

DISCOVERY SCHOOL
PARENT HANDBOOK



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Incorporated in 1974



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Dear Discovery School Parents and Prospective Parents:

We have selected Discovery School for our children because of its exciting curriculum, spirit, and especially because of its philosophy that children learn and grow through active play. In our programs, children learn through hands-on discovery, thought provoking projects and discussions, and by encouragement of independent thinking. This very unique and special environment gently guides our children to tasks that prepare them wonderfully for their next experiences in a traditional school setting. Teachers promote positive feelings in the children about themselves and the value of their work. Most of all, the children of Discovery School know they are loved, think of themselves as capable, engaged learners, and consider learning fun.

Rather than rushing children prematurely into quiet desk work with paper and pencil tasks, our children **play** with early concepts. They cook, plant gardens, care for animals, develop motor skills, learn Spanish and music. They take exciting field trips to museums, parks, community events and celebrations. They make costumes and put on shows. They paint, sculpt, sew and glue. All these are pre-academic skills that prepare them for elementary school and are promoted in a multi-sensory way. Those of us with older children who have “graduated” to other schools, are proud of how other teachers and principals complement our children’s readiness and their excitement about learning.

Discovery School is totally parent owned and governed. We are lucky to have a talented and committed Director and an outstanding Staff, but it is only with our cooperative effort that we can provide the best possible preschool environment for our children. Our goal is for any parent who wants to send their child to Discovery School to be able to do so, so we depend on maintaining tuition prices that are affordable and competitive, as well as establishing a scholarship fund to provide financial assistance to qualified families.

Tuition alone cannot cover expenses. Our fundraising activities augment our income revenue and give families an opportunity to participate in activities that directly benefit the children while being great fun! Parents are encouraged to support our major fundraising events, serve on committees or the Board of Directors, help with field trips, or pitch in when we need a work day at the school. Parents have been instrumental in our wonderfully successful fund raisers, improving our playground, gardens and classroom upgrades. Even small gifts of time and energy can make a **big** difference!

We welcome you and your child to our Discovery family, and appreciate the opportunity to share in a wonderful Early Childhood experience.

Thank you, and have a wonderful year ahead.

The Discovery School Board of Directors

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INTRODUCTION

Discovery School has provided a unique preschool experience for children in San Antonio and surrounding areas for over three decades. Originally an outreach program of the First Unitarian Church, Discovery School of San Antonio, Inc. separated and became incorporated in 1974. It has prospered and grown to an enrollment of over 175 children aged two through seven years, and is in the forefront of developmentally appropriate preschool environments. In 1989, Discovery School was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which recognizes excellence in curriculum, interactions among staff, children, and parents, physical environment, staffing, and health and safety. Of the over 1,000 preschool programs in San Antonio, less than 5% are accredited. Discovery School has continued to maintain this highest level of performance.

Discovery School of San Antonio, Inc. is unique in several ways. It is a private, non-profit, tax-exempt, multi-denominational preschool governed by a volunteer Parent Board of Directors. Discovery School is not subsidized by any other organization. Instead, it maximizes its fundraising efforts, seeks private grants, and encourages Parent participation. Discovery School offers the highest quality preschool education, employs early childhood specialists, and strives to keep its tuition affordable to a wide community base, as well as offering a scholarship program to assist families in need.

Discovery School does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, creed, national or ethnic origin with regard to hiring, admissions, administration of its educational policies, or its scholarship program. Discovery School is willing to work with families of children with special learning and/or physical needs.

DISCOVERY SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Discovery School provides preschool children with a nurturing environment in which a positive attitude toward education can develop. Emphasis is placed on laying a firm foundation upon which children can develop their full potential as sensitive, caring and creative human beings. Discovery School believes children should be active, involved learners, who deal with real experiences and concrete materials, in order to explore and manipulate in the process of learning. Close interaction between the family and school is an essential part of the educational process and the program is designed to provide children and their families additional experience in which to grow together.

To facilitate the child's emotional, physical, intellectual and social growth, the following goals have been defined:

1. To assist the child and his/her family in the important transition from home to school by providing an atmosphere of warmth, security, and trust in which positive relationships with teachers and classmates develop. A positive self-image, a concern and respect for others, a joy of learning, and a sense of humor are important goals.
2. To provide a wide variety of experiences designated to develop the child's self-confidence and mastery of his environment. The child has opportunities to initiate activities, make decisions, explore his world, make new discoveries, manipulate materials, experience success, and take pride in his/her accomplishments.
3. To provide a curriculum which reflects an orderly progression of skill development that is age appropriate, and yet flexible enough to address the various levels of readiness within the class. Children are encouraged to be curious, to wonder and to seek answers to questions. Special attention is given to the preparation skills important for future success in school. The child's listening, comprehension, fine and gross motor skills are developed. Reading, writing and math readiness evolve from the mastery of these basic tools.
4. To provide learning experiences which foster the value of our immediate culture, and the diversity of the cultures within our world. To provide the guidance necessary to help him live effectively with other children and adults, and to value his own rights and the rights of others.

Discovery School considers that attention to these specific developmental needs will significantly contribute to the development of happy, enthusiastic, and flexible youngsters who can become active and purposeful members of society.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

The Discovery School Curriculum is the result of many years of dedication and hard work, and evolves with the needs of the children. Based on our conviction that learning is a vital, active process that involves the child on many cognitive levels and through all sensory modalities, our curriculum incorporates the Unit Topic Approach. The objective of the Unit Approach is to present facts, skills and concepts in a multi-dimensional, meaningful way. Learning is most effective when the topics are directly related to the child's interests, involve their senses, allow for diversity, are enriched by materials and resources within the learning environment, and include activities that nurture his quest for information about himself and his world.

Within a well-organized framework, teachers develop curriculum topics that are based on, and expand, children's natural curiosity and interests. Younger age groups explore topics that are concrete and familiar, while older groups delve into more abstract, complex themes. Phonemes (letters and letter sounds) are introduced in conjunction with units of study so that planned activities reinforce the letter or topic. Facts, skills and concepts are presented through active learning such as center activities, field trips, books, art activities, cooking and special projects. In this multi-dimensional approach, each child is able to gain information in the way he learns best. The Discovery School curriculum is designed to engage children in their learning and to elicit an active response from each child. Our curriculum is an ongoing spiral, where each new activity builds on previously gained skills and knowledge.

The Discovery School Curriculum addresses all developmental domains – social emotional, language and communication, literacy (reading and writing), mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, physical development and technology. A Developmental Checklist has been developed for each age group that identifies basic skill progression and developmental landmarks within these domains. Using this information, teachers can choose activities that are developmentally appropriate for children of various ages and skill levels. Portfolio collections of work samples, rubrics, and other assessment tools are also used to document growth and development and to determine individual educational plans. Other forms of assessment and evaluation may include photographing the child demonstrating a skill or developmental stage, Teacher narratives and anecdotal records.

As an authentic reflection of our educational philosophy, the curriculum is integrated into a daily schedule that provides a balance of teacher led/child initiated, active/quiet, whole group/ small group/ 1:1/ individual, and inside/ outside activities. The schedule also allows time for transitions, resource classes and snack and/or meals.

CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Built on our long-standing philosophical commitment to provide active experiences and learning through play, our curriculum resources lay an excellent foundation for learning. Skills and materials are sequential, developmentally and age appropriate. Within each topic, teachers choose specific activities that take into consideration the needs and readiness levels of the children as well as her unique teaching style. Activities for each topic are integrated across the curriculum to include: basic vocabulary and language enrichment; math and literacy challenges; science/discovery explorations; creative art projects; songs and finger plays; field trips or special guests; cooking projects; fine and gross motor activities.

Our curriculum resources include a school library, teacher resource library, audio/ visual materials, folder games, Topic Boxes (collections of related props and special materials) and computer software for the older age groups. We draw instructional elements from the *Math Their Way* and *Handwriting Without Tears* and *Daily 5* programs. Materials are continually reviewed to assure the continuity and diversity of the curriculum resources. Staff review the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills objectives and other standards to ensure that our curriculum goals align with those of the programs to which our students will matriculate.

LEARNING CENTERS

Inviting, engaging learning centers encourage children to interact with materials and peers, to make choices, move freely and independently, attempt new skills, challenge or reinforce their learning. Center activities draw children to areas that they might not have chosen otherwise, or allow them to revisit favorite activities. They give children opportunities to learn individually or in small groups, while allowing the teacher to take advantage of moments of readiness, keen interest, and desire.

Children are gently enticed into the mainstream of learning. With time and encouragement, every child soon comes to enjoy all of the available centers and activities. The shy child may choose a quiet corner, while another child may join a group in dramatic play or in a learning game that requires several participants. A child with an interest in art may choose to start her day in that area, whereas another child might enjoy quietly working with play dough.

The focus of the learning centers and their materials change throughout the month, depending on the unit of study, the age level, and the individual needs of the class. The following list is the minimum type of centers in each classroom.

ART

Art activities vary on a daily or weekly basis, and are often topic related. Throughout the year children will experience drawing, painting, sculpting; working with clay, textiles, and recycled materials. Some projects are teacher directed, but there is ample opportunity for creativity and experimentation. The Art Center includes the easel and free art area with crayons, markers, pencils, glue, scissors, scrap paper and collage materials. By experimenting with a variety of media and techniques, a child develops imaginative thinking, creative expression, fine motor and discriminatory skills in addition to building an appreciation for his own work and that of his

peers. Art activities help children creatively express their thoughts and feelings and reinforce fine-motor skills and concept development.

MANIPULATIVE TOYS

Working with puzzles, lotto games, peg boards, stringing beads, magnets, sorting toys and Legos, a child develops the eye-hand coordination, manipulative, fine motor, and visual discrimination skills that are critical for reading, writing and math readiness. Activities help improve small-muscle development and eye-hand coordination. By manipulating materials in this center, a child also increases reasoning, problem solving, and decision making skills while strengthening motor planning and abstract thinking capabilities.

BLOCK PLAY

Included in this center may be wooden, bristle, magnetic, foam or cardboard blocks. Block Play is an important part of all rooms, where the child learns mathematical concepts of size, weight, symmetry, cause and effect as well as the social skills in the give and take of cooperative play. Various props that relate to the theme being studied, writing or sketching materials, or printed resources (blueprints, architectural photos) may be added periodically. Putting blocks away provides experience with visual discrimination, sorting, organizing and taking responsibility for our classroom.

DRAMATIC PLAY

Dramatic Play includes dress-up clothes, furniture, household equipment and appliances, dolls, and props. Materials reflect our cultural diversity. The "housekeeping" center can easily be changed into a grocery store, office, space station, cave, tropical rainforest, or Physician's office where the child can enact familiar or fantasy situations. Children are given freedom to assume traditional and non-traditional roles, use language, and negotiate the dynamics of their play. Dramatic Play fosters role-playing, practicing life-skills, improves social skills, increases self-esteem, builds vocabulary; encourages cooperation, imagination, self-expression and problem solving among peers.

READING CORNER AND LISTENING CENTERS

Cozy, quiet settings with pillows, carpet or child-sized rocking chairs are provided where the child experiences not only daily story time, but may choose to spend individual, small group or 1:1 time with a Teacher quietly "reading" or listening to recordings. The Reading Center encourages an interest in, and respect for, literature, strengthens visual perception and reinforces reading readiness skills. Flannel boards and puppets are often included for creative story telling. The children increase language skills, gain appreciation for books, build vocabulary, expand their knowledge base, develop listening skills and increase their attention span.

SCIENCE AREA

The Science table provides an opportunity to observe nature (plants, insects, rocks, shells, bird nests, etc.), and work with scientific tools such as magnifying glasses, prisms, magnets, scales and weights. With these materials, the child begins to form scientific and mathematical concepts and may engage in simple experimentation. Activities provided in the Science Area develop sensory awareness, enhance a child's natural curiosity, and encourage observation and discriminatory skills. Most classrooms also have a classroom "pet" (guinea pig, fish, or bird) and live plants which foster care-taking skills, respect for nature and caring for our environment.

MUSIC CENTER

This area allows children to develop creative expression, sound discrimination and an appreciation for different kinds of music. A variety of musical and rhythm instruments are available, as well as a CD player and a diverse selection of music. Children can experience rhythms, beats, musical tones and singing from around the world, or create their own “song”. The Music Center strengthens auditory discrimination, fosters creative expression through music and movement, encourages large and small muscle coordination, and taps into a child’s innate love of music, rhythm, movement and song.

WOODWORKING

In the Woodworking Center, children have a chance to work with some of the tools they may see being used in the “real world”. The Center may include child-sized safety goggles, hammers, screwdrivers, wrenches, a pounding block for nails, nuts and bolts, tool belt, level and measuring tape. The use of tools helps them develop problem solving and design skills, hone their fine and gross motor skills, increase eye/hand coordination, and explore mathematical and scientific concepts while learning about the proper use of, and safety guidelines for, simple tools.

SAND/WATER SENSORY TABLE

To pour and measure, touch and squish, fill and dump, dig and tunnel are important to the development of a child’s sensory awareness. Using measuring cups, scoops, funnels, sand/water wheels, pumps, egg-beaters, molds and other manipulatives, children gain an understanding of basic scientific and mathematical concepts. Activities allow children to experiment with textures and properties of different substances. In addition to sand and water, sensory tubs might incorporate seeds, ice, “goop”, flour, colored rice, feathers, deer corn, balls, pom poms, paper for cutting practice, soil and magnifying glasses, jelly spheres, or other materials.

MATH

By interacting with Math based manipulatives, games and materials that are available throughout the room and reinforced throughout the day, children explore sorting, seriation, measurement, classification, geometric shapes, 1:1 correspondence, numeral recognition, time, money, graphing and other mathematical concepts. These early experiences create number sense, build an understanding of number relationships, and develop mathematical vocabulary. Math activities may include folder games targeting a specific skill or concept, board games, puzzles, or pencil and paper tasks. Children create graphs, lists, and charts; use objects to create sets, venn diagrams, or to form math sentences; use standard and non-standard units of measurement, and use 1:1 correspondence as they help set out snack, take roll, or count to 100. Mathematical understanding is built upon extensive work with concrete materials, pictorial representation, and abstract reasoning.

