

PARENT HANDBOOK

PURPOSE AND HISTORY

Dianne Arnett founded the Children's Discovery Center on Duval St. in September of 1979 with the intention of creating a safe environment for children to explore and learn through hands-on experiences. In August of 1991, Kyle Holder took over the school and expanded on that philosophy in creative new ways. He utilized the current schools of thought in early childhood development to develop a program using progressive, innovative ideas. In 1996, Kelly McRee became the Educational Director to help guide the school's curriculum and shape the philosophy of the school to become even more developmentally sound. They opened up the second location in west Austin in September of 1997 and named it The Discovery School. In 2004 Kyle and Kelly, along with a few like-minded educators started a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation to create an elementary School that would be a progressive alternative to the public school system. In 2005 a charter was granted by the State of Texas and The Austin Discovery School was born! Kelly took the reigns as principal, and many of the teachers that shaped the pre-school's philosophy are now teaching there. The charter school serves grades K-6 and is free to the public!

In March of 2010, the idea for The Children's Discovery Center South was hatched, with an opening date set for June 2010. After 3 years at the central school, Lynne Kirby became the Site Director for the south school, which offers a great Summer Camp for elementary age children, as well as infant care, pre-school, and an after-school care program. At the Children's Discovery Center Central, Ros Schneider was promoted to Director in 2006 after teaching for us since 2001. Britney Overton is the Assistant Director and has taught at the school since 2007. Dustin Withers is the Site Director at the Discovery School pre-k program in west Austin and he has been with the school since 2005. Ashley Farmer is the Assistant Director at the west school, and has taught with us since 2008.

We are always expanding on the progressive, innovative, child centered educational techniques that we feel are critical for children. This philosophy is vital for children in order to have a meaningful pre-school experience. Here at CDC, our goal has always been to maintain an environment that is rich in opportunities that instill self-confidence and enable children to develop socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively. We form partnerships with parents to promote a greater understanding of ways in which children grow and learn.

PHILOSOPHY

The Philosophy of Children's Discovery Center is based on the image of the child. We see the individual child has having right to a high quality education. We respect that the child is the co-constructor of knowledge. This means that the children's interests and their innate curiosity help choreograph our curriculum. We support the children's exploration of their environment as natural researchers, and their need to be interactive learners. We offer children the environment for learning and the provocation to take another look. Our philosophy combines some of the teachings of the greatest educators of our times- Jean Piaget, John Dewey, Erik Erikson, Bev Bos

and Reggio Emilia's Loris Malaguzzi. Our environment is structured so our curriculum is truly child centered which implies that it is both child initiated and teacher facilitated. We focus on the process of learning in all its intricacies, not just the end result or the product. The learner must be trusted and supported to follow the creative processes without worry of what the finished product may be. At Children's Discovery Center, we are dedicated to allowing children the freedom to explore the world at their leisure and at their direction, while setting age appropriate boundaries and limits to make sure children feel safe.

INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to visit the school whenever they wish. If you have any special talents or skills such as playing an instrument or if you are a police officer or firefighter, etc., then we would welcome you to share those skills with the children. We feel the more involved the parents are in the school, the more positive the children's experiences will be. The Children's Discovery Center offers a complete open door policy and you may stop by at any time of the day to visit. We do, however, encourage the parents to discuss visits with the director, as most children associate seeing their parents with going home. It might be hard on some children to have to say good-bye to their parents again in the middle of the day.

PROGRAM

The Children's Discovery Center attempts to provide an environment that facilitates the development of:

1. A feeling of belonging, love and respect.
2. Consideration for the feelings of others.
3. Friendliness
4. Self confidence, self control and self esteem.
5. Curiosity and a desire to discover and explore.
6. Problem solving skills.
7. A positive group experience.
8. Self help skills and an expression of individualism.

