



Handbook

Revised: Summer 2005 - DRAFT

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⇒ Denotes INSERTS within this Handbook

Beginning of the Year Forms and Informational Sheets

These include all the forms and informational sheets parents receive at the beginning of each new school year. For new parents receiving the DCS Handbook, these forms will be located in the front binder pocket. The forms indicate if they must be signed and returned to school. All parents are encouraged to keep any informational sheets with this DCS Handbook for future reference.

Mission, History and Philosophy

1. Mission Statement

As a community, we strive to educate the whole child in a cooperative effort that respects and responds to each child's needs and abilities. We do this through developmentally appropriate curricula, active parent participation, and a world view that emphasizes community and lifelong learning. We support intrinsic motivations and foster a non-competitive learning environment.

2. History

Discovery Community School was established in 1994. A group of parents in the Lake Washington School District wanted to start a new alternative elementary school that would allow them to be involved in their children's elementary education in a very meaningful and cooperative way. Rather than expand Kirkland Community School, as the district first proposed, the parents won district approval to open Discovery Community School on the Mark Twain campus in Kirkland's North Rose Hill neighborhood.

The school opened in the fall of 1994 with one teacher and about 25 students in grades 1 through 3. In 1995, another teacher was hired and the student body was divided into a first- and second-grade classroom and a third- and fourth-grade classroom. A third teacher joined Discovery Community School in 1995 to teach a combined kindergarten/grade 1 class. Today, Discovery School serves first- through sixth-grade students in three classrooms.

In 1997 Discovery relocated to the Carl Sandburg campus at the invitation of its principal, allowing Mark Twain to reclaim space needed for its own rapidly growing student body. The school continues to flourish on the Carl Sandburg campus today.

3. Philosophy

Discovery Community School is built on a foundation of values and life skills that we hope to foster in our children. They include:

- ❖ Love of Learning
- ❖ Strong Self-Esteem
- ❖ Cooperative Spirit
- ❖ Independence
- ❖ Personal Responsibility
- ❖ Respect for Self and Others
- ❖ Belief in the Importance of Community

We believe that children learn best when parents and teachers work in partnership, and parents are actively involved in their children's learning - at home and at school. As a parent group, we share decision-making for policies and procedures within the Lake Washington School District guidelines, support our staff's professional judgments, and work to create the best possible environment for our children to learn.

Bylaws, Policies, Insurance and Financial Guidelines

1. Bylaws

⇒ Bylaws, Issued September 1997

⇒ Bylaw Amendments, November 2003

2. Policies

⇒ DCS Policy List and Policies

3. Insurance

Insurance Company:

Address:

Phone Number:

Contact:

Policy Number:

Renewal Date:

4. Financial Guidelines

4.1 Maintaining Not-For-Profit Status - *Jim Portugal?*, *Susie Shavey?*

4.2 Restricted Gifts will be accepted by DCS under the following conditions:

4.2.1 All restricted gifts will be reviewed and approved by the teacher affected and the finance committee.

4.2.2 Restricted gifts from community members must exceed the recommended contribution for their family, based on the number of children enrolled in DCS for the current school year.

⇒ How To Obtain the Bank Signature Card

⇒ Tax Filings are available for viewing. Check with the DCS School Secretary or Community Group Treasurer.

