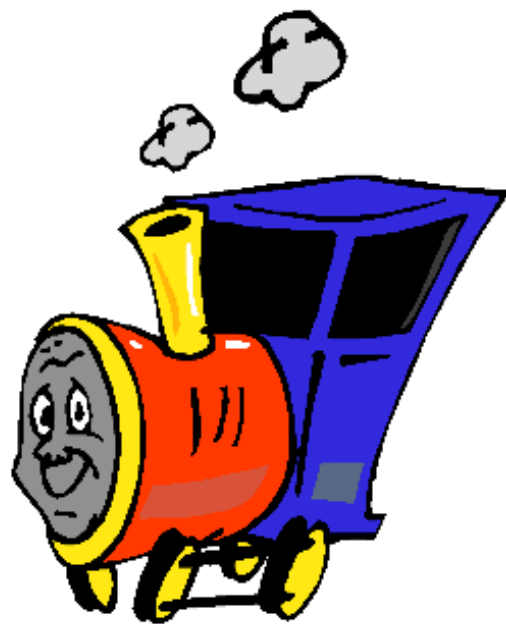


Discovery Depot

Handbook 2011-2012



Dexter Park School
3 Dexter Street Ext.
Orange, MA 01364
978-544-1124

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Discovery Depot is an early childhood program of the Orange Public School system. Currently, both three and four year old children attend this program. Discovery Depot is funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Education and the Orange Elementary School system. The grant is renewable yearly. Much of the operating budget is derived from this funding.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Orange Elementary School District in active partnership with all students, their families, individual citizens, and established groups within the community, is to educate students in a safe and challenging environment, which will allow them to meet the responsibilities of a rapidly changing and diverse world. To that end, we believe that education must begin at a very early age and provide an intensive, broad educational program, emphasizing personal adaptability, critical thinking, individual and team problem-solving, a wide range of communication skills, and global understanding and responsibility.

We support the use of **interdisciplinary** (Involving 2 or more academic subjects), **experiential learning** (learning by doing) activities and technological resources to enlist each child's **multiple intelligences** (the several independent forms of human intelligences that exist). Above all else, we recognize that every child is deserving of equal opportunities to maximize his or her potential and we encourage all students in the pursuit of excellence.

GOAL OF THE PROGRAM

The goal of Discovery Depot is to provide a happy and safe environment rich in the facilitation of language development. A specific objective is to provide children with opportunities to develop and learn in a natural and inquisitive environment at their individual developmental level.

The staff is committed to challenging each child at his/her developmental level while fostering a positive attitude, and thus creating life-long learners.

Discovery Depot is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). A fundamental belief of NAEYC is to provide educational challenges, which are **developmentally appropriate** (what a child would be expected to know or do at a particular age) for the individual child.

Discovery Depot has adopted the Massachusetts Department of Education's Early Childhood Program Standards for Center-Based Programs for Three- and Four-Year Olds as its curriculum. These goals and standards have been carefully developed to ensure that they are built around the NAEYC accreditation process and that they meet or exceed the Office of Child Care Services standards as the law requires.

SLIDING FEE SCALE

In 1997, the Massachusetts Department of Education requested that all Community Partnerships Programs, like Discovery Depot, implement a tuition for each attending child. This tuition is calculated according to a sliding fee scale provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Department of Education requires that all parents pay a parent fee. The Discovery Depot tuition is reviewed yearly. The maximum charge is currently **\$3.00 an hour. Parents who do not wish to provide income verification are given the opportunity to pay \$3.00 an hour for tuition.**

Tuition is charged according to the number of days your child is scheduled to attend. This tuition is divided accordingly to create a monthly schedule of payments. Monthly bills will be issued on the fifteenth of each month. Payment is due on the first of each month. The first payment is due before your child begins school. If payment has not been received by the end of the month, your child is subject to dismissal from the program. There are no reimbursements for days children do not attend. Emergency tuition payment schedules may be established on a contractual basis with the approval of the director of Discovery Depot.