LITERACY CENTERS

The Literacy Center may include various writing tools (pens, pencils, markers, paper, notepads, stencils, letter stamps), phonemic awareness materials (letter games, rhyming words, class books), and other activities that develop writing, language, and reading readiness skills. Activities may introduce, reinforce or enhance letter recognition, letter/sound identification, upper/lower case formation, creative writing, proper handwriting mechanics or environmental print. While at the Literacy Center, a child might assemble an alphabet puzzle, create a letter page, sort objects by initial sound, compose a story, match upper and lower case letters, create a class book, record information, copy shapes, letters or words. In the early years, the focus is on identifying and discriminating sounds, making letter/sound association and distinguishing letters in isolation. Once basic skills are mastered, literacy activities move from inventive to more

traditional spelling, sight words, word families, the mechanics of punctuation, capitalization and sentence formation, elements of story writing, and incorporating leveled readers.

RESOURCES AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Discovery School is committed to providing a holistic education that teaches to the whole child and incorporates all forms of intelligence. All students attend Music, Spanish and Motor Skills classes once a week. Older students attend Science Lab twice a month, and all age groups work in the garden several times a month.

MUSIC

Children innately love music. During Music class, children learn simple folk melodies, seasonal favorites or songs related to their unit of study. They are exposed to live and recorded music, diverse musical genres, incorporate musical props and play rhythm or percussion instruments. Students learn to distinguish beat, pitch, timbre, rhythm and tone through music and movement. Older classes explore basic music theory, musical vocabulary and musical notation. Several times a year, we take music outside, paint to music, or invite a musical guest. First Grade students also include a Drum Circle in their Music curriculum.

SPANISH

Children are introduced to Spanish words, phrases, songs and customs with the use of puppets, pictures, props, art, cooking and musical activities. Instruction is primarily in Spanish, and children hear the flow of language through conversation, reading books, and learning simple songs and poems. Younger age groups participate in interactive games and guided instruction, with the emphasis on simple vocabulary, words and phrases. Older age groups begin studying the alphabet, sentence structure and punctuation. Our families' Hispanic traditions from around the world are incorporated into seasonal topics.

MOTOR SKILLS

Children love to move and they love Motor Skills! Motor Skills class challenges children to develop balance, upper body strength, eye-hand coordination, bilateral movement, vestibular awareness, crossing the midline and gaining large muscle control. Aerobics, Yoga, cooperative games and locomotive activities are incorporated as well as introducing specific skills such as shooting a basket, kicking a ball, moving a puck, or throw and catch. The children use balance beams, balls, ladders, stepping stones, scooter boards and hoops. Music, shapes, colors, letters and numbers are also combined with the topics of study and paired with movement activities.

SCIENCE LAB

Children enrolled in 5day 4s, Kindergarten and First Grade attend Science Lab twice a month. Topics of study are enhanced with scientific experiments, projects and explorations. Meaningful learning connections are formed by integrating hands-on activities with scientific concepts. Students are introduced to gravity, states of matter, echo-location, polymers, and the light spectrum. Mixing unforgettable concoctions, following scientific procedure, performing trials and comparing outcomes introduce elements of chemistry, physics, biology and anatomy.

GARDENING

All classes garden in our raised flower and vegetable garden beds. Children observe what soil is comprised of, prepare garden beds, plant seeds, water and weed their tiny seedlings, document growth, search for butterfly larvae, dig for worms or taste what they've harvested! Together with their Garden Buddy children plant, tend and harvest a Fall and Spring crop. Garden Buddies nurture relationships between older and younger age groups, bring literacy activities outside, and gives everyone a chance to play in the dirt! Our garden is Nature's classroom.

ENHANCEMENT

In conjunction with units being studied, the children extend their learning with enrichment activities. These include outdoor play, field trips, cooking, and a variety of extra-curricular activities.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Children go outside every day – weather permitting. Our well designed playground contains sand areas, children's garden, swings, large and small climbing structures, wheeled toys, a playhouse, picnic tables, a shaded grassy area, basketball hoop, garden gazebo, covered patio and a tricycle track. The large play structure consists of steps, platforms, ladders, dual slide, climbing wall, bridge, and tire swings. In this environment, the child is able to partake in healthful outdoor exercise and develop large motor skills. Outside play provides a crucial physical outlet as well as the opportunity to build on social, cooperative and imaginative play experiences. When outside play is not possible, large motor activities may still be possible on the covered patio or breezeway, or if the Music or Motor Skills Rooms are available.

FIELD TRIPS

Taken in conjunction with units of study, field trips provide an opportunity for the child to apply new information to life outside the classroom. Field Trips may include the Witte Museum, downtown San Antonio, special exhibits or presentations, the San Antonio Art Museum, an underground cavern, the Magik Theatre, nearby city parks, the Zoo, the Botanical Gardens, a bakery, the Post Office, a fire station, a working farm, the McNay, the Produce Terminal, nature trails or wildlife conservancy, Mission San Jose, the Public Library, medical or veterinarian clinic, and local theatrical productions. Field trips are dependent on the availability of Parent drivers. Drivers are required to complete a DFPS background check, provide a valid driver's license and proof of insurance and are under the direction and supervision of the Teacher. In addition to off campus excursions, we also bring special guests or traveling exhibits such as the Reptile Man, Tooth Fairy, SA Fire or Police Dept. vehicles, or artifacts from museums or the Institute of Texan Cultures.

COOKING

The children cook several times a month. These rich sensory experiences tie into units and topics being explored in the classroom, as well as providing an opportunity to work with measurement, mixtures, discussing proper nutrition, discriminating new flavors and trying different foods. While cooking, Teachers stress proper sanitation, expand on the children's language, introduce math and science concepts, and involve the children in the preparation, enjoyment, and cleanup of their cooking project.

AGE LEVEL PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

TWO AND TWO-AND-A-HALF YEAR OLD PROGRAMS

The Two-Year Old program is separated into young 2's (Spring and Summer birthdays) and 2 ½'s (Fall and Winter birthdays).

The primary goals for children at this age are to ease the transition from home to preschool, instill a positive attitude concerning school, provide ample opportunities for socialization, and to foster a developing sense of independence and cooperative play. Children are free to choose among dynamic and engaging activity centers that may relate to the unit of study or that allow for open-ended exploration of materials. Teachers guide children to share, take turns, show concern for others' feelings as well as ways to express their own feelings and needs appropriately. During free play, Teachers facilitate the children's play and interactions, encourage appropriate use of materials, or pull one or two children aside to work on a more involved project, a skill builder or an assessment. Through hands-on experiences with a variety of materials and manipulatives, the children develop the fine motor skills necessary for cutting and a correct pencil grip. Emerging literacy, language and communication skills are developed through familiar songs and rhymes, story time, finger plays, thematic projects, and interactions with peers and Teachers. Children form early mathematical concepts by classifying common objects, identifying parts of their body, grouping by attribute (texture, size, weight, temperature), and experimenting in block play. Students are exposed to basic shapes, colors, and number concepts from 1 to 10. Even snack time can be an opportunity for Teachers to expand the children's vocabulary and understanding as they discuss the shape of a cracker, color of fruit, or describe its taste. Cooking projects integrate math (measuring ingredients, everyone stirs 1-2-3), vocabulary (salt is coarse, flour is soft) and science (what happens when we mix yellow and blue?) During a short Circle Time the children sing a Welcome song to greet their friends, the agenda for the day is presented, a story or flannel board is used to introduce the topic or theme, as the children learn to attend for an age-appropriate length of time. Self-help skills are encouraged (setting out snack, cleaning up toys, washing hands) or as the children show signs of readiness (toileting, dressing).

