

# CHILDREN'S DISCOVERY CENTER PRE-SCHOOL HANDBOOK

4112 Duval St Austin, Texas 78751

Office Phone: (512) 458-1891

Infant Room: (512) 458-1801

Website: [www.DiscoverySchools.com](http://www.DiscoverySchools.com) E-mail: [childrensdiscoverycentral@gmail.com](mailto:childrensdiscoverycentral@gmail.com)

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# Our School

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## PURPOSE AND HISTORY

Dianne Arnett founded the Children’s Discovery Center on Duval Street in September 1979 with the intention of creating a safe environment for children to explore and learn through hands-on experiences. In August 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 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 who 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 2010, the idea for the Children’s Discovery Center South was hatched, with an opening date of June 2010. After three years at the central school, Lynne Kirby Collier became Site Director for the South school, which offers infant, toddler and preschool programs. Chris Box and Christina Montell are the Assistant Directors. At the Children’s Discovery Center Central, Ros Schneider is the Director and Brittany Overton is the Assistant Director. Dustin Withers is the Site Director at the Discovery School Pre-K program and Eva Silver is the Assistant Director.

We are continuously expanding on the progressive, innovative, child-centered educational techniques that we feel are critical for children to have a meaningful pre-school experience. At Children’s Discovery Center (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.

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## PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of the Children's Discovery Center is based on the image of the child. We see the individual child as having the 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 child-centered, nature-based 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, Becky Bailey, and Reggio Emilia's Loris Malaguzzi. Our environment is structured so that 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 CDC, we are dedicated to allowing children the freedom to explore the world at their leisure and direction, while setting age-appropriate boundaries and limits to make sure children feel safe.

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## PROGRAM GOALS

The Children's Discovery Center provides 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
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## CURRICULUM

We create a learning environment at our school that fosters independence, divergent thinking, creativity, and a love for learning that lasts a lifetime. This handbook discusses each academic aspect along with examples so you can fully understand our program and why we consider it the best prescription for learning. We believe that learning happens when it is meaningful for each child. Learning must occur in a natural way so that it is seen as play not memorization, worksheets or meaningless drills. Our play based curriculum allows children the freedom to grow in their own unique way.

### ENVIRONMENT

The environment is structured to ensure the success of every student. We look at our workspace as an additional teacher whose help is imperative. Our environment is exciting, sensory rich, and provokes children to take another look at materials in the room. The environment is organized so materials are readily available and in a logical spot. The room structure helps to create a sense of autonomy, gives children choices, and allows for less intervention from teachers/adults. This gives children the tools for success and the choice to explore what is interesting to them.

### MATERIALS

You will see open-ended materials in our classroom as well as real world objects. We want children's imagination to fuel their use of the materials. We don't want the manufacturer of the toys to be influencing and dictating the use of specific materials. This kind of environment fosters the joy of lifelong learning as well as helping children become problem solvers and possess divergent thinking skills.

### SELF-REGULATION

Our schedule provides continuity for the children in our classroom. They know specifically what order things happen in each day. The day is predictable and they can count on what will happen each day at school. This allows for smooth transition throughout the entire day. Please understand that our program is child centered and that sometimes we must adjust for the wellbeing of all children. A responsibility guidance system (positive guidance/redirection) governs our limit setting in the classroom. Children have power, ownership, and control in our classroom, as do all members of our classroom community. Our classroom, as



a whole, decides on the limits for our room and these limits are enforced at all times. Children know the expectations and are given choices within our structure. This allows children the freedom to explore while creating a safe environment for everyone. Feelings are always validated in our classroom. We create an environment where all children have autonomy, can communicate feelings and understand the consequences of their behavior. They learn to develop empathy for all members of our community and can solve their own problems without intervention

## **ART**

We use open ended materials for children to develop their own unique artwork. Some examples of the open-ended materials are recycled items and items found in nature. Children will be exposed to various art media such as markers, crayons, chalk, charcoals, pastels, colored and drawing pencils, acrylic and watercolor paints, different textures of paper to work with, and clay. Art is an integral part of our curriculum and children can choose to be involved in art projects as much as they desire. We want children to view art as a unique expression of who they are so you won't see models for children to duplicate, stencils, or coloring books that require children to see art in a specific way.

## **READING/ WRITING/ LANGUAGE SKILLS**

Our approach to reading is based on a whole language philosophy which includes various strategies to help a reader succeed. This includes using predictable text/rhyming text, pictorial clues, and phonics. Reading is a part of our daily schedule. We want children to be exposed to quality children's literature and books where reading success is guaranteed. We want children to begin to write in a meaningful way. It is important to allow children to write approximations of a word as they begin to spell. We work with children by helping them hear sounds in a word and by helping them to acquire the tools to find new words for themselves. For example, we help them to develop strategies for finding the spelling of a new word by helping them use a dictionary, asking a friend or teacher to help find the word, or by finding the word in a familiar story. Students will begin writing their own stories by dictating to a teacher/volunteer and then they will begin writing on their own. It is important to understand that children will become readers and writers on their own and in their own time. We want to be there for encouragement but never to push them. Children will learn to read naturally by being exposed to literature. Children learn to talk by listening to others talk to them and it is the same for reading.

We are not worried about your child being a reader or writer by some predetermined deadline that is meaningless. We will just be there to provide the opportunity when they are ready.

## **SCIENCE**

Students will be exploring nature by taking nature hikes on our greenbelt trails. They will be developing a sense of community and environmental awareness by recycling, composting, planting, and maintaining a garden. Many classrooms have aquariums and terrariums set up so we can observe objects from nature in their natural habitat. Students will be learning basic science concepts, understanding what it means to be part of a community, and developing a sense of responsibility and appreciation for our environment. Water play is naturally built in to our environment. They will be constantly measuring, adding color and soap to water, using cylinders, funnels, tubing, and other containers. They will be able to see the properties of the water change as they manipulate it.

## **MATH**

We use open ended materials such as rocks, shells, leaves, pinecones, as well as beads, unifix cubes, and geoboards to count, show one to one correspondence, measurement, weight, identity of shapes, etc. Students will begin to see symmetry and patterns. They will learn basic concepts of addition, subtraction,



multiplication, division, and geometry. This learning will occur by counting and measuring when activities like cooking, water play and making grocery lists happen. We take advantage of natural times like these to teach math concepts while a child is fully engaged so that learning takes place naturally. Each child's own natural rhythm is respected so children are not forced into work that is meaningless to them.

## **MUSIC & MOVEMENT**

In addition to our daily curriculum and projects, we provide a variety of extra-curricular activities to enrich our program. The activities are brought to our program by specialist and may include such interests as yoga, soccer, sign language, gymnastics, foreign language, music, theater, etc. The schedule for these extra-curricular activities will change from time to time. Please check with your classroom teachers or the school directors for the most up to date schedule.

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## **UNSTRUCTURED PLAYTIME**

Unstructured playtime is the foundation of our philosophy at CDC and Discovery School. Research repeatedly shows that young children are made/born/hardwired to play. Play is defined as “engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose.” But when we see children playing, they can be serious and can have a purpose... or not. Play is biologically wired into children for social/physical/emotional development. Through play, they become who they are meant to be... they learn social skills, pre-academic skills, motor skills and so much more. Child directed play, which is what we aim to protect in our school, means that they decide where, when, what, who and how to play. We aim to provide safety, warmth and comfort, materials to bolster their ideas, and conflict resolution when ideas conflict. This first part of our series will be broken into sections: why free play is essential to growth and development, defining “unstructured”, why we have so few transitions in our day and types of play and why they are important.

“A child's preparation for life and school comes through boisterous play, spontaneous play, running and roughhousing, playing house and playing pirates. Yelling, screaming and crying are part of it. So is friend-making (and rejection). Taking risks-creative risks, physical risks and social risks. Dressing up and storytelling. Trying out crazy (and messy!) art. Encountering conflict. Sorting it out. Young kids already have a full agenda: play.”  
Excerpt from: [It's OK Not to Share and Other Renegade Rules for Raising Competent and Compassionate Kids](#)

The American Academy of Pediatrics and many doctors, psychologists and neuroscientists endorse free play as the best way to nurture young children.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=19212514>

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/OPINION/12/29/christakis.play.children.learning/>

Here at CDC, we believe that free play is a child's right. We will always provide large, unstructured blocks of free play in the morning and in the afternoon, along with large amounts of outdoor time. Shorter, interrupted play time reduces the complexity and maturity of children's play.

<https://www.childcareexchange.com/library/5019448.pdf>



Our classrooms are set up to invite children to touch, explore, and get messy. Teachers support the play, but it is largely child guided; we are here to offer support, love and conflict resolution help and safety. Much of the reason we do not push academics in preschool is that we do not want to put the cart before the horse. Forcing academics too early leads to the loss of skills necessary to complete later academic tasks and often burns out a young child long before they begin traditional schooling. Before a child can read and write letters, they must fall in love with language and books, songs and stories. Play involves complex sorting, negotiating, balancing, problem solving, intense concentration, relationship building, failing (and then changing approaches). You name it, it is there.

Dr Stuart Brown is a medical doctor, psychiatrist, and clinical researcher and major proponent of the importance of play. He founded the National Institute for Play (<http://www.nifplay.org/institute/about-us/>) Dr Brown provided us with the strongest evidence yet that play is ESSENTIAL to normal development in all species, and more importantly, the devastating consequences of a play deprived life. Play is essential. Children have an evolutionary and biological drive/need to play and we will always respect the rights of children to play in a warm, caring environment.

<http://www.mcm.org/uploads/MCMResearchSummary.pdf>

<http://www.parentingscience.com/benefits-of-play.html>

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## TEXAS STATE LICENSING

The Child-Care Licensing (CCL) Division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services agency is responsible for issuing licenses and regulating operations of child-care centers and homes. CCL developed the minimum standards that all licensed centers must follow and conduct regular inspections to determine the practice of such standards. CDC South posts the most recent licensing report as well as current copies of other required paperwork (IE insurance, fire inspection, health inspection, etc.) in staff in the main hallway. For more information on Texas Department of Family Protective Services, to contact them, or to view chapter 746 of the minimum standards for child-care centers, visit their website at <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/default.asp>



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## ENROLLMENT PROCESS

Children’s Discovery Center offers classes for children age six weeks to five years. All CDC Programs are offered on a full-time or part-time basis (see the Tuition and Fees section in this packet for details). Year-round enrollment in our programs is based on available space without regard to race, sex, creed or religion. Please contact our office if you would like to schedule a tour of our center. The enrollment procedure consists of the following steps:

1. Orientation: An initial interview with the director, an overview of our Preschool Handbook, a tour of the campus, an introduction to the staff and an opportunity for your family to clarify policies and ask questions about the program.
2. Payment of the deposit and completion of the Contract of Deposit. If you decide to enroll here, a deposit will secure your place on the classroom roster or waiting list. The deposit for the Preschool Program is \$300. Half of this deposit is not refundable because it is the registration fee. The other half is refundable upon 30 days’ written notice of withdrawal.
3. Receiving notice when space for your child becomes available. We will contact you via the email address you provided on the Contract of Deposit and always do our best to give advance notice of the availability. Though immediate enrollment is preferred, we can hold the space for your child for up to two weeks from the date we send you the notice. If you need the space held for longer than two weeks, please note that you will be responsible for the prorated tuition amount that occurs after the two-week period and prior to your child’s actual start date. (IE: Family is on the waiting list for and receives notice on Mar. 2<sup>nd</sup> that the space will be available on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Though CDC can hold the space until April 15<sup>th</sup>, the family wants to wait until Apr 21<sup>st</sup> to start. To hold the space until Apr. 21<sup>st</sup>, the family will need to pay for the tuition starting on Apr. 15<sup>th</sup>).
4. **Completion and return of the enrollment forms and other required paperwork at or before your child’s first day.** The Directors will need to review and keep this paperwork in our school office and provide a copy to the classroom teachers.
5. Providing the school with current immunization records and a Well Child Statement (must be provided within two weeks of start date if not available immediately upon enrollment).
6. Classroom visits: We encourage parents and children 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. Based on individual needs an entrance conference with your child’s new teachers may be required. Families are also encouraged to request a parent-teacher conference at anytime.
7. If you plan to have a therapist (speech, physical, occupational, etc.) work with your child while they are at CDC, additional steps will be required before the sessions begin. Please see the Health section of this handbook and the excerpt titled ‘Therapists’ and let the director know as soon as possible.

