



Discovery
Children's Academy

Embracing The Future

Passing On A Legacy

Discovery Children's Academy
111 Roundabout Drive
Midlothian, 76065

Telephone: 972-775-5600
Facsimile: 866-626-6252

discoverychildrensacademy.com

Executive Director: Renay McAfee

Parent Handbook

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Welcome to Discovery Children's Academy. We are glad to have you and your child be a part of our Center. We know that your choice of early childhood programs is one of the most important decisions you will make for your child.

We are dedicated to giving your child the best quality care possible. We believe that each child is unique and deserves to be accepted as such. We aim to provide a warm, relaxed, "extended family" atmosphere, focusing on each child's cognitive, social, and emotional, language, and physical development.

We are committed to you, the adults of the community. Our task is to support you in your efforts as you pursue your goals as a parent. The "extended family" concept can provide a framework for all of us lending support, encouragement, and assistance in dealing with the daily functions of parenting.

Discovery Children's Academy offers a nurturing and educationally stimulating program. All children will be involved with music, art, gym, stories and activities involving shapes, colors, counting, etc. Children in the Center have the opportunity to participate in cooking activities, solve puzzles, build with blocks, and enjoy a variety of other activities. A major emphasis is placed on cooperation, turn taking, and problem solving. A supervised homework time is provided for the school age children.

This handbook will outline the specific policies and guidelines of our particular role within the Center setting. Fees and policies in this handbook are subject to change. Some of these policies have been revised, so even if you are a returning parent, you will want to read them thoroughly. Then be sure to keep it handy to refer to it throughout the year as questions arise. The Center will give a two-week notice of any changes in our fees and policies whenever possible.

Our children, families, and staff are indeed our most valuable resources! We welcome your questions and suggestions and hope you will share yourselves and your talents with us. We look forward to knowing you and your child, and together making Discovery Children's Academy a rewarding place to be.

Sincerely,

Kyle & Renay McAfee, Executive Officers

Mission Statement

Discovery Children's Academy's mission is to provide a quality comprehensive early childhood environment for nurturing and facilitating the growth and development of young children.

Center's Philosophy

Discovery Children's Academy offers the opportunity for each child to develop physically, socially, and cognitively according to individual learning style. Each child is considered unique in temperament and rate of development. Curriculum is planned to enhance and challenge particular, distinct individual needs, interests, and abilities. Activities and relationships occur in a healthy, positive and relaxed environment in which a well-qualified staff provides personal attention, guidance and nurturing to each child. The Center strives to maintain continuity and consistency throughout the program by conducting cooperative staff planning, training, and a variety of joint activities involving the various groups of children. In this context, all caregivers are encouraged to express their individual pedagogical strengths as they work with individual children and in their cooperative efforts with other staff members. The Center is also committed to the continuing education of our employees.

Center's Goals

To promote a philosophy of early childhood development that will serve the individual needs of the children and parents at the Center.

Also:

- To recognize the importance of the parent as the primary influence in his / her child's development.
- To provide a nurturing, flexible and calm atmosphere where self-concept is enhanced, independence is encouraged, and expectations are made clear.
- To offer an atmosphere where the foundation of respect for others is established, along with respect for the equipment and materials.
- To be supportive of parents and families, promoting involvement, and encouraging open and honest communication while using tact and discretion.

Pre – Enrollment Visit

We require touring the Center with your child at least once prior to enrollment. This gives you and your child the opportunity to talk with the Director and teachers before enrolling. We recognize that this is a major decision for you and your family. Your initial comfort contributes to a successful transition for your child. During this time, the parent and child are encouraged to become involved in the regular classroom activities. This allows children to become comfortable in the new setting. It also helps to talk with your child about what's going to happen, so he / she can be prepared for what's ahead and anticipate the fun times to come.

Registration

Registration at Discovery Children's Academy is open to children ages six weeks through 12 years old. Enrollment can be completed only by submitting all signed registration and permission forms, providing a current immunization record and with the payment of the non-refundable enrollment fee and the first week's tuition. A separate application must be submitted for each child.

No child shall be denied admittance on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin or ancestry. We do not make it policy to deny enrollment on the basis of a child with special needs. If we are not sure if we could handle a special needs child, we would be willing to try. The parents and Director would have to evaluate if arrangement is successful. The Center makes no assumptions concerning any individual's abilities or disabilities and makes an individual assessment to determine if each child's needs can be met our group childcare setting. We feel that this in their best interest, since our goal is to meet each child's unique needs.

Confidentiality of Records

The information contained in your child's file is privileged and confidential. The file is only accessible to those staff who are directly involved with your child and State Officials. You, as the parent, have access to

your child's record at anytime. Information in the file will only be released with your written consent. Parents have the right to add and delete information from the file.

Tuition

Child Care fees are based upon the age group in which the child is enrolled. Parents are required to pay for the full plan in which they have registered, even if the child is absent from the Center; this will guarantee his / her space upon return. Additionally:

- There will be a 10% discount to families with multiple children enrolled;
- At the end of the calendar year the Center will issue an itemized receipt showing the payments made throughout the year per request;
- Tuition fees are subject to change;
- The Center may require that accounts be current before issuing payment statements.

A survey is conducted yearly on the tuition rates and other fees that Child Care Centers in our area charge their clients. Our rates are competitive with comparable facilities.

Registration and Activity fee

A non-refundable registration / supply fee of \$25.00 per child / \$ 50.00 per family is due upon enrollment. Registration fees help to cover insurance and administrative costs associated with enrollment. If your child terminates for any reason and then re-enrolls, the registration fee will be charged again.

All children, 18 months through pre school, will be assessed a monthly activity fee of \$15.00. This aids in covering the curriculum supply needs and activities cost that occur during the month.