Young 2's and their parents enjoy their first field trip to ride the Brackenridge Train in the Spring. The 2 ½'s and their parents visit a nearby pumpkin patch in the Fall and ride the train in the Spring.

2 year olds have a choice of 2 day a week programs – Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday. The student to teacher ratio in the 2 year old program is 8:2,

2 ½'s have a choice of either 2 day (Tuesday/Thursday) or 3 day (Monday/Wednesday/Friday) programs. The student to Teacher ratio is 10:2.

THREE YEAR OLD PROGRAM

In the Three Year Old classes, week-long units of study incorporate whole group, small group, independent play and learning center activities. Our thematic curriculum spirals from more concrete themes such as “I am 3”, to more abstract, complex topics such as “Through the Looking Glass” (mirrors and reflective surfaces). The 3’s also delve into two Author Studies, Leo Lionni and Eric Carle, spending several weeks exploring the author’s themes, characters, illustrations, and storytelling style, culminating with the creation of a one-of-a-kind t-shirt illustrating major characters from each of the literature selections. The Three Year Old program strives to develop a positive attitude about school and learning, to build on each child’s level of readiness, and to encourage deeper levels understanding. Within learning centers, materials and expectations can be leveled to either support or challenge individual students. Children are encouraged to follow simple multi-step directions and to attend to activities for longer periods of time. They experience number concepts to 20 with one to one correspondence and rote counting, work with shapes (including rhombus, oval, and pentagon), non-standard measurement, and primary and secondary colors. Surrounded by literacy, the children begin to recognize their names in printed form and may identify isolated letters. Emerging literacy skills are scaffolded as children dictate and teachers model writing, as they collect baggies of environmental print they can “read” (ie. HEB, Cheerios, Target), or as they “write” or draw in their journals. They engage in daily routines such as calendar activities, charting the weather, and doing their classroom “job”. They are exposed to a variety of art media and manipulatives, more complex puzzles, and challenging cutting tasks to improve fine motor skills. Developing language is fostered through language experience stories, imaginative play, recalling story details, sequencing events, contributing to class discussions and participating in Show ‘n Tell. Through peer interactions, they begin to perfect the give and take of play and to develop negotiation skills. Teachers use direct and indirect guidance strategies, classroom routines and age-appropriate expectations to develop self-regulation skills, to recognize the needs of others, and to use our words to problem solve. We respect a three year old’s pride in their growing self-help skills by encouraging self-sufficiency in toileting independently, dressing themselves, being able to wait their turn, and cleaning up with minimal assistance.

Topic-related field trips extend units of study and make learning more meaningful. A visit to a fish store, enjoying a play at the children’s theater, touring the kinetic sculptures at the McNay, comparing produce in the grocery store, or relishing the sights and smells in a nearby bakery – make a topic come to life!

Three year olds have the option of 2, 3, or 5 days a week classes. The student to Teacher ratio is 12:2 in the 2 or 3 day classes, and 14:2 in the 5 day class.

FOUR YEAR OLD PROGRAM

The Four Year Old curriculum builds on a child's emerging interest in exploring the world around him. Unit studies are combined with a Letter Study, so that throughout the room, throughout the week, children interact with materials and activities that reinforce the theme or letter study. Learning centers are designed to engage all 5 senses, and specific activities can be adapted to either challenge or support individual needs. Literacy skills are a crucial component of the curriculum. Correct letter formation is taught using the Handwriting Without Tears approach. Other emerging literacy activities expose children to upper case and lower case letters, letter/sound association, words that begin with that sound, that letter in their environment, and identifying and forming the letters in their first and last names. The classroom is filled with labels, environmental print and writing opportunities. Pencil and paper activities, journals, and book-making materials are also available. Children move from large muscle experiences (tracing the letter in the air or on a whiteboard) to the fine motor skill of holding a pencil or writing on a line. Language experiences focus on organizing ideas, broadening vocabulary, and effective communication. Show 'n Tell, Sharing Sack or Mystery Boxes add challenge and develop speaking skills. Mathematical skills encompass number sense to 20 and beyond, rote counting to 100, numeral recognition to 20+, sequencing, patterning, seriating, all geometric shapes, non-standard units of measurement, basic coins, skip counting, even and odd numbers. Numeracy activities use concrete materials, visual organizers, and pictorial representation to lay the foundations of mathematical operations. Science/Social Studies content includes topics such as the rainforest, community helpers, pets and vets, our planet Earth, and insects. In addition to more sophisticated puzzles and manipulatives, centers provide leveled activities that encourage independence and require greater focus, staying on task and being time aware. Some activities are open ended and optional, other centers, particularly those that pinpoint a skill or assess growth and understanding, are required of all students. There are daily opportunities for free art, and classroom projects emphasize the process as much as the product. Four year olds are able to communicate with an ever-expanding vocabulary. They are encouraged to communicate with appropriate language to express ideas, feelings and emotions; respect the rights and space of peers, accept direction and assume classroom and self-help responsibilities. They are responsible for cleaning up their work, using classroom materials appropriately, carrying out a classroom job, and keeping track of personal items such as their backpack. They are expected to be self-sufficient in toileting, dressing and eating.

Learning extensions in and outside the classroom include field trips to fine arts venues, a farm, a veterinary hospital, a museum or the Botanical Gardens. Our Four Year Olds ride the Viva Via Bus, take walking field trips or enjoy special guest presentations such as a visit from The Reptile Man.

Four year olds have the option of 2, 3, or 5 days a week. The student to Teacher ratio is 12:2.

KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Kindergarten at Discovery School is an innovative and challenging program with a unique blend of active, hands-on learning and sound academic preparation. Within each unit of study, our Kindergarten curriculum targets literacy and numeracy skills through whole group instruction, center-based activities, projects, small group work, independent research and one on one teaching. Weekly contract centers in the morning scaffold literacy and numeracy skills across all curriculum areas incorporating language arts, math, science, art, and dramatic play. Within each center, materials and expectations can be leveled to either support or challenge individual students. During contract centers, the children are expected to be self-managers, be time-aware, and to remain on task, while teachers move through the room facilitating learning. Literacy or math centers in the afternoon incorporate direct teach, teacher-led small groups, and independent work. Afternoon centers provide focused instruction and reinforcement of specific literacy and math skills.

A year-long Art study explores the work and styles of at least ten classical artists culminating in a Spring Art Show showcasing their masterpieces. Unit studies may spiral from one topic to another, ie Reptiles and Amphibians followed by Pond Ecosystems. Some topics such as Anatomy, Texas, or Our Solar System span several weeks. At the conclusion of these larger units, the students might assemble a life-sized mini-me complete with representational skeletal, digestive and muscular systems, tour historic downtown, or take a trip to the Planetarium. Learning extensions in and outside the classroom include field trips, research projects, community service activities, and special presentations.