TUITION

Tuition for full time childcare is \$850 monthly, \$950 for children under 18 months old. The part time rates vary from \$560 to \$840, depending on the specific program chosen. There is a schedule of fees available for you. Tuition is due on the first of each month. There is a six-day grace period and after the sixth day of the month there will be a \$10 late fee. If your tuition is more than 30 days late, your child will not be able to attend school. We raise tuition rates every April. This allows us to increase staff pay and benefits, as well as keep up with equipment and facility maintenance.

NUTRITION

A nutritious snack is served at 9:15 a. m. and 3:15 p. m. every day. Children bring their own lunch and eat at 11:00. We ask that you respect our low sugar/no chocolate policy and pack lunches and/or breakfasts that are nutritious and sugar free. There is a nutrition suggestion package available from the director on ideas for lunches. Water is provided with lunch and juice is served with afternoon snack.

SCHOOL LUNCH

To give parents a mid-week break, we offer a Wednesday lunch plan. The plan offers cheese pizza every Wednesday at a cost of \$7.00 per month. Most parents are signed up for this plan and it is added to tuition.

ENROLLMENT

The Children's Discovery Center on Duval offers classes to children 6 weeks old to 5 years old, on a full or part time basis. 3 1/2 to 5-year olds will be enrolled in The Discovery School, located at 8600-3 White Cliff Drive. We provide transportation to and from The Discovery School from The Children's Discovery Center at 4112 Duval St., 78751. We have a low child/staff ratio, with a ratio of 4:1 in our infant room, up to 9:1 in our 3 year old class, and 9:1 at Discovery School. There are five classes at CDC starting at 6 weeks old up to 4 years old. Every room has at least two teachers for the support and team teaching benefits. The Children's Discovery Center South, located at 3515 Convict Hill Rd, is currently enrolling infants for regular admission, as well as 4-10 year olds for Summer Camp and the After-School Program. Enrollment in our programs is based on available space without regard to race, sex, creed or religion. The enrollment procedure consists of the following steps:

1. An initial interview with the director of the school and a tour of the school.
2. Visiting all the other schools you are interested in.
3. Payment of the deposit. If you decide to enroll here, a deposit will secure your place in line. The deposit is \$300. One half of this deposit is not refundable because it is the registration and supply fee and the other half is refundable upon thirty days written notice of withdrawal.
4. **Completion of the enrollment forms before you start school!**
5. Providing the school with current immunization records and a well-child statement (within 2 weeks of start date if not immediately available).
6. We encourage the parents and child to **visit as much as possible** before the actual start date to familiarize the child with the school and make the first days of school easier.

HOURS

The school is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. till 6:00 p.m. The school closes promptly at six and the teachers are not paid to work after six. Therefore, a late pick up fee of \$2.00 every 5 minutes will be charged and paid to the teacher who stays late.

HOLIDAYS

The school will close for the following holidays: Memorial Day, Independence Day (or the closest weekday if it falls on a weekend), Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday, and two full weeks at Christmas time, (Christmas Holiday break will always coincide with AISD's closure). Of the following **five** holidays, we will close for only **three**, to be announced every year on September 1st: M.L.K. Day,

President's Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, and Good Friday. These will also **coincide with AISD** closings, which vary from year to year (we don't know why AISD does this, but they do). Tuition is not prorated for holidays.

ATTENDANCE

Every child who is enrolled in the center should attend regularly. We strongly encourage this to promote the child's development and sense of consistency. If a child is to be absent, we ask you to call the school and let us know so we can plan accordingly. Each child must be accompanied into the building and presented to the teacher by an adult. Children will only be dismissed to their parent or an authorized adult listed on the application. If any authorized adult listed on your child's application is to pick up your child, please have them to bring a driver's license for identification purposes.

HEALTH

Each child will be given a health check upon arrival at school. Children with contagious symptoms or visible illness will not be allowed to stay at school. Children must be able to take on an active day at school and be able to keep up with the pace of a normal school day. If your child should require that medication be administered during the school day, you must give the medication to the teacher and sign the medication chart for time and dosing information. Any child that seems drained or not feeling well should not be at school. Other symptoms that exclude children from school are: fever above 100 degrees, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue or discolored mucous. If a child stays home or is sent home from school, they need to be symptom free for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Parents are encouraged to report any contagious diseases to the director for the safety of the rest of the children. Policies regarding exclusion and re-admittance are dictated by the regulations of the Health Department. In the event of an emergency, the director will call 911.

