



**LEARNING ON THE MOVE**

*Discovery Preschool  
and Kindergarten*

**HANDBOOK**

2011-2012



We are so excited you have chosen the Discovery Program for your child and we look forward to getting to know them – and you – better. In the Discovery Parent Handbook, you will learn more about the program, have many of your questions answered, become more familiar with our policies and be provided with additional helpful information.

## **Assessing Preschool Activity Levels**

**From:** Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 77, 167-176

W.H. Brown and colleagues set out to develop an observational system for assessing physical activity in preschool-aged children. In their study, they discovered the four most frequent physical activities were sitting/squatting, lying down, standing and walking. Running was a distant fifth activity for the children observed in the study. This research system is a tool researchers might use to better understand preschool-aged children's physical activity and how it is linked to childhood obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

A significant finding in this study was children spend a great deal of their time at preschool in sedentary or stationary positions. In response to the problem of poor activity levels in young children, GYMCO launched its Discovery Program. The program, for children 3-6 years, is based on research demonstrating physical movement is critical to brain growth and cognitive ability in young children. The Discovery Program also promotes lifelong physical activity.

## **Frequently asked questions:**

### **Why choose the Discovery Program?**

Children engage in creative activities that:

- Promote healthy interpersonal relationships
- Develop an understanding of sharing space and taking turns
- Provide successful experiences that lead to increased confidence and self-esteem
- Promote independence, competence and initiative

The Physical Literacy component helps children:

- Increase strength and flexibility
- Develop skills for every sport
- Increase oxygen to the brain
- Reduce stress levels and build stronger bones

Learning activities help students:

- Prepare for school readiness
- Develop better ability to listen and follow direction
- Develop problem solving skills
- Develop learning receptors in the brain by using all senses



## **GYMCO's Philosophy**

- We use an individualized approach
- Provide appropriate challenges with instructions and encouragement necessary to conquer them
- Promote critical thinking and problem solving
- Provide a safe and positive environment
- Develop confidence by helping children experience success in small steps

## **Things to Know**

1. All necessary forms, including health appraisals and contract, must be turned into the office BEFORE the first day of school. Your child cannot participate until all paperwork has been received.
2. Tuition is due at the beginning of each month; a late fee of \$15.00 will be added to your tuition if it is not paid by the 15th of the month.
3. There are no tuition adjustments for daily absences because of weather, holiday, illnesses, or vacation.
4. Students may be dropped off no earlier than 5 minutes before the start of class. Please have your child ready to enter the gym on time as it can be overwhelming for the child to enter on their own with an activity in progress.
5. Parents must walk their child into the facility for drop off and must walk into the facility for pick up. If other arrangements need to be made, please inform your child's teacher. If you would like your child to be released to someone else, their name must be included on the Child Information Record form.
6. Please pick up your child on time. If an emergency occurs, please inform the office as soon as possible. A late fee will be charged for additional minutes that child is left at Gymco. Cost will be \$10 for every 5 minutes.
7. Each child will need a backpack with his/her name on it to transport notes, art projects, etc. Please also include an extra change of clothes in the backpack in case of accidents.
8. Students should wear comfortable clothes that do not prohibit movement. Jeans, skirts, tights and clothing with snaps or zippers are not permitted.
9. A healthy snack will be provided by Gymco. If your child has any food allergies please contact his/her teacher to make arrangements. We will make every effort to provide an alternate snack for children with allergies or their own may be supplied.

## **Classroom Information and Policies**

### **Supplies**



We do not require you to provide materials for your child or charge you a supply fee. We are happy to provide the students with snack, art supplies and the necessary tools for preschool. However, in the past, many parents have asked if there is anything we need for our classroom. We have compiled a list of supplies that always are needed for the program. Please do not feel that this is in any way a requirement, but if you would be interested in providing these new or gently used items to Gymco's Discovery Program, we would be very thankful and would accept them anytime throughout the year! Thank you!

#### Miscellaneous Supplies:

- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Construction paper
- Glue sticks
- Washable paint and washable stamp pads
- Matchbox cars, train sets, building blocks
- Safety scissors
- Beads, lacing activities, puzzles
- Games
- Any other games or activities you think would benefit your child
- Books! We love to have the children explore books on their own. We also read out loud to them. We would love any of your child's favorite books to add to our library.

