



Austin Discovery School  
Connect. Reflect. Change.

## Parent-Student Handbook

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# Austin Discovery School

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# Introduction to Austin Discovery School

## *An Innovative Approach to Education*

The Children's Discovery Center (CDC), a child development center in Austin, Texas, provides preschool child care to children ages 6 weeks through 5 years. Directors Kyle Holder and Kelly McRee heard from families that graduated from this program about how dissatisfied they were with the educational opportunities available to them, including public, parochial, private, and other charter elementary schools. These comments made it clear to Kyle, Kelly, and their proactive team members (Lisa Lasater, Sam Greer, and Leigh Moss) that it was time to take their preschool philosophy of teaching to the next step by opening a school.

The founders of Austin Discovery School shared a vision for a better elementary school experience that would be grounded in proven philosophies and methods but also adaptable to individual students' needs. With the formation of a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation in 2003, they created ADS Incorporated (ADSI), the sponsoring entity for Austin Discovery School. In 2004, ADSI was awarded a charter from the Texas Education Agency to operate Austin Discovery School using our innovative educational model.

## *Our Community: A Unique Aspect of Our School*

Austin Discovery School sees a school as a community of people working together to achieve a goal: the successful education of its students. This involves unique and personal relationships among our faculty, the students, and the parents. The physical environment of this community and good nutrition also play important roles.

## **Faculty**

The faculty of Austin Discovery School is unified in our approach to education. **All staff are trained in our philosophy of education.** All teachers hired to join the ADS team understand the ADS philosophy and agree to teach within this framework. Having all the staff on the same page philosophically puts us at a great advantage, ensuring children receive the same messages and are taught in a similar manner from grade to grade.

Austin Discovery School maintains a low ratio. With **lower ratios**, a classroom has fewer discipline problems, more time to devote to each child, and a real opportunity to give children the attention they deserve. Lower ratios also help us to spend the time needed to assess each child's strengths and individual learning styles. In addition, **collaborative teaching teams** are integral to our curriculum. This creates a mutually supportive environment and allows teachers to be engaged professionally towards a common goal.

To further the staff's ability to plan conscientiously, we have dedicated afterschool professional development for teachers and staff. This provides opportunities for important grade-level and subject-level discussions about student growth as well as the development of curriculum, which may include educational seminars.

## **Management**

### **Head of School – Leigh Moss**

The Head of School is responsible for the financial and legal obligations of the school and ultimate oversight of the entire organization, ensuring the program adheres to state and federal requirements, our charter, and our vision. The Head of School directly evaluates all administrators and office staff on an annual basis. The Head of School serves as an ex officio board member and works closely with the Board of Directors to establish and achieve board goals to ensure the sustainability and longevity of the program. Additionally, the Head of School is responsible for an annual program evaluation, outside community partnerships, mission advancement, development of policies and procedures, strategic planning and developing short & long term goals to present to the Board of Directors.

The Head of School is responsible for researching and implementing best practices in education for the benefit of our school community. The Head of School directly supervises the teaching staff and provides support with planning, professional development, and adherence to the charter and the state guidelines. The Head of School is the facilitator of school-wide discussions and reflections to bring best practice theories into the classrooms. The Head of School is an observer, making weekly visits to each classroom to record student strategies for learning and to collect a wide variety of project-based learning techniques and ideas so that they can be shared and evaluated by our teaching teams. The Head of School assists parents and students with mediation of any issue at the lowest level possible.

### **Assistant Principal – Amity Taylor**

The Assistant Principal (AP) is an academic leader who works to support teachers through professional development and collaboration around the school's vision, mission and campus-wide goals. The AP supports students through the school's Response to Intervention structure. Additionally the AP works closely with the Head of School to organize, facilitate and maintain systems for teachers that will enable the school to collaborate seamlessly and communicate efficiently. The AP works with teachers on professional goal setting, observation and continuous improvement to the craft of teaching.

### **Social/Emotional Program Director – Kelly McRee**

The Social/Emotional Program Director is responsible for the oversight of the Social/Emotional program at ADS. She leads a Restorative Practices campus team to ensure best practices in behavioral support and discipline. The strategies employed range from classroom management techniques to creating a school-wide culture of positive behavioral supports. The team is responsible for creating a positive, safe campus culture based on respect, responsibility and safety. The Social/Emotional Program Director also directly works with students, parents and teachers concerning discipline referrals, restitution, social skills classes, and mediation. She supervises the PEACE centers along with social/emotional interventionists and the middle school social worker.

### **Business Manager – Lydie Jessin**

The Business Manager works closely alongside the Chief Operations Manager and Head of School. The Business Manager is responsible for the daily financial transactions (bills, deposits and donations), and issues payroll, IRS transactions and payroll related reports to governmental agencies. The Business Manager coordinates health insurance, benefits and retirement for all staff, oversees all Human Resource matters for incoming and exiting staff members, and maintains necessary reporting for state agencies. The Business Manager also coordinates training and compliance for staff around safety, workers comp and insurance benefits.

### **Special Education Director - Maria Martinez**

The Special Education Director is responsible for monitoring and facilitating services to students who are at-risk and/or receiving special services such as Academic Interventions (RTI) and Special Education Services. The Special Education Director sits on the Response to Intervention Committee and directly supervises ,Special Education Teachers and Instructional Aids.

### **Chief Operations Manager – Taylor Young**

The Chief Operations Manager is responsible for campus operations, including processes and procedures related to safety (such as field trips, campus event planning, etc.), facility operations, traffic, and communication with our co-campus neighbors.

## **Parents**

Parents of Austin Discovery School are as **integral** to the success of ADS as the faculty and students. Parents’ active participation is essential to children’s educational success.

### **Volunteering**

Austin Discovery School has a high expectation for parent participation. To support our community, we suggest that all parents offer at least **20 hours per year of volunteer time** around the school. We recognize families have unique demands on their time, so we offer a variety of volunteer opportunities that can be done on campus or at home. The ADS Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) works closely with classrooms and school administration to organize volunteers and provide parents with many opportunities to participate and be active in the school community. To inquire about volunteering, contact the PTO via email: [volunteer@adspto.org](mailto:volunteer@adspto.org), or inquire at the office.

### **Parent Involvement Activities**

We also suggest parents attend **three parent involvement activities** per school year.

There are several ways to participate, such as:

- Student Goal Setting Conferences These are generally in September and February each year. Check with teachers to sign up.
- SPARK night End of the year goal review, portfolio presentation and project demonstration night. Generally held in last three weeks of school.

- Parent Education Classes These classes will include extensive talks about philosophy, child development, and a host of other topics. Parents are encouraged to find a topic of interest and will be given opportunities for workshops that may occur on or off campus.
- Fine Arts or Curriculum Showcases Two to three times per year, students will showcase their work to the community. Increased opportunities for students to perform or demonstrate mastery of their studies is shown to improve engagement and the quality of student work.