Payment Day

Tuition fees support the operation and staffing of our Center. Quality services require consistent support. Because we are dedicated to providing quality services, we must adhere strictly and consistently to the following policies:

- Tuition is due in advance, on Mondays;
- Payments may be made weekly, biweekly, or monthly (in advance);
- A late fee of \$10.00 (per day) will be added on Tuesdays at noon;
- The Center reserves the right to discontinue services to any family that arrears or that has repeated occasions of paying late;
- When payment becomes one full calendar week behind, the child may not return to the Center until payment has been made. Aggressive action will be taken to collect outstanding accounts;
- In cases of overpayment, credit will be applied in the amount of the overpayment toward the next week's tuition.
- Deposits and tuition (even tuition paid in advance) is non refundable.

If you happen to experience occasional hardships or need to make special arrangements from time to time, please communicate with the Director prior to the tuition due date.

Tuition must be paid in the form of personal check, money order, traveler's check, debit cards credit card (Visa, Master Card or Discover), or certified check. For safety reasons currency payments are not accepted. Checks should be made payable to Discovery Children's Academy. Out of state checks are not accepted.

Return Check Charge

There will be a \$30.00 fee for any check returned due to insufficient funds. The parent has three days after notification to rectify the situation. Childcare services may be halted until full payment of tuition and N.S.F. charges have been made. After more than one check is returned due to N.S.F. only money order, traveler's check, debit cards credit card, and certified check payments will be accepted.

If a family dis-enrolls and leaves a NSF check, the Center will submit the check to the District Attorney's office for collection.

Hours of Operation

Our Center is open five days a week and twelve months a year. Our hours of operation are from 5:45 am to 6:45 pm.

Holidays

The Center will be closed for the major legal holidays:

- New Year's Day,
- Memorial Day,
- Independence Day,
- Labor Day,
- Thanksgiving Day, and the day after,
- Christmas Eve,
- Christmas Day.

If the holiday falls on a Saturday, the Center will be closed the Friday before. If the holiday falls on a Sunday the Center will be closed on the Monday after.

Due to fixed cost, averaged over a calendar year, there is no reduction in tuition for these holidays.

Late Pick-Up

Please make arrangements to pick your child up by 6:45 p.m. If you are going to be late; due to unforeseen difficulties, please notify the Center as soon as you realize you cannot make it by closing time. This call is a courtesy call, which does not affect any late charges that may accrue.

If a late pick up occurs, the parent will be asked to sign a slip to verify the date and time of pick-up. One copy is given to the parent and the other is retained by the Center. A fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed. The fee must be paid upon your arrival. The clock in the Center's lobby will be used to determine the time of pick up, please set your watch in accordance.

This fee doubles after the third late pickup. Should you have more than three late pick-ups within six months you will need to meet with the Director and discuss the circumstances relating to this matter. The Director will then decide if the Center can continue to provide childcare for you and your family.

Vacation Policy

To accommodate our families, Discovery Children's Academy has developed a parent-friendly Absence and Vacation policy.

After one full year of enrollment your child may be absent from the Center one week, five continuous days, per year without charge. The following conditions must be met:

- The vacation must be requested in writing within 5 business days before the absence;
- The credit does not apply to infants 18 months and younger;
- To receive credit you must be current on your payment of tuition;
- Vacation will not be allowed to roll over from one year to the next;
- A maximum of 5 days may be requested per year.

Absent Credit

After one full year of enrollment your child may receive absence credit. During this period, the regular tuition rate is reduced to half. The following conditions must be met:

- The credit must be requested in writing within 5 business days before the absence;
- The credit does not apply to infants 18 months and younger;
- To receive credit you must be current on your payment of tuition;
- Children may attend the Center a maximum of two days during the week.
- Absence credit will not be allowed to roll over from one year to the next;

- A maximum of 3 credits may be requested per year.

Inclement Weather Policy/Procedure

Discovery Children's Academy makes every effort to be open on all weekdays of the year, except holidays as noted. We realize that parents need to work and that reliable childcare is very important. However, there are times when it is not safe or feasible to operate the facility, such as acts of nature (snow, etc.) and God (tornadoes, hurricanes, etc.). In those circumstances, closures will be the same as those for Midlothian I.S.D. Radio and television stations broadcast this information. If this information is not available or if the public schools are not in session, Center closing will be left to the discretion of the Executive Officers.

If the Center needs to close during the day while your child is already in attendance, we will be contacting daytime phone numbers as provided by you so that you may make arrangements to pick up your child immediately.

Weather closings that fall on weekdays are not subject to reimbursement.

Field trips will not be attempted if weather conditions present a hazard.

Transportation will NOT be provided to / from school during inclement weather.

Immunizations and Medical Records

Each child enrolled must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Health Immunization Requirements. All immunizations required for the child's age must be completed by the date of admission. Current immunization requirements can be found at <http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/immunize>.

Also required by Texas Office of Child Care Services, a licensed physician must examine each child and a health form, signed by the physician, must be on file at the Center. This must be done prior to enrollment in-group childcare. Parents are required to have medical forms for their children updated yearly and as new immunizations are given.

Vision And Hearing Screening

Along with a child's immunization records, Texas law requires all children age four and older to be screened for vision and hearing problems upon entering a licensed facility for the first time. Written evidence of this screening must be on file at the Center. Parents are responsible for the vision and hearing screening. This screening can be done by the child's physician or may be offered at the Center in the spring and fall for a small fee. You may refer to Texas Health and Safety Code, §36.011, for specifics on vision and hearing screening. This information may be accessed at: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vhs/default.shtm>.

Breakfast, Lunch & Snacks

The Center provides breakfast each morning from 5:45 a.m. until 8:00 a.m., a hot lunch at 11:00 a.m. and nutrition snacks at 9:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to children twelve months and older. School age children will receive p.m. snack upon arriving at the Center.

Meal times are part of our learning experience. Children help with table set up and clean up. The children also practice good table manners. A prayer is said before snack and lunch. Meals are served family style and conversations are promoted during mealtime.

We encourage children to try all foods that we serve, but we do not force children to eat. Picky eaters usually eat better at "school" because they see other children eating. All foods are talked about in a positive way.

