

# Discovery School at the Center 2023-2024 Handbook



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Street Springfield  
MO 65806  
417-862-9910

[www.discoverycenter.org](http://www.discoverycenter.org)

## **Mission**

To inspire curiosity and a life-long love of learning through memorable and engaging hands-on experiences in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

## **Vision**

To deliver a world-class educational experience through cutting-edge science for the next generation of world changers.

## **Practices**

We value quality, creativity, inspiration, experiences, people, learning, progress, caring and an open-culture.

Our leaders have a proven history of responding quickly and making thoughtful decisions confidently based on facts.

Discovery School will provide an engaging, academically-rigorous educational experience based on the individual needs and strengths of each student. We will foster creativity, innovation, wonder, joy, passion, and positivity in an affirming, safe, and just environment that strengthens character, leadership, responsibility, compassion and service alongside academic growth.

With deep roots and connections in downtown Springfield, we will not only be bringing the world to the classroom, but will also be taking students out into the world to learn.

We practice problem solving, critical thinking, individuality, and failure in a way that gives students the safety to take academic risks and gain the confidence needed to obtain higher levels of achievement and develop their unique gifts.

We commit to loving our students and progressing their talents.

## **Policies**

### **Hours of Operation & Communication**

Discovery School will be in session from 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Extended care options are available as needed for an additional fee.

Discovery School Day-to-Day Operations: 417-689-7975

Discovery Center Administration: 417-862-9910

### **Drop-Off and Pick-Up:**

Students can be dropped off between 7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. each day for school. A car line map will be provided to enrolled families prior to the first day of school.

Pick-up is at 3:30 p.m. following the same car line procedures. Adults permitted to pick up a student must be listed in the enrollment packet. All adults will be required to show a school issued car tag or photo identification before picking up a student. If a caregiver calls to add an adult to the approved pick-up list, a staff member will call the caregiver at the number on file to confirm the request prior to dismissing a student.

### **Attendance**

We will quickly fall in love with your student and because we care, we will want to know if they are okay when they aren't with us. Please call or email to report student absences.

If your student should need to be away for an extended absence (such as vacation or a mandatory quarantine) we ask you work together with your student's teacher to keep ahead of learning. You will have the option to stay connected digitally during an extended absence.

### **Homework**

Time with family, rest, extracurricular pursuits and interests are equally important to the well-being of your student as academic achievement. Most homework assignments given will be optional skill-builder practice for students wishing to advance at a faster pace, but will very rarely be required. Most optional homework will be foundational and enjoyable with a goal of allowing families to connect on what the student is excited about learning. Required homework may be assigned in rare instances where a student has not used their time wisely during the school day or to make up for missing assignments due to an extended absence.

### **Closed Campus**

All visitors, including caregivers, must check in at the front desk. Students are not to open doors to visitors at any time.

### **Dress Code**

Please send your students in comfortable clothes that are easy to wash. Closed-toed shoes with rubber soles are recommended. We will try our best to use smocks and lab coats in case of hands-on learning messes, but dressing in clothes you wouldn't mind a stain on is the safest option.

### **Personal Items**

We encourage you to send a change of clothes in a plastic bag labeled with your student's name to leave at school in case of spills or accidents. Students are welcome to bring personal items that will make them feel more at home while in our classrooms.

Discovery School staff will take every effort to care for special personal belongings but will not be held responsible for lost or damaged items.

### **Meals, Snacks and Drinks**

Students may bring a lunch, snack and water bottle to school each day. Breakfast and snack will be provided each day as an option for your student. Hot lunches will also be available for \$3 per day.

We are a peanut/tree-nut-free facility. If your student has special dietary restrictions, everyone on our team will be made aware. We will always feed hungry kids so please communicate with us if your student is on an eating plan we should know about. You are welcome to provide or make suggestions for healthy snacks for your student to enjoy as long as they are peanut/tree-nut free.

### **Communication with Teachers**

If you need to communicate with your student's teacher during the school day, please email or call the main office and schedule an appointment to meet after school. Teachers will not be using cell phones during the school day while supervising children. Drop-off and pick-up times are not appropriate for caregiver/teacher discussions about student progress or concerns. The teacher will have an open door for caregiver/teacher communication during times when it is safest for the teacher to give their undivided attention.