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## TRANSFER POLICY

Transfer from one CDC location to another is usually possible based on space availability. You will need to contact the Director of the school to which you would like to transfer in order to schedule a meeting and tour of the facility. If space is available, you will be able to change locations on your desired date. If there is a wait list at your desired location and you remain enrolled in CDC, you will not be placed into the wait list pool, but will

instead be given priority to receive the first available space. At the time of relocation, CDC will transfer you child's paperwork and deposit. Your registration fee will remain with the current school and a new registration fee of \$150 will be due to the new school upon transfer. You will also need to complete and return an enrollment update form, and submit any missing items from your child's file at that time.

To make the transition as smooth as possible, please give 30-days' written notice to the Director of your current school. Include your desired transfer date and reason for transfer in the notice. Your tuition must be paid in full before relocating.

## In the Classrooms

### DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE

A central objective of CDC is to help children develop self-discipline. To encourage this, we use an 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, 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

Additionally, we do not force a child to apologize, nor do we make them sit in time-out.

More than any other subject, discipline is the most discussed topic by parents and teachers alike, and it's something we revisit and reflect on regularly at CDC. This is because our approach to discipline requires thoughtfulness; it should be respectful, compassionate, and developmentally appropriate. Unfortunately, this is not always a common approach in our society, and, often requires a reprogramming of the learned behaviors



passed down to us. In other words, it isn't always easy and there is no such thing as a "one size fits all" approach!

### **Egocentrism**

One common developmental thread between all of the children in our care is that they are egocentric until about 5 or 6. This means that children are incapable of seeing a situation from another's perspective. This is the driving force behind why we don't make children apologize or sit in time out and "think" about what they have done. Children under 5 are just not capable of this, and are usually not sorry. In addition, "when we ask children to apologize prematurely we are actually devaluing the process of working through conflict. We're sending the message that we ought to just quickly apologize, even if we don't feel sorry as a way to smooth over the incident. We're also inadvertently teaching kids that conflicts should be avoided, rather than used as an opportunity to connect further and get to know each other better." (See more at:

<http://www.awakeparent.com/Shelly/forced%2%ADapologies%2%ADundermine%2%ADconflict%2%ADresolution%2%ADskills/#sthash.tJ6nPXfQ.dpuf>

Instead of forcing apologies, we try to get to the source of a conflict and provide children with the language and questions they need to work through it.

### **Setting Limits and Consistency**

When it comes to limits/rules, it's important that they be as clear and simple as possible. It is also important to set limits that you believe in! Here at CDC, we don't have a list of arbitrary rules for kids to remember. Our limits are almost entirely safety related we can't allow anyone to hurt themselves or each other (physically or emotionally) and we can't allow them to destroy property and we don't ever falter on these. When we find that a child is not being safe, we try to keep it short and simple by firmly saying something like, "I can't let you do that because it's not safe for your body," and then we try to move on to what the child *can* do. ***We never offer children a choice when there isn't one.*** If it's time to go home, it's time to go home. If it's time to get a diaper, it's time to get a diaper, etc. We might offer the child a choice on how they get to the changing table (do you want to hop like a bunny or fly like an airplane?), but it's important to be clear and firm in explaining that it is not a choice.

In everything that we do consistency is our best friend and can prevent a lot of unwanted behaviors. Consistency helps children know what to expect; which provides them with a sense of security as well as a sense of responsibility. It can be very confusing and even anxiety provoking for kids when today it's like this and tomorrow like that. Consistency is also beneficial to parents and teachers, because children know you mean what you say and are less likely to test limits. It is most effective when teachers and families are consistent with each other; especially in terms of how we handle undesired behaviors such as biting or hitting. It's important to note that no one is perfect at this 100% of the time, and that, even if you are the most consistent person in the world, children will still test limits. It's in their nature and it's a big part of development. Just remember that setting limits and being consistent will eventually result in a secure child who understands what is acceptable and is capable of self-regulation.

### **Age-Appropriate**



First and foremost, responding appropriately to challenging behaviors requires an understanding of what is developmentally appropriate for the age group at hand. This allows for realistic expectations of children which can help us exhibit more patience and respond in a way that is most helpful to children. It can also prevent power struggles and discipline issues from happening in the first place. For example, when you understand that dumping out full containers or knocking everything off of a shelf is developmentally appropriate for toddlers; you can save yourself a lot of grief when you witness it happen hundreds of times. Through these seemingly destructive and messy activities, young children are learning essential information and making important connections. Griping at a toddler for doing something so innate can have very negative implications when it comes to their sense of self. It doesn't mean we have to love this stage in their development, but we can find a way to encourage and support this important milestone without feeling angry or overwhelmed. Before we step in, it's important to ask ourselves, "Is this behavior developmentally appropriate?" The answer to that should dictate our response.

For a list of milestones by age: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

### **Conflict Resolution**

We believe adults must be "kind, tender and humane" when it is time to 'discipline' children. To quote more from Bev Bos on this topic: *"Why are adults so afraid of being kind when disciplining? Often adults convey anger and disappointment to children. Children are anxious to please adults and really, really want to do the right thing. But instead of giving encouragement, too often we reprimand them with put downs and punishments. Adults frequently talk down to their children, they are demanding and rude. They often treat children in a way they would never treat another adult. When we threaten children we:*

*model for children how to be an angry, yelling person who humiliates others in other words a bully have children who, have been made to feel that they are genuinely bad people, may act that way. (If you hear it enough times you may start to believe it)*

*teach them how to freeze up, lowering their own expectation of discovery and success in order to stay out of the line of fire.*

- *have children who have been made to feel that the adults in their lives are the enemy."*

To read the full article:

<http://rivieraplayschool.com/wpcontent/uploads/2010/05/ConflictResolutionBevBos.pdf>

When a conflict arises between two children (for example: Timmy hit Sally) it is our goal to help the children communicate what they don't like. We have a basic protocol that we follow which may look a bit like this:

- We always tend to the person that is hurt first. We make sure they are ok and console them. We say what we see: "Sally, you're crying! That must have hurt when Timmy hit you. Did you like it when he hit you?"
- Sally: "no!"
- Adult: "Well let's go tell him that you didn't like that so he knows."

(sometimes kids will answer yes, that they did like that, even though they are crying and clearly did not. We just proceed as follows...)

- We go with the child to talk to the person who hurt them. Some children will very loudly exclaim, "I DON'T LIKE THAT WHEN YOU HIT ME!", while others may be very timid and say nothing at all. We can't force a child to communicate this, so sometimes we might have to do it for them.



- Then we make sure Timmy heard what Sally had to say.
- Next, depending on the age of the child, we might say “What *would* you like them to do?” Some of the older Starburst and Explorers can follow through to this point, but younger kiddos might need help. For younger kiddos I might say, “You can ask him to please be gentle with your body.” And then we move on.

This is not meant to be a scripted response that we use with every kid, every time. It is important to remember that each situation is unique and there is no one size fits all approach. Our main goal here is to understand what happened and give children the language they need to eventually solve conflicts on their own. “And remember, for goodness sakes, that this kind of conflict resolution takes more than once, it takes TIME. But it is a gift which pays enormous dividends. You cannot hold your child’s hand throughout their life so the earlier you help them learn how to resolve conflict without inflicting physical pain the more productive and happy their lives will be.”

Bev Bos

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## CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

In the words of Bev Bos, “The most important thing to remember about discipline for young children is that it needs to be kind, tender, and humane.” As educators of young children, we realize that challenging behavior can arise from time to time in a group setting. Our teachers are empathetic and understanding in dealing with each child as he/she learns to play and work with others. We are well-trained in positive guidance techniques such as redirection, active listening, setting reasonable limits, helping children develop their emotional intelligence, etc. At CDC, we understand that in order for children to regulate their behaviors, emotions and impulse control; children must first be able recognize what they are feeling. We help children to develop their language, build a foundation for empathy, listen to other people talk about their feelings and recognize the nonverbal cues that other’s may be providing. Our staff utilizes principles outlined in Becky Bailey’s Conscious Discipline Classroom Mismanagement Program, many of which we have taught to our families in trainings offered through our Family-Staff Nights. When children are in conflict, we interrupt any unsafe situation, focus on helping the victim instead of punishing the perpetrator, move on without humiliating the children and recognize that self-regulation is a long process and that growth happens bit by bit. We see each conflict as a teachable moment.

Furthermore, we teach children skills to help them develop self-discipline, pro-social behaviors, self-calming methods, conflict resolution techniques, etc. Children are encouraged to talk through inappropriate behaviors with adult guidance and prompting. In the event that children are unable to safely manage themselves in a particular activity or classroom center after teachers have made every reasonable attempt possible to work with the child in that particular situation, teachers may redirect the child from that area and provide them something else to do. If a child becomes physically or emotionally unsafe to themselves, others or the environment, s/he will be asked to take some supervised space and time so that they may collect themselves before re-joining the activity. This cooling off period is another form of re-direction that gives the child an opportunity to recognize and manage their feelings and emotions. It is usually in the designated quiet center of the classroom or playground, and is closely monitored by the teachers.

Parents are key to the success of any behavior management of young children. Teachers will talk with parents by phone, email, in person or during a conference, should inappropriate behavior become an ongoing concern. Our goal is to become a team with parents, working together for the benefit of the child. Parents are encouraged to talk with teachers should they feel that their child is having difficulties at school, or if they can provide insight into their child’s behavior. Families are informed of the child’s progress. Conferences are scheduled as needed. Please remember to refrain from discussing confidential matters at drop off and pick up times as these delicate



conversations need a private conference-type setting. Furthermore, your child's behavior should not be discussed in front of your child or any of the other children in our program.

Teachers address challenging behavior by observing each child and situation to determine the function of the child's behavior, developing individualized plans, and using positive behavior support strategies. It is important to remember that each situation is unique and there is no one size fits all approach. Our main goal here is to understand what happened and give children the language they need to eventually solve conflicts on their own. (Please note, as listed in the discipline section of the Handbook, that under no circumstance will teachers use physical or psychological punishment with a child, nor will they withhold food or water as punishment.) Please contact a director if you have any questions or would like more resources for dealing with challenging behaviors.



“And remember, for goodness sakes, that this kind of conflict resolution takes more than once, it takes TIME. But it is a gift which pays enormous dividends. You cannot hold your child’s hand throughout their life so the earlier you help them learn how to resolve conflict without inflicting physical pain the more productive and happy their lives will be.” Bev Bos

## **Biting**

Biting is a behavior that is extremely common to infants and toddlers, and it is developmentally, if not socially, appropriate. As alarming as it can feel to hear that your child has bitten another person or to see a bite mark on your own child, we assure you that is normal for this age. At CDC, we use various techniques and do all that we can to help each child be successful at **not** biting.