⇒ Budget - Past Three Years

5. Charitable Contributions

⇒ Charitable Contribution Information Form

DCS Community Group Structure

⇒ Letter from the Co-Chairs

⇒ Current Discovery Community School Organizational Chart

1. The **DCS Community Group** includes parents, teachers and staff.
2. **Community Group Meetings** are held monthly throughout the school year to conduct school business, discuss issues that affect the entire community and/or school and resolve concerns as needed. At each meeting:
 - 2.1 Staff members give reports and/or presentations about classroom activities and pertinent happenings within DCS, Sandburg and the LWSD.
 - 2.2 Steering Committee chairs provide reports on recent and prospective projects and activities and updates on any concerns raised, decisions made, or votes taken at the most recent Steering Committee Meeting.
 - 2.3 Parents are also encouraged to give relevant reports and presentations and are expected to submit topics for the Agenda using agenda addition forms available on the DCS website.
 - 2.4 Prospective agenda items must be submitted to committee chairs and approved by the Steering Committee.
3. **Steering Committee** members are the elected officers and chairpersons of the standing committees. The Steering Committee works on the business of DCS: legal and bylaw requirements, DCS and District policies, the budget, reviews prospective agenda items and coordinates standing committees. Steering Committee members also serve as a resource to the community. The Steering Committee brings issues to the Community Group and makes recommendations as needed.
4. **Steering Committee Meetings** are held monthly, typically about two weeks before each Community Meeting. These meetings are open to all Community Group members. Agenda items are presented as needed and can be submitted using the agenda addition forms available on the DCS website.
5. **Standing Committees** do much of the work required to operate the school. They include:
 - 4.1 **Classrooms:** Includes the three classroom teachers, with the Head Teacher noted, and the DCS Secretary.
 - 4.2 **Enrichment**
 - 4.2.1 Field Trip Coordinators
 - 4.2.2 Class Libraries Coordinator
 - 4.2.3 Art Docents
 - 4.2.4 Enrichment Docents

- 4.2.5 Book Order Coordinators
- 4.2.6 Science Docents
- 4.3 **Community Building:** Helps build a sense of community among parents, teachers, students and staff through:
 - 4.3.1 Room Reps: Help teachers with snack coordination, classroom decorations, special projects and more. The Room Reps are the teachers' most accessible link to the community.
 - 4.3.2 Staff Appreciation Coordinators
 - 4.3.3 T-shirt Coordinator
 - 4.3.4 Fall and Spring Camp Coordinators: Bring together all information and resources for two fun learning and community-building events each school year. Fall Camp is typically a one-day event, while Spring Camp is typically two days. Camp Coordinators require a great deal of assistance from community members in the planning and implementation of both camp sessions.
 - 4.3.5 Hospitality Coordinator
 - 4.3.6.1 Plans social events such as holiday celebrations, Parents' Nights Out, swim parties, etc.
 - 4.3.6.2 Provides refreshments for Community Meetings and other events.
 - 4.3.6 Sandburg Yearbook Coordinator: Assists Sandburg yearbook staff with putting together collage photo pages.
 - 4.3.7 DCS Memory Pages Coordinator: Responsible for managing school cameras, reminding community members to take pictures at school functions and events, gathering pictures from school cameras and community members, assembling pictures into a format for sale to the Community and coordinating the sale.
 - 4.3.8 PTSA and PTSA Special Needs Liaisons: work with the Sandburg PTSA and Special Needs Committee
- 4.4 **Volunteer Support:**
 - 4.4.1 Volunteer Coordinator works with the teachers and community/ committee members to organize volunteer support for the classrooms, as well as support for requirements outside the classroom.
 - 4.4.2 Volunteer Development/Elections Coordinator conducts the annual officer elections.
- 4.5 **Community Outreach/Community Service:** Helps to make sure DCS is connected to the world at large by planning community service activities and programs that educate and involve members within our local and worldwide communities.

- 4.6 **Communication:** Coordinates internal and external communication systems and needs, including:
 - 4.6.1 this Handbook
 - 4.6.2 e-mail updates and distribution
 - 4.6.3 Parent Organizer
 - 4.6.4 website development and maintenance
 - 4.6.5 the DCS roster
 - 4.6.6 publicity
 - 4.6.7 Risk Management Liaison
 - 4.6.8 LWSD Liaison
- 4.7 **Finance:** Raises funds for DCS through grants and other activities. Creates and manages DCS budget. Presents budget for following school year to Steering Committee and Community Group as per bylaws.
- 4.8 **Facilities:** Coordinates upkeep and needs of the building, grounds and technology.
- 4.9 **Community Support:** Includes all elected officers and the Sandburg/DCS Principal and Vice-Principal.
 - 4.9.1 Officers are elected each spring by members of the Community Group. Each term is for one year, from the end of one school year to the end of the next. This schedule supports smooth transitions from year to year.
 - 4.9.2 Elected officers lead both the Steering Committee and the Community Group. See the bylaws and DCS policies for more specific information about these positions.
 - 4.9.2.1 The Chairperson and Assistant Chairperson facilitate the Community and Steering Meetings.
 - 4.9.2.2 The Secretary(ies) record and maintain the minutes of the Community and Steering Meetings and make the minutes available for posting to the Community. This position is typically shared by two people who negotiate an appropriate division of responsibilities for their term.
 - 4.9.2.3 The Treasurer(s) maintain the financial records as per general accounting systems and present updated budget information at all Community Meetings. Typically, individuals serve as Treasurer for two years, alternating ends of service, to ensure at least one experienced Treasurer serves each year.

