

OUUMC DISCOVERY DAY SCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK

2011-2012

DISCOVERY DAY SCHOOL is a ministry of Oxford-University United Methodist Church. Established in 1983, DDS provides a nurturing, safe environment in which children feel loved, respected and valued while they are encouraged to develop to their fullest potential socially, emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. Children of all faiths and nationalities are welcome.

We believe that each day should be filled with joy in learning, wonder, curiosity, and engaged investigation. **We believe** that children need time to acquire play skills so that they can learn to investigate, invent and problem-solve with complexity. **We believe** that the whole child – body, soul and mind – should be nurtured and challenged. **We believe** that teachers and families working together in partnership provide the highest quality preschool experience.

OUR MISSION

Discovery Day School, a ministry of Oxford-University United Methodist Church, is designed to provide preschool children with a wide variety of experiences that will encourage social, spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual development in a positive, nurturing atmosphere. Discovery Day School operates on the belief that if a child's preschool education is an enjoyable and exciting experience, the child will approach future school experiences with positive expectations.

The objectives of the Discovery Day School program include working with each individual child to:

1. Develop a positive self-concept.
2. Develop natural curiosity and creative potential.
3. Increase independence and self-direction.
4. Develop large and small muscle skills and increase physical coordination.
5. Develop positive relationships with peers and teachers.
6. Increase competence in dealing with emotions and social situations.
7. Increase communication skills.
8. Enlarge the child's understanding of the world through exposure to new experiences, people and ideas.
9. Experience the loving care of adults whose lives exemplify commitment to the Christian community.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

At Discovery Day School, we believe that effective early childhood education must be based on developmentally appropriate practices. Principles guiding our curriculum planning and classroom management include the following:

1. Children learn as total persons – emotionally, socially, physically and intellectually.
2. Children grow and develop at individual rates.
3. Children learn best when teaching is meaningful, interesting and useful.
4. Children learn through their senses – hearing, seeing, touching, tasting and smelling.
5. Children learn through active involvement – exploring, playing, manipulating and problem solving.
6. Children learn through opportunities to make choices.
7. Children learn through attitudes as well as content. Classrooms should provide a positive emotional climate in which a community of learners can learn in a noncompetitive atmosphere.
8. Children learn through play to create their own meaning and learning schemes. Play is the work of the child.
9. Children learn language through interaction. Opportunities to ask questions, to talk with their peers and to discuss things of interest to them (their art work, projects, ideas) with interested adults are vital to oral and written language development.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Discovery Day school offers a child-centered curriculum based on teaching age-appropriate skills and concepts through a variety of engaging teaching strategies built on children's interests and natural curiosity about the world around them.

Concepts and skills taught in our three- and four-year-old classes are based on the benchmarks and expectations provided by Mississippi Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten Curriculum guidelines. While learning standards and developmental sequences serve as a guide, they are not used as a checklist of "must-sees" to evaluate a child's worth.

Learning themes are built around science and social studies. Teachers are encouraged to build curriculum based on children's interests, using strategies which strengthen children's identities as thinkers, explorers, experimenters and problem-solvers.

We believe Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences – that children come to us "wired" for different ways of learning. Individual children have unique sets of talents and learning styles with every child having preferred ways of learning new skills and concepts. A child may show a preference for activities in one or more of the following areas – linguistic / verbal, logical / mathematical, musical / rhythmic, spatial / visual, bodily / kinesthetic, interpersonal,

intrapersonal and naturalist. As educators, our goal is to build on a child's individual learning style, as well as to strengthen all ways of learning through encouragement, enrichment and support.

The Value of Play- Our philosophical approach is supported by research that shows play is a critical resource for learning and has a strong relationship to future academic success. Teacher-supported play builds many foundational skills and complex cognitive abilities such as memory, successful school adjustment, self-regulation, oral language abilities and better social skills. Play engages children's senses and encourages active exploration, creativity, imagination, reasoning, negotiation and motivation. Play is an essential learning tool for young children.

Bible Stories and Scriptures - Our students hear a weekly Bible story and learn Bible verses which correlate to their units. These stories are non-denominational; they simply and beautifully relate favorite stories and parables from the Old and New Testaments. We include these stories to teach Christ's love as a model for our lives and treatment of others.

YOU CAN HELP US TEACH YOUR CHILD

- Help your child attend regularly and on time, except when ill.
- Teach self-reliance and promote confidence by encouraging your child to do things independently: put away toys, hang up wraps, get dressed, eat regularly and get plenty of rest.
- Confer with teachers, but not in the child's presence.
- Take time to listen to daily experiences. Ask questions, and answer them. Engage in conversation with your child.
- Read to your child each day.
- Take an interest in school and in the work your youngster brings home.
- Help your child become aware of and care for the world we live in.
- Don't be afraid to say, "No".
- Limit your child's television and computer time. Encourage creative play and social interaction.
- Volunteer to help with special activities or share your hobby with the class. Share your talents and resources with us.
- Let us know what your child is talking about and finding interesting at home.
- Be honest about the way you feel about the school. If you have a concern, question or suggestion, please talk with the teacher or director.