There are many reasons that children of this age bite. They are an oral stage of exploration. Infants discover things about their environment with their mouths, which is why almost **everything** goes there right away. They still mouth toys and they are still teething. Unfortunately, this helpful form of exploring sometimes includes nearby friends! We also know that children of this age are testing a lot of cause and effect. “What will happen if I do this?” “Oh! He screamed! That was very exciting! Ok, so what happens if I try it again?” This is also a normal part of development. Finally, biting can occur in patterns of frustration, as when a child is hungry, tired, seeking attention, or to relieve boredom. Some kids bite, and some do not. They are not being malicious or trying to hurt people. With all of this and more in mind, we use a few specific strategies to help prevent bites from occurring in the first place.

- Biting is typically a classroom problem: Parents can help by reinforcing a no biting rule at home, which includes no playful nips (IE “I’m gonna eat your little foot”). But most of the time, the biting is happening at school and parents can feel a bit helpless. We are here to help your child be successful!
- When biting does occur, we first comfort the bitten child, and then we use a firm voice with the biter and say, “NO BITING”. End of attention; do not give biting more power than that. Then, we also use positive reinforcement; such as commenting at lunchtime “You are using your teeth to eat food!”
- We look for patterns and reasons that a child may be feeling frustrated. “Is he/she hungry?” Then we offer a snack or drink. Is he/she “Tired?” Then we offer a rest time in a lap or on a pillow with a book. Is the child experiencing “Boredom?” Then we offer a new activity or some one on one time. If the room feels overwhelming, we tone it down, clean up and try a calmer activity, etc.
- Teething issues can be dealt with in the usual way: teething tablets, biscuits or a cool teether.
- We may also make some environmental changes to our room if needed.
- Finally, we shadow children who are frequently “tasting” friends. Prevention is so much better for everyone, and can be more effective at curbing the biting than a reprimand after the fact. We will stay close by and redirect often.

Tips for Parents: If your child bites, say “NO BITING” in a firm voice and then step away and tend your bite. Too much attention can negatively reinforce biting. Also, playful nipping and pretending to “eat” toes or anything else can be confusing. And finally, NEVER bite a child back. This sends a very confusing message and can increase aggression. Please check our website or ask a director for more helpful articles and resources.

## **Hitting and Pushing**

Hitting and pushing occurs most frequently in the toddler classrooms, and, as with biting, they are developmentally appropriate although not socially acceptable. Most of the time toddlers hit out of frustration. They have very clear ideas about what they want but are often preverbal, lack impulse control, and have

virtually no social skills. This is why asking a toddler to “use their words” is not very helpful at this stage. Even if they have the words, their undeveloped impulse control doesn’t give them the chance to use them.

We deal with these behaviors similar to the way we deal with biting. First, we comfort the child that is hurt, help them talk to the person who hurt them, and try to understand why it might have happened in the first place. When we know what triggers a child to hit or push, we can provide them with alternatives and maybe even intervene sooner the next time. As we’ve mentioned before, we always remain calm and composed, we keep our language as simple as possible, and we remain consistent. It is helpful to remember that these behaviors are normal for this stage, and, once children better develop their vocabulary, impulse control, and social skills, these behaviors will start to diminish. The following section will focus more specifically on conflict resolution which can be applied to behaviors such as biting and hitting.

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## ROUGH & TUMBLE AND SUPERHERO PLAY

This is a subject that has come up over the years here at CDC... challenging aspects of play and our take on them. We are not trying to convince you to change your values where this sort of play is concerned, but to understand our approach to them and respect all forms of play.

Rough and tumble play, wrestling, whatever you call it, is common in young children. Both boys and girls engage in it frequently, but boys seem drawn to it more. We have discussed what types of play we will allow in many staff meetings, agreeing on safety limits and how we will re-direct, if necessary, this play. First, we respect and honor ALL play. Children use play to learn and develop every skill they acquire in early childhood. There simply is no type of play that we cannot accept, because our definition of play changes based on the circumstances. That is not to say EVERYTHING is allowed, because as soon as the children seem to be in distress, looking fearful, being hurt (verbally or physically) it is no longer “play” and we step in accordingly. When children are playing roughly with one another, or wrestling, they are benefitting in a few ways...

Quoting from the book, *The Art of Roughhousing: [Good Old-Fashioned Horseplay and Why Every Kid Needs It](#)*, by Anthony T. DeBenedet, MD and Lawrence J. Cohen:

### **1. Roughhousing makes kid smart.**

This is fascinating: Roughhousing fertilizes our brain. For real. This kind of physical play releases a chemical called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) which really is like fertilizer for our brains. Roughhousing stimulates neuron growth within the cortex and hippocampus regions of the brain, responsible for memory, learning, language, and logic. Animal behaviorists have found that the youngsters of the smarter species engage in physical play, so it isn’t surprising that roughhousing actually boosts school performance. Who knows? If your kid wrestles every day, he might win a scholarship to Yale!

### **2. Roughhousing builds emotional intelligence.**

Because roughhousing helps children develop skills in reading the emotions of others—*Is he going for my gut? Or is he going to grab me over the head?*—as well as manage their own emotions—*I am not going to hit him in the gut or grab him over the head*—they are well prepared to navigate successfully through the emotional adult world: reading a boss’s mood, knowing how to challenge a co-worker, being able to hang with the family during the holidays. Moreover, kids learn how to regain self-control, which makes them more confident in their emotional lives.

### **3. Roughhousing makes kids more likable.**

This is true for four reasons. First, physical play builds friendships and other relationships, and this is especially true for boys, who don’t gush all over each other, much less say “I like you.” Roughhousing can be a declaration of friendship or affection not only for elementary school boys, but for young men, as well. Second, kids who roughhouse are able to

distinguish between innocent play and aggression; therefore, it helps children develop social and problem-solving skills. Third, youngsters who physically play learn how to take turns. If they are playing right, each person will get a chance to chase, and to be chased. No one person should be “it” the entire time. Finally, roughhousing teaches kids the concept of leadership and negotiation. Think about the rules that go into physical games. Everyone needs to agree, which is wonderful preparation for professional success as well as committed relationships.

#### **4. Roughhousing makes children ethical and moral.**

Interestingly enough, the animals with the highest level of moral development also engage in the most play, especially physical play. One way we can measure moral behavior in animal play is by observing “self-handicapping,” when the stronger animal holds back his strength when playing with a weaker or smaller opponent. Humans do this too, and especially parents, when physically engaging with their children.

DeBenedet and Cohen: “When we roughhouse with our kids, we model for them how someone bigger and stronger holds back. We teach them self-control, fairness, and empathy. We let them win, which gives them confidence and demonstrates that winning isn’t everything. We show them how much can be accomplished by cooperation and how to constructively channel competitive energy so that it doesn’t take over.”

#### **5. Roughhousing makes kids physically fit.**

This one is obvious. But physical fitness isn’t just about body strength, say the authors. It involves complex motor learning, concentration, coordination, body control, cardiovascular fitness, and flexibility. So free play is going to offer different benefits than, say, gym class.

#### **6. Roughhousing brings joy.**

As a species, humans are hard-wired for roughhousing, so the body and mind are happy when we let it happen. According to studies in neuroscience, when the play circuits in the brains of mammals are activated, they feel joy. In addition, we know that roughhousing is often the times when young boys experience affectionate touch from another boy. Touch is important to humans! Roughhousing is a way that affection can be given in a fun and playful way.

However, we want children to also be safe. We look for certain things that signal that it is time to step in and offer boundaries, the most obvious being when a child is unwilling, upset or crying. The faces of two children wrestling/rough playing harmoniously look relaxed, they are smiling or concentrating, and most often they are giggling breathlessly. This can change quickly if energy/excitement level rises and we watch out for these signs and step in. Here’s an article describing just that:

<http://www.positiveparentingconnection.net/roughhousing-preschoolers-why-its-great-and-how-to-keep-it-safe/>

Sometimes it’s hard to watch our children engage in rough play without worrying about injuries. Out of this worry, parents will sometimes yell out directions or commands to the wrestling children which can become distractions and lead to injury. Directing their play too much can also defeat a child’s inner guidance which is helping them learn how to read their opponent.

#### **To maximize the fun and reduce the chance of injury adults can help ensure that prior to playing things are set up in a safe manner:**

- The children that are playing together should be of similar build, age and energy level. A small two-year-old and a tall agile six-year-old would probably not be a good match. On the other hand, a tall three year old and a five year old could play-wrestle very well if their sizes similar and their energy levels are compatible.
- When dealing with groups of children roughhousing together, limiting the size of the group to no more than five children is a good idea.
- Too many children trying to wrestle all together? Or too many children tackling on specific child over and over? Help the group break up into pair formation to keep everyone safe.
- A lawn, a field or an old mattress on the ground all provide safe places for soft landings and happy tumbling. If playing outdoors, survey the grounds together for any sticks or stones or other objects nearby that could cause injury.



- Observe the energy of the children for any overly excited participants. Should things start to get out of hand, inviting the group to take a break for some water is a positive way for children cool off without calling out negative attention to an overly excited participant.”

A harder subject for some... gun play, war play and superhero play. [We Don't Play with Guns Here, War, Weapon and Superhero Play in the Early Years](#) is a great reference if you would like to read more on the subject. There is so much complexity and information about this subject.

We know from research and experience that by banning this type of play, it will only increase. Sandiches will become guns or swords, in addition to the current use of Lego's, blocks, sticks, anything and everything that could be used is used. What happens when we outright ban this play, is that children continue it, but try to hide it. It becomes very attractive, almost obsessive, and they cannot be honest about it. We also found that banning it stifled creative play, and dramatic play, as these kids were left with no “story” to act out, or were abruptly stopped in their play theme and wandered around for a while, unfocused. We noticed that when we relaxed our “no's” and our redirection that gun/sword play decreased or began, and then more complicated play themes emerged (where they live, how they get around, what they would wear, who was in charge, etc.)

Very young children use play to work out power. Who has it, who does not and how to cope with issues of early morality and processing the world around them. Children engage in representational play to “work through” things they see, hear and learn. By “killing bad guys” they exert some control over their world. No matter what we do, our children are exposed to the world around us and need play to work it out. Dramatic play involving guns/swords and superheroes allows young children a way to process all of this, regardless of adult values. The last thing we want to do is shut down that avenue for learning and coping. This type of play tends to wax and wane, depending on what children in the group are exposed to (even innocuous seeming cartoons contain these themes). We reserve judgment on what children are exposed to, knowing it varies from household to household.

We understand the deep fear, or desire that parents might feel to keep children and guns/violence/war play wholly separate and have found these boundaries work best for our philosophy:

- We do not allow toy guns/swords/replicas. There is simply no need.
- If any child is not enjoying the play or feels scared by it, we step in and try to help kids understand where they've crossed the line.
- Finally, and most importantly, we ask open ended questions, and even play along to better understand the child' perspective. Leaving the dialogue open for children to talk is of utmost priority. We always respect their right to play, and communicate.