⇒ Discovery Community School Organizational Chart - Past Four Years

⇒ Standing Committee Chair Job Descriptions, Communications and Notes

Meetings and Communication

1. Meeting Guidelines

- 1.1 The ultimate goal of all meetings is to contribute to a positive learning experience for DCS students.
- 1.2 Meeting leaders begin and end meetings on time, assigning a timekeeper if necessary.
- 1.3 Meeting leaders clearly state the purpose of the meeting and the expected output.
- 1.4 All participants respect the agenda.
- 1.5 Everyone at the meeting participates.
- 1.6 Participants wait to speak until recognized by the meeting leader.
- 1.7 All participants listen actively and respectfully to all expressed opinions.
- 1.8 Participants do not contribute to side conversations.
- 1.9 Meeting participants who feel they have not been heard may submit their thoughts in writing.
- 1.10 Participants leave meetings with a clear understanding of next steps, action items and responsibilities, and deadlines.
- 1.11 Participants observe safety requirements and leave the meeting room as they found it.
- 1.12 Children may not attend Community Group or Steering Committee meetings. Children may attend other committee meetings at the members' discretion, provided it does not violate guidelines for use of Carl Sandburg facilities.

2. Community Group Meetings

- 2.1 Attendance by at least one parent is required at the monthly Community Group Meetings. This time counts towards volunteer hours.
- 2.2 Meetings are held in the Sandburg gym on alternating third Wednesdays or Thursdays.
- 2.3 The first Community Meeting of the school year is held on the Thursday evening before the start of school and is combined with an Ice Cream Social. The children go with their teachers to see their classrooms while the parents meet. Afterwards, ice cream is served and the children play on the playground.
- 2.4 No meetings are held in December and June.

3. Steering Committee Meetings

- 3.1 Meetings are held in the Sandburg Teacher's Lounge on the first Thursday of each month.
- 3.2 All community members are welcome to attend at any time.

4. A majority of DCS communications comes through **Parent Organizer**, including field trip information and permission forms, Community events and classroom activities.
 - ⇒ DCS Communication Tool - Parent Organizer
5. Carl Sandburg PTSA publishes a weekly newsletter, *The Informer*, which is sent home via kid-mail on Tuesdays. It contains important information about PTSA-Sponsored programs and events, and general school news.
6. Contacting Staff and Officers
 - 6.1 All questions and concerns regarding staff, curriculum, and issues within the school day should first be directed to the child's teacher or staff involved. DCS also has a head teacher that has volunteered to be the liaison between the parents, staff, and the Sandburg Principal. The Head Teacher can answer questions regarding the right course of communication to pursue for specific situations.
 - 6.2 All questions and concerns regarding other community members should be directed to the Chairperson, Assistant Chairperson, or relevant committee chairs.
 - 6.3 The DCS Secretary is available to answer school administrative and procedural questions.
 - 6.4 The DCS Chairs, the Head Teacher, and the Sandburg Principal meet monthly to review any issues or concerns necessary.
7. Information can be sent from one parent to another via kid-mail by putting the TO: name on the front and writing a note asking that it be put in the child's cubby.
8. How Decisions Are Made
 - 8.1 Decisions for the DCS community are made at Steering Committee or Community Group Meetings.
 - 8.2 Issues impacting DCS Philosophy, Bylaws, Policies, Insurance or Financial Guidelines must be presented, with recommendations whenever possible, to the Community Group for decisions to be made. The Steering Committee is empowered to make decisions not impacting the above.
 - 8.3 To propose a change to an existing practice:
 - 8.3.1 The change recommendation and any relevant issues must first be documented and submitted to the Steering Committee, along with a request to include the proposal in an upcoming Steering Committee Meeting Agenda.
 - 8.3.2 The Steering Committee will discuss the proposal and notify the person(s) proposing the change of their decision.
 - 8.3.2.1 If the Steering Committee is in agreement, they will place the proposal on the agenda for the next Community Group Meeting. They may choose to refer the proposal to the Community Group without a recommendation.