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GENERAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES

ARRIVAL - We ask that you be prompt and drive through the car line for drop-off between 8:45 AM and 9:00 AM. Give your child a quick, cheerful goodbye when the teacher opens your car door and greets your child. We have lots of experience handling separation difficulties. Please trust us to get the day started well. If you arrive after 9:00 AM, you will have to park and walk your child to the classroom. A child who arrives tardy misses out on the activities that set the tone for the day, making it more difficult for your child to separate from you and find a place in the group. If you arrive prior to 8:45, please wait for in the lobby area or your car until teachers begin unloading cars. Teachers and assistants arrive early and use the time prior to 8:45 AM to prepare for an enriching school day.

MAKE SAYING GOOD-BYE EASIER FOR YOUR CHILD

Prepare your child for your departure – Like most of us, children like to know what to expect. Talk about the names of your child’s teacher, and the children in the class. Talk to your child about the daily schedule – “ You are going to play outside, have a snack, do some fun activities inside, sing some songs and hear a story. Then I’ll pick you up and you can tell me about all the fun you had and the new friends you’ve met.”

Expect some anxiety – Adjusting to a new situation is difficult. Children may express their anxiety by whining, clinging to you or being irritable. Be calm and don’t add to the anxiety. Give them time to adjust.

When it’s time to leave, don’t prolong it – We cannot over-emphasize this tip! If your child fusses when it’s time for you to leave, you may worry that your child will fuss or cry the whole time. If your child senses you are unsure about leaving, the child will certainly not feel secure about being left! We have lots of experience at helping children with separation anxiety and are experts at helping children transition by engaging them in activities to distract them.

If you leave with your child unhappy, you may call the director at 234-3371, and ask her to check on your child. Be assured that we will not let your child be inconsolable for a long period of time without calling to let you know.

DISMISSAL - Three-year-olds are dismissed at 11:45 AM and four-year-olds at 12:00 noon. To avoid worrying your child or inconveniencing the teachers, please do not arrive early for school or pick up your child late. Beginning at 12:01 for three-year-olds and 12:16 for four-year-olds, a late charge of \$1.00 per minute for the first five minutes, and \$2.00 per minute thereafter, will be assessed for any student not picked up on time.

CALENDAR - School begins in August and runs through early May. A yearly student calendar is available. Important dates will also be noted on monthly classroom calendars sent home at the first of each month.

FEES - The \$150.00 registration fee is submitted with the registration form. The August tuition payment is due upon notification of acceptance into DDS. Tuition for September through April may be paid in one of three ways:

- 1) One lump sum - one tuition check dated September 1, 2010, (3 day = \$1,280.00; 5 day = \$1,880.00)
- 2) Two semester checks - one post-dated for September 1, 2010, and the other dated January 1, 2011, (3 day = \$640.00; 5 day = \$940.00)
- 3) Eight monthly checks - each check post-dated for the first day of each month, September through April (3 day = \$160.00; 5 day = \$235.00)

Regardless of which payment plan is chosen, all tuition checks for the year are due at the "Meet Your Teacher" parent meeting on August 24, 2011. Please make checks payable to "OUUMC Preschool Programs". There is a fee of \$25.00 for checks returned for non-sufficient funds.

SCHOLARSHIPS – Believing that every child can benefit from a quality preschool experience as the basis for future school success and adjustment, DDS offers need-based scholarships. For more information on scholarships, contact the OUUMC Preschool Programs Director.

ADMISSIONS POLICY – A child must be three or four by September 1 and toilet-trained, to be admitted to the program. All registration information must be complete and immunization Form 121 must be on file before a child will be admitted to the program.

ENROLLMENT PROCESS – Priority enrollment privileges are given to members of Oxford-University United Methodist Church and to returning Discovery Day School students. Any spaces not reserved by priority registrants by the February deadline are immediately available to new students.

STAFF – Our staff are qualified and dedicated professionals who participate in a continuous program of in-service training and professional study. Classroom teachers have degrees in early childhood or elementary education, curriculum and instruction, gifted education or other child-related fields. All teachers and teaching assistants are required to attain a minimum of 15 clock hours of professional development each year. Most staff members hold current certification in CPR and First Aid.

NEW STAFF – We hope to not have changes in staff during a school year. However, if a change occurs we will make the transition as smooth as possible. Whenever possible, we allow the children to say good-bye and bring in the new teacher to meet the class before the previous teacher leaves. You will also be informed in writing as soon as possible.