It is the policy of Discovery Depot to collect all fees that have been determined in the tuition contract. Failure to make payments could jeopardize the child's placement. If payments are not made, Discovery Depot is obligated to file with the Orange Court system. Parents assume all court costs, which range from \$19.00 to \$300.00 when sent through the county sheriff's office. Court charges are applied each time it is sent to the court system. While we take no pleasure in this court action, we will do so promptly and equitably.

WHO ATTENDS DISCOVERY DEPOT?

Each classroom consists of a diverse population of children from various socioeconomic, language, and ethnic backgrounds. Both children with special and typical needs attend these integrated classrooms. Typical needs children are those children who have not been identified as having special needs. Children with identified special needs are referred to the program by various public and private agencies. Parents and caretakers may also refer children for special needs screening if there are areas of concern.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Children between the ages of 2.9 (by September 1st) and five years old **and** are residents of Orange are eligible to attend Discovery Depot. If a child turns five on or before August 31st, he/she is age appropriate for kindergarten in the elementary schools and will not be eligible for tuition subsidy from the Community Partnerships for Children.

Enrollment for Discovery Depot is through an application process. When there are more applicants than available spaces in the program, children are placed on a waiting list and may be placed in the program as openings become available. Admittance to the program may be determined by lottery. Discovery Depot is an integrated program

servicing special needs children and places are reserved for those children with identified special needs. Discovery Depot reserves the right to review all student placements and act in accordance with local policies along with state and federal guidelines to ensure appropriate student placement.

PLAY IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

The staff of Discovery Depot view the opportunity to play in a classroom as essential. Play is an important learning strategy for all children. Teaching and learning is seen as an interactive process where teachers learn from children, children learn from teachers, and children learn from other each other. Play provides an ideal context and process for these interactions to occur. Play, in fact, becomes a process whereby the child controls his/her own learning, which can then be more meaningful, memorable and enjoyable.

Within play it is the process, not the product that is valued. During play, the child is acquiring skills, strategies, knowledge and the love of learning. Consider for example, the richness and earnestness of children in play. The children decide what to play, how to play it, organize what they need, use their muscles, practice communication with their peers, play a role and problem solve as situations present themselves. Children use objects concretely and symbolically, practice turn taking and negotiating. They have the opportunities to learn about letters, numbers, colors, and shapes through the natural properties of the play materials and events in play.

Effective learning and teaching must be interactive. The adults have numerous opportunities to observe the children in play, to identify their interests, needs, strengths and skill entry level and then plan the play environment accordingly. The adults also follow the lead of the children during play, judging when to intervene, supporting and extending play by joining in. The adults may add materials, model appropriate behaviors, make specific comments and suggestions, remembering that the child is the director. The adults may ask thought provoking questions and overall, create a safe, nurturing and non-critical atmosphere within which the child can take risks.

Play is used as a primary vehicle for language use and development. This is most effective because there is a natural reward for a student to use his language while interacting with peers. Due to the intrinsic value of play, children are regularly given uninterrupted time to explore in an environment designed for play with objects, people, language, and movement.

Teachers strive to facilitate growth in the areas of self-esteem and respect for others. Social/behavioral skills are given special attention in each classroom. The following skills are also a focus of the program:

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

The development of control over the larger muscles of the body, including balance, strength, bilateral motor coordination and motor planning. Such skills include jumping, hopping, climbing, and running. Gross motor skills may be assessed by the physical therapist.

VISUAL PERCEPTUAL/FINE MOTOR SKILLS

The development of the smaller muscles in the hands. Such skills include writing, cutting with scissors, and dressing. These skills may be assessed by the occupational therapist.

SPEECH/LANGUAGE SKILLS

The development of proper articulation, which is the pronunciation of sounds, as well as the development of proper sentence structure. Speech and language skills may be assessed by the speech and language pathologist.

COGNITIVE SKILLS

The development of cognitive skills allows a child to accurately process information, and express that knowledge to others. These skills are assessed by the teacher through informal observation.