Parents of children with special dietary needs, food allergies or special kosher needs may wish to provide their meals. If you choose to send your child's meals daily or on occasion, please write your child's name and date on the bag and give it to our staff to serve to your child at meal time.

We ask that you avoid sending candy, gum or sodas. Due to some childhood allergies we request that no nut items are brought in the Center.

A copy of the Center's menu is posted outside of the kitchen area and copies can be obtained upon request. Adjustments to the menus will be as infrequent as possible and posted on the morning of the change. All food substitutions will be of equal nutrient value.

Formula and / or breast milk must be provided in pre- prepared bottles by the parent. Solid foods must be in the original unopened container. Please label all food and bottles with the child's full name. All bottles must be accompanied with the original caps.

Allergies

Please communicate any eating difficulties your child may experience or any food allergies. It is important for you to familiarize us with any specific symptoms of allergic reactions so we may alert medical personal of any necessary precautions. The more we know about your child's special needs the better quality of care we can provide. In some cases, a physician's note may be required.

If your child has no known allergies at the time of enrollment, please notify the Director if any unusual symptoms develop such as hives, fever, rash, or prolonged irritability that could indicate an allergic reaction so that records can be updated.

A list of allergies is kept in the classroom and kitchen. The Center will make reasonable food substitutions for children with allergies.

Items Children Will Need

The following items must be supplied for children age 5 and under. Please make sure that all items are labeled with the child's full name.

Items needed include:

- Complete change of clothing, including underwear and socks, to keep in the child's cubby at all times;
- A small blanket and small pillow for nap time;
- Diapers, pull-ups and wipes;
- Winter: raincoat for rainy days, hat, mittens, warm clothes. Please make sure each morning that your child is appropriately dressed for winter, as outside play is part of our daily curriculum and it is expected that all will participate. Playground and outdoor play is cancelled only during extremely adverse conditions;
- Summer: swimsuit, towel, water shoes, or extra shoes, sunscreen;
- Pre – made bottles for infant age children, labeled with their full name;
- Non – spill "beginner" cups for toddler age children, labeled with their full name.

Please note that bottles and beginner cups are hand washed with soap and hot water daily by the staff, but are not washed in a dishwasher. These items should be taken home each day for complete sterilization.

Parents are responsible for keeping up with supplies. If your child runs out of diapers / wipes during the day, you may be phoned to bring some to the Center. Discovery Children's Academy is not responsible for providing baby supplies.

All clothing and shoes should be sturdy and comfortable. The clothes your child wears should be easy for him / her to put on and take off, and be washable. Children do play with a variety of materials and clothing will surely become soiled as they learn through a hands-on program.

Clothing donations are always appreciated. The Center tries to maintain a supply of spare clothing for "accidents" but this supply becomes depleted quickly.

Toys should not be brought to the Center except on Show and Tell days. On Show and Tell days, children must realize that the toys brought to the Center are to be shared with the other children. Please see your child's teacher for further guidelines.

In order to minimize the chance of injury, items that are proven safety risks will not be allowed in the Center. These include, but are not limited to:

- Coins and latex balloons which, if swallowed or aspirated, are extremely dangerous;
- Guns and other war toys which frequently lead to aggressive behavior;
- Toys with very small parts or projectiles.

Lost Articles

We cannot replace lost, stolen or broken articles. If your child brings money or something valuable to the Center, it is important that the teacher or Director be informed.

Please check in lost and found if an item is missing. Lost and found items will be donated to charitable organizations after a reasonable period of time.

Toy donations made to the Center are always appreciated.

Weapons and Firearms

At no time will weapons, concealed or otherwise be allowed in the Center, parking lots, playgrounds, field trips, buses, vans, etc. Weapons include but are not limited to:

- Guns,
- Knives, Pocket knives, Swords
- Stun-guns
- Pepper spray, mace,
- Martial art accessories,
- Lassos,
- Hand-cuffs,
- Smoke bombs, etc.

Our Staff

Our staff consists of experienced caregivers and students who are studying child development. All of who genuinely care about helping children grow and ensuring that they have wonderful experiences at Discovery Children's Academy. All staff are hired and trained to be role models for the children. The staff's attitude, energy and enthusiasm reflect this. All our caregivers have first aid / CPR training and have had a TB test. Our staff and volunteers have undergone intensive employment and background screenings.

Professional staff is required to meet the State of Texas requirements for continuing education hours. Discovery Children's Academy is fortunate to have staff members that are excited about professional growth and current best practices in early childhood education. Staff is encouraged to explore different possibilities of continuous improvement and is required to attend at least 25 conference hours each year.

All staff members are instructed on the Center's confidentiality policy. A staff orientation is held for all employees within their first week of employment. This orientation provides information on policies, procedures, First Aid, appropriate guidance techniques, job expectations, and daily schedules.

Pictures of current teaching and administrative staff are posted on a bulletin board near the administrative offices.

Adjusting to the Center

It is quite normal for some children to experience some separation anxiety when a parent leaves. This is especially true at the beginning of a child's stay at the Center. Children may approach this new experience with hesitation since they have not yet formed secure attachments with their teachers or classmates. Please be assured that the teachers and the Director will assist the parent and child during this time. We will help the parent find the best way to say good-bye for the day. Sometimes it may require that the parents stay for a little while so that both the child and parent feel comfortable. If the parent has a positive feeling about leaving, this is transmitted to the child. However, if the parent is overly anxious, the child will sense this. Children can be prepared for the adjustment of "going to school" in several ways:

- Visit as often as necessary until you see that your child feels secure and comfortable.

- Talk to your child about where you are going, what he or she will be doing, and when you will return.
- Acknowledge your child's feelings and offer comfort, support, and assurance.
- Always say good-bye before you leave. Good-byes build trust. Repeated good-byes strengthen the child's belief that you will return.
- Upon picking up your child, take a moment to share in his or her activity. This will leave the child with positive thoughts and feelings about the Center.

The best support you can give is to be enthusiastic and encouraging – and be patient. If you need reassurance or further suggestions for helping your child feel more at ease, speak to your child's teacher and the Director.