#### **Staff**

Gymco's Discovery Program is directed and taught by dedicated staff members who are trained in child development and accredited through Gymco's pre-sport development training program and the preschool accreditation program. All staff members participate in monthly training clinics, annual first-aid training and on-going educational programs. Discovery teachers can talk with you regarding your questions or concerns during drop-off and pick-up or by arranging a personal conference. Communication between staff and parents is important to your child's success. We also encourage parents to watch your child in our viewing area.

#### **Behavior Management**

The Discovery Program encourages children to develop independence and self-discipline by practicing positive methods of self-control and respecting limits. We teach children the importance of practicing specific safety rules to respect and protect the rights of themselves and others. Teachers in the Discovery Program work together with families to prevent discipline problems from developing. Our goal is to promote growth and provide a model that encourages cooperation and conflict resolution.

At Discovery, no physical punishment is ever used. If redirection and discussion are not effective, the child will be removed from the group for a brief "timeout" to cool down and regroup. If serious problems continue, a conference will be called with the parents to discuss an appropriate plan of action to help the child change negative behaviors. It is our responsibility to provide a safe, nurturing learning environment for the children in our program. Discovery Director Jill Pfeiffle retains the right to make decisions to determine if a child must be removed from the program because of harmful behavior.



## **Admission and Enrollment**

### **Who can join?**

Any child accepted into the Discovery Program must be 33 months old by the first day of the session and must be toilet-trained. Children with special needs are welcome in the Discovery Program. Depending on each child's unique situation, an evaluation might be required to determine proper placement.

### **Enrollment**

The first month's tuition is due at time of enrollment. This assures a place is reserved for your child in the Discovery Program. In order to ensure the fair enrollment of students into the limited spaces in the Discovery Program, remaining a member of the program for the duration of the session is expected.

### **Cancellation Policy**

Cancellations made 60 days or more before the beginning of the session will be reimbursed 100 percent of the first month's tuition. Cancellations made within 30 days of the start of the session will be reimbursed 50 percent of the first month's tuition. No refunds will be given for cancellations made less than 30 days before the beginning of the session.

### **Withdrawals**

If a child must be withdrawn from the Discovery Program after the session has started, a request must be submitted in writing to Gymco in order to be released from the contract. You will be required to pay for the remainder of the month, as well as a \$75 cancellation fee. The fee will be waived in cases of a documented injury.

## **Health, Safety, and Nutritional Policies**

### **Illness**

The health of the children and staff are important to us. In order to prevent unnecessary exposure to germs and illness, we ask you keep your child at home if he or she is contagious. Participation in the Discovery Program requires constant activity and movement. If your child is not feeling well, they will not fully benefit from that day's activities.

Please keep your child at home if any of the following symptoms are present:

- a fever
- an excessive amount or bright yellow or green color to the mucus (this indicates infection)
- a continuous cough that is aggravated by physical activity
- the child taken any prescribed or OVC or OTC medication that causes drowsiness
- the child has vomited or had excessive diarrhea in the past 24 hours.
- any contagious or communicable disease: measles, mumps, chicken pox, strep throat, pink eye, etc.

### **Release of Children**

No child will be released to anyone other than a parent or guardian who is on the child's release form. If a different arraignment is necessary, the parent or guardian must let the child's teacher know ahead of time.



If an emergency occurs and the parent(s) or guardian cannot pick up the child and someone is sent to get the child who is not on the approved release form, the office staff must have verbal permission from someone who is on the primary or emergency contact list before the child will be released. Parents must always pick up their child inside the lobby area. If the child is engaged in an activity outside, please wait for the class to conclude and the children to come inside before retrieving your child.

### **Medication Policy**

Gymco is not responsible for administering medication to any child except for emergency care. If a child has a known medical condition, such as asthma, and needs to carry a rescue inhaler or needs to carry an epi pen, the parent must give written permission for Gymco to administer the needed treatment.