8.3.2.2 If the Steering Committee is unable to come to a consensus on a recommendation, they must specify a process and timeline for resolution or make a conscious decision to stop the recommendation from moving further.

8.4 The Steering Committee and Community Group make decisions through a modified consensus process.

8.4.1 Typically, discussion of an issue results in a motion.

8.4.2 Once the motion is made and seconded, the chairperson asks for a show of hands for and against the issue.

8.4.3 If all members approve the motion, it passes.

8.4.4 If very few members vote against the motion, the chairperson may poll each of them to determine whether they are able to support the motion as is, or to determine what aspects of the issue remain to be resolved.

8.4.5 If many members vote against the motion, discussion continues until outstanding concerns are resolved and a new motion is made.

8.4.6 If the group defers the decision, it must specify a process and timeline for resolution. The process must include returning to the Community Group for a decision.

Volunteer Support

1. Family Expectations: Volunteering at DCS is one of the cornerstones that makes our school so successful.
 - 1.1 Each family is asked to contribute a minimum of 65 hours/year of volunteer time. All family members can contribute toward the volunteer hours.
 - 1.2 The volunteer commitment can be met through classroom assistance, field trip support, event support, committee work, attendance at Steering, Community Group, and other committee meetings.
 - 1.3 Volunteer hours are accrued from the day after the last day of a given school year until the last day of school for that year.
 - 1.4 Letters are sent throughout the school year reporting family's recorded volunteer hours to that point.
 - 1.5 At the end of the year, families that have not met their volunteer commitment will be asked to return to their home school, at the discretion of the DCS Principal, DCS Head Teacher and Co-Chairs.
- ⇒ Letter from Volunteer Coordinator
- ⇒ Family Participation Commitment

Classroom Workings

1. Discovery Community School believes in and heartily supports the Lake Washington School District Policy.
2. Life Skills - *need this list*
3. Curriculum Night
4. Student Conferences and Performance Assessment
 - 4.1 Discovery Community School teachers conference with individual students and their parents in the fall and spring. These conference allow students and parents to discuss concerns with teachers, and give teachers an opportunity to share their classroom observations.
 - 4.1.1 The fall conference is typically a goal-setting meeting.
 - 4.1.2 The spring conference is typically an assessment of the year's worth of work.
 - 4.2 Throughout the school year, students in all classrooms assemble portfolios of their work in each subject area. These portfolios are shared with parents at the spring conference.
 - 4.3 Teachers typically prepare Report Card Narratives in addition to the letter grades required by the LWSD.
 - 4.4 DCS students participate in state-mandated testing as required by the LWSD. Results are published at the end of each school year in a district-required annual report, which is distributed to all DCS families and contains other performance-related information as well. Additionally, some state-mandated testing groups supply performance results directly to families.
5. Classroom Volunteer Assistance
 - 5.1 Under teachers' direction and depending on teacher needs, parents may work with students one-on-one or in groups to reinforce academic instruction, to conduct non-academic activities, to prepare materials or to provide other teacher-requested support.
 - 5.2 Classroom volunteers work only by prior agreement with teachers and needs may vary throughout the year.
 - 5.3 Teachers depend on volunteer commitment when developing teaching plans. Parents must keep their classroom volunteer commitments or arrange for substitute volunteers if they cannot.
6. Field Trips
 - 6.1 Parent volunteers are needed to chaperone all field trips and, when buses are not used for transportation, are asked to drive. Chaperoning field trips requires prompt compliance with teacher instructions and constant focus on students' learning needs and safety.

⇒ Child Seating Information Form

⇒ LWSD Authorization for Use of Private Auto for Student Transportation Form

Sandburg Community and PTSA

1. Discovery Community School supports the Sandburg PTSA as they support us and their work benefits our children. DCS participates in all PTSA fundraising activities.

⇒ Carl Sandburg PTSA Committee Information

⇒ PTSA Carl Sandburg Membership Form

⇒ School Snacks