As far as superhero play goes, children are most often pretending to be “good guys” who are strong and capable and defeating “bad guys”. This theme has and always will be a part of childhood. When we intervene, it becomes more scripted and less imaginative. Here is an example of superhero stories and morality play:

<http://teachertombsblog.blogspot.com/2009/07/muddy-puddle-of-morality.html>

The part that ties in here, and make adults uncomfortable, is the “killing” of bad guys or monsters. Grownups understand “killing” from an adult point of view. For kids, it's a way of dispensing with a monster or a bad guy,



with little connection to reality... it is fantasy play. Remember that these kids only have 3-4 years on the planet, compared with our years of experience... they do not mean the same things as they do to us.

Our highest priority is the safety of the kids here, but next to that is how we handle their development. We aim to be on top of current research, always evaluating our own practices, and doing what seems most responsible for your children. Many hours of discussion, brainstorming, researching and anecdotal experience go into forming our philosophy. It's what we love so much (as well as your babies!) about this important work!

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## CLASSROOMS AND MATERIALS

Our classrooms and materials provided are purposeful and are a big part of our philosophy. We are inspired by the Reggio-Emilia approach, but we also take ideas from many sources, including our own trial and error.

Reggio Emilia is an educational philosophy developed parents rebuilding schools in post WW11 Italy. They were joined by Loris Malaguzzi, and the first municipal Reggio approach schools were founded. It is based on the following set of principles:

- Children must have some control over the direction of their learning;
- Children must be able to learn through experiences of touching, moving, listening, and observing;
- Children have a relationship with other children and with material items in the world that children must be allowed to explore;
- Children must have endless ways and opportunities to express themselves.

Reggio Emilia is a deep and complicated subject to explore in just this brief discussion, so please read a summary of the entire approach and how it is implanted in the Italian school here:

[http://www.communityschool.org/programs/early\\_childhood\\_center/reggio\\_an\\_overview/index.aspx](http://www.communityschool.org/programs/early_childhood_center/reggio_an_overview/index.aspx)

Schools that are inspired by the Reggio approach cannot replicate these schools as they exist in Italy for a variety of factors, largely cultural differences in funding of schools and community ideology. But we are inspired by many ideas presented by Reggio schools and adopt some of these ideas into our own philosophy.

The classrooms in a Reggio approach school are known as “the third teacher”, meaning that environment is set up to provoke learning and to invite participation from children. Furniture arrangement, materials provided, large and small spaces and spaces dedicated to certain types of play are all major influences on behavior, flow to the day, what children choose to participate in etc... Each classroom is arranged in a thoughtful way, to reduce running (or to encourage it), to cause smaller play groups, to provide light and shadows or access to a window, for ample space to build large and small structures. The Reggio approach also believes that children should be surrounded by aesthetically pleasing spaces. We try to keep windows free of obstruction, plants and other natural materials in

classrooms, mirrors and frames on the walls, rugs and chairs and soft places to sit. We have come a long way towards keeping our classrooms looking pleasant, but day to day, we still have a way to go towards keeping spaces clean and organized. The teachers focus first on their children and then tend to everything else, but not at the expense of the relationship with a child. We have tossed around the idea of having volunteer parents rotate in and out of the job of helping keep things cleaner, such as someone signing up for a once a week obligation to come in and help wipe things down and remove crayon/marker from furniture and walls, and watering plants. We are proud of our school, and do not wish to be a sterile environment, but we do want clean, pleasant, home-like spaces for our children.

We are largely an outdoor school, with much flexibility in where teachers and kids choose to play. Outside, we try to also keep a wide variety of objects and items to allow kids to build, dig, act out dramatic play and engage in art and small motor activities.

The materials we choose (and those we avoid) have to do with the idea that children are capable, curious and enterprising when it comes to play. We do not want their play dictated by the toy manufacturer, but rather their own imaginations and growing skills. Kids are surrounded by electronics, lights, sounds, beeps, commercial characters and bright, loud primary colors. Our goal is to remove electronics, and we will not use toys or books that depict commercial characters. They have plenty of that whether we like it or not... children are marketed to in every way possible. We believe very strongly in limiting that exposure here, while they are in our school. We are not judgmental about your choices as parents, though. There is nothing awful or evil about Buzz Lightyear, but our goal is to provoke them to build, be creative, and problem solve.

We (almost always) choose open ended, natural, and real materials. We have done away with plastic bins and replaced them with baskets and wooden bowls. The classrooms contain toys that can be used in any number of ways, and are often mixed into different centers for different purposes. Teachers do not limit the use of materials to one area, which often leads to more creative use. A pot full of Lego's becomes "soup" in the kitchen, for instance. "Open ended" means that the outcome is not pre-determined... it can have endless purposes or no purpose at all. It comes to life in the hands of the kids. Our goal is to help children develop and retain their innate creativity and to learn problem solving, and critical thinking. Open ended materials will come up again in discussing art. Read more on use of open ended materials here:

[http://www.rediscovercenter.org/pdf/promoting\\_creativity1.pdf](http://www.rediscovercenter.org/pdf/promoting_creativity1.pdf)

We try to use natural materials as well. First, natural materials are not plastic. We accept that plastic works for certain things, like Legos, and Magnatiles (two of our favorite manipulatives) but we can limit the use in other areas, when we can. If it can be found in wood, we will opt for wood. Also, natural materials are more pleasing to look at and touch. It can be more varied in texture, size, shape and weight. Wooden objects contain grain lines and variation, metal is heavy and can be warm or cold, woven items can be rough or soft. Items from outdoors and found in nature are important in our rooms too. We love seashells, pinecones, rocks, pieces of found wood, leaves, branches, nuts, flowers... anything from outside can come into a center and transform the play. If you find something



interesting outdoors, please feel free to bring it or let your child bring it in. The skin of a cicada or a handful of dandelions will be a wondrous thing!

Finally, “real” items are important to us and to children. We try to have real tools, real phones, real cookware and utensils etc... ready for use. Miniaturized versions are not as engaging... kids want to do what we do, with the same tools we use. Using toy versions is not only not as fun, but also diminishes respect for children a bit. Again, we are not judgmental on this... we have a variety of toys and kids play with almost anything, but they really gain the most when offered real things. Real things have weight to them, which challenges growing bodies and provides more challenging motor skill practice. We have real boards for building, real pots for cooking and real clothes and shoes for dressing up. A padlock and a key will test and grow motor skills, while making the child feel important enough to be trusted with such a grown-up thing. Sorting and classifying objects is an important pre-math skill that is best supported by use of everyday materials.

Bev Bos (legend and inspirer of teachers all over the world) – “The experiences have to be real and they have to be authentic. It can’t be a video, it has to be real. ----- discovering everything on your own. I always think imagine trying to discover how to ride a bike on a video. You have to do it yourself. Imagine if your first experience with apple is the word in a book, not seeing that long thing that your grandmother could peel off all in one. Not tasting it. Not smelling it. Not knowing it can be juiced. Imagine your first experience with an orange if it was only a word. And we do that sometimes to children. We show those things on videos. We do all sorts of things on videos.”

It must be in the hands before it can be in the brain!

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## ORIENTATION AND NEEDED SUPPLIES

Please plan to tour our campus as part of the enrollment process. Tours times are Monday-Friday 9am-12pm and 3:30-4:30 pm, on a walk in basis. Once you are enrolled in our program, we require that you visit your child’s classroom for at least one hour and we encourage you to visit as often as possible **prior to your child’s first day**.

There are six classrooms at CDC South, all with low child/staff ratios, summarized below:

	Dew Drops	Hummingbirds	Dancing Bears	Dragonflies	Starbursts
<b>Age Range</b>	6 weeks to 14 months	12 to 20	18-24 months	2 to 3 yrs	3 to 4yrs
<b>Child/Staff Ratio</b>	8:2	5:1	6:1	7:1	9:1
<b>Maximum Class Size</b>	8 children	10 children	12 children	15 children	18:2

Every classroom has at least two teachers to help support each other and for the benefit of team teaching. Please ask your child's teachers for a copy of their classroom orientation materials. Each class may have an additional list of recommended supplies, but certain items that all children need to bring to school include:

- at least two extra sets of season-appropriate clothes
- plenty of diapers/pairs of underwear
- one to two packs of moist wipes per month (used communally unless otherwise indicated)
- One bottle of sunscreen per month (communal)
- Two bottles of bug spray per month (parents preference)
- an extra pair of shoes
- a blanket and crib sheet (unless they do not nap at school)
- your child's bottles and/or lunch and snacks

**Please label all items with your child's name.**

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## CLOTHING

Clothing should be comfortable, washable, suitable for preschool activities, and **will generally get pretty dirty**. Children learn by doing. 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. Please don't send your child to school in their good clothes, as there is no way to keep children spotless for 5-8 hours of school. Please keep at least two complete sets of clothing in your child's cubby, in case of accidents or sudden weather changes.

All children are 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. Some children prefer to be barefoot or outdoors in minimal clothing. There are many benefits to experiencing the earth with bare feet. As long as this does not pose a safety risk and the weather permits, we allow children to dress as they choose (diaper or underwear must be worn at all times). Please see our Weather Policy for more details.

All clothing should be labeled with your child's name with a permanent marker or clothing label. We will always try to return your child's clothing to their cubby, but as we are supporting children to develop their self-help skills and we are caring for a group of children, sometimes clothing and shoes are misplaced. We do our best to make sure clothing is not lost, but sometimes it might take a while for clothing to make it back to the right cubby. For this reason, **label all of their items, and please do not send your child to school in important clothes!**

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## MOVE UPS

Children's move ups from one classroom to the next are based on the child's age and availability. Most move ups will happen at the end of the summer as our oldest children move onto kindergarten. However, they may also happen throughout the school year as space permits. The director will send your family a move up notice 2-4 weeks in advance. We allow a transition time for all children to visit the classroom prior to their official move up date. For more details on the process, please contact a director.



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## SECURITY

Each classroom keeps a daily sign-in sheet that is created by administrators and turned into the office at the end of the day. Teachers will be responsible for adding the child's name as well as their time-in and time-out of the program. **Families must always acknowledge a staff member upon arrival and departure, and they will be responsible for signing the sheet upon the arrival and upon their departure of their child.** The teachers will be conducting name to face checks of the children throughout the day. If families wish to have anyone other than the child's parent or legal guardian pick-up their child, they must provide the administration with a written list of names of those who are authorized to do so. We keep this list in the office and give a copy of it to the teachers. Staff members will ask for proof of identification from anyone that we do not recognize and this identification must be matched to the list of authorized names that we have been provided. Please be sure to let us know if anyone other than a parent or legal guardian will be picking up your child that day to facilitate this process.

All visitors and tours will be required to check-in with the office and to sign into our visitor's log.

Our school has chain latches on each of our gates. These are in place to help us keep the children safely on the playground with their class. It is both the staff and the family's responsibility to close and latch the gate every single time it is used. Please keep in mind that the most important job of our staff is to keep the children safe and supervised. Though teachers want to talk with you during drop-off and pick-up, they are responsible for many children. This means that they will not be able to carry on lengthy conversations during our regular hours of operation as this can compromise their supervision of the children. If you ever feel you need more time to talk with your child's teachers, we would be happy to set up a parent-teacher conference for your family.

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## FIELD TRIPS AND WATER PLAY

Many of the classes take field trips throughout the year. **You must give signed permission on your enrollment packet for your child to participate as well as to be transported to the field trip.** CDC does not exclude children from activities that are offered to the group or class. Therefore, if you do not give consent for your child to participate in field trips, your child will have to stay home during the scheduled event. Furthermore, if you do not give consent for your child to be transported and supervised by staff for field trips, then you will be required to arrange your own ride and supervision for your child during the fieldtrip. If you cannot arrange your own transportation and supervision, then you will have to keep your child at home during the scheduled outing. They will not be allowed to be 'left behind' while the rest of the group participates in the event.

