

Discovery Developmental Center Curriculum

Mission Statement

To provide developmentally appropriate programming for young children of all abilities in a professional environment.

Philosophy

Discovery's curriculum philosophy is based on the following organizational values:

- We believe that children learn best through PLAY! Children develop their self-esteem and enthusiasm for learning through a creative, non-stressful educational experience. Discovery's curriculum is based on research, and the premise that children learn best through hands-on activities, and a social skills and play-based approach to learning that allow for choice, adult and child interactions, and individual needs.
- We believe in an integrated setting for young children. Children become more aware of the variety of gifts and abilities that they possess. As their ability to be sensitive and supportive of one another grows, they develop a respect for each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- We believe the most important teacher a child will ever have is their family. Open lines of communication between center staff and family members allow us to facilitate a child's growth and learning. We promise to recognize, honor, protect, and nurture every child as long as they are in our care and to respect the integrity and diversity of all families enrolled.
- We believe that excellence in teaching requires autonomy and creativity. Teachers are given the freedom to create classroom environments based upon individual children's needs and interests. The curriculum content is developed to meet the needs of ALL children in the class.
- We believe that a healthy, positive self-image develops when a high degree of success is experienced in social situations. When children feel safe in their environment, when they have the freedom to explore and have fun, and when they can enjoy the unique differences in themselves and others, a confident caring individual will develop.

Curriculum Goals

Helping children to learn how to play with others and manage their own behavior in a group setting is at the core of Discovery's curriculum. Children are not born with these skills and must be taught them purposefully. Staff are expected to emphasize developmentally appropriate methods that include play, open ended questions, group discussion, problem solving, and cooperative learning. Specific goals and objectives are included in their entirety in the following pages, and include all areas of development, including Creative Arts, Language and Literacy, Mathematics and Numeracy, Physical Development and Health, Science, Social/Emotional Development, and Social Studies.

The Classroom Environment

Classrooms are arranged in learning centers to offer child-initiated play and learning choices at developmentally appropriate levels for each age group and the individual children within that group. There is space for art, dramatic play, reading, math and science, blocks, manipulative table toys, writing, language arts (stories and finger plays), music, and large motor activities (outdoors and in). Learning centers allow children the opportunity to make choices, explore and experiment with a variety of materials and sounds, and to problem-solve, make decisions, and interact with their peers.

None of our classrooms are meant to be self-contained. Classroom teachers utilize the entire building and the outdoors, planning for activities within individual classrooms, our “living room” area, and our multi-purpose art/lunchroom, and often take the curriculum outdoors. Children experience and gain practice in making transitions, and being able to predict where they will be at certain times of the day, and what the expected behaviors are.

The Experiences (*activities, routines and schedules*)

The daily schedule is planned to provide a balance of activities including indoor/outdoor; quiet/active; individual/small group/large group; large muscle/small muscle; and child initiated/staff initiated. Routine tasks like hand washing, toileting, diapering, eating dressing, and resting are incorporated into the program as a means of furthering children’s developing self-help and social skills. A variety of experiences and interactions with the children are offered that encourage vocabulary development, listening, and speaking skills, and exposure to the written word. Activities encourage creative expression and representation and include music, art, movement, puppetry, imaginative play, storytelling, and construction. Academics, including pre-writing, pre-reading, and pre-math, are incorporated into learning centers and hands on activities. The use of commercially created worksheets and drill cards is highly discouraged.

Adult roles

Within the context of the curriculum, classroom teachers have a high degree of freedom in choosing what materials are presented to the children and when. Weekly, monthly, and seasonal themed units of each classroom’s choosing provide focus when developing lesson plans. Children’s interests and needs are almost always at the core of these choices. Curriculum content is developed to meet the needs of **all** the children in the class, adapting the materials as necessary to allow participation for children with special needs. With the help of therapists and family members, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed for children with special needs. Goals and objectives for the children are based on assessments of their developmental stage, programming needs, and current interests.

Teacher-directed activities teach young children the social skills and language skills that are necessary to communicate in an appropriate manner. Staff strive to help children develop self-control and to practice thoughtful and courteous behavior towards each other. Large group teacher-directed activities like circle time also help children gain a sense of community and belonging and are helpful in extending attention spans, taking turns, following directions, and sharing space. The classroom teacher’s role is to facilitate, observe, and expand upon children’s learning.

Materials

A wide variety of materials are available to classroom teachers to enhance children’s learning and creativity. Materials are rotated in and out of the classroom regularly and include manipulatives, blocks, games, math counters, writing materials, dress-up, and dramatic play themes. Most are open-ended, and utilized with no end-product in mind. Creative arts materials are available almost daily, giving children many experiences with a variety of paints and painting tools, drawing materials, collage materials, playdoh, and other experiential materials. Craft projects are utilized as “listening” activities rather than creative arts. Children will also have time to experiment with a variety of sensory materials, including water play on a regular basis.