SENSORY/MOTOR INTEGRATION

The organization of sensory information that allow a child to execute specific motor tasks with accuracy. Sensory integration includes efficient motor, language, and social emotional growth and development. These skills may be assessed by the physical therapist and the occupational therapist.

HEALTH CURRICULUM

The health curriculum is taught by the classroom teacher. The subjects that will be discussed are: hygiene/germs, personal safety, getting lost, teeth, feelings, nutrition, safety, body, and tobacco. All topics are presented to the children at a developmentally appropriate level. The topic, personal safety, is presented with a counselor. This topic deals with stranger safety, good touch/bad touch. A notice is sent home before this topic is presented.

ASSESSMENT

Delays in the development of any of the above mentioned skills may be cause for a referral to an appropriate resource; for example, the special education department, or the child's health care provider for eye/ear screening. Parents are always consulted and parental permission for assessment must be received before a child is to be formally evaluated.

Many of these skills progress in stages and children will enter and leave these stages at various times and rates. Parents are encouraged to ask questions about their child's development. Teachers and specialists are part of the program as consultants.

STAFF

Enver Softic - Director, Discovery Depot

Rebecca McIntyre - Preschool Teacher - Full Day Classroom

Kirsten Andrews - Preschool Teacher - 4 year old children – M-F am & M-F pm

Janet Peluso - Preschool Teacher - 3 and 4 year old children – MWF am, MWF pm,
TR am, TR pm

Susan Nolan - Teacher Assistant

Lisa Giannakakos - Teacher Assistant

Paula Velleca - Teacher Assistant

Dr. Kathy Stemm - Physical Therapist

Bernadette Wiemer- Occupational Therapist

Susan Barnes – Speech Pathologist

Melissa Brown - Speech/Language Pathologist Assistant

Helen Zatoryka - Nurse

Susan Apteker - Coordinator, Community Families Community Engagement and Tools
of the Mind Coach

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents and/or caretakers are welcomed in the classroom. This is a great opportunity to see how the children spend their day at school. It is also exciting for children to have a “special someone” visit the classroom. For safety reasons, all parent volunteers, as well as the Discovery Depot employees, must submit to a background check Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) before volunteering. Please check with the classroom teacher prior to visiting. Visitors are required to sign-in and get a pass, outside the front office, when entering the school.

DISCIPLINE

Discovery Depot uses an approach to discipline known as **1,2,3 Magic** written by Dr. Thomas Phelan. More information about this approach is available in the Early Childhood Office at Dexter Park School. Because fostering a positive self-image is so critical, strategies are consistently utilized. These strategies include ignoring negative behavior and rewarding positive behavior.

TOILETING

Parents are responsible for providing an adequate amount of disposable diapers and wipes for their child if they are not toilet trained. No child shall be punished for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet. Soiled clothing is “double bagged” in sealed plastic bags. Rinsing soiled clothing is not allowed. They are sent home as they are removed from the child. If your child is in the process of toilet training, please indicate this to the teacher so that training can be consistent. Additional clothing should be provided in case of an accident.

SCHEDULE

There are three preschool classrooms at Discovery Depot. The hours of the half-day program are:

8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

12:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

There is one, full-time, school year program:

8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

The full day program was established for working families.

Tuition is calculated on an hourly basis using a sliding fee scale provided to all Community Partnerships programs by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We ask that you be prompt in delivering and picking up your child. Additional parent fees will be added for chronic early arrivals and late pick-ups. Please refer to your contract for exact times your child will be attending.

In most cases, Discovery Depot follows the same calendar year and vacation schedule as the Orange Elementary schools. **In order to get information to you regarding a delayed opening or school closing as a result of a winter storm we notify a number of radio and T.V. stations, including AM The River-WGAW (1340) and WHMP (1240); FM WXRG (99.9), WJDF (97.3) and WHAI (98.3). It is also on, channel 5 (WCVB), channel 7 (WHDH), channel 22 (WWLP), and channel 40 (WGGB).** These stations will announce school closings several times. In addition the Fire Department issues 4-4-4 blasts on the fire signal at 6:30 A.M. if school is closed. You will be notified, in advance, of any variance in this schedule. If the students of Orange Elementary School are being dismissed early due to inclement weather, Discovery Depot will also be dismissing their students.