Our approach to literacy combines phonics, sight words, and language experience. The students work with phonemes, long and short vowel sounds, rhyming words, word families, and high frequency sight words. Creative writing progresses from symbolic pictures to letter strings, to inventive spelling, to three sentence stories using writing conventions. Writer's Theater or Writer's Workshop provide a forum for the students to explore what good writers do, using illustrations effectively, and presenting their stories to classmates. Small guided reading groups, leveled readers, trade books and an on-line reading program build fluency and allow students to progress at their own rate. Math goals include rote counting, number sense, skip counting, place value, mathematical operations (addition, subtraction), money, geometry, interpreting visual organizers, measurement, fractional parts and time. Kindergarten students build a solid understanding of math concepts through manipulatives and games, as well as through pencil and paper activities.

Our Kindergarten curriculum incorporates elements of Classical Education, Core Knowledge, LIPs, Handwriting Without Tears, Math Their Way, Daily 5-Literacy and Daily 5-Math, and meets or exceeds State standards (TEKS). Our small class size and optimal student /teacher ratio allow for individualization for each child's needs while our enriched curriculum lays the foundation for academic success.

Kindergarten students attend Monday through Friday from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm. The student to Teacher ratio in the Kindergarten program is 12:2.

FIRST GRADE PROGRAM

Discovery School offers an enriched First Grade program which expands Discovery School's unique hands-on learning approach into the realm of elementary school. Using State requirements (TEKS) and Best Practice standards as a foundation, our First Graders' day consist of differentiated learning opportunities in reading, writing, science, social studies and mathematics integrated within thematic units of study. Themes include Aquatic Life, Volcanoes, Texas Missions, U.S. Geography, the Scientific Method, Stars and Constellations, Poetry, and Comparative Animal Anatomy. Culminating activities such as field trips to the Aquarena Center or Mission San Jose, our First Grade Science Fair, Poetry Café, or Evening Star Party, make learning meaningful and cohesive. Classroom instruction is differentiated to include whole group, leveled small group, cooperative groups, and individual instruction. A year-long Art study explores the work and lives of ten renowned art masters. First Graders develop their creative and investigative skills through independent work, group projects, class plays or performances, and research assignments. Literacy activities incorporate trade books and classical literature, Daily CAFÉ activities, weekly Spelling words, creative writing opportunities and Monthly Book Club selections. Handwriting skills are refined using the Handwriting Without Tears Approach to letter and numeral formation. Guided Reading groups focus on decoding, phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension using leveled fiction and non-fiction books, poetry, chapter books and other texts. Writing Workshop focuses on writing strategies, adding details, grammar, punctuation and editing. Students have several opportunities to read every day, and are encouraged to read at home every evening. Math concepts are taught on both concrete and abstract levels utilizing Math Their Way guidelines, as well as a variety of other materials and manipulatives. Numeracy skills are strengthened through Math Their Way and Daily 5 Math centers. Math goals encompass number sense, computation, memorizing Math facts, place value, standard and non-standard units of measurement, word problems, time, money, fractional parts, as well as practical Math applications. Students problem solve using graphic organizers, manipulatives and mathematical reasoning. Learning extensions in and outside the classroom include "Life Work" (multi-disciplinary assignments for home), field trips, research projects (Holiday Traditions, 50 Nifty), community service, and special presentations.

First Grade attends Monday through Friday, 8:45am to 2:15pm. The student/teacher ratio for First Grade is 14:2

STAFF AND TRAINING

Our Staff are carefully chosen based on their educational background and professional qualifications as well as their prior experience and a passion for working and learning with young children. For Lead Teachers of Two's and Three's, a minimum Child Development Associate credential is required. For Lead Teachers of Four's, a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education is preferred. For Lead Kindergarten and First Grade Teachers, a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood or Elementary Education with a State Teaching Certification is required. Classroom Assistants are hired based on early childhood experience and educational background.

All Staff undergo background checks, have a current tuberculosis examination and are up to date with any necessary vaccinations, have completed a notarized Affidavit for Employment as specified by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, and have received pre-service training.

All Staff receive on-going training through local, State and National Conferences, seminars, workshops, and Staff inservice. Training includes the areas of child development, developmentally appropriate practice, health and safety, professional development, curriculum planning, diversity, guidance, literacy, detecting child abuse and neglect, reporting suspected abuse and neglect, special needs, and brain development. Every year, Staff are certified in CPR and managing a blocked airway, Pediatric First Aid, severe allergies and the use and administration of an epi-pen.

Each Staff member is observed and evaluated frequently.

Our Administration and Staff are committed to maintaining an open door approach to problem solving and conflict resolution. Parents are encouraged to express any question, concern, or suggestion about policies or procedures.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES

DAILY OPERATION AND ROUTINES

DAYS OF OPERATION:

Discovery School is open Monday through Friday and follows a typical academic calendar. The School year typically begins the last week of August and continues through the third week of May. Our calendar follows area public school calendars and includes Winter and Spring Breaks and Teacher Workdays.

HOURS:

Pre-School hours are 9:00 to 12:00, with an optional extended day from 12:00 to 2:00. Kindergarten meets from 9:00 to 2:00 every day, and First Grade is from 8:45am to 2:15pm each day. We offer Early Care before school from 8:00 to 9:00, and Late Care from 2:00 – 3:00 every day.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURE:

Please have your children arrive at school between 8:55 and 9:05 a.m. In order for each teacher to begin her planned activities on time, your promptness is appreciated. Parents, family members, caregivers, or carpool drivers should sign each child in and indicate any special instructions for the day. Children wash hands immediately upon arrival.

DEPARTURE PROCEDURE:

Departure times are either at 12:00 (preschool), 2:00 (Kindergarten or Extended Day), 2:15 (First Grade) or 3:00 (Late Care). The teachers are responsible for the children until the parent, family member, caregiver or car-pool driver arrives. At that time, each child should be signed out, and the teacher relinquishes her responsibility to that individual.

Each family should submit a list of persons authorized to pick up their child. The School cannot release a child to anyone other than the parent/guardian without written or spoken approval from the parent/guardian. Any person other than the customary adult picking up a child, or one who is unfamiliar to the Teacher, must first be cleared by the Office staff by showing ID **and** being listed as authorized to pick up the child. Children will not be released to a possibly impaired adult and another authorized person will be contacted.

CARPOOLING:

A zip code list is available at Parent Orientation Night to assist those who wish to form car pools. Once a car pool is formed, please submit a list of drivers to the office.

TRANSPORTATION:

Discovery School does not transport or receive children from other forms of transportation or programs.

CIRCLE TIMES:

This part of the day sets the tone and structure of the day in the morning and provides closure at the day's end. The children are encouraged to express themselves, relate events and learn to listen patiently to their peers. The shared group time is used for presentation of topics or activities, direct instruction, story telling, show and tell, or wrapping up the day's events. It provides time for the children to focus on, or expand upon, a particular concept, language activity or to participate in group sharing.

