boskola Governing Council.

One representative of the Boskola Governing Council also participates in the leadership of the HSM.

Boskola and Connections to Other Organizations

Connection to the Hungarian Scout Association in Exteris

The goals and programming of Boskola and the Hungarian Scout Association are similar, being concerned with education and development of the same age group. For this reason, the two organizations currently meet on the same days, one program following the other, and offer collaborative and mutually supportive curricula. Although the Scouts are independent of Boskola, the two entities periodically organize joint events, particularly in celebration of major annual holidays.

A representative of the Hungarian Scout Association is invited to sit in on meetings of the Boskola Governing Council as a non-voting member.

Other Connections and Partner Institutions

Boskola currently maintains close contact with the following American and Hungarian institutions and organizations:

- Balassi Bálint Institute of Hungary
- Associations of North American Hungarian School Teachers
- Honorary Hungarian Consulate of Boston
- Hungarian American Coalition

Signatories

The Boskola Governing Council