### Classroom Visits

You can aid us in achieving the goal of maximizing student potential by helping us maintain a focused learning environment. Interruptions are distracting to the children. Staying with your child in the classroom for more than a few moments does not help students focus on learning. Academic time is sacred, so **we ask that you leave the classroom by 8:00 a.m.**

Teachers coordinate times to join the class for lunch or hikes. Coordinate with your teacher to schedule a visit. When you arrive on campus, **sign in at the office** as you enter the school and confirm with the office that the teachers are expecting you. **All visitors and volunteers must sign in and out when entering or leaving the campus.**

## **Environment**

The school is situated on 200 acres of land in East Austin, a short 15 minutes from downtown, with a breathtaking view of the city. You will find our campus **surrounded by nature with all the conveniences of a large school.** The environment provides students with enough space to run and play, take hikes, examine ecosystems, and learn how to create sustainable food sources through gardening. The campus offers acres of woods, hiking trails, and gardens.

We believe children, as part of our society, have become distanced from the origins of their food. We have an extensive and comprehensive science and gardening component, known as EcoWellness, as part of our curriculum. Students work regularly with an experienced science/gardening teacher in gardens to learn the basics of planning, growing, maintaining, and harvesting produce. The ever-evolving gardens are peaceful and exquisite places for the community to enjoy.

### Dress Code

ADS does not have a specified dress code in grades K-5.. We require that children wear appropriate clothing for learning and the activities they participate in at school. Flip flops and sandals are permitted; however, children must have safe shoes for hiking and physical activities. It is strongly recommended that children wear closed-toe shoes and cover their legs for hikes since there is poison ivy on the property.

**Wearing flip-flops or sandals will not exclude a student from hikes.** Additionally, tennis shoes are needed for physical education classes. All children should either wear these types

of shoes for Eco-wellness, Hiking and/or PE or keep them in their backpack or cubby in the classroom.

## **Student Cell Phones**

Students are not permitted to use cell phones or non-school issued electronic devices on campus during or after classes. These items can be easily lost or damaged at school; therefore, it is recommended that no child bring a cell phone or electronic device to school. If you need to contact your child during the school day or in AfterCare, you may call the school or AfterCare Director. We ask that you limit distractions to emergency or time sensitive information.

In some instances, parents need a child to have their cell phone for an activity after school (away from campus). We understand there may be exceptions. If a child must do this, we require the phone remain off and in the child's possession. Teachers and administrators will not be responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged cell phones or electronic devices. If a child does bring a cell phone to school, parents will be notified.

## **Animals on Campus**

Due to the general safety of our students, animals (including household pets and dogs) are not allowed on campus. Classes may, on a case by case basis, have small caged classroom pets at the discretion of the Head of School. If your child has an allergy that could be affected by a class pet, notify the teachers immediately

## **Therapy Dogs**

We do have several certified and trained dogs/handlers at Austin Discovery School. These dogs and their handlers go through intensive training to become certified as pet therapy dogs. They attend a 6-week training through Austin Dog Alliance. The training lessons include perfecting basic commands, helping handlers to read their dog's body language so they can appropriately handle a variety of situations, and working around children, adults and other dogs. At the end of the 6 week training, trainers and handlers must go through an intensive evaluation. The only dogs allowed on campus must be certified pet therapy dogs through Austin Dog Alliance. The handler must sign an acknowledgement of the policies/procedures for their therapy dog to be on campus.

Dogs and handlers can participate in Animal Assisted Activities (AAA) or Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT). At school, all pet and handler teams will participate in animal assisted activities such as helping with separation from home to school, participation in classroom reading programs for K-2 students, and small social skills groups.

## ADS Food and Nutrition Policy

One of the unique aspects of our school is that we take nutrition very seriously. Studies show that when the children are getting a well-balanced diet, they will perform better academically, have more energy, and be more balanced emotionally. Therefore, we've established strict food guidelines for lunches and snacks. Weigh this commitment to high quality nutrition before you sign up, as it is integral to our curriculum.

### Lunch Options

Austin Discovery School offers our lunch program through Revolution Foods. ADS chose to partner with Revolution Foods because they believe that everyone deserves whole foods made with carefully considered ingredients and foods that promote growth and development. [Click here for more information on Revolution Foods.](#)

**Remember to pack a daily snack** for your student if they want one. There are various times throughout the day (depending on age level and classroom) where students take a break and are able to eat a snack if they would like. Prepare adequately each day for your child's individual needs and know if your child's classroom is nut free.

Families may sign their children up for the lunch program at any point during the school year by contacting our Lunch Coordinator at [rjones@austindiscoveryschool.org](mailto:rjones@austindiscoveryschool.org).

Students and families may also make the decision to bring their lunches and snacks to school from home. Students will eat lunch in the outside courtyard areas when weather permits, in their classrooms or the school cafeteria regardless of whether they participate in the lunch program or bring their lunch from home.

*ADS does not restrict what foods or beverages parents may provide for their own children's consumption.* Teachers allow students to eat foods brought from home; however, our program teaches nutrition and lunchtime provides an authentic opportunity to examine nutritional consumption, set goals and assess one's diet. Parents are encouraged to respect the nutrition guidelines.

**Nutrition Guidelines:** We ask that all students adhere to the following guidelines concerning food at school: No Lunchables, frozen kid cuisine, sodas, juice drinks that are not 100% juice, caffeinated drinks or food and no chocolate. Also, limit sugar and choose from unrefined sugar sources. We also ask that you screen foods and not send items that contain the following: MSG, artificial coloring or flavorings or partially hydrogenated oils.

**Food Allergies:** Notify the office if your child has a food allergy. Occasionally, in the event a lunch is forgotten at home, teachers call home to see if the parent can bring a lunch.

**Nut-Free Classrooms:** Parents of a student with a documented nut allergy that can lead to anaphylaxis can request the student be placed in a classroom designated as Nut Free. This request should be made to the Office Manager. A Nut Free classroom is defined as a

classroom where no food that contains nuts or is made in a facility that contains nut products is served or consumed by any staff member or student. Signs indicating a classroom is Nut Free will be posted outside the classroom door.

Teachers in nut free classrooms will monitor snacks brought in by students for nuts. If a student brings a snack with nuts into a Nut Free classroom, the student will not be allowed to eat that snack in the classroom. In special circumstances, with Head of School approval, the student may be allowed to eat in an alternative location.

### **Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value (FMNV) Policy**

ADS may not serve or provide access for students to FMNV and all other forms of candy at any time anywhere on school premises during the school day. Such foods and beverages may not be sold or given away to students on school premises by school administrators or staff (coaches, teachers, etc.), students or student groups, parents or parent groups, guest speakers or any other person, company or organization.

Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value include:

- Soda
- Water ices
- Chewing Gum
- Candy or dessert type items  
(cookies, cakes, cupcakes, pudding)
- Fried Foods
- Foods containing Trans-fats
- Electrolyte replacement beverages  
(sports drinks)

### **Competitive Foods and Snacks**

An elementary school may not serve competitive foods (or provide access to them through direct or indirect sales) to students on school premises during the school day.

### **Snacks**

Elementary classrooms may allow one nutritious snack per day under the teacher's supervision. The snack may be in the morning or afternoon but may not be at the same time as the regular meal periods for that class. The snack may be provided by the school food service, the teacher, parents or other groups and should be at no cost to students.

Prepackaged snacks must comply with the fat and sugar limits of the ([Texas Public School Nutrition Policy](#)) [TPSNP](#), and must be single-size servings. All snacks (homemade and prepackaged) may not contain any FMNVs or consist of candy or dessert type items (cookies, cakes, cupcakes, pudding, ice cream or frozen desserts, etc).

### **STAAR Test Days**

Schools and parents may provide one additional nutritious snack per day for students taking the STAAR tests. The snack must comply with the fat and sugar limits of the [Public School Nutrition Policy](#) and may not contain any FMNV or consist of candy, chips or dessert type items. Packaged snacks must be in single size servings.

## **Instructional Use of Food in Classroom**

For instructional purposes, teachers may use foods as long as the food items are not considered FMNV or candy. Students may consume food prepared in class for instructional purposes. However, this should be on an occasional basis, and food may not be provided or sold to other students or classes. Food provided for students as part of a class or school cultural heritage event for instructional or enrichment purposes would be exempt from the policy. However, FMNV may not be served during meal periods in the areas where school meals are being served or consumed, and regular meals (breakfast and lunch) must continue to be available to all students.

## **Pizza Parties & Potlucks**

Classrooms may organize classroom celebrations where food is made available to students *after they have had an opportunity to eat their lunches*. Such food-related celebrations must be scheduled in advance with notice sent to parents; however, a complete list of foods made available does not need to be shared.

**Foods that are served to students by teachers, staff, or other parents MUST follow the ADS food policy guidelines.** *Foods from the FMNV list (above), chocolate, caffeine, and fast foods are not allowed.* Organizers should encourage whole foods, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, vegetarian and vegan options and encourage options for children with allergies. Teachers, in conjunction with parent organizers, should help educate parents on food restrictions and classroom needs as well as monitor food to ensure compliance.

## **Birthday Parties & Holidays**

ADS honors the life of each student and appreciates the excitement of holidays, such as Halloween, Valentine's Day, etc. However, candy, desserts or other FMNV are **NOT ALLOWED** to celebrate such events. Additionally, **ADS does not allow food or beverages to celebrate birthdays at school.** In the event food items are brought for a child's birthday, they will not be distributed to students during or after the school day.

## **Field Trips**

ADS does not allow parents or teachers to purchase food on field trips conducted within the school day. For overnight field trips, ADS coordinates meal plans with parents in preparation.

## **Helpful Articles and Links to Information on Nutrition**

- [Links Between Nutrition and Academic Achievement](#)
- [Healthy Children, Healthy Choices](#)

## **Breakfast Program**

ADS offers breakfast from 7:30 to 7:45 a.m. in the office. Students who qualify for free and reduced lunch will receive breakfast free of charge.

# Curriculum Innovations

At Austin Discovery School, we create a learning environment that **fosters independence, cooperation, divergent thinking, creativity, and a love for learning** that will last a lifetime. We believe that learning happens when it is meaningful for a child. Our hands-on approach to education lends itself to learning that occurs in a natural way instead of memorization, drills, and worksheets.

## Literacy and Writing

Our goal is to expose students to quality children's literature and to ensure reading success. Our language arts/literacy curriculum is based on a whole-language, whole-child philosophy. This includes various strategies such as shared reading, guided reading, phonics, pictorial clues, predictable and rhyming text, and dictated stories. Introduction to spelling begins with spelling approximations and phonetic spelling. Children are guided through games and activities to recognize patterns in spelling as they move toward conventional spelling.

Writing workshop is a daily structure in our classrooms. Students are taught to work independently using strategies modeled in mini-lessons or conferences as they go through the writing process. Teachers suggest strategies for students to improve their writing through reflection and setting individual goals. This guidance is an essential component to the philosophy and curriculum of our school.

We provide students with opportunities for language growth through activities such as song, dramatic interpretations of literacy, literary reviews, kinesthetic movement, and cooperative learning. Our varied approach to literacy gives children a chance to feel successful as their individual intellectual strengths are explored.

## Social Studies

The foundation of our social studies curriculum is the development of community. Our cooperative learning approach promotes interpersonal relationships and greater academic achievement. By incorporating hands-on, integrated projects in the curriculum, students come to learn through experiences that transcend textbook learning and create an unparalleled understanding of historical and cultural events.

## Math

Our mathematics time features a combination of whole-group, small-group, and independent activities. With the use of complex visual models, students see, touch, and work with manipulatives and sketch ideas. This allows them to create pictures in the mind's eye that help learners invent, understand, and remember mathematical ideas. By encouraging students to explore, test, and justify their reasoning, the curriculum facilitates the development of mathematical thinking.

## Science and Eco-wellness

The school gardens and surrounding natural environment serve as the primary classrooms for our science and gardening curriculum. They provide students with real-world science foundations and a personal connection to the world they discover. Scientific thought and processes form the structure of the program and are made tangible through the use of science journals. Students examine physical, life, earth, space, and environmental science through hands-on, inquiry-based projects and explorations.

The eco-wellness component provides students a sense of ownership and respect for our campus. As part of our ongoing nutrition focus, the students plant, tend, harvest, and consume the produce from our gardens.

For more specific information about the Curriculum used at ADS, visit our website.

## Fine Arts and “Essentials”

Students have essentials classes each day that include at least one class period of art, music, library, and physical education and EcoWellness per week. As with all of our curriculum elements, we use a hands-on approach to discovering each of these special areas. A cultural emphasis enriches these classes, providing opportunities to learn and embrace ourselves and others through celebrations. Cooperative games reinforce community building, while an exploration of mediums and instruments provide individual students the opportunity to find their place in the arts. Elements of all these areas are integrated into the entire curriculum. As we become attuned to each student’s learning style, we can draw on these aspects to compliment children’s individual learning strengths in the classroom. Middle school students will choose a Fine Arts elective in Music, Art or Theatre and will also attend PE and EcoWellness each week.

