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DLA Learners, Parents, & Families,

Welcome to Discovery Learners’ Academy! We are so excited to have you join us!

At DLA, we choose to be brave enough to try new things, which means failing sometimes! (Hint: failure is an opportunity for massive learning!) We choose to be kind to ourselves and others, valuing every member of our community and communicating differences in a respectful way. We also choose to be curious; by always wondering about the world around us, and even about ourselves, we stay open to learning and growing. Finally, we choose to be creative, combining who we are with what we know to make new and beautiful things.

We love being a part of a school where each individual is celebrated for being themself! We cannot wait to learn and grow with you.

We hope you will find this guide helpful. Should you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to us. We are always happy to help and open to conversation.

Gratefully,

Rachel Good

Non-Discrimination Policy
DLA does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, the appointment to and termination from its Board of Directors, hiring and firing of staff or contractors, selection of volunteers, selection of vendors, and providing of services, selection of learners/families in the application process, treatment of staff, students, or their families.

Our Program/Disability clarification
Discovery Learners’ Academy follows an academically challenging model. We are willing and able to work with students with special needs if this placement is their least restrictive environment and a place in which growth towards academic independence can be achieved.

Our school setting has students working on academic goals at their independent level on computer based programs. We make accommodations to support students with executive functioning, problem solving, social skills, emotional regulation, scaffolding for academic needs and support with scheduling for students who need outside therapies. We do not have the facility, the staffing, and/or the curriculum/materials to support students who need a 1:1 program or a functional life skills track.
Hours of Operation

DLA doors open at 8:00am on school days.

Academic hours begin at 8:30am.

Academic hours end at 3:00pm.

Learners may be picked up anytime between 3:00pm-3:30pm.

Aftercare is available from 3:30-4:30 pm for $50/learner/month. You must sign up AHEAD OF TIME.

In the case that a parent or approved pick up person does not pick up a child by 3:30pm, a $1/minute late fee will be applied to their account. If you realize you will be late due to traffic or other unavoidable circumstances, please contact our office as soon as you can to let us know. Exceptions to this policy may be granted in extenuating circumstances only, and at the discretion of the Executive Director.

If a child is repeatedly not picked up by 3:30pm (more than 3 times in a semester, not counting up to 2 times if excused by ED), a conference will be requested to attempt to come to a solution. If parent(s) are unable to attend the conference, despite good faith efforts on the part of the school to accommodate reasonable schedule requests, or if no solution is found, DLA reserves the right to disenroll the child from the school immediately.
Behavior & Safety Policy

Students are entitled to work in a school setting free of harassment, intimidation, bullying, and violence. As such, DLA will maintain a safe environment free of harassment, intimidation, bullying, and violence. Additionally, DLA will not tolerate the illegal possession of weapons, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, vaping devices and/or other related paraphernalia, nor other controlled dangerous substance on any school property or at any school function on or off school property. Any violation involving these items will bring severe sanctions, and involvement of law enforcement officials should be expected.

Any person who makes a threat against another person or otherwise indicates a safety risk as determined by the school administration will not be allowed to enter the building. Once a person is barred from the building for safety reasons, he/she/they will not be allowed back without a thorough and formal review and approval by the Executive Director and the Board of Directors.

Learners’ Rights
1. Learners shall have the right to participate in a school that is physically safe from internal and external threats.
2. Learners shall have the right to learn in an environment free of harassment, intimidation, and bullying from peers or adults.
3. Learners shall have the right to be treated with kindness by their teachers & peers.
4. Learners shall have the right to expand their experiences and opportunities through a challenging program of academic and extracurricular activities.
5. Learners shall have the right to be educated in an environment that recognizes and supports their cognitive learning styles.
6. Learners shall have the right to express their opinions in a responsible manner and to take part in their education as appropriate for their age and maturity.
7. Learners shall have the right to know the rules and expectations for their behavior.

Learner Responsibilities
1. Learners shall be responsible for respecting school property, ensuring that safe conditions continue in the schools.
2. Learners shall be responsible for their behavior and shall refrain from harassing, intimidating, or bullying others.
3. Learners shall be responsible for demonstrating kindness for others through their use of appropriate language, avoiding profanity; racial and ethnic slurs; or any otherwise denigration of others through other verbal and nonverbal language or communication.
4. Learners shall be responsible for working to their potential.
5. Learners shall be responsible to accept the challenges of their classroom work and give their best efforts to complete assignments in a timely and meaningful manner.
6. Learners shall have the responsibility to speak up for themselves and be their own advocate in the classroom.
7. Learners shall have the responsibility to offer their opinions and participate in their education.

**Disciplinary Procedures**

Discipline, by definition, means to teach. Our goal is always to teach behaviors which will enable the learner to engage meaningfully with peers and adults both at DLA and elsewhere. We also have the responsibility of maintaining an environment that is safe and conducive to learning for learners, mentors, and any other staff.