The adult-to-child ratios are lower for field trips, so extra teachers and family volunteers will often be asked to help with transportation and supervision. Any child under age five or less than 36 inches tall is required to ride in a child safety car seat. We put all children under age four in a car seat regardless of height. When your child's class plans to go on a field trip, we will post a sign on their classroom door stating where they will go and when they will leave and return to school. This notice will be posted at least 48 hours prior to the field trip.

Though we often find inexpensive to free places to visit (such as splash pads, parks, fire departments, etc.) but from time to time extra fees may be incurred from field trips (I.E. admission fees, zoo train ride charges, etc.). When this happens, we will notify parents of the potential charges. You may always opt out by keeping your



child home during the field trip. Otherwise, we can add any additional charges to your account so you can conveniently pay them with your monthly tuition statements.

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## NATURE HIKES AND WALKS

Studies show that children are happier and healthier when they have frequent and varied opportunities to play outdoors and explore the natural world around them. Unlike playground equipment which responds the same way every time it is used, nature changes with the seasons and the organic variation of the climate. To provide children with a well-rounded, nature-based curriculum, and to foster children’s love and respect for nature, hikes and walks are a regular part of CDC’s curriculum.

Neighborhood walks are taken through the nearby residential areas, giving children a variation to the nature hikes and an opportunity to learn about “sidewalk safety.” Anytime the children are on sidewalks or near roadways, they walk in a single-file line, holding onto a rope with teachers both at the front and the end of the line. **Closed-toe shoes are strongly recommended for neighborhood walks.**

As hikes and walks are a regular part of our curriculum, **written parental consent for these outings is required.** Check with your child’s teachers to learn the designated day and time that hikes/walks are scheduled for their classroom (for most groups this is 10-11am on Wed). You will need to have your child here before the class leaves for the scheduled hike or walk. Similar to field trips, if you are not able to drop-off your child before the class leaves for their scheduled hike, you will have to either wait with your child until the class returns or leave with your child and return after the hike is over. Children will not be allowed be “left behind” in the office or in a different classroom while the rest of the class participates in the activity. Parents are always welcome to attend the hikes and walks.

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## WEATHER POLICY

Children need daily outdoor time, weather permitting. Older children will likely want and need to be outside as much as possible. Wind chill factors, the child’s clothing, sprinklers, water play, shade and other external influences, etc. will also affect the situation. Please always be aware of the weather and send your child in weather appropriate clothing.

Young children do not regulate their temperature (hot or cold) as efficiently as adults and they’re more susceptible to cold stress due to their relatively large surface-to-mass ratio. Children also lose heat rapidly in cool water or wet clothing (water conducts heat away from the body 25 times faster than air because of its density). It is important that we understand Health and Safety procedures and use Developmentally Appropriate Practices regarding our children’s outside time. Water play must be limited to temperatures that are 70 degrees or greater.

For more information regarding our policies for severe weather conditions that require a school closure or delayed opening, please see the section of our Handbook titled Emergency Closures.



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## 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 by hand washing after coming into contact with animals or items used by animals. Children will only be able to come into contact with animals that have been examined by a veterinarian and with written parental consent.

The playground and child care center will be kept free of unfamiliar animals. Family pets should be left outside of the playground; as even friendly animals can be become scared by excited children.

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## TECHNOLOGY

Children's Discovery Center does not keep T.V.s or computers in the classrooms.

Because we care about the health and well-being of the children in our care, we adhere to the American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommendations on Screen Time:

- Children under 2 should have no screen time
- Children age 2 and over should watch less than 30 minutes per week at child care (<2 hours per day total)

From time to time, teachers in the 3 to 5-year-old classroom may bring in an electronic device to enhance a specific concept the children have decided to explore. For example, if the children have shown interest in learning about dinosaurs, a teacher may project images of dinosaurs using a projector, use a video camera to film the children as they act like dinosaurs, help the children print images of the dinosaurs of their choice from a notebook or scan photos of dinosaurs from books with the copy machine to manipulate and study closer. However, even as a means of educational enrichment these times will be rare, the teacher will have explicitly sought out permission from the director to use such equipment and the teacher will always be in control (children will never have unsupervised access) of said devices. At CDC, we fully believe that electronic media can get in the way of exploring, playing, and interacting with others; all of which encourage learning and healthy physical and social development. More so, whenever possible, we prefer to spend our time outdoors and in a natural environment.

Communication between staff and families is extremely important. However, per state requirement and CDC policy, teachers are not allowed to use cell phones while in the classroom.

We ask that all families follow our school's policy and refrain from cell phone use while in our center. It is best for the child and everyone in our program that families and parents are not distracted by the use of electronic devices while picking up and dropping off their child.



# Health and Safety

## HEALTH CHECK

Teachers will conduct and document a health check for each child upon arrival to the school. A health check is defined as a visual and physical assessment of a child to identify potential concerns about a child's health, including signs or symptoms of illness and injury, in response to changes in the child's behavior since the last date of attendance. 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 keep up with the pace of a normal school day. 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. (See the Wellness Policy section for more detailed information.)

## WELLNESS POLICY

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services give specific guidelines regarding exclusion if a child shows symptoms of an infection. These guidelines are the basis for our "sick policies," and require immediate action by both staff and parents in the event of illness. **Staff will be required to remove the child from other children to avoid exposure and parents will need to respond promptly and pick up their child within one hour of receiving notification. Response time is vital!! Please have a back-up person available, if you are not able to pick up your child. If we cannot reach you, we will call the emergency contacts listed in your enrollment packet.**

Symptoms requiring exclusion include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. An axillary temperature of 100 degrees or greater\*
2. Vomiting or diarrhea: a very loose bowel movement (BM) accompanied by nausea, or 2 loose BMs that the Teacher/Director judges to be diarrhea, or loose BMs that are uncontained by the diaper. This includes antibiotics-induced diarrhea (we recommend using a probiotic to reduce loose BMs).
3. Extreme runny nose or dark/green discharge
4. Ongoing cough, resulting in expulsion of phlegm or vomiting
5. Discolored matter in the eyes or extreme redness around pupil (i.e. pink eye)
6. Skin irritation causing discomfort such as rash, blisters, itching, etc.
7. Sore throat (includes redness or pain accompanied by loss of voice, swollen glands, white spots or blisters)

\*Occasionally, when we call parents because their child has a fever, the parent's initial response is, "They are cutting teeth." We have been advised by physicians that children who cut teeth will not run a fever higher than 100 degrees. Therefore, the State considers a temperature of 100 degrees or greater to be an indication of a contagious factor and mandates that the child be sent home.



Your child may return to Children’s Discovery Center when the following criteria are met:

1. No fever for 24 hours, UN-medicated, prior to attendance. If a child returns to school and within the course of the day runs a temperature of 100 degrees or higher, we will again request that you pick up your child.
2. If your child has a contagious infection, they may return once the fever has abated and they have been on their medication for a minimum of 24 hours.
3. Viral infections cannot be cured with medication and must be allowed to run their course at home!
4. If sent home with vomiting/diarrhea, the child may return 24 hours after the last episode.

Policies regarding exclusion and re-admittance are dictated by the regulations of the Health Department. Please understand the importance of these guidelines. They are for the protection of your child as well as others. The only way for us to break the ongoing transfer of illness is to remove the contagious party until the threat of infection has passed. Illnesses are transferred very quickly in a group child care setting and we are doing our best to keep all children healthy and follow our state regulations. Also, it is our belief that children who do not feel well need a good dose of love and comfort, lots of special one-on-one attention, and a lap all of their own.

In the event of an emergency, the Director will call 911.

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## VACCINATIONS AND OTHER HEALTH SCREENINGS

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 provided at enrollment. For infants or children who have yet to receive all their vaccinations, vaccination records must be updated with the school on a regular basis, as new immunizations are received. If you choose to opt out or delay your child’s immunization schedule, you must obtain an official affidavit from the Health Department. This affidavit must be notarized and kept at school in place of your child’s immunization records. You must also be prepared to keep your child out of school if certain illnesses are diagnosed within our school. The immunization schedule you must follow and instructions on how to order the opt-out affidavit from the health Department may be accessed through the Department of Family Protective Services website at <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>. **You must keep the documentation of your child's medical records current with the Director.**

Vision & Hearing screenings are required for any child who is 4 by September 1st. They must be screened or have a professional examination. This needs to be completed within 120 days of admission for first time students or before the end of the first semester. The University of Texas screening department will be at Discovery School each spring to conduct V&H screenings. Advanced notification of this screening will be provided.

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## MILESTONES

Your child’s classroom assignment will be based on age and availability not milestone achievement. However, understanding expected milestones can be beneficial as families strive to understand the development of their



child. Please let a Director know if you would like to obtain a developmental milestone chart. You may also learn more about milestones by going to <http://www.positive-parenting-ally.com/developmental-milestones.html>

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## TOILET LEARNING

At CDC, toilet learning is a both a developmental and a child-initiated process in which the child learns to use the toilet appropriately. Children will often indicate their readiness by to establishing more independence, becoming aware of their bodily functions and showing an interest in the toilet. We believe children should not be pressured to achieve a level beyond their capability. As always, our goal is self-discipline. We will not use praise or punishment. Instead we follow the child's cues, encourage their success and guide them as needed. For more information or hand-outs on toilet learning, please ask a Director.

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## SWADDLING

Per minimum standards (chapter 746.2428) set by our state licensing Department of Family Protective Services, we are prohibited to swaddle infants in our program at any time. Families of infants will need to read and sign the Safe Sleep Agreement that we provide for our Sprouts room.

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## MEDICATIONS

If your child requires medication be administered during the school day, you must give the medication to the teacher and fill out a Medical Authorization Form with specific dosing information and your signature. Ask a teacher or the Director if you have any questions about this process. We will not give non-prescribed medication throughout the day, unless it is for a specific pain. Medicine must always come to us in its original packaging, the authorization sheet must be filled out by a parent and CDC must administer it according to the instructions on the package. Licensing does not allow us to mix the medicine into bottles before administering, nor do they allow us to serve a bottle to a baby in which the medicine was already mixed.

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## THERAPISTS

Children's Discovery Center understands the importance of integrative therapy. We are happy to accommodate families that choose to have a therapist (IE speech, physical, behavioral, occupational, etc.) work with their child while they are in our school program. In order to arrange this with our school, you must provide the Director with a complete list of the names and contact information of any therapists along with written approval that the therapist is allowed to work with your child while they are at CDC (this must be provided for each therapist). Second, therapy times must be scheduled so that they do not interrupt the daily activities (such as meal times and nap) or the special weekly events in the classroom (such as Wednesday morning Nature Hikes). Please refer to our daily schedule and your classroom orientation packet for schedule times. Third, we must be provided notice of any changes to schedules or therapists within 24-hours. Lastly, your child's Teachers and the Director would like to meet and talk with the therapists outside of the classroom. This helps us to understand the goals,



any specific techniques being utilized and support the process. More so, the teachers can help the therapists integrate their work within the context of our group setting. Please let us know if you have any questions.

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## ALLERGIES

All allergies need to be listed in your child's enrollment packet and a note from a physician, dietician or specialist is required. Be as specific as possible. Inform the Directors and teachers, in writing, of all updates as you get them. A copy of the child's allergies will be kept in the office and in their classroom. More information on food allergies is found under the 'Food' section.