## Student Progress

Teachers approach each child as an individual, assessing their needs and tailoring instruction to those needs. Rubrics and checklists, along with formal assessment instruments are used to evaluate quality of content, competence, and presentation. Austin Discovery School **does not provide letter or numerical grades** or report cards for our students in grades K-5. However, teachers will inform parents of student achievement as it relates to state mandated grade-level expectations. Conferences and portfolio work provide more descriptive information regarding the student’s progress toward mastery of the content and progress during the year. Narratives are given at the end of each academic year. Parents also receive a progress report at the end of each academic unit.

Beginning in Middle School, students will transition to a more conventional grading system. Students continue to develop goals, represent their progress through their portfolios and receive teacher and peer feedback through one to one or small group conferring and rubrics.

## Conferences

There are **3 parent-student-teacher conferences** scheduled during the year. The first, held during the fall, is a goal-setting conference and a time for a collaboration in the development of SMART goals. During this first conference, the student's current strengths and needs will be discussed, goals for the year will be set, any modifications necessary to support the learning will be noted, and any other elements deemed appropriate for the SMART goals be detailed. These goals and the assessment data, which are provided by the teacher along with the child's own ideas, will be the central discussion of the conference. The second conference is held in the second trimester to provide feedback on progress toward goals and to adjust or set new goals. The third conference is a student-led portfolio conference. This is a celebration held near the end of the year to let the student present his or her portfolio and to discuss the year's learning experience.

## State Mandated Assessments

Austin Discovery School participates in all state mandated assessments, including phonemic awareness and reading fluency assessments, and the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) tests. Other assessments include the Developing Writing Assessment (DWA), Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), Mathematic Assessments, or Words Their Way Spelling Inventory.

Parents will be notified of their child's achievement on each state mandated academic assessment the Friday after the district receives the scores. Information on test retakes and accelerated instruction for students who did not pass will be communicated with all parents as applicable. Requirements under the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (SSI) Student Success Initiative will also be disturbed to all families in grades 5 and 8.

## Special Programs

### Child-Find: RtI

(Assistant Principal Amity Taylor: [ataylor@austindiscoveryschool.org](mailto:ataylor@austindiscoveryschool.org))

Austin Discovery School monitors progress of all students through Response to Intervention (RtI) process. Students who are not performing on grade-level as indicated by assessment information as well as locally adopted performance indicators are eligible for special intervention programs. Students may also be eligible for services if they qualify based on State and Federal indicators, such as low-income status, Limited English Proficient, homelessness, foster care or reside in residential treatment centers. Parents are notified if they qualify for services within the first month of school. If you feel you qualify and were not notified, or if you have any questions about the Special Programs we offer, contact the Assistant Principal.

RtI provides a strategic process for early identification of learning/behavior concerns of students as well as the necessary tools for selecting appropriate interventions toward a positive solution for the student and teacher. RtI helps to:

- Establish a comprehensive campus-based process for identifying students who are struggling in the classroom (either academically or behaviorally).
- Implement coordinated early intervening services designed to address the learning needs of students and prevent the need to refer students to special education.
- Provide a system for supporting the implementation of a response to intervention process for early identification of students with learning differences.
- Assist teachers in identifying specific research-based strategies to meet the diverse needs of students in the classroom to prevent unnecessary referral to special education. Provide coordinated early intervening services to struggling students, as described in ESSA and IDEA 2004.

If you think your child's learning difficulties are due to a disability, you have the right to request an evaluation for special education at any time. To do this, give a written request for the evaluation to the Special Education Director. The school must respond to your request:

1. If the school agrees that a disability is suspected, it will begin the evaluation process. Your rights will be explained and you will give written consent. Your child can continue to receive intervention.
2. If the school does not agree, it will not evaluate your child. You will get a written explanation about why a disability is not suspected. Your child can continue to receive intervention through RtI.

## **English as Second Language (ESL)**

Program Coordinator: Cristina Rocha (crocha@austindiscoveryschool.org)

Austin Discovery School provides inclusion, consult, resource and sheltered instruction services for students identified as Limited English Proficient as indicated from the Home Language Survey and District and Norm-Referenced Assessments. For more information on ESL services and program, contact ESL Coordinator.

## **Dyslexia / Section 504**

Program Coordinator: Jennifer Taylor-Burton (jburton@austindiscoveryschool.org)

In Texas the identification and instruction of students with dyslexia and related disorders is mandated and structured by two statutes and one rule. Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.003 defines dyslexia and related disorders, mandates testing students for dyslexia and providing instruction for students with dyslexia, and gives the State Board of Education authority to adopt rules and standards to administer testing and instruction.

Chapter 19 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.28 outlines the responsibilities of districts and charter schools in the delivery of services to students with dyslexia. Finally, §504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 establishes assessment and evaluation standards and

procedures for students. Section 504 procedures are implemented when it is determined that dyslexia substantially limits learning.

For more information consult The Dyslexia Handbook Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders: [The Dyslexia Handbook](#)

Section 504 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education. [Information on Section 504](#)

Parents are invited and encouraged to be a part of the educational planning of all students. Parents who have children eligible for and receiving special program services are considered a team member of all decision making meetings. Parent input is necessary and parents will be offered a parental involvement agreement upon notification of eligibility for services. Additionally, parent input will be requested to evaluate the content and effectiveness of the special programs as well as the parent involvement policy.

## **Special Education**

Speical Education Director - Maria Martinez ([mmartinez@austindiscoveryschool.org](mailto:mmartinez@austindiscoveryschool.org))

In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Special Education services at ADS include instructional and related services specifically designed to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. [Procedural Safeguards](#)

## **Teacher Qualifications**

Parents have a right to notification of educator qualifications, certificates, as well as education degrees. Biographies for teachers are on the website and available at the office. Any questions about teacher qualifications should be directed to the Head of School.

## **The School Day**

The academic day at Austin Discovery School begins at 7:50 a.m. and concludes at 3:05 p.m. Monday through Friday, except that **Wednesdays are early release days** ending at 1:50 p.m.

## **Early Morning Drop-off**

**Children may not be dropped off prior to 7:30 a.m.** Children may arrive to the playground staffed by ADS employees starting at 7:30 a.m. This service is provided free of charge. All children should be dropped off in the designated drop off zone.

During days of inclement weather, children will gather in the lobby of the administrative building or the library, and teachers will escort them to their appropriate buildings so that adequate supervision is provided at all times.

## **After School Pick-up & AfterCare**

Children are dismissed from class at 3:05 p.m. with the exception of Wednesdays. Wednesday is an early release day ending at 1:50 p.m. You may pick up your child at dismissal or AfterCare is available from 3:05 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesdays, students have the choice to either attend an early AfterCare option or our Arts and Movement program. The AfterCare program offers care during some breaks that do not coincide with AISD holidays.

The AfterCare enrollment form, handbook and information about Arts and Movement are available on the [website](#) and at the office.