Arrival

The morning schedule in each classroom is designed specifically to aid in the daily transition from home to the Center and to allow as much flexibility as possible to individual families. Therefore, it is asked that children arrive at the Center each morning between 6:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. During this time, less structured, open-ended "free play" activities are planned. This allows each teacher the freedom to greet each arriving child and parent, aid in the child's transition into the activity of the class according to his / her arrival style, and aid in the good-bye process.

Shortly after this time, many classroom transitions begin to take place such as clean up, snack and group times, which makes it difficult for a teacher to be available to an arriving child. It also does not allow an appropriate "buffer zone" for the child to once again acclimate to the group setting at his / her own pace. However, given parents schedules, we do realize that this may not be possible in all cases.

Parents are required to accompany their child into the Center daily and escort him / her to their classroom. Please make contact with the teacher before leaving your child.

Departure

A child may be released only to those persons authorized in writing by the parent. Each family will be required to complete an Authorization and Consent Form listing all such persons. The person picking up the child must be at least 18 years old. This permission form should be updated when necessary. The Center will refuse the release of a child to any persons other than those on file. The Director will also ask to see identification for any persons they do not recognize on sight, even if their name is on file. Parents must also notify the Center in advance when an authorized person will be picking up their child.

The emergency contact list you are required to complete designates who may pick the child up if there is an emergency and you cannot contact us. Those on the list should also be people we would call in the event that your child becomes ill / injured or it is after normal Center hours and we are unable to contact either parent.

Additionally:

- It is extremely important that parents make verbal contact with the child's teacher upon arrival to pick up the child;
- Parents must come inside the Center to pick up their child. Children will not be released from the playground;
- Children will not be released to parents on field trips unless the Director has been notified in advance.

For your child's safety, please bare with us as we take the above precautions.

Additions To The Pick Up Permission Policy

If a parent / guardian list an individual on the Pick –up Permission form as a person not authorized to pick up your child, the parent / guardian must provide the Center with a copy of legal court documents, which supports your request.

Without a legal court document, the Center does not have the authority to prevent a parent from visiting and / or taking their child once the Center had verified the identification of this individual. (If you have physical or sole custody of your child, then you should have a document that supports this).

However, in the cases where legal documentation does not exist, the Center staff will follow these guidelines:

- The Center staff will contact the parent to come to the Center and work this situation out in a peaceful, calm manner;
- If the parents / guardians are not able to come to a mutual agreement and / or the Center staff fear any altercations may get out of hand, the local police will be contacted.

The burden of proof falls on the parent enrolling the child, and the Director will handle all situations that keep the best interest of the child in the forefront. Communication and cooperation are the key factors in these situations.

Visitors

All visitors are greeted and asked to sign the visitor log and state the purpose of their visit. To ensure the security of the children and staff picture identification is required.

Key Pad

For the safety of your child and for security reasons, there are certain regulations governing the arrival and departure of each child. The Center is equipped with a keypad entry system to ensure only those persons with an access entry code can enter the building. Parents are given a code to enter during regular operating hours of the Center.

Absenteeism

If your child is going to be absent, please notify the Center prior to 9:30 a.m. It is encouraged that children attend the Center on a regular basis, as frequent absences disrupt their daily routine and make it difficult for them to benefit fully from the curriculum.

Parking Lot

It is very important that parents use extreme caution when walking in the parking lot. Children should be supervised closely at all times and should never be allowed to run ahead of a parent or play in this space as they walk in and out of the Center.

Additionally:

- Parents are expected to follow the parking lot signs. Enter only through the entry side and exit only through the exit side;
- Park within the white parking slots;
- Parking in the fire lanes is not permitted for any length of time;
- Handicaps spaces are reserved for persons requiring special assistance;
- Parents are asked to park in the parking lot only, not in the grassy areas;
- Please do not leave children unattended in your car;
- Please do not leave your car running;
- Please do not leave your keys or any valuables in your car;
- Speed Limit in the parking lot is 5 miles per hour.

Discovery Children's Academy is not responsible for damage to vehicles or items left in your car.

Smoking Policy

Discovery Children's Academy maintains a smoke – and tobacco free office. No smoking or other use of tobacco products (including, but not limited to: pipes, cigars, snuff, or chewing tobacco) is permitted in any part of the building. When smoking or otherwise using tobacco products outside, please do not leave cigarette butts or other traces of litter or tobacco use on the ground or anywhere lese.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an integral part of our daily schedule. During the time outdoors, children can actively discover their environment, explore the natural elements, develop their gross motor skills and play freely with their peers.

Discovery Children's Academy has chosen playground equipment especially designed for children's development. Safety surfaces are imbedded in the playground, which will absorb falls and cover the portion of the playground underneath the equipment, while hard – surfaced areas are provided for jump rope, riding toys, and ball games.

As required by the Minimum Licensing Standards, all children are required to have daily outdoor activities, weather permitting. Due to this requirement, if a child is not well enough to be outdoors, he / she is not well enough to be at the Center. Please provide your child with the appropriate clothing for the existing weather conditions. Staff will apply sunscreen on your child that you provide and as you direct. Your written authorization and instructions for applying the sunscreen are required. Please remember to label your child's sunscreen with his / her first and last name.

A child will not be allowed to remain indoors during the outdoor program unless a signed slip from the child's doctor indicates that the child should remain indoors.

Indoor large motor play will be available on days inappropriate for outdoor play.

Rest Periods

Children under five years of age are required to have a rest period daily. We try to make naptime a relaxing time where children can listen to stories, music, etc. If you feel that your child will not need a nap please understand that while we do not insist that they sleep, we do request that the children lay quietly so that others are not disturbed.

Infants are an exception, as each child will follow his / her own schedule for napping. We place all infants on their backs for sleeping. No infant will be placed on their stomach to sleep UNLESS we are provided with a signed doctor's note stating the reason the child must be placed on their stomach.