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## EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS AND PROCEDURES

This excerpt was copied directly from our Staff Handbook. Please let a Director know if you have any questions.

**Staff Responsibilities:** It is the responsibility of all staff to understand their role in an emergency. This includes understanding and familiarization with the location and operation of fire extinguishers, reporting a fire to the fire department and knowledge of all fire exits and evacuation procedures. Evacuation routes and procedures are posted in each classroom as well as the office and main hallway. Fire extinguishers are located in the following room: Dancing Bears Classroom, Dragonflies Classroom, Starburst classroom, and one in the Office. Extinguishers are serviced annually and as needed. Fully stocked first-aid kits are located in each classroom, on each playground, and in the office. Exit Lights that have a dedicated outlet as well as back-up battery for power outages are located above each door that leads to the outside. Carbon Monoxide Detectors are checked monthly and are spread throughout the building.

- **SCHOOL** – The school will retain responsibility of all children on premises until they are released to a parent, guardian or other designated person or until they have been transported to an official evacuation center, in which case selected staff will remain with the children until they have reunited with their families.
- **EMPLOYEES** – All employees will remain on the premises as service workers, as designated by law. Such employees will be subjected to whatever tasks are assigned by the person or persons in charge, and may not leave the premises until the same person in charge give them official permission to do so.
- **PARENTS** – Parents should not telephone the school; they should listen to the radio for progress reports on whatever disaster is taking place. Follow official instructions relayed by officials via the radio. If parents are able to reach the school without danger to themselves or without interferences with disaster workers, they should come to pick up their children. Children will be released only to parents, guardians or other designated persons known to them or to their parent guardians.

### **A. In Case of FIRE, NATURAL DISASTER. INTRUDERS or BOMB THREAT**

1. Save lives!!! Evacuate any persons in immediate danger!! Fire drills are conducted regularly to help you become familiar with the process.
2. Evacuate the children and adults out the classroom doors to designated meet up spaces indicated on evacuation plans. Make sure to take sign-in sheets, your cell phone (and if possible) the children's files. Check for any stragglers and make a head count!
3. Sound alarm. Pull any fire alarms that are not already sounding. Supplement with voices and shouting if needed.



4. Report fire. Dial 911. Say: There is a fire at Children’s Discovery Center located at 4112 Duval St, Austin Texas 78751. Tell specifics of what is burning. Assign one person to meet first officials.
5. Use portable fire extinguishers or wall extinguisher if it is safe to stay inside area while doing so.
6. Contain the spread of fire and smoke by closing all doors and windows (if possible).
7. Keep your sign-in sheet and cell phone on you. Must account for all children ALWAYS!

#### **After Evacuation**

1. When safe within the pre-designated area, all children and adults must be accounted for.
2. Person in charge reassures children of their safety.
3. First Aid administered if needed.
4. Building is not re-entered until permission is given by the officials.
5. **Evacuation Evaluations:** Follow the emergency with an evaluation by all staff in order to spot areas of weakness or oversight to be remedied for any future emergency.

#### **B. In Case of POWER OUTAGE:**

1. Remain calm.
2. If weather permits, evacuate building if rooms are too dark to use.
3. If weather is hot and electricity blackout has caused the air conditioner to cease operating, plan for being outdoors in a cool, shady spot, if possible.
4. Utilize available emergency supplies to keep children comfortable.
5. When the announcement is made to close the school, person in charge will attempt to notify parents, guardians, or designated person to pick up child.
6. However, parents should follow announcements of AISD closings, delayed openings or early closings on radio stations/television stations.
7. Parents should arrange to pick up their child as soon as possible.

#### **C. In Case of LOSS OF WATER OR HEAT:**

1. The Director will notify Kyle Holder, Owner, to report the problem.
2. The preschool must meet minimum requirements regarding temperatures, hot water, flushing of toilets, running water, etc... in order to operate. After the problem is evaluated, Kyle Holder and the Director will make a decision whether or not the preschool should close.
3. Parents or guardians will be notified to pick up their child and announcements will be made on designated radio and television channels if deemed necessary.

#### **D. Expanded Emergency Evacuation Plan**

In the event of an emergency situation that requires an evacuation of the school, one of the following three plans should be implemented. In all situations, the teacher in charge shall take when evacuating:

- Accurate attendance list, file box with children’s folders, daily schedule



- Account for all children and staff during any boarding of vehicles
  - Bring any necessary medications/supplies and emergency records
1. If the environmental emergency is confined to the immediate area of schools, e.g. fire, toxic fumes, etc... and the children cannot stay on the premises, the children will walk to Fresh Plus. They are to remain in this relocated space accompanied by teachers while parents/emergency contacts are notified of the situation and arrangements are made for either transporting home or care taking for the remainder of the day. In the event of exposure to toxic materials, gases, flooding, etc... and a physical examination is recommended, children will be transported by ambulance/police cars to the nearest hospital. In the event of a major environmental emergency which is more widespread and encompasses a larger area (neighborhood, several buildings and homes) due to a non-confirmed environmental threat, e.g. toxic materials/fumes from a spill, floodwaters, brush fires, etc... and the children cannot remain while parents/guardians are notified and arrangements are made for either transportation home or continuation of care are made.
  2. In the event of a major environmental hazard that necessitates a larger area evacuation (several neighborhoods, a city/town) due to a non-confirmed hazard, e.g. nuclear accident, earthquake, etc... the children will be transported by emergency vehicles/personal cars (if necessary) to a red Cross designated mass shelter. They will remain accompanied by teacher(s) while parents/guardians/emergency contacts are notified and arrangements are made for their pick-up.

Emergency procedure messages will be sent through the school’s Text Alert System. Families can also call Kyle Holder, owner, at 512-762-3321.

**We will work closely with all emergency personnel to evacuate all children and teachers to the safest location as quickly as possible.**

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## STAFF VACCINATION POLICY

As it is not required by the state of Texas, per policy the Children’s Discovery Center does not require their staff to receive immunizations, but recommends current TDAP and seasonal flu vaccines. For information on state recommendations for immunizations, you may refer to the Adult Safety Net program created by the Texas Department of State Health Services and/or visit their website at [www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)

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## GANG FREE ZONE

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of a child care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalties.

## Attendance

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## HOURS AND LATE POLICY

CDC is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The office is closed from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. during the children's naptime.

The school closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. and teachers are not paid to work after 6:00 p.m. **Therefore, a late pick-up fee of \$1 per minute will be charged and paid to the teacher who stays late.**

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## HOLIDAYS

Our program will close for the following holidays:

- Martin Luther King Day
- We follow the AISD schedule for the week of Spring Break
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (or the closest weekday if it falls on a weekend)
- Labor Day
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in October (for Staff Development Day)
- We follow the AISD schedule for the week of Thanksgiving
- We follow the AISD schedule for Winter Break (includes Christmas and New Year's Day)

Tuition is not prorated for holidays.

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## ATTENDANCE

We strongly encourage every child who is enrolled in the center to attend regularly, to promote the child's development and sense of consistency. If your child will be absent, please call the school and let us know so we can plan accordingly.

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## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

Consistent arrival times and routines have a significant effect on the child's success in our program. Each child must be accompanied into the building and presented to the teacher by an adult. We understand that families are often in a hurry during drop-off times, but we strongly encourage families to verbally connect with the teacher for a quick daily exchange to insure the smoothest transition possible for the child.

Dew Drops start the day in their classroom or on their deck and the other classrooms blend for morning drop-offs from 7:30-8:30 am. The Hummingbirds and Dancing Bears combine in the Hummingbird classroom and the Dragonflies and Starbursts combine on the Starburst playground. Please drop off your supplies in your child's classroom and then proceed to their drop-off area.



During pick-up, children will only be dismissed to their parent or an authorized adult listed on the application. **departure of the child.** If an authorized adult listed on your child's application will pick up your child, please have them to bring a driver's license for identification purposes.

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## SEPARATION

The transition from home to school varies from child to child. Some children adapt easily while others worry about being separated from their family. A few children may even feel nervous that their parents won't return for them. As a parent, you want to help your child enter the outside world as confidently as possible. Building routines and rituals during drop-off and pick-up times can be very helpful in this process. The brain is pattern-seeking, so help your child feel empowered by letting them know what to expect next. For example, you may let your child know, "I will be back to pick you up after lunch." This may help the child feel confident by knowing when to expect you.

Prior to starting at CDC, we encourage you to visit often. Take time to show your child the building and grounds in a relaxed way. Visit the playground, walk around and slowly look at things of interest to your child, and meet the teachers. If you feel extra attention or advanced strategizing may be needed for your child's transition, we encourage you to reach out directly to your teachers. Furthermore, brief visits to relatives, neighbors or playdates may give both you and the child practice in separating and reuniting.

Many children experience a degree of separation anxiety as they come and go from the security of home and family. This is healthy and appropriate; however, we will still find ways to comfort them here at school. Hugs, warm reminders that their parents will return, slowly introducing them to new friends, and setting up activities that we know they are interested in are just a few of the ways teachers will help children acclimate. Bringing pictures of their home and family to school can be especially reassuring for children. You might want to make a small photo album or put a photo in a locket for your child to carry around. Perhaps their favorite blanket might be just what is needed to brighten their day. You know your child better than anyone. If you have any concerns or questions, please let us know.

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## EMERGENCY CLOSURES

In the event that our school must close due to emergencies or extenuating circumstances, we will update our website to announce the most up to date information for families. [www.discoveryschools.com](http://www.discoveryschools.com)

The safety of the children, families and staff in our program is of our utmost concern. Regarding extreme weather and unsafe driving conditions, Children's Discovery Center will generally follow the AISD emergency schedule for delayed-openings and closures. Should AISD announce a 2-hour delayed-opening, CDC will open at 10:00am. Should AISD announce a 12:00pm delayed-opening or an all-day closure, CDC will follow with a respectively with a 12:00pm delayed-opening or an all-day closure.

There may be additional conditions that require an emergency closure. For example, should a power outage occur while our center is in operation and persist for an hour, we will have to close our center. Should there be a power outage already in progress when we arrive in the morning to open our center, we will act as quickly as possible to contact families through our text message alert system. If the power is restored by or before 10am,



we will re-open our center as soon as possible. However, if the power remains out past 10am, we will close our center for the remainder of the day.

Families will not be allowed to drop-off their children at our center during a severe weather event or power outage. During these circumstances, families may stay with their child in the classroom until the center makes the official announcement to stay open or to close. If the weather makes travel from the center impossible, families and staff will be expected to follow our emergency shelter procedures as outlined on the diagrams hanging in each classroom, the office and the front hallway.

These extenuating circumstances are usually unforeseen but administration will determine proceedings and communicate any changes to the schedule as quickly as possible, keeping in mind the safety of our families and staff.

We will send families a message through a mass texting app. This app will keep your information private so that other families cannot see your contact information. Please keep your phone number up to date with our office and submit any changes in writing to the director.

We do not provide make-up days for unexpected closures due to emergency or extenuating circumstances.

## Food

### NUTRITION, SNACKS AND LUNCH

A nutritious snack is served daily around 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Monthly menus are planned in advance and approved by an early childhood and nutrition specialist. Menus are posted in the classrooms each week.