Children who are not picked up by 3:30 p.m. will be sent to AfterCare, and parents will be **responsible for paying the AfterCare fees, which is \$20 per child**. After the third late pick-up, you will be required to enroll your student(s) in AfterCare. There will be a first-time forgiveness of the fee, but all late pick-ups will be tracked and fines will be assessed beginning with the second offense.

**If you do NOT wish to have your child enrolled in AfterCare, you must arrange for their pick up before dismissal.**

ADS does not have staff to supervise children after dismissal other than in AfterCare. If a parent refuses AfterCare and consistently fails to pick up their child from school by dismissal, **the school reserves the right to contact Child Protective Services to report neglect.**

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to arrange timely pickup of your child, and/or call the office in the event of an emergency. *Financial aid is available for AfterCare and the PTO will help parents communicate to find carpool arrangements. Inquire in the office if you need help for afterschool pickup.*

**For more information on our AfterCare program, visit us [here](#)** or find us at [www.austindiscoveryschool.org](http://www.austindiscoveryschool.org) > Parents > AfterCare.

## **Arriving Late or Leaving Early**

If your child arrives late or leaves early during the school day, you must come to the school office to sign the child in or out.

## **After-school Pick up Procedures & Releasing Students**

## Student Safety

Since ADS is a commuter school, we must maintain strict safety guidelines at pick-up time. Review and abide by the safety guidelines below:

- Students remain seated (weather permitting) outside buildings until 3:30 p.m. each day.
- **\*\*\*Parents may not park in the fire lane at any time.\*\*\*** This includes after hours pick-up. Use the parking lot or designated parking spots only, at all times if you are leaving your vehicle unattended.
- All parents who do not wish to park must drive in the left lane, closest to the sidewalk where students are seated.
- All drivers must pull forward to the designated “pick up zone” for pick-up while staff bring children to the car. **Parents may not get out of the car while in the pick-up lane.** If you must exit your vehicle, park in a designated parking space.
- All drivers must stop for parents/students in the crosswalk. All parents/students may only cross the street at the crosswalk.
- Drivers may not use cell phones while driving on campus and must drive slowly (less than 15 mph).
- Parents who wish to park and walk to the class may do so; however, we ask that **adults must refrain from speaking to teachers during pick up.** Teachers must be watching children and traffic. Teachers are not permitted to engage in conversation at that time.
- Once your child is dismissed to you, maintain supervision of your child. Children are not allowed to rejoin classrooms or walk around unattended during this time, as it creates confusion and is a safety hazard.

## Release of Students

ADS personnel will release children only to parents, guardians, persons listed on the emergency/health forms, or those authorized for carpooling purposes. Provide the school with documents about restraining orders or custody limitations. Notify your child’s teacher and the office if you have any concern that an individual with restricted access to the child might attempt to contact or collect the child from school.

## Carpools

ADS staff must release each child to the right person. If you carpool, let the teacher and office know **in writing** which children are in the carpool and which adults are driving which days. If your child is going with someone else after school, send a note.

Make sure the office personnel and your child’s teachers are emailed about these arrangements at least 1 hour prior to dismissal. . If your student will join another age group to be picked up in a carpool, you will be required to fill out a form designating who the student is and what group they’ll be joining to be picked up.

## Student Attendance

At Austin Discovery School, it is important that we work in partnership with our families to ensure the best possible school environment for your child. Each year Austin Discovery School adopts a calendar that identifies 75,600 minutes of academic instruction. While we value the health of each student and the entire student body, we also must contend with financial loss with each absence. Therefore, we encourage and desire our students to be in school *all* school days. Families who have 12 or more absences will be required to meet with administration and develop a plan to address the student's danger of losing academic credit for the year and/or being dismissed from Austin Discovery School upon exceeding 18 absences.

**Attendance is taken at 10:00 a.m. each day.** If your children are not present at that time, they will be counted absent. Attendance is primarily the responsibility of students and parents. Attendances and tardies will be reviewed each trimester. A mandatory attendance review will be scheduled if your child has excessive absences.

## **Tardiness and Absenteeism**

### **Tardies**

A student is considered **TARDY** when the student arrives at school between 7:51 a.m. and 9:59 a.m.. Because late-arriving students disrupt the learning environment for all students, we strongly discourage students from arriving late. Get your child to school on time, and do not take him/her out unnecessarily. Much of the learning is in the discussion and group tasks that cannot be recovered once missed. Recurring tardiness will trigger administrative review.

### **Absences**

A student is considered **ABSENT** when they are not in the classroom by 10:00 a.m., with the following exceptions:

- Observation of a religious holiday, or
- Attendance at a school-sanctioned function, or
- Arriving at school after 10:00 a.m. with a doctor/dentist's note indicating that he/she had a doctor's appointment.

We expect each child's family to let school administration know when and why students are absent. When a student is absent, a teacher or administrator may call or e-mail to inquire into the absence.

If students have more than 18 unexcused absences per year at Austin Discovery School, they may **lose academic credit** for the entire school year, be **retained** in their current grade level, or **jeopardize future enrollment**. This makes your communication and documentation with the school essential.

If a student is absent for 5 consecutive days without the school being notified, the student will be presumed voluntarily withdrawn, and his or her spot will be filled. Parents will receive notification of the withdrawal.

Any time your child is absent, take a moment and call the school or email your child's teachers and the office at [info@austindiscoveryschool.org](mailto:info@austindiscoveryschool.org)

## Religious Observance

When your child will be absent for religious observance, send a note to school before that date. If you do, state regulations allow children absent for religious observance to be **counted as present**, but **class work must be made up**. (So, absences for religious observances are not counted toward your nine absences.)

## Return to School After Absence

All absences require a note from the parent/guardian in order for the student to return to school. Absences must be cleared ON THE DAY OF RETURN with a written note signed by the parent/guardian. Notes should be submitted to the office.

## Excessive Absenteeism

Student attendance is continuously monitored by teachers and administrators, and is formally reviewed when student progress reports/narratives are issued three times per year (generally October, February, and June).

School administrators and teachers encourage attendance as much as possible for all students and believe that being present is an integral component of a student's academic success. Much of our students' learning is done experientially with teachers and peers, and students with poor attendance who struggle academically, socially, or emotionally have a huge disadvantage. Parents of students with excessive absences (6 or more during the first trimester or 12 or more by the end of the second trimester) are required to meet with teachers and school administration to discuss the impact of that absenteeism on student progress. A plan of action will be agreed upon to ensure that the student does not miss additional days of school unless for urgent medical reasons.

Austin Discovery School will allow a student with excessive absences (more than 12) to remain enrolled only after review of the following:

- Parent/doctor notes (required after each absence)
- Whether excessive absences have been a pattern
- Whether the student/parent followed the agreed plan of action
- Whether the student is on grade level based on their chronological age and is making satisfactory progress
- Whether the student/parent agree to adhere to the Austin Discovery School attendance policy in the future

## Health Care

A child who is ill should not be sent to school, as this may result in his/her health becoming worse and/or exposing others. For more information on illness and state guidelines, visit the [Texas Department of Health Services](#) or call the ADS office at 512-674-0700.