Many children need a security item from home to feel more comfortable during rest time. We encourage you to bring this special item for your child, keeping in mind that it needs to fit into your child's cubby for storage throughout the day. In addition, we ask that you clearly label the item with your child's name.

The Center will provide a sanitized mat or crib for every child. Parents shall provide a toddler size blanket for preschool age children. These items should be taken home at least weekly to be washed.

When at all possible, it is best to limit the traffic flow by parents and / or visitors during naptime to allow the children uninterrupted quiet period to rest / nap. Naptime begins about 12:00 p.m. and ends about 2:30 p.m.

Parent Teacher Communication

Another way of increasing the effectiveness of what we do is by communicating with you about your child's experiences here. We do this informally through conversation as you drop off or pick up your child, more formally through daily reports. If teachers or administrative staff is not free to talk with you during an unscheduled visit, please understand that our first priority is to give our attention to the children.

The Center does not routinely schedule Parent / Teacher conferences but we strive to keep the lines of communication open. If you wish to have a conference with your child's teacher please call the Center and we will arrange a mutually agreeable time for family and teachers. This ensures you will have their undivided attention. Conferences are also welcome by the administration staff. If you wish to speak with the Director call us or stop by the office.

Please inform the Center of any changes (e.g., one parent has taken a trip, illness in the family, moving, parents changing jobs, etc.) before and when they happen. Changes at home often lead to changes in behavior at the Center. We can care for and work better with your child if we are aware of changes at home. In turn, our staff will keep you informed of any issues we feel should be addressed.

It is of utmost importance that you notify the Director of any changes in address, phone numbers, etc.

Parent Involvement

Parents are the first and most lasting influence upon how a child feels about herself / himself. Childcare is a shared process, and we encourage you to take part in the day-to-day activities of the Center; meals, field trips and class visits. We would like you to share your ideas, traditions, and recipes and even yourself or any other way that you would enjoy. Parents are an important piece of our community and are welcome in the Center and classroom at any time. This enriches our program and is a great source of pride for your child. Remember, however, that some children may have a more difficult time accepting the arrival and departure of parents at times other than the normal routine. If a visit from a parent causes the child to become upset, the Director may ask the parent to take the child with them.

As your child will be spending a major portion of his / her day at the in Center, we want to make sure that parents are kept informed of all that is happening both in our classrooms and the Center. Children have a folder located in their classroom. From time to time you will receive various classroom notices, memos, agendas, and other information pertaining to the Center's operations, educational programs or special events. Please check your child's folder daily. On some occasions, especially important information may be sent via postal service or email. Notices are also posted in each classroom and Center notices are posted in the foyer.

Behavior Management

Our program believes that effective, positive discipline is guidance an educational process, not a tool to force obedience. Children will always be given opportunities to make choices and find alternatives to inappropriate behavior. The desired goal of positive discipline is to promote self-discipline and responsibility in children, which enable them to cooperate with others. We will not use any method of discipline that may cause a child's self-esteem to be damaged. No method of discipline will be used that causes humiliation, fear, or physical harm to children. Food will not be limited, nor will food be used as a reward.

The only acceptable forms of discipline are redirection, positive reinforcement, and the occasional use of "sit and watch". The guidelines that we use for children in "sit and watch" are one minute for each year of their age (i.e., three year old – three minutes; four year old- four minutes, etc.) accompanied by a quite discussion with the child regarding the unacceptable behavior. The child is always within view while in "sit and watch".

If a child's behavior leads our staff to believe that the Center is unable to meet the needs of a particular child, a minimum of two conferences will be scheduled to develop a plan of action to find a way to meet the needs of all. Such a plan may include family counseling, parenting classes, or a referral to a more appropriate childcare program (e.g. one with a smaller group size). If after two conferences the Director determines that the Center is unable to meet the needs of a particular child, the parent will be given a notice of termination. It is important to remember that we must keep all children safe at all times.

Telephoning The Center

Parents should also feel free to call the Center whenever the need arises. Please be aware, in order to provide security to the children, callers may be asked to verify their identities.

A parent who wishes to speak with a teacher about a matter that is not urgent may be asked to leave a message for him / her. Messages are returned as quickly as possible.

Calendars and Newsletters

A monthly calendar and / or newsletter are published which includes classroom news, field trip plans, special activates, and other Center information important to you and your child. Please take time to read the calendars / newsletters and mark important dates on your personal calendar.

Birthdays and Other Holiday Celebrations

If your child wishes to celebrate his / her birthday by bringing food as a treat for his / her class, please make sure of the following:

- The Director is notified ahead of time;

- There will be plenty for everyone;
- Goodie bags must not include gum, hard candies, nuts, sharp objects, toy guns, swords and other war toys;
- Balloons and birthday candles are prohibited.

Parent participation is welcome, but not required. To prevent hurt feelings, if birthday invitations are distributed at the Center, all children in the class should be invited.

Throughout the year, the Director will plan Holiday and Special Celebrations. Signup sheets for the parties will be posted on each classroom door at least one week prior to the party. "Low sugar" snacks and treats are encouraged. Examples of snack items include fresh fruits and vegetables, bagels, cheese and crackers (for further ideas consult center teachers or Director). We value healthy cooking and nutrition and therefore avoid highly processed food with high fat, salt and sugar content.

We are unable to serve children nut items and food that has been prepared at home. All food items must be purchased from a store or prepared in a commercial kitchen. Due to food allergies, we request that the nutritional information label is on items brought into the Center.

Please let the Director know of religious beliefs or personal request that may require alternate activities during the above listed celebration times. Your family's beliefs will be acknowledged and respected.