KEEPING PARENTS INFORMED – Prior to the first of each month you will receive a classroom calendar and newsletter outlining the special upcoming activities in your child's classroom. Our school newsletter, *The Preschool Press*, is sent home quarterly. All newsletters, calendars, field trip information and notes are sent home in the DDS tote bag.

PICK-UP AUTHORIZATION – If your child is to ride home with someone other than his/her usual ride, send a note giving us the name of the person picking your child up. If a change in pickup plans occurs after your child arrives at school, you must call to give us permission to release your child. We will not release a child to an unauthorized person. If you leave a car seat at school for your child's ride home, please make certain that the teacher is aware and that the car seat is labeled with your child's name.

CLOTHING – Dress your child comfortably for school activities. Remember we play outside daily and work with glue, paint and other messy substances on a regular basis. Please dress your child in clothes that allow for independence in the bathroom and send an extra complete change of clothing to be left at school. Please label coats, sweaters, etc., with your child's name. Short jackets and tennis shoes with socks are best suited for the playground. Footwear, such as cowboy boots, flip flops and crocs, are inappropriate at school. Rubber-soled tennis shoes are best for our new gymnasium floor. Please send a coat or jacket as even during cold weather we will have a short playground time most days.

BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAY PARTIES – Celebrating a birthday is important to preschool children and we are always happy for you to celebrate your child's birthday with special refreshments. Please talk with your teacher for an approved date and acceptable refreshment ideas. Please do not send candy, gum, or party favors. Invitations to birthday parties outside of school may only be given out at school if each child in the class is included.

We encourage you to provide special treats for holiday celebrations and to plan to help host two class parties. Opportunities to volunteer for class parties will be provided on "Meet Your Teacher" Day. Please check with your child's teacher for snack ideas and avoid snacks with peanuts or other tree nut products. Again, please don't bring party favors, but concentrate on planning party activities the children will enjoy participating in.

We also request that you avoid scary costumes, treats or activities. For Halloween, please no monsters, witches, skeletons or skulls. Please don't send your child in their Halloween costume or mask.

HEALTH – No child should come to school visibly ill. Please keep your child home if your child is listless or cranky, has no energy or has no appetite. Please notify us if your child has a communicable illness such as chicken pox, mumps, strep, etc., so we may make other parents aware that their child has been exposed. For the health and safety of all our children and their families, we will err on the side of caution and send home any child who is not feeling well or shows signs of sickness. No medications will be administered to the children.

Please keep your child home if they have had:

***Fever** – A temperature of 100 or greater in the last 24 hours. A child must be fever-free without the aid of Tylenol or Ibuprofen.

***Runny nose / Congestion** – If your child's nose needs to be wiped frequently, regardless of whether the discharge is clear or thick.

* **Coughing** – If a cough occurs more than once every five minutes. Children are not old enough to cover their mouths and spread germs easily.

***Vomiting / Diarrhea** – Either within the last 24 hours.

***Eye Discharge** – If discharge returns after wiping or if there is redness of the sclera, the white of the eye.

***Ear infections** – Viruses and bacterial infections that cause ear infections can be contagious.

***Rash** – If you do not know the cause of the rash, or you know it to be contagious.

***Biting** – For the safety of others, a child who inflicts bruises or breaks the skin must be kept at home until the biting phase is past.

Although biting is not an illness, it is a physical hazard to other children and can require medical treatment, and cause scarring. If your child is at a stage in which the child's bite is bruising or breaking the skin (not a one-time bite causing a temporary pink mark) we will ask you to keep your child out of preschool until the stage is passed. Our purpose is not to punish the biter. Just as keeping a sick child at home is to protect others, not punish the sick child, keeping a biter at home is to protect the other children in the class. Tuition cannot be prorated or refunded for a child kept at home for biting or illness.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES – Fire drills and severe weather drills are practiced regularly.

NUTRITION– In accordance with state licensing regulations, children are not allowed to bring breakfast or snacks into the building. We provide nutritious snacks which generally include fruit, fruit juices, muffins, cheese, crackers, yogurt or cereal. We make a concerted effort to introduce our students to healthy eating habits and encourage them to try nutritious foods in a variety of colors and textures. Parents are welcome to send a special snack for the class and asked to talk with the teacher in advance about what you plan to send and when.

SNACK STARS - Your child will have the opportunity to be a "Snack Star" one Friday each semester. Snack Stars provide snacks for the class. The snack may be a favorite treat of the child's choice, or relate to a current study unit or upcoming holiday although this is not necessary. Again, please do not send gum, candy, peanuts, peanut butter or other tree nut products, please. Check with your teacher for other suggestions and specific allergies in the classroom.

TOYS – We provide a wide variety of manipulative materials and activities for the children. Personal toys should stay at home, unless your child chooses to bring one for show and tell. These toys can get lost or broken and are often too "special" to be happily shared with classmates.