### Fever

When children become ill or injured at school, they will receive prompt attention from the staff. Students with a temperature of 100° or more must be sent home. The student may return to school when the fever subsides without the use of fever-suppressing medications.

### Injuries at School

If your child is injured beyond first-aid or simple comfort measures, you will be called to take the child home or to the doctor. In an emergency, appropriate action will be taken, and you will be informed immediately. If you cannot be reached, other designated adults listed on the child's emergency card will be notified. **It is essential that you keep the school informed of any change in address and/or telephone numbers so that a responsible party may be reached in an emergency.**

### Medicine

**Students are not allowed to have any medication (including homeopathic medicines and creams) with them (in classrooms, desk, or backpack).** All medications must be kept in the school office at all times. If it becomes necessary for a student to take a prescription, over-the-counter, or homeopathic medication during school hours, parents must fill out a Medication Authorization form in the office.

**Special Note:** Asthma inhalers are allowed to stay in backpacks if the student's doctor provides a written note indicating the child is able to administer the inhaler properly.

## Enrollment Regulations

Enrollment at Austin Discovery School is governed by regulations for charter schools set forth in Texas state law and Texas Education Agency rules. Any child residing in the geographic boundaries below has an equal opportunity to enroll in the school.

The following school districts are within our boundaries:

- Austin Independent School District
- Bastrop Independent School District
- Cedar Creek Independent School District
- Del Valle Independent School District
- Eanes Independent School District
- Elgin Independent School District
- Georgetown Independent School District
- Hayes Consolidated School District
- Lago Vista Independent School District

- Lake Travis Independent School District
- Leander Independent School District
- Manor Independent School District
- McDade Independent School District
- Pflugerville Independent School District
- Round Rock Independent School District
- Smithville Independent School District

## Lottery

The enrollment application period is between February 1 to March 31. Enrollment forms received by March 31 will be given space in the school as available.

In the event that more applications are received than spaces available, a lottery will be held to fill any spaces the first Monday in April. Applications received before April 1 will be included in the lottery and placed in order as selected to create a waiting list. After March 31, any application received will be added to the waiting list in the order it was received.

**Applications are taken on a continuing basis.**

Siblings of currently enrolled students as well as children of teachers and founders are excluded from the lottery process. Returning students must re-enroll during the application period (February–March 15) to retain their space.

## Placement of Students

Each child is placed in a classroom or building based on criteria established by the staff and administration. Every effort is made to maintain a balance in each class with regard to student ability, ethnicity, gender, and age.

## Parent Requests

- **Prior to class placement decisions:** Administration will not take parent requests for specific teachers. However, parents can write an essay (submitted to [info@austindiscoveryschool.org](mailto:info@austindiscoveryschool.org)) at the conclusion of a year regarding the type of social or learning environment that would best match their child. Efforts will be made to ensure that children are matched with a suitable placement. This information is compiled at the office and reviewed in connection to placement decisions. Make any requests by May. All requests must be written and submitted to the Office Manager (email above.)
- **After class placement decisions:** Parents may request their child move classes if another classroom has an open spot. Provide detailed information describing the circumstances of the request so all information can be taken into consideration. The administration reserves the right to change placement under extenuating circumstances.

Class lists will be emailed to the parent mailing list and posted on the door of Building 1 on Campus in August (prior to the start of the new year.)

**Note: Enrollment changes affect class lists, so they are subject to change.**

When the school does not receive accurate intent to return information back from families, this impacts hiring decisions as well as delays class list postings. All class lists postings will be dated with an 'As of' date; therefore, the most current version of the class list will be evident.

## **Withdrawal from School**

If your child will be withdrawing from school, notify the office of your intent to withdraw at the earliest possible date. A "withdrawal form" should be filled out and signed for a student to be considered formally withdrawn. The withdrawal form provides us with the name and address of the new school your child will be attending. Student records will be forwarded upon receipt of the request from the new school. All fines must be cleared and all school property must be returned before withdrawal.

**If a student is absent for 5 consecutive days without the school being notified, the student will be presumed voluntarily withdrawn, and his or her spot will be filled.** Additionally, voluntary withdrawal may be triggered by a parent's failure to adhere to school discipline policies and procedures as stipulated in the Code of Conduct.

## **Lost and Found**

Label your child's clothing! Every effort is made to return lost articles to the rightful owner. Clothing and other items worn or brought to school are easier to return if marked with your child's name. Items found will be placed in a designated area outside Building 9. Students and parents may check for lost articles at any time. All unclaimed items are given to charity at the end of each nine-week period.

## **Hazardous Weather**

During times of inclement weather, Austin Discovery School will update information in the News section of the website and notify families via text and/or email by 6:30 a.m. If Austin Discovery School closes for any reason during the school day, parents will be notified, and staff members will only release students as you have authorized.

## **Communication**

### **Notices and Announcements**

The Weekly Newsletter “The Hoot” is a regular means of publishing the school calendar, issuing reminders, and thanking volunteers and contributors. Other announcements and reminders are available on website and the official ADS Facebook page. Parents are urged to sign up for the electronic weekly newsletter . Paper copies are sent home to families who request paper copies. The Administration must approve all announcements prior to duplication and distribution.

## **Telephoning**

In general, school telephones are for business use by the staff and for educational use by the students. Students cannot use the phone at school except in emergencies. We encourage our parents to contact teachers via email.

## **E-mail**

All administrators, staff, and teachers have email addresses that follow this pattern:

“first initial last name”@austindiscoveryschool.org

Example: jdoe@austindiscoveryschool.org

## **Discussing Your Concerns/Grievance Procedure**

In an effort to hear and resolve complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, the school has adopted an orderly process that all students and parents must follow when bringing formal complaints and grievances.

The formal grievance process provides all students and parents with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management if they are dissatisfied with an administrative response. Once all administrative procedures are exhausted, students and parents can bring concerns and complaints to the Board.

## **Concerning Your Child**

If there is an issue with the teachers, the next level to contact with your issue would be the appropriate administrator in charge of the area of concern. Discipline complaints should be brought to the Social Emotional Learning Director, 504, ELL or Special Education complaints should be brought to the Student Services Director. If the complaint cannot be solved at the director level, forward your complaint to the Head of School.

If you are unsure of where to begin the process of making concerns known, contact the Head of School for assistance. If you are uncomfortable with any part of the grievance process, contact the Head of School and she will help you proceed accordingly.

### **Grievance/ Problem-Solving Process**

- If you have questions or concerns regarding your child, **contact your child's teacher** first. If your issues are with the teacher, and you feel the issues are serious or involve serious teacher discrepancies or moral turpitude, bring concerns immediately to the Head of School. The Head of School will direct the complainant to the teacher's supervising staff member. See above before making this determination.