Infant Rooms

The following lists the policies for the Infant rooms. These policies are based on National Association for the Education Young Children (NAEYC) regulations as well as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) training received by the staff

- All babies under the age of 6 months will be placed on their backs to sleep. If parents want their child to be placed on his / her stomach or side, they must submit a signed waiver from a licensed physician.
- Blankets will not be used in the cribs. The Center encourages babies to be put in sleepers with feet for warmth. If parents want their child to sleep with a blanket, they must submit a signed waiver.
- Infants will not be given bottles while in their cribs.
- Bottles will not be reheated and will only be saved for 30 minutes. Once a bottle has been heated and fed to an infant, the formula or breast milk will be discarded if not consumed within 30 minutes.
- Infants will only be fed from unopened baby food jars and food will not be reheated.
- Unused food will be sent home with the parents at the end of the day.
- No bottles will be served with cereal or any other food product in them.
- Bottles are warmed by running them under warm water from the sink.
- A monthly feeding schedule must be filled out and signed by the parents until the baby is eating table food.
- No cloth diapers will be used.

A private room is available at the Center for nursing mothers. Note that nursing in the classrooms is not permitted. Mothers are allowed to nurse their child at any time during the day. The child's nursing schedule can be provided to the child's teachers at the time of enrollment.

Additionally:

- Infants must be awake, alert and taken out of their carriers before the parent leaves.
- Parents shall inform the teacher of the last time their child ate.

Toilet Training Policy

We will work with parents to ensure that toilet training is consistent between home and the Center. Parents and teachers will maintain communication about progress and will share any concerns or questions that they have.

We will not punish or shame children in any way for "accidents". We recognize that accidents are part of the learning process and may be attributed to many factors. We will help the child change clothing following accidents. This demonstrates respect for the child, acceptance of accidents as inevitable, and understanding

that young children do not learn by intimidation, fear or shame. We will need adequate supply of clothes; pull-ups, wet wipes, and plastic bags during the toilet learning process to keep your child clean and dry all day.

Class Promotion

As children grow, their developmental needs change. In order to provide the most developmentally age appropriate program possible, children move from one age / stage classroom to another. Naturally, we try to make these transitions as stress free as possible for both the children and parents. We generally have children move with a friend or two; we have children visit their new rooms over a period of a week in order to make these changes more gradual; and we encourage parents to visit with their children. We remain sensitive to the fact that young children grow attached to their teachers and we know that these attachments are a part of healthy social / emotional development. We are open to parental input about the classroom moves.

Curriculum

When you enter Discovery Children's Academy, you will notice that the classrooms are arranged into learning centers. These include family living, blocks, library, discovery, manipulative, music, creative art, and an outdoor area. Each center is filled with materials that enrich the child's experience in ways that are not always evident at first. For example, when children play with blocks we often think that they are just stacking objects. Children are actually developing large and fine muscle control, visual discrimination, logical thinking, and problem solving skills. They are learning math, science, and socializing with other children. Often when a parent asks a child what he or she did in "school", a response might be, "I just played." Feel good in knowing that play means developing readiness concepts, prompting social and emotional development, language skills, fine and gross motor coordination, sensory motor abilities, perceptual skills, and conceptual skills. These are presented to the children through various experiences.

The centers follow a language-based program. Activities will be developmentally appropriate and challenge children's thinking as they start to understand written and oral language concepts. They will be exposed to language through reading, writing, singing, and cooking.

Discovery Club

The "Discovery Club" is our after school program. Our Center provides a relaxed atmosphere with a variety of activities for the children to choose from. During the school year there are opportunities provided for the children to do their homework. However, you and your child will be responsible for the accuracy and completion of all homework.

Transportation Guidelines

Transportation is provided to area schools and field trip destinations. The Center only transports children 4 years or older and at least 36 inches tall. Everyone on the vehicle must wear safety belts at all times and follow the bus safety rules. Children who do not follow the bus rules or distract the driver will be suspended from riding the bus. The parents must complete a permission slip before the child will be allowed to take part in our transportation system.

School Age Fees

Holidays & Early Release Days

We welcome our school age children to attend additional days and times when needed, such as in-service days and school holidays. There are additional fees for attendance outside the program time the child is enrolled in. Siblings of other children enrolled may also attend, but the full enrollment package must be on file at the center.

Picking up at local elementary schools

Discovery Children's Academy will assume your child will need to be picked up every day from school unless you call and notify us by noon. There will be a \$10 charge for failure to notify the school to not pick your child up. Please understand that in this case we have to wait at your child's school until we make

contact with you. This makes our buses late picking other children up and keeps us from abiding by school district policies.

Vacation Camp

Each spring, fall, winter and summer break; our "Discovery Club" children will be given the opportunity to take part in an outstanding, educational and recreational program. The Center will be transporting the children to sites throughout the metropolitan area. Parents will be given a schedule for all of these activities in advance. There is additional charge of \$10.00 a day and some field trips may require an extra fee. Please contact the Director for details.

Field Trips

Field trips are an integral part of our program. Parents will be asked to sign a blanket permission slip for local trips upon enrollment. To better ensure the safety of the children, colored T-shirt will be issued to your child. The shirt is to be worn over your child's clothing. This will aid the teachers in easily identifying / locating the members of their group. The teachers also wear colored T-shirt, so that the children can easily identify / locate them. (Please see the Director for the current fee of the shirt).

Parents will be notified via posting in the foyer at least 48 hours in advance of the field trip. This information will include: when and where the children are going, and when the children are expected to return to the Center.

Children as well as staff must follow all safety rules and procedures as well as state licensing requirements. All drivers have received training in bus / van safety.

Parents are welcome to accompany their child on field trips when possible. Parents are responsible for their cost of the field trip and may be required to provide their own transportation.

Some children may not be allowed to attend field trips if their behavior threatens the security of the child or the group. Parents will be informed if their child does not attend a scheduled field trip for which they gave permission.

If your child arrives at the Center after their group has left for a field trip, he / she may join the class that is closest to their age until his / her age group returns.

Field trips will not be attempted if weather conditions present a hazard.

Contact Information

The Center *must* have a record of telephone numbers for each parent, other adults who would respond in case of an emergency, and for the family's pediatrician or other doctor. Any changes in the emergency information must be reported to the Center immediately. It is imperative that up-to-date numbers be maintained, as emergency medical services cannot be offered to your child in the absence of consent from a parent or legal guardian.