Vision and Hearing screenings are required for any child who is 4 by September 1st. They must be screened or have a professional examination for possible vision and hearing problems. This needs to be completed within 120 days of admission for first time students or before the end of the first semester. We offer these screenings every spring, administered by UT.

IMMUNIZATIONS

A written documentation of immunizations for measles, mumps, rubella, polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, tuberculosis and HIB must be presented at the time of enrollment. A well child statement from the child's doctor must also be presented. The immunization schedule you must follow is attached to the back of this handbook. You must keep the documentation of your child's immunizations current with the director.

TRANSPORTATION

We only provide transportation for our students to and from Discovery School. We use parent volunteers to help transport children on field trips.

FIELD TRIPS AND WATER PLAY

Many of the classes take field trips throughout the year. You will need to give signed permission for your child to participate as well as signing permission to be transported to the field trip. Any child under the age of 5 or less than 36 inches tall is required to ride in a child safety car seat. We also put all children under 4 in a car seat regardless of height. When your classroom is going to go on a field trip, they will post a sign on their classroom door stating when and where they will go, when they will be back to our school and this notice will be posted at least 48 hours prior to the field trip. Many parents really enjoy volunteering to help on their classroom field trips. Older children may have weekly walks around the neighborhood, check with your teacher to find out the schedule. We regularly use splashing/wading pools and/or sprinklers on warm days for water play.

ANIMAL POLICY

Should we choose to have animals on the premises, we will notify parents in writing when animals will be present and ensure that the animals do not create unsanitary conditions. Caregivers and children will practice good hygiene after coming into contact with animals or items used by an animal by hand washing. The playground and child care center will be kept free of unfamiliar animals. Pets should be left outside of the playground, as even friendly animals can be become scared by excited children.

COMMUNICATION

All children have mailboxes located in their room. That is where newsletters, notes, menus, tuition statements and artwork can be found.

The school's phone numbers are:

Children's Discovery Center on Duval St: 512-458-1891

Children's Discovery School South on Convict Hill: 512-458-1891

The Discovery School on White Cliff: 512-794-1021

The Discovery School bus phone: 512-587-3153

The infant room at CDC on Duval: 512-458-1806

The Austin Discovery School charter elementary school: 512-674-0700

We will call parents (or emergency contacts if parents are not reachable) in the event of illness, injury or emergency. If there is a serious event, we will call 911 first.

CONFERENCES

Parents and teachers are encouraged to ask for a conference at any point in time. A particularly good time is when there is a concern that has not been fully addressed. Conferences will be held at a time that is convenient for both the teacher and the parent. Typically, teachers try and schedule a conference during their weekly planning periods, between 1 and 3 p.m. It is important for the parent and teacher to connect without distractions. Problems should not be addressed in front of children. When the teachers are in the class, or on the playground, they are responsible for many children. Teachers will not be able to carry on lengthy conversations during those times, but we want to know how the parents feel, so we welcome you to set up

a conference. We want parents to feel comfortable with this and not be worried that it be taken negatively, because we do realize that many topics need to be discussed, and cannot be during class time. It is our firm belief that communication is vital to our success and we encourage all comments and suggestions. We will welcome all your ideas and we will always treat your child with respect and love.

CLOTHING

Clothing should be comfortable, washable and suitable for preschool activities and will **generally get pretty dirty**. Children learn by doing and during the course of doing they are going to get dirty, therefore, you can count on your child being happy and healthy at the end of the day, but not necessarily clean and free of stains. There is no way of keeping children spotless for 5 to 8 hours of school. Please don't send your child to school in their good clothes and always keep at least two complete sets of clothing in your child's cubby. You never know when accidents will happen or the weather might change. All children will be expected to have clothing suitable for that day's weather. We spend a good deal of time outdoors even if it's muddy or wet. All clothing should be marked with your child's initials with a permanent marker. We will always try and get your child's clothing back to their cubby, but sometimes clothing and shoes get misplaced. **We will do our best** to make sure no clothing gets lost, but sometimes it might take a while for clothing to make it back to the right cubby. **Please do not send your child to school in important clothes!**