We also have an automated system that will send messages to students' home telephone numbers.

SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

Students who participate in the full day program are offered lunch. Based on the expectation of continued grant funding, breakfast will be offered at no cost to any student enrolled in the Orange Elementary Schools. Parents may bring their child to breakfast. Parents must sit with their child until the classroom begins.

The price for school lunch is **\$10.00 per full week or \$2.00 per day**. Payment is encouraged on the first day of the week for that week's lunches. Menus are sent home once a month. Children who bring a cold lunch from home may purchase a half-pint of milk for **\$.40** per day. Checks can be made payable to: Orange Elementary Schools. Checks are not accepted if less than \$10.00.

Applications for free and reduced price lunch may be obtained at any time during the school year. Parents who feel they might qualify are strongly encouraged to return the form to school with the required information. The school nurse has been designated

as the one who determines which children are eligible for free lunch based on Federal Government guidelines. Reduced priced lunches are \$.40 per day. **Universal Breakfast is free of charge.**

SNACK

Each session of Discovery Depot has a snack time. You do not need to send a snack with your child every day. Instead, a sign up sheet is posted outside each room for you to sign up for a particular item to donate to the class. The teachers request each child donate at least one snack item and one juice each month. This provides all children with the same snack each day. Please be sure it is in an unopened package because the snack item you bring in may not be used the same day. This does not apply to fresh fruit or homemade snack items. Please be sure to notify your child's teacher of any food allergies that may exist for your child.

ABSENCES

It is understood that from time to time, a child will miss a session of school due to illness or an appointment. If your child is going to be absent, please call the Discovery Depot Office at 978-544-1124. It is important that we are aware of your child's whereabouts if we are expecting him at school that day. Eleven (11) unexcused absences per month or four (4) consecutive absences is justification to review your contract.

Because there is a lengthy waiting list for this program, we feel confident that parents are committed to their child's place in the program. We anticipate that this commitment will be shown through consistent attendance.

HEALTH CARE POLICY

Parents are usually the best judge of their child's health. It is only with your cooperation that we will be able to prevent the spread of contagious ailments to the rest of the children. Please do not hesitate to inform the school staff of any contagious disease that you suspect or know your child to have or to have been exposed to. All information will be dealt with confidentially.

The easiest policy to enforce is one based on visual evidence or symptoms. If a child arrives with any of the following symptoms or develops them during the day, they will be excluded from school. Please provide us with two (2) names of emergency contacts should your child need to be dismissed from school early. This is highly important.

- fever of 99.8 degrees F - return once the child has been fever free 24 hours
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- body rash with fever
- sore throat with fever and swollen glands
- severe coughing
- eye discharge - thick mucus or puss, pink eye
- yellowish skin or eyes
- bacterial meningitis - parents will be informed when child can return by physician
- chicken pox - return 7-10 after rash begins or when all lesions are scabbed over

- diphtheria - when physician informs parents and school when to return
- head lice - return 24 hrs after treatment and until all nits (dead or alive) have been removed
- hepatitis A - 1 week after the illness began
- measles - 5 days after rash appears
- mumps - after swelling subsides or 9 days after swelling begins
- pertussis - whooping cough - 4 weeks after intense coughing begins or 5 days after antibiotic treatment has begun
- pneumonia
- scabies
- strep throat

Medication must be prescribed by a physician and in its original container if it is dispensed by the school nurse. Please notify the school nurse if there are any medical conditions including allergies (food, epi-pen, etc.).

Items such as **sunscreen** and **insect repellent** should be applied prior to coming to school. If the parent feels it is necessary for reapplication of these products while the child is at school the parent is responsible for providing them. The products should be in their original container and placed in a zip lock bag with the child's name on it. A note from the parent giving staff permission to apply the product should be given to the classroom teacher.