In the Event of Illness

By state regulation, children may not come to the Center if they are ill. Only children well enough to participate in the full range of curriculum activities, including outdoor play, should be in attendance. We have established this policy in an effort to maintain as healthy of an environment as possible for all members of our community.

Children who become ill while at the Center will be placed in isolation briefly while the parent is contacted to have the child picked up. The Center will notify parents when a child looks or behaves in a way that is clearly different than normal. Examples of this are when a child appears unusually tired, pale, seems confused, irritable, indicates pain, fever, discomfort, distress, or exhibits inconsolable crying. Ill children must be picked up within one hour from the time the Center calls you. If a parent cannot be reached, one of the alternative contacts listed in the child's emergency form will be called.

If your child has diarrhea, vomiting, a fever over 101, any other contagious illness, they cannot be brought to the Center until the symptom(s) are gone for 24 hours. Any children suspected or diagnosed with head lice

will be excluded from care until treatment has been applied and the child is nit free. We also require parents to wash all the child's personal belongings (blankets, coats, hats, stuffed animals, etc.) prior to returning to care.

Children who have been excluded from the Center and have been in the care of a physician can return when the physician had determined that no serious health risk exists for the child or others. For children who have not been in the care of a physician, the child may return when symptoms have passed and the child feels ready to again participate in the day's activities. The Director will aid in this determination if necessary. Any child who was excluded with a communicable illness must have a doctor's note to return to the Center.

In cases of a communicable illness, the Director will post a notification so that parents can take the needed precautions to prevent further spread.

Medication

Upon the written request of a parent or physician, medication will be administered. Before any medication can be given the following procedures must be met:

- The parent must fill out a Medication Authorization Form daily.
- Over the counter medications must be in its original container with its original label, legible directions for use, expiration date, child's name and the dosage amount must be identified for your child's weight and / or age.
- Physician prescribed medications must be in its original container with its original label, legible directions for use, expiration date, child's name and child's physician's name. The medication must be prescribed specifically for your child. The prescription will not be administered to siblings.
- Medication must be taken home every day.
- Medication must be handed to the Director. Under no circumstances may a child retain possession of the medication.
- Topical Non-Prescription medicines can be applied with written parental authorization only.
- The Center dispenses Medications at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. only, unless otherwise specifically prescribed by a physician.

It's a good idea to ask your pediatrician if the medication can be given in the morning or evening so you can avoid bringing it to the Center.

Discovery Children's Academy and its staff accept no responsibility or liability for any error or omission regarding administration of medication.

Minor Accidents

In the case of minor injuries such as small cuts, bruises, or bumps, a staff member trained in first aid will take the appropriate steps for treating your child's injury. An Incident Report Form will be filled out by the staff member and sent home with your child. The original will go in the child's permanent folder. The parents will receive a copy. The parent will also be verbally informed about the injury. We will inform you immediately if the injury requires any additional medical attention.

Medical Emergency

In the event of a life threatening or major medical emergency to a child in our care, one staff member will remain with the injured or ill child while another staff member calls 911. The parent will be notified immediately after 911 has been called. If we are unable to reach the parent, we will contact one of the emergency contacts listed on the Enrollment Application. Transportation to a care facility will be arranged through a rescue team or the child's parent. Parents will be required to complete a permission to transport form at the time of enrollment.

Fire and Tornado Drills

Our program has policies and procedures for emergencies such as fire, storms, etc. Each staff member is aware of these procedures to ensure the children's safety. Drills are staged regularly. Evacuation plans are posted in each room. There is always a staff member present with CPR and first aid training. Should an emergency affect the Center, we will notify parents as soon as possible.

Extracurricular Activities

Discovery Children's Academy offers extracurricular activities, some are completely voluntary and are not included in the tuition rate. The activities are offered to children in the Center by organizations not affiliated with our program. Parents can sign up for each activity at the Center, but will pay all fees and charges directly to the corresponding organizations. Please see the Director for information on these activities.

Water Activities

Throughout the year, children (except infants) will engage in water play. During the summer months children have opportunities to participate in "splash days." Children cool off outside by running through sprinklers, playing with water hoses, etc. The Center strictly follows all State guidelines and standards for water activities.

Discovery Children's Academy does not have a swimming pool on the premises. However, we do transport school age children to public swimming pools. These facilities have certified lifeguards on duty.

Please alert the staff if your child has ear tubes or needs ear protection.

Video Viewing

Classes occasionally view educational videos that are related to their current unit of study. Once a month classes may also see a movie that is 'just for fun'. All programs are previewed to evaluate content and suitability for the age group of the children. Children are supervised at all times and an alternate activity is available for those children who choose not to watch the program.

Animals / Pets

From time to time the classrooms may have an aquatic pet. The care and keeping of a classroom pet gives children the opportunity to learn how to properly nurture small animals. When this occurs we will post a notice on the classroom door or on the information bulletin board to inform you. The teachers will be responsible for the daily care of the animal including proper food, and care for its tank or "home." The children and staff will practice good hygiene and hand washing after feeding the fish or after cleaning the tank.

The classroom teachers may ask for parent volunteers to "foster" the fish during long holidays when the Center is closed. If you are interested in helping in this way, please speak with your child's teacher.

Policy Changes

The Center reserves the right; in its sole discretion, to modify these policies and procedures and to promulgate new ones. These policies reflect licensing and city standards, Center procedures, and agreements made between parents and Discovery Children's Academy.

In the event of an operational policy change or change involving the child-care enrollment agreement, parents will be notified in writing via posting in the foyer and a written notice distributed. These announcements must be signed by the parent and returned to the Director within 3 days of publication. The parent handbook will also be updated. A two-week notice will be given when possible.

Fundraising

The Center will depend upon the parent community to lead and conduct fundraising efforts in order to help subsidize our program. Tuition will not always cover the total cost of materials and personal. Money raised through fundraising activities may go toward upgrading the inside / outside environment, new equipment, art supplies, increasing teacher salaries or contributing to their professional development.