DISCIPLINE

One of the main objectives of the Children's Discovery Center is to help children develop self-discipline. To encourage this, we use a discipline approach that:

1. Is individualized, consistent, firm and benevolent
2. Fosters the child's development of inner controls
3. Sets limits, gently and consistently enforced
4. Accepts and acknowledges the individual child's feelings
5. Constantly and positively reinforces appropriate behavior
6. Is age appropriate for limits and guidance
7. Redirects behavior using positive statements

We do not use any the following as per State of Texas licensing standards:

1. Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
2. Punishments associated with food, naps or toileting
3. Pinching, shaking or biting a child
4. Putting anything in a child's mouth
5. Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting or yelling at a child
6. Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive or profane language
7. Placing a child in a locked or dark room
8. Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

At any time, parents wish to discuss any policy or procedures for the school, please feel free to contact Ros, Lynne, Dustin or Kyle at school during business hours to set up a time to talk. Also, feel free to send us an e-mail outlining your complaint, and we will address it promptly. Please include the best way to contact you and times you are available. Our e-mail addresses are: ros@discoveryschools.com, lynne@discoveryschools.com, dustin@discoveryschools.com or kyleholder@yahoo.com. Many issues can be easily resolved once we are aware of them and we are glad to help facilitate dialogue between you and your classroom teacher as well. We have a bulletin board outside our office door with a list of teacher trainings available. This is also the place where we display our latest licensing report. Please feel free to view the minimum standards for licensed child care centers with our copy in the office or it is available on their website, www.tdprs.state.tx.us. Some important numbers you may need to know are: the local licensing number 834-3195 and the child abuse hotline 1-800-265-5400.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY CENTER

Welcome to the Children's Discovery Center! We want to welcome you to our school community. We have a very active parent body at Children's Discovery Center. This is an outline of parental involvement at our school that will help you and your family acclimate you to our annual school traditions.

Our Scholastic Book Fair is a big event for us every November. The Book Fair enables us to get many new books for our school library. We believe that children should have access to books at all times, but this can result in books getting torn or lost, so we need to replace books frequently. We have raised over \$1,000.00 each year in free books. The Book Fair is a great place to purchase holiday gifts and to get your book for Holiday Book Exchange (detailed below).

We have several traditions that the majority of our parents participate in. We have a huge Halloween carnival every year. Parents sign up to run different children's activities booths like ring toss and fishing for worms. There are about fifteen different booths, as well as a Moon Bouncer. Parents help set up the carnival, so we really need a lot of parental involvement. We post a sign up sheet on the parent's bulletin board the week before Halloween.

For the holidays, we have an annual book exchange. Each child brings a wrapped book on the last day before the Holiday break. The book should not cost more than ten dollars, and should be labeled as to whom the book is from. This is the way for all of us to share in the holiday spirit.

The other holiday tradition we have is an annual teacher bonus program. All parents are asked to participate by donating ten or twenty dollars, so that all the teachers can receive a cash bonus before the holiday break. In year past, full time teachers have each received around a hundred-dollar bonus.

We have parent/teacher workdays four times a year. On these days, we spend a Saturday doing a project for the school. We organize classrooms, clean toys, and in years past, we have built decks, play-scapes, and done major remodeling. It is a great bonding experience for all of us to work together.

Parents are not required to participate in any of these events if they do not wish, but we have found that most want to be a part of at least a few of these events! We feel that parental involvement is the one of the key ingredients to a satisfying school experience for both your child and your family.