Solutions to problems should always be attempted between caregiver/teacher first with the full support of school administration if and when more ideas need to be considered.

Discovery School is an open-culture institution and will use digital tools to stay connected in real-time. Such tools may include but are not limited to Facebook School page, Facebook class pages, email, phone, Zoom, Class Dojo, and Google Drive accounts to track student progress. Caregivers will receive cell phone numbers of their teachers and school administrators and can call the main office during school hours.

### **Freedom of Inquiry**

It is essential to the mission of the school for students and teachers to have freedom to teach or communicate ideas or facts that might conflict with certain political, religious, or ideological beliefs without being targeted for repression.

Conflicting viewpoints will not only be allowable, but encouraged when maintained in a respectful, emotionally-safe atmosphere at age-appropriate levels of conversation. We will ask our staff and students to do their best to keep conversations strictly to scholarly

viewpoints using a research-based approach. Teachers will be trained to carefully avoid controversial matters that are unrelated to the subject discussed or are best addressed at home. Thoughtful and respectful conversations on differing opinions will be allowable when contained within our school values of quality, creativity, inspiration, experience, people, learning, progress, caring and an open culture.

### **Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

Discovery School is built on the foundation of proven efficient and effective abilities of the Discovery Center to adapt and evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of our community. We ask all constituents including staff, students, caregivers, and members of the board to commit with a genuine desire to learn, succeed, and innovate. In our open culture, when new methods or plans are discovered that will help us meet a clearly defined goal or objective, we commit to staying flexible and adapting together for the success of our students.

### **Admissions Policies and Procedures**

1. Submit application for admission
2. Complete admissions testing
3. Complete enrollment packet
4. Participate in family interview
5. New student is accepted for enrollment
6. Space is reserved once enrollment contract has been completed

### **Criteria for Admission**

Students older than age 5 who thrive in flexible environments with mixed ages and abilities, enjoy a challenging intellectual environment, and can work independently with few behavior challenges are ideal candidates. Students aged 3-5 who are potty-trained are eligible to apply for Science Sprouts Discovery School.

Immunization records are required.

It is recommended for all students to have reliable internet access and an internet-connected device to work on from home.

We reserve the right to refuse admission or re-enrollment to any student.

## **Evaluation Process**

Students will be pre-assessed in the areas of reading (or reading readiness), writing, math, fine motor skills, and ability to follow directions. The main purpose of the student evaluation is to get a baseline for measuring academic growth.

Once a student has been evaluated for admission, a family interview will be scheduled. This will be a time for questions, to confirm caregiver and school administrators are on the same page about commitments made to one another, and to ensure matriculation will be mutually beneficial for both the needs of the student and the school.

Information collected from the student evaluation and family interview will result in an admissions decision by the school. Families will have 48 hours to complete the enrollment packet before their spot will be opened to another student.

## **Waiting List**

All incoming students will be placed on a waiting list until the enrollment process is completed, at which time a classroom will be open to no more than 10 students. All students on the waiting list who do not receive a spot in a classroom will be refunded their enrollment fees.

## **Financial Responsibilities**

To protect our small class size of 10 students we ask all admitted students to make a one-year financial commitment.

Application fee – one-time \$25 non-refundable.

Admissions pre-assessment fee – one-time \$100 non-refundable.

New student enrollment fee – \$500 due at time of contract submission, can be combined with monthly tuition payments if first month's tuition is received by enrollment deadline.

Tuition - \$8,250 choose any option.

- One-time payment of \$8,250
- 2 payments of \$4,125 due the first business days of August and January
- 10 monthly payments of \$825 due the first business days of August – May

Full tuition scholarships may be available for students meeting certain income guidelines with funds received from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provided by the Missouri Department of Social Services. It is our goal to offer a diverse socioeconomic community with a sliding tuition scale once additional scholarship funding becomes available. Families will be asked to sign a one-year financial agreement at the time of enrollment.

### **Instructional Tools & Programs of Study**

Pre-assessment will occur before each unit of study. Assessments to measure growth, development, and achievement of students will be ongoing throughout each instructional period and will be communicated to caregivers.