CLOTHING:

Play clothes are strongly advised. Children have many hands-on experiences, and the teacher cannot be responsible for, nor guarantee, that your child's clothing will remain unstained. Tennis shoes are requested, especially on Motor Skills days. Please, no boots except for Western Day. Younger children should have additional diapers, pull-ups, or underwear and a change of clothing left at school.

In case of an accident, spills or sudden change of weather, there are extra underwear, clothes, socks, shoes, sweatshirts and jackets in the office.

BACKPACKS/TOTEBAGS:

Each child should bring a labeled backpack or tote bag to school each day. Important notices, daily work and projects will be placed in the child's backpack for them to take home.

CLASS CALENDARS/NEWSLETTERS:

At the beginning of each month, a monthly calendar and Teacher newsletter will be posted on the Parent Portal. A hard copy of each will be posted on the classroom bulletin board, but Parents are responsible for downloading the calendar for reference. Special events, field trips, birthdays, share-a-snack schedule, and weekly topics are included. Print your child's calendar and post it in a prominent place for reference throughout the month. Also, for those teachers who have a show-and-tell time, the calendar will help your child select materials that pertain to the topics being covered. Because show-and-tell differs among teachers, please confer with them individually. A school-wide newsletter is posted at least monthly to keep families informed of All-School events and news.

CULTURAL ARTS ACTIVITIES

A variety of extra-curricular activities are offered during Extended Day and after school hours, including gymnastics, dance, cooking, gardening, art, yoga, Musical Theater and karate. Cultural Arts activities have separate tuitions that are invoiced on the first of each month, and may include the cost of Extended Day. All Cultural Arts instructors have undergone background checks and are under the supervision of the Director.

HEALTH AND WELL BEING: DISCIPLINE, HEALTH, AND NUTRITION**SAFETY:**

Pursuant to the Texas Penal Code, Discovery School is a gang free zone and any criminal offense within 100 feet of our campus is subject to harsher penalties.

DISCIPLINE POLICY:

Discovery School does not use, condone or tolerate physical punishment. Food is never withheld as a threat or form of discipline. We believe positive classroom management begins with us -- if the Teacher is well prepared, the classroom offers a variety of engaging activities that are developmentally appropriate, and there are optimal student:teacher ratios, discipline issues are greatly reduced. If there is a serious problem with a child that cannot be handled with teacher intervention, redirection, negotiation, or applying logical consequences, the child may be removed from the activity for an appropriate amount of time. Children are always encouraged to resolve conflict using appropriate words and empathy. Parents will be informed if a child has serious or recurrent difficulty. Should behavioral problems continue, Parent/Teacher/Director conferences may be held to discuss a behavior plan that targets the desired behaviors. All parents will be provided the Guidance and Discipline Policy through the Parent Portal. This Policy delineates the hierarchy of consequences and actions that will be taken in response to challenging behavior. TDPRS discipline guidelines are also available for review in the Office.

SUSPECTED ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY:

All staff is mandated to report, and document, any cases of suspected abuse or neglect. Reports can be made to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services in-take line or to the Abuse Hotline. The Director should be notified of all suspicions. The protection and well-being of the child is the primary concern. Anyone reporting suspected sexual abuse or neglect shall be immune from discharge, retaliation or other disciplinary action for that reason alone, unless it is determined otherwise. The full Suspected Abuse and Neglect Policy is available for review in the Office.

HEALTH STATEMENT / IMMUNIZATIONS:

All children must have a current health form on file signed by a physician, stating that the child has been examined within the past year and is physically able to participate in our program. Each child enrolled must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Health. A child may be exempt from all or some immunization requirements if medically contraindicated, or if medical diagnosis, treatment or immunization conflict with the tenets and practices of a recognized religious organization of which the parent is an adherent member, or if the parent has filed a completed, notarized affidavit citing conscientious objection to all or some vaccinations.

VISION AND HEARING SCREENING:

All children four years and older should be screened for possible vision and hearing problems. When possible, the School will provide vision and hearing screens through the UTHSC nursing school, Prevent Blindness Texas or private individuals.

ALLERGIES / DIETARY RESTRICTIONS:

You must complete a Severe Allergy / Dietary Restriction form if your child has any significant allergies or dietary restriction. This form must be recorded in the Office before the start of each school year. In the case of a possibly severe reaction, any appropriate action to be taken, medication to be administered, and emergency contact information must be included. Epi-pens or rescue medications and a completed Medication form must be secured in the Office or with the Teacher. Severe Allergy information will be posted in a prominent site in each School area. All Staff receive annual training on severe allergies and epi-pen administration.

Dietary restrictions or preferences will be honored as much as possible. (Please refer to the Discovery School Food Policy for further details)

Parents will be notified of any severe food allergy or dietary restriction in their child's class.

MEDICATIONS:

Please do not send medications in your child's backpack or lunch. All medications must be brought to the office where they will be stored in a locked cabinet. Since it is impossible to keep refrigerated medications in a place inaccessible to children, we ask that you not send any medication requiring refrigeration. All medications should be in the original container. In order to administer medication, a parent must sign a Medication Form stating dosage and times. Medication will only be administered by Office Staff or the child's Teacher. Date, time, dosage and name of the Staff who administered the medication are noted on the form.

ILLNESS:

If your child becomes ill at school, he/she will be comfortably isolated in the office and you will be contacted. Illness may include a fever above 100* (taken electronically), behavior changes or other signs or symptoms such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, diarrhea, or vomiting. Please do not send your child back to school until he/she is free of symptoms (fever, diarrhea, vomiting, etc.) for 24 hours. In case of a highly contagious illness in your child's class, you will be notified. Staff are required to send home any child with the above symptoms.

PARENT NOTIFICATION:

If a child has a minor accident at school, the parent will be notified through a verbal report or with a "boo-boo" note. For any incident requiring more extensive first aid, an accident report will be completed, and parents will be called. This form is signed by the Teacher and the Director and will be kept in the child's file. Any accident requiring medical attention by a health-care professional will require the completion of the TDPRS incident report, and the Director's and the Parent's signatures. This report will be kept in the child's file.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES:

Parents must give permission to seek emergency medical treatment on the current Health form. In the case of a medical emergency, appropriate first aid will be administered, Emergency Medical Service will be called, and parents will be notified. Parents must maintain current phone numbers where they can be reached in an emergency.

SNACKS:

The children are provided a mid-morning snack with water. Snacks are nutritious and low sugar. There is always fresh fruits, vegetables and cheese available. Twice a year, your child's teacher may request that you sign up for a "Share a Snack" - a specified day for your child to bring a snack to share with their class. A list of suggested foods and appropriate portion sizes is available. Check with your child's teacher regarding any special considerations, food allergies, dietary restrictions or ideas. (Please refer to the Discovery School Food Policy for further details)

MEALS:

Meals are not served unless it is one of our special events such as Pizza Lunch or Grandparent/Special Friend Day. If your child stays for Extended Day, or is enrolled in Kindergarten or First Grade, they bring their own lunch. Food brought from home should not require additional refrigeration or re-heating. We strongly encourage nutritious, well-balanced meals. In order to assure the nutritional value of a child's lunch brought from home, we keep fruit, juice, vegetables, peanut butter and cheese on hand to supplement a child's lunch. (Please refer to the Discovery School Food Policy for further details)

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:

Staff are trained in emergency procedures including fire, injury, security threat, lockdown, flooding or severe weather. Fire drills are held every month, on different days of the week and at various times of day. Severe weather drills are held every 3 months. Evacuation plans, escape routes, and relocation sites are posted in every room. In an emergency evacuation, each child's emergency information is taken along and Parents are notified immediately. If School is cancelled due to weather, Parents will be notified by phone, text, email or on the Parent Portal. The complete Emergency Preparedness Plan is available for review in the Office or on the Parent Portal.