PARENTS' SUGGESTED READING LIST

Books by Bev Bos

Don't Move the Muffin Tins

Together We're Better

Before the Basics

Smart Moves-Why Learning is not all in your head

Carla Hanford, Ph.D

Endangered Minds-Why children don't think and what we can do about it

Jane Healy, Ph.D

There's Gotta Be a Better Way-Discipline that works

Dr. Becky Bailey

Punished by Rewards

Alfie Kohn

Books by Howard Gardner

Multiple Intelligences

Frames of the Mind

Books by Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D

7 Kinds of Smart

Awakening Your Child's Natural Genius

In Their Own Way

Play's Place in Public Education for Young Children

Edited by Victoria Jean Dimidjian

Free Play

Stephen Nachmanovitch

100 Languages of Children

Lella Gandani, George Forman, and Carolyn Edwards

TUITION AND FEES
CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY CENTER
EFFECTIVE FOR ENROLLMENT AFTER JANUARY 1, 2009

MONTHLY TUITION FOR CHILDREN UNDER 18 MONTHS OLD:

FULL TIME	\$950			
7:30 - 12:00	5 DAY \$745	3 DAY \$700	2 DAY \$635	
12:00 - 6:00	5 DAY \$745	3 DAY \$700	2 DAY \$635	
7:30 - 3:00	5 DAY \$820	3 DAY \$735	2 DAY \$700	
3:00 - 6:00	5 DAY \$700	3 DAY \$635	2 DAY \$600	
FOUR FULL DAYS	\$840			
THREE FULL DAYS		\$745		
TWO FULL DAYS		\$700		

MONTHLY TUITION FOR CHILDREN OVER 18 MONTHS OLD:

FULL TIME	\$850			
7:30 - 12:00	5 DAY \$670	3 DAY \$635	2 DAY \$585	
12:00 - 6:00	5 DAY \$670	3 DAY \$635	2 DAY \$585	
7:30 - 3:00	5 DAY \$730	3 DAY \$655	2 DAY \$625	
3:00 - 6:00	5 DAY \$635	3 DAY \$590	2 DAY \$560	
FOUR FULL DAYS	\$745			
THREE FULL DAYS	\$670			
TWO FULL DAYS		\$635		

ENROLLMENT DEPOSIT: \$300

ONE HALF OF THIS DEPOSIT WILL BE REFUNDABLE UPON THIRTY DAYS WRITTEN NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL.

THE OTHER HALF IS THE REGISTRATION AND SUPPLY FEE. IT IS NOT

REFUNDABLE.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN OVER 18 MONTHS OLD:

MUSIC, STORYTELLING AND GYMNASTICS: \$11 PER MONTH FOR 1-2 SESSIONS PER WEEK

LUNCH FEE: OPTIONAL \$7 FOR PIZZA DAY ON WEDNESDAYS

LATE CHARGES/DROP IN FEES:

LATE CHARGE: \$10 IF TUITION IS PAID AFTER THE 6TH OF THE MONTH

RETURNED CHECK FEE: \$35

DROP-IN CHILD CARE FEES: \$55 ALL DAY, \$40 HALF DAY (AM OR PM)

INFANT DAILY CHILD CARE: \$65 ALL DAY, \$50 HALF DAY (AM OR PM)

LATE PICK UP FEE: \$2 FOR EVERY 5 MINUTES PAST 6 PM

HOLIDAYS:

MEMORIAL DAY

JULY 4TH

LABOR DAY

THANKSGIVING AND THE FRIDAY AFTERWARDS

TWO WEEKS AT CHRISTMAS TO COINCIDE WITH AISD

OF THE FOLLOWING FIVE HOLIDAYS, WE WILL CLOSE FOR ONLY THREE, TO BE ANNOUNCED ON SEPTEMBER 1, TO COINCIDE WITH AISD CLOSINGS (WHICH INEXPLICABLY VARY FROM YEAR TO YEAR)

- 1) M.L.K. DAY
- 2) PRESIDENTS DAY
- 3) COLUMBUS DAY
- 4) VETERANS DAY
- 5) GOOD FRIDAY

THE HOLIDAYS FOR 2007/2008 ARE: VETERAN'S DAY, M.L.K. DAY AND GOOD FRIDAY.

TUITION IS NOT PRORATED FOR HOLIDAYS