Children bring their own lunch and eat around 11:00 a.m. Water is provided with lunch and snack. Please send your child's lunch in a labeled container with an ice pack to keep perishable items safe and at least one drink. We can help warm up food for the child in their classroom. But, please note all liquids and food hotter than 110 degrees F are kept out of the reach of the children. We spend a lot of time outdoors, so please send a labeled water bottle/cup for your child.

We ask that you respect our low sugar/no chocolate policy and pack food that is nutritious. We want to turn children on to good nutrition. Please let us know if you need some fresh ideas, we are happy to send home healthy meal and snack suggestions or sample menus.

To give families a mid-week break, we offer a Wednesday lunch plan of cheese pizza prepared in the commercial kitchen of Mr Gatti's pizza and cut into child-size slices. The cost is \$9.00 per month which is added to the monthly tuition statement. We encourage parents to send fruits or veggies that day for your child to enjoy with their pizza. Our snack on pizza day will often consist of fruits and veggies as well.



CDC does not ever use food or beverages as a punishment or reward for behavior. Given the specific needs of infants, the Sprouts classroom has unique food policies that differ from the rest of the school, which are available in their classroom orientation packet.

**We proudly accommodate breastfeeding at our school.** If you would like to feed your baby here, we have a large couch in our office, a comfortable chair in our infant room and lots of spaces around our center for you to choose from. If you need help finding a quiet location, please ask one of our staff members for help. If you're sending bottled breast milk to school for your child, let your teacher know as we want to help you store and save it properly. If you have any questions or need support resources, check with the infant teachers or a director. There are some great local and online resources for breastfeeding mothers. We suggest checking out: La Leche League International at [www.llli.org](http://www.llli.org) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) at [www.fns.usda.gov/wic](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic). If you need additional information or resources, please let a director know.

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## FOOD ALLERGIES

Our staff is educated on food allergies and take precautions to make sure that children are protected. Families must provide the Director with a written list of a child's known food allergies or dietary restrictions with a note from a physician, dietician or specialist. Be as specific as possible. You must keep the Director updated in writing of any changes to this list as they occur. New families should indicate the allergies in the child's Enrollment Packet, as well as provide a note from a physician, dietician or specialist. Families that are already enrolled may provide this information to the Director via email or by written notice. The Director will keep a copy of this information in your child's file and post it in the kitchen and classroom.

We will post any known food allergies in our classrooms and may require families to conference with teachers and administrators regarding their child's specific allergy. If a child has a severe allergy to a specific food item, we may eliminate that item from the classroom's snack menu and ask families to avoid bringing that item in their child's lunch.

## Scheduled Events

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## DAILY SCHEDULE

For children ages 12 months\* to 5 years, the daily schedule is as follows:

7:30-9:00 a.m. Drop-offs, free play, transition into classrooms  
9:00 Morning snack  
9:30 Diapers/potty  
10:00 Sensory activities, art, music, story time, etc.  
11:00 Lunch  
11:30 Project/Play  
12:00 p.m. Diapers/potty

- 12:30 Transition into nap time (Book/Story Time)
- 1:00-3:00 Nap time (Kinder Time for children 4 years and older only)
- 3:00 Diapers/ Potty
- 3:30 Afternoon snack
- 4:00-6:00 Sensory activities, art, music, story time, free play, and pick-ups

\*For children under 12 months, the schedule is less structured, to accommodate the varied routines of infants at different developmental stages. Please see the classroom orientation packet for more information.

## NAP TIME

Our center’s daily rest period is 1-3pm. At this time all classrooms are low-lit and quiet and the office is closed. We ask that you refrain from dropping-off or picking-up during this time as this can disrupt the entire class and wake up sleeping children. Most classrooms start transitioning into rest time around 12:30pm. This may include brushing teeth, doing yoga stretches, listening to stories, etc. Please check with your classroom teachers for their specific routine.

Rest time is an important part of any all-day program as it allows children a time to relax, process the day’s events, get some much needed shut-eye, etc. More so, it is required by the state of Texas. Children up to age 4 years will have a 2-hour rest period. Children above the age of 4 years will have at least a one-hour rest period (with the option to extend their nap by an additional hour) followed by one hour of quiet activities. We understand that some children fall asleep easily and some do not. Our teachers will do everything they can to make the environment relaxing and all children in their care comfortable. Some children like to have their backs patted or their heads rubbed. Please let your teachers know if your child has a particular nap routine at home.

CDC provides vinyl resting mats (standard crib mattress size) to use during daily rest time. Families must provide a fitted sheet, blanket or sleeping linens for their child at the beginning of each week to be taken home at the end of the week. Children may also bring a soft toy from home to sleep with that must be kept in their cubby at all other times. Teachers will help children dress their mat before nap and return their bedding to their cubby at the conclusion of naptime.

## ANNUAL CALENDAR

The following calendar is for general reference only. A detailed annual calendar is updated and distributed regularly to all CDC South families.

September	October	November	December
Closed for Labor Day Tuition Assistance Applications Due	Closed 2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday for Staff Development Day Halloween Carnival Fall Tuition Assistance Program Term Begins Photo Days	Fall Family/Staff Workday Closed the week of Thanksgiving	Closed for Winter Break
January	February	March	April

Reopen after Winter Break Closed for MLK Day		Closed for Spring Break Spring Celebration Tuition Assistance Applications Due	Closed for Good Friday Spring Family/Staff Workday Spring Tuition Assistance Program Term Begins
<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>
Closed for Memorial Day		Closed for Independence Day	Family/Staff Night - Back to School Night

Note: CDC has a permanent holiday closure schedule for the following holidays: Martin Luther King Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in October (Staff Development Day). CDC bases its Spring Break, Thanksgiving and Winter Break closure on the AISD schedule. You can view the AISD calendar online at [www.austinisd.org/academics/calendar/](http://www.austinisd.org/academics/calendar/)

\*These special events are specific to Children’s Discovery Center in South Austin

## Family Involvement

### CLASSROOM VISITATION

Families are encouraged to visit the school several times before their child’s first day and thereafter whenever they wish. 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 day to visit (remembering that naptime is 1-3pm daily).

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 welcome you to share those skills with the children, and encourage you to talk to the Director about arranging special visits or activities for the children.

### REPORTING ABUSE

It is CDC policy, as well as State regulation, to report any and all suspected cases of child abuse or neglect immediately by phone to the Department of Family and Protective Services, and to follow up in writing within 24 hours, documenting the same information reported by phone. CDC will offer full cooperation of our staff during the investigation of the reported incident.

Our teachers and administrators undergo annual training in abuse and neglect. We are also happy to provide information and resources to our families. Please ask a director if you have any questions. The Child Abuse Hotline phone number is 1-800-252-5400 or you may report online at <https://www.txabusehotline.org>.

The Department of Family and Protective Services may be contacted directly through their website <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/> Child Care Licensing may also be accessed through the website.

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## VEHICLE POLICY

### Texas Penal Code Sec. 22.10. LEAVING A CHILD IN A VEHICLE

(a) A person commits an offense if he intentionally or knowingly leaves a child in a motor vehicle for longer than five minutes, knowing that the child is:

- (1) Younger than seven years of age; and
- (2) Not attended by an individual in the vehicle who is 14 years of age or older.

(b) An offense under this section is a Class C misdemeanor.

We have been advised by the Austin Police Department to report any observed offenses to this law. To insure the safety and health of all children, we ask that parents and caregivers do not ever leave their child unattended in their vehicle at any time for any reason, regardless if the windows are down or the air conditioning is running. If you see a violation of this policy, please report it to a Director immediately.

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## COMMUNICATION

Communication is a huge part of our program and we have multiple venues in which we will share and distribute information with families.

We regularly communicate through email and therefore strongly recommend all parents and caregivers to be on our email list. Furthermore, we require that each household provide at least one active email address for this purpose. The school email address is [childrensdiscoverycentral@gmail.com](mailto:childrensdiscoverycentral@gmail.com)

Teachers may send emails to announce upcoming events, make requests (such as field trip participants or family photos), communicate classroom issues, etc. Many of the classrooms send regular reports to the families to reflect on the past week's curriculum, projects, and happenings. Again, we ask that all families check their email regularly.

Please visit our website, [www.discoveryschools.com](http://www.discoveryschools.com) often as we frequently update it. All children have personal mailboxes located in their classroom, where hand-outs, notes and artwork can be found. Furthermore, we may post signs on our doors or gates to announce important information.

You may also contact us by phone. Please note the office is typically closed between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. daily during naptime. If you need to speak to a Director, please call between 7:30a.m. and 1:00 p.m. or between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

The Discovery schools phone numbers are:

Children's Discovery Center South (Convict Hill Rd.): .....512-899-2267  
The Infant Room at CDC South (Convict Hill Rd.): .....512-891-5366  
Children's Discovery Center (Duval St.): .....512-458-1891  
The Discovery School (White Cliff Dr.): ..... 512-372-2460  
The Austin Discovery School Charter Elementary School: .... 512-674-0700

The following important phone numbers are also for your reference: the local licensing number (512-834-3195) and the child abuse hotline (1-800-265-5400).



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

As noted in the EMERGENCY CLOSURES section, we will send text message alerts to families regarding schedule changes, delayed openings or emergency closures. Please do not reply to text alerts, as responses will not be monitored or returned. If you do have any questions or concerns after receiving the text alert, please email us or call us during normal hours of operation.

We require families to keep all contact information up to date with the Directors. If you need to update your contact information and you are not able to reach us over the phone or in person, please email your full name, child's name and updated contact information to [childrensdiscoverycentral@gmail.com](mailto:childrensdiscoverycentral@gmail.com)

Our school has a closed Facebook group in which we will post photos, announce events and share documentation with families. The Facebook group is a platform that we have set up solely for distributing positive information to our families. It is not an avenue in which families should announce concerns or try to address issues. Our Facebook page will not be monitored for this type of communication; nor will such comments receive a response. Instead, they will be deleted. Abuse of our Facebook page in this manner, will be a violation of school policy. We have many other ways for families communicate concerns, as outlined in this section. Please see the GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES section for more details on this process.

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## GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

In an effort to hear and resolve complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, CDC has adopted an orderly process that all families must follow when bringing formal complaints and grievances. The formal grievance process provides all families with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management if they are dissatisfied with a result or response.

If you are unsure about where to begin the process of making concerns known, or uncomfortable with any part of the grievance process, please contact the Director for guidance.

If you have questions of concerns regarding your child, please contact your child's teacher first. The teacher may be able to quickly answer your question or address your concern. If the issue is not resolved with this teacher, the parent may request a conference with the classroom teachers. The teachers may also request a conference with parents. If a conference is requested by either party, teachers and parents are expected to attend. Please see the above section, FAMILY/TEACHER CONFERENCES for more details. At the conference, the teachers and family will discuss a plan of action to resolve the issue. A follow-up conference may be included in this plan of action.

If after the plan of action has been executed and if you feel the problem has not been resolved, you may request a problem-solving meeting with the Directors and Teachers. The request for this meeting must be made in writing to the Directors. At this meeting, the Directors will document the concern and make a written plan for addressing or investigating the concern. A follow-up meeting may be required.

If the issue or classroom concern remains unresolved after this, parents may request a formal meeting with the Directors. This request must be made to the Directors in writing. The Directors will respond in writing. As needed, the Directors will review all documentation from previous meetings, discuss the issue with the School



Owner and investigate the issue further. The Directors will then make a recommendation or decision regarding the issue and discuss this decision with the family.

Please note that if your issues are with the teacher, and you feel the issues are serious or involve serious teacher discrepancies or moral turpitude, please immediately bring concerns to Directors. The Directors will discuss and determine how to address the complaint.