Most teaching will take place within the studio, and will involve a private conference between the learner and a mentor to evaluate what has happened, what feeling or need motivated the behavior, and what replacement behaviors can fill that need while meeting the expectation of contributing to a safe and kind environment.

All learners are encouraged to take proactive breaks as needed with a range of activities, sensory items and even a change of environment if needed. In addition, staff may direct a learner to take a break if the learner is not following the expectation of being kind and safe.

Most incidences of behavior which is unkind or unsafe will be addressed through conferencing, natural consequences, and/or reparation.

In the case of repeated incidents, a formal conference will be scheduled with the mentor, learner, and Executive Director or Director of Operations for problem solving. In this case, a note will be sent to parents/guardians explaining the concern and planned resolution.

In cases which are not resolved through conferencing, teaching replacement behaviors, natural consequences, and/or reparations, a conference including parents/guardians will be scheduled.

Behaviors which create an egregiously unsafe environment including, but not limited to: hitting, kicking, harassment, threats, stabbing, biting, and running away will result in a parent conference, suspension, and/or expulsion.

Discovery Learners’ Academy team members WILL NOT restrain any learner except in cases of EXTREME safety (including, but not limited to a child running towards a road or physically attacking someone). If a child is restrained, a parent/guardian will be notified as soon as safely possible, and the child will have to be picked up immediately. This will also result in, at minimum, a one day suspension for the following school day, and may result in longer suspensions and/or expulsion.
Suspension Policy: For unsafe or recurring behaviors, learners may be suspended for up to 5 consecutive days. In order to return to school at the end of the suspension, a safety team meeting must be held prior to the child’s return, including the Executive Director, at least one of the child’s mentors, a parent/guardian, and in most cases, the child. A safety plan will be developed and utilized to ensure a successful and safe return to school. Failure to follow the plan may result in expulsion.

In case of suspension, the learner will not be allowed to attend school or extra curricular activities at or sponsored by the school for the length of the suspension, and tuition will be owed as if he/she were attending.

Expulsion Policy: While we never want to expel a learner, it is our responsibility to provide a safe learning environment for all. If a learner fails to follow a safety plan following a suspension, they may be expelled. In addition, in cases of extremely unsafe behaviors, including, but not limited to bringing a weapon to school, making a credible threat, significantly hurting another person, or leaving the building without appropriate supervision, a learner may be expelled for a first offense.

In the case of expulsion, a student will immediately be disallowed from campus and will not be allowed to attend school sponsored activities. Tuition will be due in full up to and including the current month. No additional/future month tuition will be due, and any prepaid tuition for future months will be returned within 30 days.

Attendance
Students are expected to be in school on a regular basis. Excessive absence from school or habitual tardiness may lead to sanctions and disciplinary actions, loss of credit, and/or referral to proper authorities.

In the case of necessary absences, including, but not limited to illness, family emergency, and family vacations, please notify the school administration with as much advance notice as possible, and at a minimum, by the start of school, 8:30am, on the day the student will be absent.
Dress Code

DLA respects learners’ rights to express themselves in the way they dress. Learner attire should facilitate participation in learning as well as the health and safety of students and the adults that supervise them. This policy is intended to provide guidance for learners, staff, and parents.

- Clothing must cover areas from one armpit across to the other armpit, down to approximately 3 to 4 inches in length on the upper thighs. Tops must have shoulder straps. Rips or tears in clothing should be lower than the 3 to 4 inches in length requirement.
- Shoes must be worn at all times and should be safe for the school environment.
- See-through or mesh garments must not be worn without appropriate coverage underneath that meet the minimum requirements of the dress code.
- Clothing may not depict, imply, advertise, or advocate illegal, violent, or lewd conduct, weapons, or the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other controlled substances.
- Clothing may not depict or imply pornography, nudity, or sexual acts.
- Clothing may not display or imply vulgar, discriminatory, or obscene language or images.
- Colors, bandanas nor other items etc. affiliated with gangs will not be allowed.
- Learners are not allowed to wear items that cover their entire face.
- Clothing may not state, imply, or depict hate speech/imagery targeting groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, or any other protected class.

The administration reserves the right to determine what constitutes appropriate dress. Learners who do not adhere to these guidelines will not be allowed to attend class. Parents will be called if appropriate clothing is not available or the learner refuses dress-code appropriate clothing.

All Articles on Campus Search Policy

All articles on campus, including, but not limited to: lockers, backpacks, lunchboxes, purses, pockets, water bottles, and other containers are subject to search at DLA team discretion.
School Staff Contact Information and Communication Policy

Our office phone number is 423-708-2621.

You can email us at:

rachel@dlachatt.org  amy@dlachatt.org  kayla@dlachatt.org  ashley@dlachatt.org  
lisa@dlachatt.org  kara@dlachatt.org  becca@dlachatt.org

In addition, you will receive a parent code for our communication software at the beginning of the school year. We will use this to share your learner’s work and to communicate with you during the day about non-urgent things.

You can expect:

Emails or phone calls to be responded to within 1 school day (24 hours, not including weekends).