PARENT PARTICIPATION / COMMUNICATION**PARENT – SCHOOL COMMUNICATION:**

Understanding our parents' feelings, attitudes, questions and concerns is vital to the effectiveness of our Program. We encourage parents to share their comments, inquiries, and suggestions. Parents will be informed of any policy changes through written notification. Parents may contact Office Staff at any time with questions, concerns, compliments or suggestions.

Parents and Staff communicate through face-to-face or phone conversations, email, notes home, or by using our Parent Portal or Remind (a text messaging app).

USE OF TECHNOLOGY ON CAMPUS:

In order to promote optimal communication between staff, children, and families cell phone use is not allowed on the breezeway during school hours or while on field trips.

PERSONAL PROFILES:

These data sheets will be mailed to you during the summer and should be completed and returned to your child's teacher as soon as possible. This information is extremely useful. It helps your child's teachers know more about your child and gives them a greater understanding in developing personalized educational and social goals.

ROOM PARENT:

Each class will need one or two persons to share the responsibility of Room Parent. If you are interested, please notify your child's teacher. A list of responsibilities is available or can be obtained from the Board of Directors 1st Vice-President.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS / PARENT CLUB:

Discovery School is totally parent owned and run, and there are many ways a parent can be involved throughout the year. Parents, caregivers and extended family are included in our Parent Club – a forum for volunteer opportunities which may include helping with clerical work in the office, babysitting for school events, yard work, general carpentry tasks, working in the School library, driving on field trips, making classroom materials, sharing special talents or skills, reading stories, baking for school events, gathering props or arranging for guest performers during special events, or helping with clean-up or work days. Opportunities for Parent participation will also be posted on the Parent Portal, in the School newsletter, or in the Office. Parent volunteers are vital to our fundraising efforts and to our ongoing program activities, so we encourage you to be involved in any way that fits your interests and availability.

PARENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Discovery School is governed by a volunteer Parent Board of Directors, consisting of a President, First and Second Vice-Presidents, Treasurer, Parliamentarian, and two Secretaries as well as a maximum of thirteen Members At Large. The Board of Directors determines fees and tuition, oversees the Director, determines an annual operating budget, and is in charge of fundraising events. Discovery School maintains a Directors Liability Policy. Board positions are open to all members of the Parent Corporation. Meetings are held once a month during school hours, and baby-sitting for Discovery School children is available during meetings. If you are interested in a Board position, please contact the Director, Board President, or a member of the Nominating Committee.

MEETINGS OF THE PARENT CORPORATION:

There are several parent meetings scheduled throughout the year. These meetings are held to conduct official school business, such as voting in Board Officers. Two standard meetings of the Parent Corporation are Parent Orientation, held in August, and Open House, held in May. Other meetings are called as needed.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS:

Parents are welcome on campus at any time and are equally welcome to observe in any classroom. Please contact the Director if you would like to observe in a classroom other than your child's.

PRE-ENROLLMENT VISITS:

Prospective parents are encouraged to make a pre-enrollment visit. They will have a tour of the facility, meet with the Director, and have an opportunity to visit the Resource classes, school grounds and gardens. These visits should be scheduled in advance with the Director.

PARENT / TEACHER CONFERENCES:

Formal Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled at least twice a year -- in November and early Spring. A final assessment is done at the end of the year, with a Parent Conference being optional. Parents will be given a written report of their child's progress and learning. A copy of the report signed by the Parent is kept in the child's record. Additional conferences may be held whenever a parent or teacher feels it is necessary. Frequent communication and/or telephone contact is encouraged. A translator can be provided.

ASSESSMENT / CONFIDENTIALITY:

In order to obtain an accurate assessment of the "whole" child, teachers will use a variety of informal and formal assessment tools, including a developmental checklist, anecdotal records, observation, portfolio of work samples, reading inventories, or photo documentation. Assessment will provide a scope of learning in social-emotional, language and communication, emergent literacy, mathematics, science/social studies, fine arts, physical and technological domains. Formal Assessment is done three times per school year (Fall, Winter and end of year), but informal assessments are incorporated on an ongoing basis. Teachers use the results of assessment to identify children's interests and needs, to modify and improve the curriculum, and to communicate with families. Assessment may also identify the need for referral or

diagnostic screening. There is a list of Community Resources (agencies, consultants, therapists, diagnosticians, and specialists) available to assist families. Assessment records are strictly confidential. Assessments, work samples and Teacher observations are included in a Student Cumulative Folder that is passed on to the next teacher. Parent permission is required before any information may be shared with other providers, agencies, or school programs.

PARENT EVALUATION OF DISCOVERY SCHOOL:

Each year, the parents have an opportunity to evaluate the school, curriculum, the staff and faculty. From this information, the school formulates goals and plans for improvement.

GANG FREE ZONE:

Discovery School is a Gang Free Zone so certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of campus is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

CELEBRATIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

BIRTHDAYS:

Birthdays can be celebrated at school during snack time. Parents may provide a special snack or cake, but gifts are discouraged. Children with summer birthdays can celebrate their “Unbirthday” . (Please refer to the Discovery School Food Policy for further details)

HOME VISITS:

This favorite activity involves the visitation of the class to each child's home during the course of the year. A home visit may be part of a Holiday observance or end of the year celebration. The children love sharing this aspect of their lives with their friends and involves very little work on the part of the parent. As this activity varies among classes, please check with your child's teacher. Home visits are optional, so there will be no questions asked if you choose not to host a visit.

FIELD TRIPS:

Field trips are an integral part of our program. Trips are taken in conjunction with the topics being covered as a form of reinforcement and expansion of knowledge. They are dependent on the availability of parent volunteers as drivers. Parents give permission for their child to attend field trips on the annual registration form. Parents are notified in advance of a field trip through the monthly newsletter, Parent Portal and notification posted outside the classroom. If a Parent prefers a child not go on the field trip, the Teacher must be notified, and the child can either stay at home or be cared for in another classroom or in the Office. Parents driving on field trips must have a cleared TDFPS background check and have a copy of their current auto insurance and driver’s license on file in the Office. Any information related to background checks will be kept confidential. We prefer that Teachers not drive on field trips, so there must be enough cars to safely transport the class and Teachers. All children must be secured in an approved child restraint car seat or booster. Parents install their child’s car seat in the field trip driver’s car prior to leaving campus. Each driver will carry a Field Trip Folder including emergency medical forms for each child in their vehicle, basic first aid information, supplies, and important phone numbers. At least one First Aid kit will accompany each class group.

Staff and children must wear some form of identifying tee-shirt, name tag or field trip shirt.