- If you feel the problem has not been resolved, **schedule a formal problem-solving meeting with the Head of School**. The Head of School will document the concern and make a written plan of action for addressing or investigating the concern.
- If the plan of action did not resolve the issue or your classroom concern remains unresolved, you may request a **formal meeting with the Head of School**. The request should be made, *in writing*, to the Head of School. The Head of School will review all documentation from previous meetings and investigate the issue further, if necessary. The Head of School will then make a recommendation or decision regarding the issue.
- Grievances that are not resolved at this level *may be* considered by the **Board of Directors**.
- If there is a concern against the Head of School, bring your concern to the Head of School or contact the Board of Directors. See following pages for procedures.

### **Mandatory and Discretionary Review by Board of Directors**

#### **Mandatory Reviews**

Outlined and defined below are matters which, due in large part to their legal nature, or the impact on a student's access to education, must be reviewed by the Board. The Board of Directors will review the grievance, if the grievance is not resolved through mediation, and is an appeal of a final administrative decision affecting the constitutional interest or an interest of the type listed below:

1. Expulsion or suspension of a student for more than 10 days;
2. An alleged violation or a specified binding federal law, state law, State Board of Education policy or other state rule, or local board policy;
3. The loss or reduction of salary of a school employee under a specific term contract who is not employed at will; and
4. Any other decision that, by law, provides for a right of appeal to the school board and for which there is no other statutory appeal procedure.

#### **Discretionary Reviews**

Outlined below are matters which are at the *Board's discretion* to review and respond to:

- If the grievance is not resolved through mediation, but it is not an alleged violation of a specified binding federal or state law, federal or state regulation, binding State Board of Education policy, the grievant may submit to the Board of Directors who have the discretion to respond or not respond to the grievance.
- Issues related to employee performance which are addressed in the Grievance Process in the Formal Conference stage, in which the complaints are addressed by the person's immediate supervisor, may or may not be reviewed by the Board.

School administration and the Board of Directors will consider requests to hear grievances from a group of grievants, but administrators and the Board will have the discretion to respond to individual grievants.

### **Grievance Review by Board of Directors**

If the individual bringing the complaint is not satisfied with the Head of School's final decision, then the individual may appeal their complaint in writing to Austin Discovery School's Board of Directors within 10 days of receiving the Head of School's final decision.

The complaint shall be directed to the President of the Board via email to: [board@austindiscoveryschool.org](mailto:board@austindiscoveryschool.org) or via mail to: President, Board of Directors, Austin Discovery School, 9303 FM 969, Austin, TX 78724.

The complaint shall include a copy of the written complaint to the Head of School along with a copy of the Head of School's final decision.

The complaint should follow the form template available on the [Board of Directors website](#).

The Board will consider requests to hear an appeal. To be scheduled, requests must be received at least 10 days in advance of a scheduled meeting. [Requests received within 10 days of a scheduled meeting, will be considered at the following meeting.](#) If the request is approved, the person or group will be invited to appear before the Board (in non-public session if the matter may likely affect the reputation of an individual). Any employee against whom a grievance is made may appear.

Grievances shall not be brought to the Board without first being submitted in writing, as this does not give the Board sufficient time to consider the issue(s) and address them through this grievance process. The Board will not hear matters that do not follow this grievance process.

The grievance will be considered in an open or closed meeting, as decided by the District in accordance with applicable open government laws. The President of the Board, at the next regular meeting of the Board, shall provide a copy of the grievance record to all board members. The Board's decision shall be decided on a review of the record developed at the Head of School's level. Any action of the Board of Directors regarding the grievance shall be taken in compliance with the Texas Open Meeting Act. A grievance against the Head of School shall begin at this level of review and shall follow the grievance process in accordance with this policy Section and the Texas Open Meetings Act.

In response to a grievance, the Board is empowered to:

- grant the grievance, and reverse the decision of the administration;
- deny the grievance, and uphold the decision of the administration; or
- grant the grievance in part and deny in part, thus modifying the administration's decision.

Although the Board has full authority in response to a grievance to reverse the administration's decision, the Board will extend a degree of deference to administrative decisions in matters that are reserved by law or policy to the administration. In general, the Board will not substitute its judgment for that of the administration when the decision was made in accordance with law, policy, and ethical standards. The final forum for conflict resolution, after a grievant has followed the steps outlined above, is the Board of Directors.

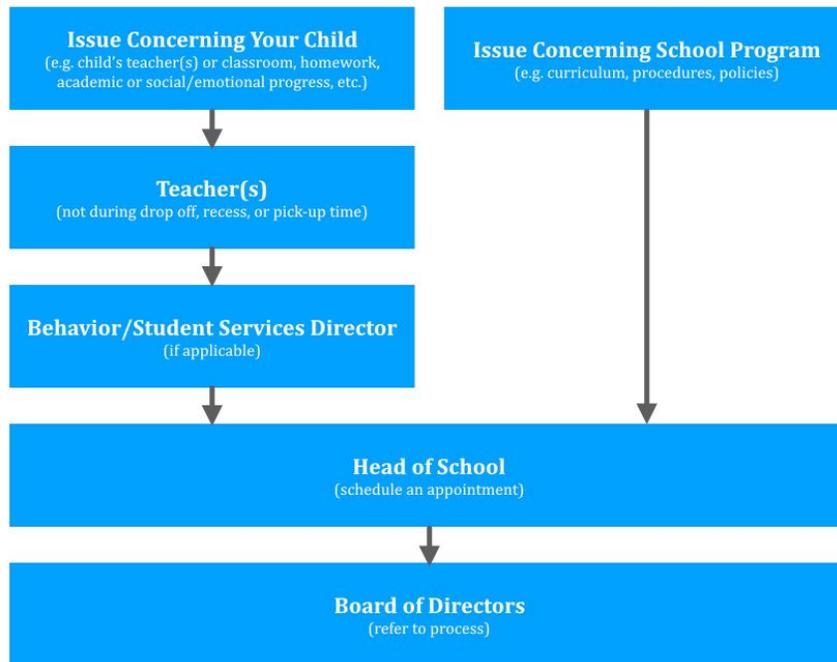
Refer to the [Board of Directors website](#) policy **300.120 Grievance Process** for information.

## Concerning the School Program

If you have a concern about the academic program, school procedures or other program concerns (not specific to your child or your child's classroom), schedule a meeting with the Head of School. If, after meeting with the Head of School, the issue needs further resolution, you may request (in writing) to the Head of School to meet with the Board of Directors in an open Board Meeting (refer to process above).

