



# the discovery center

September 2020

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

As we begin our 47th year, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of the new and returning families to The Discovery Center program. We are delighted to have you here, and are looking forward to an incredible year together!

While arrival and departure time might be a bit different, the children have adjusted very well to wearing their masks and having their temperatures taken. We could not be more proud of how they have all adapted to this "new normal". We continue to enjoy our new classroom outside play spaces, as well as the Nature Playground. They provide amazing opportunities for outside exercise and exploration! Unfortunately, we will be unable to host our all school concerts and events this fall, but will be continuing to have Storytime with Laura

down in the Nature Playground (with limited classes each time) and Spanish with Miss Lily in the individual classrooms on Tuesdays. Look for these days/times in the Coming Events section!

As always, I welcome your comments, questions, and input as to how to continually provide you and your family with an optimum early childhood experience. Please feel free to contact me via phone (663-7496), fax (663-5725), email (debbiebelcher@sbcglobal.net), or in person. We are looking forward to a fantastic year!

Warmly, Debbie



## A Note from the Miller Family

I'm very proud to announce that The Discovery Center and our staff have received three awards in this year's Family Favorites contest, held annually by the Ann Arbor Family Press. The Discovery Center won in the category of best daycare, our director Debbie Belcher was named best school principal, and Orange Room head teacher Cheryl Karch was voted best teacher. The full list of winners can be found at <https://annarborfamily.com/fam-faves-2020-2/#/>. Thanks to everyone who voted for our team, and congratulations to Debbie, Cheryl, and the entire Discovery Center staff for the outstanding work they do every day.

*Congratulations*

George Miller

President, The Discovery Center

## COMING EVENTS

Thursday, September 10th  
10:15 am



Storytelling with Laura  
(on the Nature Playground)  
Yellow Room, Green Room and Blue Room

Thursday, September 17th  
10:15 am

Storytelling with Laura  
(on the Nature Playground)  
Orange Room, Red Room and Purple Room

Tuesday, September 22nd

Possible Spanish Class Start Date

## 10 THINGS NOT TO WORRY ABOUT WHEN YOUR CHILD STARTS SCHOOL

### Don't Worry if, in the next few weeks, your child:

- 1- **Brings home sheet after sheet of easel paper completely covered with greenish-brown paint:** Don't worry, he's not depressed. It's just one of the earliest stages of painting. To kids, it's a major accomplishment to cover the entire sheet of paper. They also like to paint one color over another...resulting in that murky shade of brown. It may not look like much, but it takes tremendous amounts of concentration to do that!
- 2- **Brings home a paper covered with twenty pounds of glue and one tiny scrap of blue construction paper:** Most kids concentrate on mastering one skill at a time when doing projects. Attaching actual items to the paper will be more interesting once she's thoroughly figured out the glue bottle's possibilities, besides, squeezing the glue bottle is great fun and good for small muscle development!
- 3- **Doesn't bring home any artwork at all:** There are so many interesting things to do, and they're every bit as worthwhile, you just can't hang them on the refrigerator.
- 4- **Claims she isn't going to be invited to someone's birthday party:** Birthday parties are the standard preschool bargaining chip as in "If you don't give me a turn on the tire swing right now, I won't invite you to my birthday party". Rest assured that such threats have nothing to do with the actual party!
- 5- **Is unusually obnoxious at home:** Kids make real effort to behave well at school for the first few weeks. Meanwhile at home, where they feel safe, they let it all out. Don't worry, their refined company manners will wear off as soon as they feel comfortable at school, and they won't need to bring all those pent up feelings home to you.
- 6- **Won't tell you anything about what he did at school:** Some like to keep home and school separate. Others find it confusing to try to summarize a day's events. Try asking about specifics, if you are really curious, feel free to ask your child's teacher.
- 7- **Can't name any of the other kids in her class:** There's so much that's new and so many kids. Teachers will help the children learn each other's names once they're sure everyone knows the more vital things...like where the bathrooms is and when is snack time!
- 8- **Comes home in "school pants" because somehow he got wet:** See number 7. Don't worry accidents happen. Teachers are used to changing children. The child size drinking fountains are also a main contributor to wet clothes!
- 9- **Starts acting wild and racing around the room the minute you come in to pick her up:** Some kids wonder exactly who is in charge when both parent and teacher are present. Acting up is one way to find out. Confer with the teachers to work out who is calling the shots.
- 10- **Says he isn't going back to school tomorrow:** Around the second month of school, reality sets in. It dawns on your child that you actually expect her to go to school each and every week. Even kids who love school sometimes raise objections. Remain matter of fact and confident as you send him off. It may help out to remind yourself that you aren't the only parent whose child has come down with the "please let me stay at home blues".

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## CAN PLAYING PREPARE CHILDREN FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

Imagine yourself standing just inside the doorway of a typical early childhood classroom. To your right, a group of children are playing with cars and trucks. Across the room a little girl has just taken a tub of Legos from the shelf. In front of you, two boys are about to make pretend birthday cakes with playdough. And to your left, a group is gathered around the sand table, digging and pouring. It all looks like fun, but will it help them get ready for elementary school? The answer is YES! The connection between play and later school success is strong, but often underestimated. It's sometimes easier to see how play supports physical or social/emotional development than how it builds a foundation for academic skills. But it does. And here are only a few examples:

***Cars and Trucks—Figure-Ground Discrimination—the ability to pick out and concentrate on one item and separate it from the background.*** Arranging cars on a play mat in preschool, for example, builds a foundation for later being able to see a letter as part of a word or word as a meaningful part of a sentence. ***Visual Tracking—the ability to follow the movement of an object with one's eyes and guide it with one's hand.*** Practice in driving a toy truck along a road made of blocks helps to develop the coordination needed for guiding a pencil along a piece of paper. ***Grouping—the ability to figure out what characteristic several objects have in common.*** A child sorts through all the vehicles, searching for metal racing cars, rather than, say, plastic or wooden ones is preparing for mathematical set theory.

***Shelf Toys (Legos, pegboards, beads, etc.) - Seriation—the ability to determine what comes next in a series.*** A child creating a predictable sequence with blocks or beads is practicing a valuable math skill needed for understanding number patterns. ***Constancy—the ability to understand that a particular characteristic such as color or shape stays the same, even when other characteristics change.*** A child stringing beads soon discovers that round beads are always round no matter what their color or size. That paves the way for understanding that "A" and "a" are all the same letter. ***Control of muscles in fingertips.*** Toys that must be fitted together, arranged, and taken apart offer opportunities for strengthening and developing the muscles that will eventually be used in writing.

***Playdough—Matching—the ability to recognize how things correspond.*** A child who cuts a playdough shape with a cookie cutter and fits the shape back into the corresponding space is practicing a pre-reading skill that will enable them to discriminate differences and similarities among letters. ***Representation—the ability to see that one object can stand for or symbolize another.*** Knowing that a piece of playdough can represent a piece of pizza helps develop the idea that letters on a page can also represent real life.

It all sounds pretty serious, and that's for a good reason: Play is a young child's most critical pathway to learning. If your child's school provides plenty of time, materials, and support for play, you can relax. They understand how young children learn.

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