EMERGENCY CARDS

The emergency information provided by the home will be the primary source of information for the action taken. It is necessary that the student's parent or guardian fill out an Emergency Information form completely for each child in the family and keep it up to date regarding changes in address, phone number, etc. Please include cell phone and pager numbers. No student will be dismissed to unauthorized individuals without parental consent via note (or telephone call in emergencies). These persons, if unknown to the schools, will be asked to produce proper identification.

FIELD TRIPS

An important aspect of this program is providing children with varied and enriching experiences. Many of these experiences are offered through class field trips. Parents are asked to sign permission slips in order that their child may attend. If a permission slip is not returned, your child will not be permitted to attend the field trip. Students, teachers and chaperones will travel by school bus to go on field trips. Parents who chaperone field trips must have a CORI check. If a CORI check has not been done, you may not go on the field trip.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to and from school will be provided by parents and/or caretakers of the student. Car-pooling is encouraged as there is limited parking. A sign up sheet is posted each year for those interested in car-pooling. Once it has been posted for a brief period of time, it is copied and distributed to interested parents. The early childhood office will not make transportation arrangements.

Please be aware of where you are parking when dropping off your child. The parking is very limited and other cars have been blocked in by parents dropping off their child.

In the morning, buses make a loop in the parking lot and have been detained by cars blocking the turn.

The door to Discovery Depot is locked during the school day for safety of the children. If the door is locked, please enter through the front door of Dexter Park School.

RESTRAINT & STAFF PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH STUDENTS POLICIES

The safety of all the children as well as the staff remains one of our primary concerns at Discovery Depot. The staff at Discovery Depot follows the same policies that have been established for the Orange School District. The policy is available on our website, (www.orange-elem.org/ParentInfo/parentforms.htm)

WELLNESS POLICY

In 2006 The Orange School Committee adopted a system wide Wellness Policy. Discovery Depot follows the same policies as those established for the Orange School District. The policy is available on our website, (www.orange-elem.org/ParentInfo/parentforms.htm)

A FINAL THOUGHT

Most often, entering Discovery Depot is a first time school experience. Do not be alarmed if your child cries at first. Rest assured that the staff will call you if your child can not be consoled shortly after you leave.

Discovery Depot is designed to facilitate the developmental skills needed while fostering a positive attitude. It is important that the children are both happy and feel good about themselves.

Each child is treated as an individual taking his/her own qualities into consideration. Thank you for entrusting your "little one" with us. We promise to take good care of them.

ADMINISTRATION

There are many other people that support the everyday function of Discovery Depot. Please find listed below other staff members of the Orange Elementary School System that advocate for our Early Childhood Program and contribute to its success.

Michael Baldassarre, Superintendent of Schools
507 South Main Street, Orange, MA 978-544-6763

Tari Thomas, Assistant Superintendent of Education
507 South Main Street, Orange, MA 978-544-6763

Dr. Patricia Martin, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching Learning and Accountability
507 South Main Street, Orange, MA 978-544-6763

Enver Softic, Principal/Early Childhood Director
Dexter Park School, 978-544-6080

Dr. Jay Conway, Director of Pupil Services
507 South Main Street, Orange, MA 978-544-2535

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Joanie Cohen-Mitchell, Chairperson
Elizabeth Peirce
Pamela Oddy
Deane Perla
Angela Littlewood
Paul Gervais

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

_____ I understand that my child's name or picture may appear in the newspaper or a video. I realize that if I have any questions I will write a letter so stating to the principal.

_____ I understand that in the case of illness or accident my child will be cared for until either myself or a person designated by me can be reached. I have provided the necessary emergency contact information to the school. I authorize the school nurse to contact my child's physician in the case of emergency.

_____ I have read the handbook for Discovery Depot and understand the contents of it. If I have any questions about policies or about the program itself, I realize I can call the Early Childhood/Discovery Depot Office at 978-544-1124.

Student's Name

Parent's Signature

Date