### Flowchart of the Grievance Process

*\*\* When in doubt, start with the teacher. If the teacher realizes it is an administrative concern, they will refer you to the proper person to speak with. \*\**



## Visitors

Badges are used to help teachers recognize visitors and volunteers in the school. All visitors (including parents) **must sign in** at the beginning of their visit at the reception desk and receive a **badge to wear**. At the end of the visit, visitors must return to the reception desk to sign out and leave the visitor badge. These procedures are designed to protect our children from unauthorized individuals and also to document parental involvement.

Visitors and other persons entering the campus (other than direct family members) will need to provide a valid ID and undergo a background check unless they are accompanied by a family

member or staff at all times. Austin Discovery School will schedule tours as needed. Call the school to schedule a tour.

In the event that the administration has determined that a parent / guardian is ejected from school property or issued a criminal trespass warning, certain rights of the parent / guardian remain with respect to directing the education of the parent's child. For instance, arrangements will be made to allow parents to participate in ARD or Section 504 Committee meetings concerning their child, and parents will be given an opportunity to attend parent-teacher conferences or school activities in which their child is participating. General access to student drop-off and pick-up areas will also be allowed. But, the school can place reasonable limits on a parent's "unsupervised" access to school facilities if that parent has been disruptive or out of line with our expected standards of conduct while on school property.

## Student Behavior Standards

We maintain high expectations for behavior just as we do for academics. At ADS, we believe children who learn to solve problems constructively at an early age develop lifelong skills that will help them solve more complex problems as they get older. Students are held accountable for their choices and experience natural and logical consequences.

We strongly encourage families and all community members to take every opportunity to model our high expectations for respectful communication and conflict resolution.

### Code of Conduct

The Student Code of Conduct is contained on a separate document. It is distributed to each child and parent annually. **Review the Code of Conduct with your child.**

To obtain a copy of the Code of Conduct, [contact the Office Manager](#).

During the first days and weeks of school, teachers and students spend a great deal of time discussing, role-playing, and practicing what it looks like, sounds like, and feels like to respect yourself, others, the learning, and the environment.

ADS follows the *Loving Guidance: Conscious Discipline* program by Becky Bailey for classroom management. We also use *TRIBES Cooperative Learning* and *Drama Based Instruction (DBI)* to help build community within our classrooms. ADS uses *Positive Behavior Interventions and Strategies (PBIS)* framework to create expectations for our school wide spaces.

Our school also participates in SEL (Social Emotional Learning) initiatives and is a pilot school for Restorative Practices. All programs work in tandem and aim to help achieve a positive and emotionally safe classroom and school environment. Since ADS does not use rewards or punishment to teach social and emotional skills, the relationships within the classroom and school community are essential to create a sense of belonging. This school family is the incentive students need to treat one another with respect and care as we learn and grow together.

## Proactive Measures

Our discipline philosophy is based on meeting the needs of the students in order to provide a safe place for learning. The role of the Social/Emotional (SEL) Director at ADS is to provide assistance and training for teachers in meeting the social/emotional needs of the students. This may take the form of in class interventions, out of class interventions, teacher training, observations, and/or discipline contracts.

Since no two children are alike, no one strategy works for a child to be successful. The SEL Director assists teachers in finding proactive strategies to assist children who are having difficulties in the classroom. If a teacher is giving a lesson or attending to other students and is unable to problem solve with students, the SEL director may be called to help. This intervention may be done in the classroom or in the Peace Center. These interventions are considered learning opportunities, and are generally not communicated with a referral form. *Any event that causes physical or emotional harm to another student is considered a discipline referral and will be communicated to the parents with a referral form.*

ADS maintains a discipline policy whose goal is twofold: The first is to **ensure the right of each child to a safe and orderly learning environment**, and the second is to **help each student develop positive behavior patterns**.

Our expectations for student behavior are based on our acronym of ADS. We expect students to act responsibly, do it with respect, and safety is everyone's job. ADS staff will explicitly teach students what it looks like and sounds like to be responsible, respectful, and safe.

Every effort will be made to work with students and their parents to resolve behavioral issues by helping the student learn acceptable boundaries, self-control, problem-solving, and effective communication. **Students who are disrespectful and who continually disrupt the learning environment may eventually be dismissed from ADS.**

## Safe School Environment

It is the policy of the Austin Discovery School to maintain a safe and supportive school environment for all students free from harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying and free from discrimination on account of actual or perceived race, color, creed, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship/immigration status, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or weight.

It is the responsibility of the school and all staff to ensure that all students, including transgender and gender nonconforming students, have safe school environments. The scope of this responsibility includes ensuring that any incident of discrimination, harassment, or bullying is given immediate attention, including investigating the incident, taking age and developmentally appropriate action, and providing students and staff with appropriate resources and supports. Enforcement of anti-bullying policies should focus on education and prevention rather than exclusionary discipline. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on a student's actual or perceived gender identity or expression are to be taken seriously and handled in the same manner as other discrimination, bullying, or

harassment complaints. For more information, please refer to our board adopted policy (need link)

## **Probationary Referrals and Parent Shadowing**

Parent Shadowing, suspension, and expulsion are options that will be considered when the student is disruptive to the point that the learning is affected or the student is a threat to the health or safety of the other students. **(Students in suspension must complete all work missed while in suspension in order to receive credit.)**

Students exhibiting unsafe, aggressive behavior will not be allowed to return to class. Parents who are called to pick up or shadow their child should do so within one hour of notification.

*After repeated referrals during any three-month period, an administrator may direct a parent to accompany the student throughout the school day. Failure to fulfill this obligation constitutes a voluntary withdrawal from the school. All absences due to noncompliance with the parent shadowing will be treated as an unexcused absence. Parents shadowing students are quiet observers. A meeting with a school administrator will take place near the end of the school day to review the student's behavior plan.*

ADS does not discriminate against any student because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, military status, or on any other basis prohibited by law. Persons with questions or concerns relating to discrimination should contact the Head of School.

ADS Families,

The 2018 -2019 Parent / Student Handbook was approved by the board on . Thursday, June 21, 2018. Please review the document [on the website](#) or request a printed copy from the Front Office ([info@austindiscoveryschool.org](mailto:info@austindiscoveryschool.org)) and return this Parental Involvement Agreement to your child’s teacher no later than Friday, August 31, 2018.

## Parental Involvement Agreement

*Return this page to your teacher.*

As a parent of a student at Austin Discovery School, I acknowledge that I am taking part in an innovative approach to education. In doing so, I agree to the following responsibilities:

1. I will be responsible for the prompt and consistent attendance of my child(ren).
2. I will stay in communication with my child(ren)’s teacher regarding problems and/or progress.
3. I will do my best to support my child’s educational experience by reinforcing respect for the teacher and the learning environment.

In addition, I certify that I have read the Parent–Student Handbook.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (parent) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)  
          \_\_\_\_\_ (parent) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Children’s names and grades:

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