### **Medical Emergencies**

It is Gymco's policy a first-aid and child, infant and adult CPR certified staff member be present at all times the center is in operation. These individuals have permission to determine the seriousness of an injury and proceed accordingly. In cases of an emergency, approved staff members will check the child for seriousness of injury. If the injury is minor in nature (requiring first-aid such as cleaning, bandaging or stopping blood flow), the staff member present will provide treatment. If the injury is serious in nature (a fracture, dislocation or more serious bleeding), the Discovery Program director will provide treatment and calm the child, while the lead teacher calls 911. Parents will be called and informed immediately of the accident by the office staff if transportation to the hospital is necessary. The director is responsible to give the parents of the injured child a follow-up call within 24 hours of the accident.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

It is Gymco's policy that any and all observations or suspicions of child abuse or neglect will be reported immediately to Child Protective Services no matter where the abuse might have occurred. Parents or guardians may or may not be informed before the report is made. Gymco follows the Model Child Care Health Policies where child abuse and/or neglect is suspected. Gymco will cooperate with additional agencies to insure the safety of the child and keep his or her best interests in mind.

### **Hand washing and Sanitation**

Every sink at Gymco has proper hand-washing procedures and appropriate time to wash hands posted next to it. Staff, volunteers and children are required to wash their hands in accordance to the following procedures:

- Upon arrival for the day or when coming inside following an outside activity
- Before and after preparing or eating food or providing medical treatment
- After providing emergency medical care, helping in the restrooms or diapering, handling bodily fluids, wiping noses or mouths, cleaning sores, handling or disposing of garbage or handling pets
- Staff follows directions on washing hands as posted on the signs and instruct the children how to do the same.

Gymco's policy on facility cleanliness is as follows: "The facility and surfaces are to be cleaned on a regular routine basis. A MERSA approved disinfectant is to be used to disinfect all surfaces daily and immediately if they come in contact with any bodily fluids or when any type of spill occurs."



### **Sunscreen & Bandages**

Discovery students often spend time outside for various activities, as the weather permits. Please dress your child appropriately and apply sunscreen as you feel necessary. We will notify you when your child will be outside for an extended period of time. It is the parent's responsibility to apply sunscreen. Any open sore or wound that may open or bleed must be covered by a bandage. This includes warts.

### **Daily Routines and Activities**

Gymco's Discovery Program is a child-centered environment in which learning takes place through hands-on experiences. By providing opportunities for large group, small group and individual activities, we encourage children to explore the process of learning. Children develop at their own pace and with their own unique learning styles. At the Discovery Program, children are encouraged to practice attained skills while being challenged to allow the next stage of development to emerge. We provide a variety of learning activities that enhance the development of the child physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively. Our daily routines are structured to provide learning activities through physical movement. Activities include large and small muscle development, problem solving and self-help skill enhancement, music and rhythmic experiences, hands-on science and math activities, open-ended and process-oriented art and creative expression, whole language and pre-reading development, dramatic and pretend play and social interaction.

A nutritional, sensory snack is provided daily. Snack time is important for socializing, table manners and learning about good nutrition. Most times, the snacks engage many senses and might be a new experience for your child. For example: the child may make the snack themselves, they might use a straw instead of a fork or they might try foods put together in different ways. During snack time, children might integrate math and science concepts while enhancing positive self-help skills.

### **The Classroom Environment**

Gymco's Discovery Preschool and Kindergarten program is unique in the fact that we spend much of our time actively learning and incorporating movement. Although we spend much of our time in the gym or outside, we also spend time in our classroom. Therefore, the classroom setting is as stimulating as possible. There are several areas within the room and a variety of activities done within these settings.

### **Dramatic and Creative Play**

- allows children to interact and socialize with one another in creative and uninhibited ways
- the child can construct the world as they see it
- Children can role play and act out real-life situations
- provides an opportunity to practice language and communication skills

### **Hand Manipulative**

- Improves muscle coordination
- Strengthens and increases writing skills
- Learn problem-solving skills
- Identify relationships between objects



### **Book Area**

- Helps children begin to enjoy reading and looking through books for pleasure
- Allows children to “read” the pictures and create a story
- Learn methods of expressing their thoughts and feelings
- Children become familiar with various words and also learn new words

### **Art and Music:**

- Allows children to express their creativity
- Exposes children to various sensory experiences
- Allows children to communicate in a different way
- Increase awareness of rhythm and develops an appreciation for beauty and the arts