Instructional tools will be based on the individual academic needs and interests of each student and particular stages of brain development for the age of the student. These tools will include but are not limited to project based hands-on learning, use of technology, songs, stories, creative imaginative play, guided discovery, kinesthetic (linking the learning to the senses) exploration, field trips, guest speakers, expression of concepts through artwork, plenty of time for kids to ask questions, and lots of body movement. We will place no limits on how fast a student can learn or how much time they need to learn hard things. We will utilize the rich network of connections the Discovery Center has fostered for over 20 years to engage appropriate partnerships to facilitate instruction for the age, needs, and abilities of each student.

Curriculum will be linked across the following disciplines:

- Humanities
- Fine Arts
- World Language
- Literacy
- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Physical Education

Computer coding, robotics, design thinking, engineering challenges, 3D printing, virtual

and augmented reality, gamified learning.

Teaching in partnership with organizations such as NASA and the Smithsonian.

Could include: FIRST LEGO League, math club, chess club, Science Olympiad, Cyberpatriot club.

### **2023 – 2024 Discovery School Academic Calendar**

- August 12 – Kids Food Fest / Meet the Teacher
- August 21 – First Day of School
- September 4 – Labor Day (no school)
- September 9 – Night at the Museum (21+ tickets available)
- October 13 - Pancakes with Pals
- October 20 – Teacher InService Day (no school)
- October 31 – Fall Parties
- November 17 – Festival of Trees (21+ Adults only tickets available)
- November 22 – 24 – Thanksgiving Break
- December 21 – Holiday Parties
- December 22 - 29 - Winter Break
- January 1 – New Year’s Day Observed (no school)
- January 2 – Teacher InService (no school)
- January 3 – First Day of Semester 2
- January 15 – MLK Day (no school)
- February 14 – Valentine Parties
- February 19 – President’s Day (no school)
- March 11-15 – Spring Break
- April 5 – Spring Parties
- April 22 – Teacher InService (no school)
- May 10 – All School End of Year Program
- May 15 – Field Day
- May 17 – Last Day of School

Be sure to check our website, we offer a School Day Out program for many holidays and days off.

### **Summer of Science 2024**

Discovery School students may participate in all Summer of Science camps with a



deeply discounted rate. Scholarships are available for those who qualify.

### **Inclement Weather Plans**

Discovery School will be in session whenever possible. When the weather makes it impossible for us to meet, we will follow a phased approach to reopening that usually has us back in session before everyone else. Virtual instruction during inclement weather days will be optional and used for extra skill-building practice, catching up, or getting ahead.

Phase 1 weather plans for snow/ice: Late start of 10:00 a.m. or early

dismissal Phase 2 weather plans for snow/ice: No school

Phase 3 weather plans for snow/ice: Virtual instruction

### **School Rules**

Be responsible, be respectful, and be ready.

### **Discipline Strategies & Expectations**

Discovery School will be a safe place to learn and make mistakes. Good decisions and bad decisions each have consequences. We will strive to catch students doing good things and reward behavior we wish to continue. When a student breaks a rule and needs help remembering appropriate behavior, a logical consequence will be administered.

We believe caregivers know their student better than anyone so we will always communicate behavior issues and work with caregivers on individual improvement plans.

Behavior instruction will be administered respectfully based on logic and restorative justice. Instruction will include activities the student's mind and body might need such as an opportunity to get energy out, redirection to more engaging instruction, or to apologize and seek forgiveness. Emphasis will be placed on personal responsibility and improving relationships.

The type and amount of discipline will be determined by the teachers and, if necessary, school administration in light of the student's offense and attitude. We expect all of our students, staff members, and caregivers to act in a respectful manner towards one another. Our expectation is that everyone be treated with honor, compassion, dignity, and kindness. Any direct hateful or harassing behavior, attitudes, threats, or physical aggression will not be tolerated.

If behavior instruction is required, students will be asked which rule they broke. If they

don't know, the teacher will explain it to them. They will then be asked to apologize and to ask forgiveness from any person(s) they may have hurt. The purpose behind our discipline strategies is to train and never to punish.

If a student receives three corrections for the same offense, a meeting will be scheduled with the teacher to work on solutions together with the caregiver. School administration will become involved in this process only if the caregiver/teacher attempts at correction are unsuccessful.