SHOW AND TELL – Please limit your child’s Show and Tell to one item and only on designated Show and Tell days. No toy guns, knives or weapons are allowed at school. “Science” discoveries such as shells, leaves, seeds, etc., are always welcome for sharing. Some pets may be allowed to visit, but only with prior permission.

CONFERENCES – Parent/teacher communication is a vital component of a quality preschool experience. In the fall, three-year-old teachers will schedule an individual conference with the parents of each student. Conferences for four-year-olds will be in the spring. We will be happy to talk with you about your child at any time during the year. Please send a note or call the office and leave a message. Parent/teacher conferences do not take place in the child’s presence. As a teacher’s first responsibility during school hours is to the students in the classroom, conferences will be set outside of school hours. The pick-up or drop-off line is not an appropriate place or time for a conference, even a very brief one.

EVALUATION AND SPECIAL SERVICES – Our intention is to be in close communication with you. If we have concerns about your child’s development we will discuss our observations with you. We are not experts in diagnosing problems, but we are sensitive to emerging concerns. We can help you search for answers and guide you to appropriate specialists. We always want to partner with you for the good of your child.

DISMISSAL FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER – Our program will be dismissed for severe weather if the Oxford City Schools suspend classes or if weather conditions are determined to be unsafe for transporting young children. Announcements will be made on local radio stations if school is cancelled or dismissed early due to weather conditions.

TOTE BAGS – Each new student is given a personalized DDS logo canvas tote bag. These bags, our link to home, are used for newsletters, show and tell items, notes and artwork. Please send this bag to school each day and check the bag every night. Should your bag be lost, a limited number of replacement bags are available for purchase. DDS bags are intended for two years of use.

WONDERFUL WEDNESDAY – DDS offers an extended day option on specific Wednesdays throughout the year for an additional fee. A limited number of spaces are available to students in our DDS three and four-year- old programs. Students may sign up by the semester on a first-come, first- served basis.

T-SHIRTS – DDS T-shirts are provided to each child at the beginning of school. Each class has a different color, to make counting heads easier on field trips. We encourage the students to wear DDS T-shirts for all field trips and other special school activities. A limited number of replacement T-shirts are available for purchase.

SOLICITATIONS – DDS does not send home solicitations such as advertisements for fundraisers, parent businesses or invitations to home parties such as Kelly’s Kids or Pampered Chef.

FIELD TRIPS – Meaningful, well-planned field trips are a valuable way to provide the hands-on experiences which are an important aspect of early childhood education. Blanket permission slips are included in the registration forms. Individual permission slips for specific field trips are also required. Field trips will be noted on monthly calendars.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS – We have several programs during the year to which parents and/or other family and friends are invited. “Meet Your Teacher” is for parents or a parent representative. This meeting is your opportunity to ask questions, sign up for school activities, receive important school information and meet other parents.

We also have student performances, including a Christmas Nativity and a spring musical. All family members and friends are invited to attend these special events.

SUN SAFETY– DDS observes sun-safe practices in the location and length of outdoor activities. Parents with special concerns regarding sun exposure are encouraged to send sunscreen with written directions for application labeled in a Ziploc bag.

TRANSPORTATION – Although many DDS field trips are walking excursions, it is occasionally necessary to utilize private cars to transport children off campus. The safety of DDS students is of primary importance. In accordance with state law , the following requirements must be met for the transportation of students during the school day:

1. Drivers must have a valid state of Mississippi driver’s license.
2. Vehicles must have a current inspection sticker, license and registration.
3. Drivers must have proof of liability insurance on file in the director’s office.
4. Children board and exit the vehicle from the curbside of the street.
5. All children and adults in the car must be properly restrained. At no time should more than one child be buckled into the same seatbelt.
6. At no time shall a child be transported in the front seat of a vehicle.
7. In addition to the driver, at least one adult is required in each vehicle.
8. All children shall be transported only if the child is securely fastened in a child safety seat that meets Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS<49 CFR 57.213) which must be indicated on the child safety seat. The child safety seat must be appropriate to the child’s weight and installed and used according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
 - a. A child under the age of four must be buckled into a child passenger restraint device (car seat) or system meeting FDMV safety standards.
 - b. A child four years and less than seven years of age measuring less the 4’9” or weighing less than 65 pounds must use a belt-positioning booster seat system meeting FDMV safety standards.

DDS Handbook Signature Form

Please complete this form and turn it in at the August 24, 2011 parent meeting.

I have carefully read the Discovery Day School Student Handbook and understand the policies, guidelines and procedures. I will seek additional information from the director or teachers if I have any questions or concerns.

Parent Name (printed) _____

Parent's Signature _____

Child's Name _____

Date _____