Family Socials

Each year there shall be several opportunities for families to get together through school picnics, class events, programs, etc. These social events will provide a chance for parents to meet each other, meet teachers and your children's friends.

Baby Sitting

Discovery Children's Academy does not allow employees to baby-sit or transport enrolled children in their personal vehicle. We want to keep a professional relationship between parent, child and staff. We ask parents to please respect this policy and refrain from asking our staff members to baby-sit. On special occasions we will have "Parents Night Out" to give our parents some much needed down time.

Referral Program

Refer a friend to our Center and receive free tuition, if they enroll and stay a minimum of 30 paid days. Simply tell them to tell us you sent them. Your child gets quality childcare and child development experiences for free. See the Director for further details.

Waiting List

As vacancies occur during the year, they are filled from a waiting list, or from new registrations. Families may apply to the waiting list by completing an application form and paying the non-fundable enrollment fee. Applying for enrollment does not guarantee placement in the Center. Once an opening for enrollment occurs, we review the waiting list. The Center aims to give two weeks notice to a parent once a place becomes available. Unborn children must have a due date to apply. Siblings of currently enrolled children receive priority on the waiting list.

Parent Code Of Conduct

Discovery Children's Academy has developed a Parent Code of Conduct to ensure that you, your child, our staff, and all that enter our Center enjoy a safe, welcoming and respectful environment. Behavior that is inappropriate, illegal, threatening or disrespectful in nature or language, that is abusive or instigative is not acceptable. Parents are prohibited from physically disciplining their children while on Center property. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone, without warning, which violates the Parent Code of Conduct.

Family Withdrawal

Parents may withdraw their child from the Center by giving two weeks-advanced notice in writing. Parents must pay for these two weeks in full whether or not their child attends the Center. Any outstanding fees must be paid on or before the child's last day. If it becomes necessary for the Center to resort to legal action to collect fees, the parent will be responsible for all cost incurred on our part.

Center Termination

The Center reserves the right to terminate childcare if we feel the continued care might be detrimental to the child or the program. A child may be dismissed from the Center for any of the following reasons:

- Required information (medical, emergency, transportation etc.) is not provided for the child's file;
- Financial obligations are not met in a timely fashion or arrangement has not been made with the Director for an alternative pay schedule;
- The child poses a physical threat to themselves, other children or staff;
- The Center is unable to adequately meet the unique needs of the child;
- Lack of parental cooperation;
- Parents caused undue stress to the Center staff or operations;
- Failure of child to adjust to the Center after a reasonable amount of time;
- False information given by parents either verbally or in writing;
- If, for any reason, the Director and parents agree it is in the best interest of the child that he or she be removed.

This decision would be made after exhausting all possible alternatives. When available, assistance would be provided to the parent to find a more suitable program in the community for the child.

Baby Sitting

Discovery Children's Academy expects parents and employees to avoid activities that create a conflict of interest to the company. If you decide to arrange off-premises care with a staff member, the staff member undertakes such service on his/her own behalf- not as a staff member of Discovery Children's Academy.

Discovery Children's Academy offers no assurance of the fitness of its staff members for performing these services, and none should be implied or inferred under any circumstances. Discovery Children's Academy's employees are prohibited from transporting children who are not their own to and from the center.

Procurement Fee for Hiring Our Teachers

Hiring our teachers is highly discouraged, because it presents a conflict of interest for the teacher. If a parent does hire a teacher for a position (i.e. nanny or caregiver) that competes with Discovery Children's Academy during enrollment or for a period of 12 months after withdrawal from the school, then parents shall have 30 days to notify the center and pay the center a \$3500 placement fee, since you were introduced to the teacher through our school. Understand that this fee is common and in line with what many nanny agencies charge for placement.

Gang Free Zone

A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The specific locations include day care centers. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of Discovery Children's Academy. Similar to the motivation behind establishing drug-free zones, the purpose of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather by enforcing tougher penalties. Gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of the center is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law. The area that falls within a gang-free zone can vary depending on the type of location. The local municipal or county engineer may produce and update maps for the purposes of prosecution. Parents may contact their local municipality or court house for information about obtaining a copy of a map if they choose to do so.

Child Care Licensing

Most recent inspection reports, letters, or notices requiring posting are always displayed in the Center. A copy of the Minimum Standard Rules for Licensed Child Care Centers can be found at the front desk or at the TDFPS website: <http://www.tdprs.state.tx.us/>.

Parents may contact the Child Care Licensing Office at 214-583-4253 or 1-800-582-6036. 8700 North Stemmons Freeway Suite # 104 Dallas, Texas 75247.

Reporting Child Abuse

Child abuse and neglect are against the law in Texas, and so is failure to report suspected cases of child abuse. If we / you suspect a child to be abused or neglected, the law requires that we / you make a report to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (DPRS). Law from liability protects persons making reports in good faith, and their identities are kept confidential. Persons making false and malicious reports are open to the scrutiny of the criminal justice system.

To report to DPRS, contact the department's local chief Protective Services Office, or call the special toll-free Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400. or <https://www.txabusehotline.org>

Please contact the Center Director about any questions or concerns you as a parent may have.

Customer Satisfaction

We are always interested in your comments regarding the care and education that your child receives at our Center. Your child's teacher and our administration staff welcome your comments and daily communications to express your child's progress or concerns. Please feel free to stop by the office or call the Center whenever a concern arises. We have also set up an email address just for you, our customer. Employees of the Center will not read the emails and no one will have access to these messages except the management team and Executive Officers of Discovery Children's Academy. We believe that the professional staff at the Center will handle comments efficiently; however, in the event that you don't believe that there has been appropriate attention we encourage you to email us at:

Renay McAfee, Executive Director - renay.mcafee@discoverychildrensacademy.com

Kyle McAfee, Vice President of Operations – jkylemcafee@discoverychildrensacademy.com

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to care for your children. We look forward to serving you and your family. Discovery Children's Academy is committed to excellence.