Parents that wish to discuss a school policy or procedure should contact a director during business hours to set up a time to talk, or send an e-mail outlining the question or concern to [childrensdiscoverycentral@gmail.com](mailto:childrensdiscoverycentral@gmail.com) (also see the COMMUNICATION section for additional ways to contact us). Please include the best way to contact you and times you are available. Many issues can be easily resolved once we are aware of them.

Legal issues or concerns must be addressed with Directors immediately and may also be discussed directly with the School Owner.

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## FAMILY/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Families and teachers are encouraged to communicate regularly with each other and to ask for a family-teacher conference at any point in time. A particularly good time is when there is a concern that has not been fully addressed or when your child is getting ready to move-up to the next classroom.

Typically, conferences need to be scheduled during the classroom's weekly planning periods, between 1-2:30 p.m. This is a time that Administration has for arranged substitutes to cover the classroom, so that all teachers may attend.

It is important for parents and teachers to connect without distractions. Problems should not be addressed in front of children. When the teachers are in the classroom 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 parents feel, so we always 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 covered 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.

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## FAMILY PARTICIPATION

We want to welcome you to our school community. We have a very active parent body at Children's Discovery Center. This section outlines a few of the opportunities we offer for family involvement at our school, to help your family acclimate to and participate in our annual school traditions.

**Special Classroom Activities:** Throughout the school year, your child's classroom may host various parties or events, or plan cooking projects. Your teachers will keep you up-to-date on class events. Furthermore, we have an open-door policy. Families are welcome to visit anytime. Let your child's teacher know if you would like to join the class for lunch, story-time, or just to hang out during their activities.



**Family/Staff Workdays:** We host family/staff workdays two to four times per year (always including one in the spring and one in the fall). On these days, we spend a Saturday doing projects for the school, such as organizing classrooms, cleaning toys, building decks and playscapes, planting gardens, etc. It is a great bonding experience for all of us to work together in service to our school.

**Halloween Carnival:** Our huge, annual carnival is typically held in late October. Families' 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. Families help set up and run the festival, so high parental involvement makes the carnival possible. We post sign-up sheets several weeks before the event.

**Annual Book Exchange:** On the last day before Winter Break, we host an annual book exchange. Each child brings a wrapped book to our Winter Party. The book should not cost more than \$10, and should be labeled with the giver's name (to ensure that the book goes to a new recipient). In this way, all of us share in the holiday spirit.

**Staff Bonus Program:** The staff bonus program is a tradition that shows appreciation to our teachers. Families can participate by donating any amount they wish, so that all of the staff can receive a nice bonus before leaving for the winter break. Participation is completely optional, and families should understand that even the smallest donation is greatly appreciated and helpful. Though families can donate at any time, the program Director will run multiple drives throughout the year, including Graduation time as well as the weeks leading up to Winter Break. Donations can be added to your family's tuition statement and can be paid via auto-draft or in-person payments. Upon leaving the program, qualifying families may also choose to donate their deposit refund to the staff bonus program in lieu of adding it to their last month's tuition statement. Please ask a Director if you have any questions about this important program.

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

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## CONFIDENTIALITY

Though teachers will communicate openly with you about your child, they are not allowed to discuss another child or family with you. Furthermore, information contained in a child's record is considered privileged and confidential. Unauthorized removal of records or unauthorized divulgence of parents, children, staff, or program's confidential information is a *strict* policy staff of CDC/The Discovery School are required to follow.

The Department of Family Protective Services values the privacy of children and families. For more information, read their Privacy and Security Policy online at <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/policies/privacy.asp>

In addition to our confidentiality policy, the following excerpt is included in our Staff Handbook:

*Observe professional ethics at all times and never discuss children, families, or staff elsewhere. Observations made in the classroom and all information discussed at staff meetings/trainings are to be kept in strict confidence. Use first names only in journals or papers related to your work. If you personally know some of the children or families, keep those relationships separate from your work here at CDC/The Discovery School.*



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## POLICY UPDATES

Policy updates and handbook changes will be announced via email immediately after changes occur. Updated handbooks will be available on our website [www.discoveryschools.com](http://www.discoveryschools.com) under the section 'Forms' or hard copies may be obtained from the school office at any time.

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## SUGGESTED READING & RESOURCES

We've listed many resources throughout this Handbook and here are some more good ones:

Author	Books
Bev Bos	Don't Move the Muffin Tins Together We're Better Before the Basics
Carla Hannaford, Ph. D	Smart Moves – Why Learning is Not All in Your Head
Jane Healy, Ph. D	Endangered Minds – Why Children Don't Think and What We Can Do About It
Dr. Becky Bailey	There's Gotta Be a Better Way – Discipline That Works
Alfie Kohn	Punished by Rewards
Howard Gardner	Multiple Intelligences Frames of the Mind
Thomas Armstrong, Ph. D	7 Kinds of Smart Awakening Your Child's Natural Genius In Their Own Way
Victoria Jean Dimidjian	Play's Place in Public Education for Young Children
Stephen Nachmanovitch	Free Play
Lella Gandani, George Forman & Carolyn Edwards	100 Languages of Children
Dr. Dan Siegel & Dr. Tina Payne Bryson	The Whole Brain Child
Dr. Dan Siegel & Dr. Tina Payne Bryson	No Drama Discipline
Heather Shumaker	It's Ok Not to Share and Other Renegade Rules for Raising Competent and Compassionate Kids

**Parents are encouraged to visit our school library** which includes parent resources and many of the books listed on the suggested reading list.

**A few local and online resources we suggest:**

Texas Parent to Parent Resources <http://www.txp2p.org/resources/>  
<https://www.211texas.org/cms/> or call 211 for local resources including but not limited to resources for children with disabilities, local pediatricians, various early childhood agencies, etc.



Any Baby Can <http://anybabycan.org/>

Zero to Three <http://zerotothree.org/>

<http://consciousdiscipline.com/>

<http://families.naeyc.org/>

Conscious Discipline Tips for Parents <http://consciousdiscipline.com/about/conscious-discipline-for-parents.asp>

Benefits of Play <http://www.parentingscience.com/benefits-of-play.html>

**If there are any areas in which you would like more information or need resources, please check with our teachers or directors.**

## Enrollment and Tuition

### TUITION AND SCHEDULE

Age	Full Time	M/W/F All Day	T/Th All Day
6 weeks to 12 months	\$1,265	\$960	\$810
12 to 24 months	\$1,165	\$910	\$760
2 to 5 years	\$1115	\$860	\$710

\*One half of this deposit will be refundable upon 30 days' written notice of withdrawal. The other half is the registration and supply fee and is not refundable.

Alternate schedules may be assigned on an as-needed basis. Please check with the director for availability.

### TUITION PAYMENT POLICIES

Tuition is due on the first of each month. Payment can be made by credit card (Discover, MasterCard, Visa), debit card or check only, as we cannot accept cash payments. There is a six-day grace period; after the sixth day of the month there will be a \$25 late fee. If your tuition is more than 30 days late, your child will not be able to attend school. Tuition is not prorated for holidays.



Parents can set up an automatic payment plan with Smart Care to use their credit card to pay tuition each month. You may also set up an auto payment using your debit card or a ACH (bank) draft for a discount. Upon enrolling, you should receive an invitation to join the Smart Care App to set up payment preferences.

**Please note that we raise tuition rates every September. This allows us to give annual staff pay raises, offer benefits, and keep up with equipment and facility maintenance.**

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## SUMMER ENROLLMENT

Children's schedules may be changed during the summer. You must provide written notice 30 days prior to the schedule change. All changes made are based on availability. Children out for more than 90 days do not have to pay tuition while out, provided that CDC is able to temporary fill their child's spot while their child is out and that parents provide at least 30 days' written notice. The return date must be after AISD begins session. If these conditions are met, you will have guaranteed re-enrollment for the fall, and must pay a re-registration fee of \$150. Children out for less than 90 days will have to remain enrolled to keep their spot on the roster.

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## WITHDRAWAL POLICY

If you need to withdraw your child from our program, you must provide written notice at least 30-days in advance of their last day. If notice is adequately provided and all accounts are paid in full at the time of the request, CDC will be able to refund the \$150 deposit payment. Should you fail to provide such notice you will forfeit the deposit refund and may be held responsible for any tuition or other relevant charges that would have occurred within the 30-day time period. Should CDC need to discontinue care with a family for any reason (IE financial commitments are not met or it becomes apparent that our program is not equipped to meet the psychological or developmental needs of the child), written notification will be given to the parents with ample time (when possible) to find alternative care. The staff/director will make every effort to resolve any problems prior to discontinuing care.

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## TERMINATION POLICY

Expulsion and suspension rates are alarmingly high in Texas preschools. CDC does not suspend children and we have a continuing practice to prevent the expulsion of children from our program while maintaining the safety and well-being of everyone in our care. Please refer to the following relevant sections in our Handbook for detailed information regarding our preventative policies and procedures in the following areas: Discipline, Challenging Behaviors, Rough and Tumble Play, Milestones, Therapist, Attendance, Grievance Procedures, Family/Teacher Conferences, Confidentiality and the Withdrawal Policy.

Our utmost concern is the health and safety of the children and staff in our program. We will always do all that we can to insure the success and ongoing care of each child in our care. However, there may be times when a child's needs may require more individualized care and supervision than our group setting can accommodate. Exclusionary measures are only used as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a



determination of a serious threat that cannot otherwise be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications consistent with our policies and procedures. In the rare event that a child must leave our program, we will work to help to make the transition as seamless as possible and to assist the family in accessing services through Workforce Solutions to find alternative placement that is more appropriate for the well-being of the child. Please let a Director know if you have any questions.

## EXTRA FEES

CDC offers some additional activities and services, for additional fees, summarized below:

<b>Extracurricular Activities for Children Over 18 Months Old</b>			
Annual Activity and Supply Fee: <i>(Applied each April for students enrolled 6 months or more)</i>		\$100	
Lunch Fee: <i>(Monthly fee for optional pizza day on Wednesdays)</i>		\$9	
<b>Additional Potential Charges</b>			
Late Tuition Charge: <i>(If tuition is paid after the 6th of the month)</i>		\$25	
Returned Check Fee:		\$35	
Field Trip (admission fees)		Seldom occurrence and only as applicable	
Late Pick Up Fee:		\$1 per minute after 6:00pm	
<b>Drop-In Fees</b>			
Time:	6 weeks to 12 months:	12 to 24 months:	2 years and older:
7:30-6:00pm	\$65	\$60	\$55
*All drop-in care requests must be submitted to the Director no later than 12:00 p.m. on the school day preceding the request date. Drop-in care is contingent upon availability and MUST be confirmed by the Director. Drop In is for currently enrolled families only.			

## TUITION ASSISTANCE

Children’s Discovery Center allocates funding every month to help families who may need financial assistance with tuition costs. Our in-house Tuition Assistance Program includes two Award cycles per year (Apr 1- Sept 30 and Oct 1 – Mar 31). We offer \$150/month grants (one per family) that last for 6 months each. Interested families will need to fill out our application and submit it to our office by March 15<sup>th</sup> for April-September assistance, and by September 15<sup>th</sup> for October-March assistance. Eligibility will be determined based on total household income and number of children in care with us, with awards given to the families that spend the highest percentage of their income on tuition. Child care expenses must exceed 20% of household income to qualify. For more information regarding eligibility and requirements or for an application, please contact a Director.