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH:

Each month our School focuses on a chosen virtue. We incorporate children’s literature, describe what that virtue looks like in our classroom, school-wide, or at home while reinforcing and acknowledging everyday examples of the Virtue. Younger age groups may target simple behaviors, while older children build vocabulary and deeper understanding. Virtues include Cooperation, Courage, Compassion, Thankfulness, Honesty, Generosity and Respect.

COMMUNITY SERVICE:

Discovery School strives to foster a sense of civic responsibility, empathy and service through Community Service events that have become treasured Discovery School traditions. Children and their families are encouraged to give to those in need in a meaningful and understandable way (e.g., a Thanksgiving food drive, a Holiday Gift Tree, clothing and food drive, or a special collection for children in crisis)

HOLIDAY OBSERVANCES:

As a multi-denominational environment, Discovery School introduces students to various religious and cultural holidays for the purpose of increasing awareness and respect for others' beliefs and traditions. We do not celebrate any religious holidays as a school. Rather, we offer an environment where children and their families can share their traditions, while teachers reinforce concepts with various symbols and stories of each religious or cultural holiday. At the beginning of each year, parents sign up to host one holiday. In keeping with our philosophy, teachers and parents are asked to follow these guidelines.

1. Several holidays are celebrated as secular, cultural events with positive themes and imagery. Halloween parties include trick-or-treating, costumes (masks are discouraged), themes such as pumpkins, cats, and "friendly" ghosts, etc. Frightening and/or satanic images have no place at Discovery School. At Thanksgiving, there is a feast where themes of thankfulness are emphasized. Valentine's Day parties stress friendship, sharing, love and mutual giving.

2. Whenever possible, parents are asked to host holiday celebrations that have significance as holy days (i.e., Christmas, Easter, Chanukah, Passover) in their homes. This lends a personal touch where it is appropriate to include the religious stories behind these celebrations. Discovery School does not "teach" religious material, but parents are encouraged, whether hosting in a home or class, to share the religious significance of their holiday traditions and symbols (i.e., menorah, crèche, Easter egg, matzo, etc.) In classes in which there are no parents of a religious background familiar with a holiday, another parent will be invited to assist.

Teachers are asked to follow up the parents' introduction of the holiday with activities that incorporate and reinforce the symbols associated with the holiday. For example, a parent would host the Christmas party explaining the significance of this day to Christians. Teachers would follow this with art projects including Christmas symbols, music lessons including Christmas songs, and cooking projects dealing with Christmas foods.

3. Decorations in December will include Chanukah, Santa Claus and religious Christmas themes. In Spring, decorations will include both secular and religious Easter and Passover themes.

4. Gift giving between students does not occur. Each December there is a "Gift Giving Day", held on a day between the observances of Chanukah and Christmas, when teachers present their Winter Break gifts to students, children take home their holiday gifts for parents, and students are offered the chance to bring a holiday gift to Discovery School to be donated to a specific charity.

5. All parents are cautioned about the inappropriateness of including negative or frightening themes in any preschool holiday explanations. Thus, parents are asked to be thoughtful about how to present, or perhaps omit, some aspects of a Holiday story.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION/POLICIES

TUITION AND FEES:

Our continued goal is to open Discovery School to a wide community base, as well as to support the full cost of quality. To that end, we maintain tuition prices that are affordable and competitive, and a scholarship fund to provide financial assistance to qualified families.

Tuition is due in full regardless of absences. Monthly tuition, extended day, and Cultural Arts are billed the first of the month. Early and late care, and drop-in extended days are billed retroactively the first of each month. All tuition and fees are due by the 10th after which a late fee is assessed.

Registration fees are due at the time of registration, supply fees are due in June, a half month tuition and the Annual Activity Fee are due in August.

SCHOLARSHIPS:

Financial assistance is available to families. Applications are strictly confidential, and assistance is based on need as well as on the number of applicants. Recipients of aid are asked to work at the School in some way in return for financial assistance. Additional information and applications are available through the Director or Scholarship Committee.

CONTRIBUTIONS:

If any family or individual would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to the school in the form of a purchase, cash donation, or donation to the Scholarship, Sunshine or Grow With Us Fund, please contact the Director or Board President. Tax Forms are available for any donation.

FUNDRAISERS:

In order to supplement tuition income, finance our scholarship, Teacher tuition reimbursement, and Teacher retirement programs, there are several Fund raisers held throughout the year. These events are vital to the success of our program and all families are encouraged to participate at whatever level their budget allows.

Fall Carnival – a child-centered day of games, food, and entertainment. Each class group sponsors a booth. Parents are asked to volunteer for an hour in their class booth.

Spring Benefit – an adults only evening filled with excitement around a Silent Auction, a Reverse Raffle and entertainment. Benefit is our primary fund raiser.

Pizza Lunch – sponsored by each class once a year, these special lunches fund the purchase of unbudgeted materials determined by the individual teacher. Pizza Lunches are held approximately once every 3 weeks.

SUNSHINE FUND:

The Sunshine Fund is an annual campaign to raise additional funds to bridge the gap between income raised with tuition and fees and the real cost of providing the gift of Discovery for our children. Families, alumni, extended families, and businesses are able to participate on a variety of levels and donations can be made in a single payment or can be billed on a monthly basis. Donations are tax-deductible.

GROW WITH US FUND:

Our Grow With Us Fund is specifically to fund the purchase, renovation and maintenance of the adjacent property, our Discovery School Butterfly Wing. Families, alumni, extended family, and businesses are encouraged to invest in the future of Discovery School through an annual tax-deductible pledge, purchasing a “Square Foot of the Future”, or renting the space for meetings, birthday parties, wellness classes, or family gatherings. Donors who contribute \$250 or more are acknowledged on a beautiful Gratitude Tree in the entry. All donations are tax-deductible.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

LICENSING / ACCREDITATION:

Discovery School is licensed by the State of Texas, and exceeds state standards in many areas, especially in Student/Teacher ratios, class size, and Staff qualifications. The Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) inspects our Program once or twice a year. All inspections and a copy of the Minimum Standards are available for review in the Office.

The local TDFPS licensing office may be contacted at (210) 337-3079 or 3635 S.E. Military Drive P.O. Box 23990, San Antonio, Texas 78223-0990 or on their website at www.txchildcaresearch.org The child abuse hotline is 1-800-252-5400 or you can call the TDFPS intake line at (210) 337-3399.

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

Discovery School is regularly inspected by the Metropolitan Health District and the San Antonio Fire Department. All inspections are available for review in the Office.

Discovery School is a certified 4 Star Provider by Texas Rising Star of the Texas Workforce Commission. Certification by TRS is valid for three years and includes an annual monitoring assessment visit.

Discovery School has been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) since 1989. These high standards of quality include, but are not limited to

- low staff to child ratio
- low staff turnover
- developmentally appropriate curriculum
- appropriate guidance procedures
- commitment to the whole child – self-esteem, socialization, creativity, responsibility, independence, fine and gross motor development, and cognitive growth

Accreditation is valid for five years. The entire self-study and assessment process is repeated in the fifth year.

TAX INFORMATION:

Discovery School's Federal Tax Identification Number is **23 - 7425720**