Discovery School may suspend a student from classes at the discretion of school administration. In rare circumstances, students with ongoing behavior issues that disrupt the learning environment or make it unsafe can be removed from the program without refund. Expulsion from Discovery School will be at the discretion of the Discovery Center Board of Directors. All decisions by the board are final.

### **Behavior Instruction Steps**

#### Step One: Teacher Correction

The majority of offenses require no more than a verbal correction or warning from the teacher and, when warranted, an apology to and/or forgiveness from the offended person(s). The caregiver may or may not be contacted depending on the intent and nature of the offense and if it's recurring.

#### Step Two: Office Visit

The following are examples of behaviors that can automatically necessitate a school administrator to protect the teacher's ability to remain focused on the needs of other students. Student safety is our number one priority and these offenses will be escalated to an office visit:

- Disrespect shown to any staff member
- Noncompliance or outright disregard in response to instruction
- Fighting or striking in anger with intent to harm

During the office visit, school administrators will determine which measures are appropriate to maintain the safety and security of all students and staff members. If a student receives discipline from school administration, the following procedures may be observed:

1. The first and second time a student meets with a school administrator, the caregiver will be contacted with details of the visit. Caregiver assistance and support in behavior correction will be requested.

2. The third visit will be followed with a meeting between the students, caregiver, teacher, and administrator.
3. Should the student require a fourth visit, a suspension may be imposed.
4. If a fifth visit is required, the student may be expelled from the program.

### **Immediate action for serious misconduct**

The above office visit procedures may be bypassed and expulsion imposed immediately if serious misconduct endangers other students or staff members. Examples of serious misconduct may include but are not limited to acts of violence, violations of civil law, threats to harm, etc.

### **Crisis Management Plans**

Discovery School teachers will receive written and verbal training on emergency preparedness including tornado, fire, Code Adam, bomb threat, active shooter, and safety procedures. Drills will be conducted multiple times per semester for students to practice each emergency situation with escape routes and code words. These drills will be conducted as games with an emphasis on safety, fun and play to reduce childhood anxiety. Classroom teachers will be connected to school administrators and Discovery Center staff at all times using a two-way radio system for additional support at a moment's notice.

### **Student Health**

Students will be required to wash their hands upon entering the building. We are a peanut/tree nut free facility and frequent handwashing keeps everyone safe. Students will be sent home from school and are required to stay home until they are symptom free for 24 hours without fever reducing medicines from the following symptoms: a fever over 100° F by mouth or 99° F under arm, more than one diarrhea, vomiting more than once, severe coughing, yellow skin or eyes, pinkeye with tears, irritation or pus, unusual spots or rashes, trouble swallowing or sore throat, infected skin, tea colored urine, gray or white stool, headache with stiff neck, & severe itching of the body or scalp.

### **Medicines**

Discovery School staff may administer medicine if the student has a Medical Authorization Form on file signed by their caregiver and approved by the Director.

### **In Case of Illness**

It is the caregiver's responsibility to arrange for pick up as quickly as possible but no

longer than 30 minutes after being informed of a child's illness.

If a child is well enough to attend school, they should be well enough to participate in all activities. If the child is not well enough to participate, then alternate care needs to be available until the child is well enough to participate.

### **Student Safety**

To ensure each student's safety, every adult in the school building (including caregivers) who directly supervise students will be given a background check. All of our staff are state-mandated reporters and trained on how to prevent and respond to child abuse. We practice two-deep leadership meaning an adult will never be alone with a child.

### **School Governance**

Discovery School will be governed by the Discovery Center of Springfield Board of Directors. This Board is composed of community leaders who will impact the growth and prosperity of the school by overseeing major school policies, strategic planning, the financial stability of the school, and lead in fundraising and promotion. This governing body will generate necessary resources for providing and maintaining physical facilities, equipment, and materials adequate to support the program of the school.

The Discovery Center of Springfield Board of Directors is responsible for employing, evaluating, and supporting the Discovery Center Executive Director who will supervise the Vice President of Education. All faculty, community partners, support staff, etc. will be recruited, evaluated and trained by the Vice President of Education.

The Executive Director will support the Education Department in realizing the strategic vision of the school through management of school finances, programs, personnel, facilities, fundraising, public relations, and resources.