Your requests for an appointment to be responded to within 1 school day (24 hours, not including weekends), and scheduled in a reasonable amount of time (typically within 1 week, excluding school breaks/holidays).

Notification if there is a single serious issue or an ongoing problem involving your child.

Two conferences a year to discuss your learners’ progress, as well as additional conferences or calls as needed.

Please do not expect:

Staff returning a call after work hours.
Staff answering email in the evening/weekends.
Access to Staff’s private phone number or email.

Please contact your child’s mentor if there are:
Changes in family situations (divorce, new baby, move).
Medical issues that arise or change.
Safety issues, change in behavior at home.
Family emergencies, sleepless nights, play dates, appointments (send a note).
Ongoing and pervasive problems/concerns at school or home.
When you can’t keep a scheduled appointment.

When you have last minute information for the mentor:
Send a note on Remind.
Call the office and leave a message for the teacher.
Procedure if you have an issue or concern with the school, a staff member, or an incident that occurs at school:
Step 1-Please schedule a call or conference with your child’s mentor, or the specific staff member who was most directly involved. Depending on the concern and age of the child, you may or may not include your child in the conference.

Step 2-If the issue is not resolved or needs further attention, please schedule a call or conference with the Executive Director. Please note that all involved staff will be invited to participate in this conference unless decided otherwise ahead of time by parent/guardian and Executive Director.

Step 3-Should you have concerns with the Executive Director you may submit your concerns in writing to the Board of Directors. Attn: Board of Directors, DLA 4315 Brainerd Rd. Chattanooga, TN 37411 or to the president of the board: doug@dlachatt.org.

Please note: A mentor’s role during the day is to focus on your child as well as the other children in their room. This is not the time for a conference. Keep any reminders or needed information under 3 minutes. Ask to speak to one of the administrators if it is an emergency.

Enrollment Policy
DLA welcomes all children in Chattanooga and the surrounding area. We welcome students throughout the year, and accept admissions on a rolling basis. Admittance for any student will include consideration of all academic records and reports, along with prior disciplinary records.

Our enrollment process is simple.
1st: Submit a prospective family form on our website: dlachatt.org/apply
2nd: A staff member will contact you to set up a meeting (virtual or over the phone)
3rd: An in person tour with family members and student is scheduled
4th: Enrollment packet and fee collected.

Enrollment is limited to the number of spots available, based on teacher-student ratios and classroom space. Our admissions happen on a first come, first served, rolling basis. However, if we are at full capacity, our waitlist will give priority in the following manner: 1st priority to staff children. 2nd priority to siblings/members of the same household of current siblings. 3rd priority to all other applicants in the order a completed application and enrollment fee are received.

DLA admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship programs, and other school-administered programs.
Grading and Retention Policy

All children learn at their own rate, and are encouraged to do so. DLA utilizes progress reports to document learners’ progress towards academic goals, using the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as benchmarks. At the end of each semester (at the end of the third and sixth units), parents will be provided with a summary of their learners’ progress in reading, writing, and math.

Learners will meet regularly with a mentor (staff) to set and monitor academic goals. Parents will be notified on an as needed basis if learners are not making progress toward their individual goals.

In addition, third through twelfth grade students will participate in a nationally normed assessment once each year. Once available, learners’ score reports will be shared with parents.

Our mixed age cohorts and individualized model allow for flexibility with learners’ academic skills. However, we reserve the right to place a learner in the cohort which best meets their learning needs. Should a change in cohort be recommended by the DLA team, families will be notified and brought into the conversation before final placement.
Immunization Policy

Children enrolling in our Primary Studio (4 year olds) must have proof of the following immunizations (as required by the TN Department of Health):

- Hepatitis B (HBV)
- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DTaP, or DT if appropriate)
- Poliomyelitis (IPV or OPV)
- Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) - age younger than 5 years only
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) - age younger than 5 years only
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella - 1 dose of each, normally given together as MMR
- Varicella - 1 dose or credible history of disease
- Hepatitis A - 1 dose, required by 18 months of age or older

Children enrolling in our Primary Studio (5-6 year olds) must have proof of the following immunizations (as required by the TN Department of Health):

- Hepatitis B (HBV)
- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DTaP, or DT if appropriate)
- Poliomyelitis (IPV or OPV) - final dose on or after the 4th birthday
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella - 2 doses of each, usually given together as MMR
- Varicella - 2 doses or credible history of disease
- Hepatitis A - total of 2 doses, spaced at least 6 - 18 months apart

All children entering 7th Grade (including currently enrolled students) must have proof of the following immunizations (as required by the TN Department of Health):

- Tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis booster (Tdap) - evidence of one Tdap dose given before 7th grade entry (administered at or after age 10) is required regardless of Td history

Children who are new enrollees in a TN school in grades other than Kindergarten must have proof of the following immunizations (as required by the TN Department of Health):

- Hepatitis B (HBV)
- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DTaP, or DT if appropriate)
- Poliomyelitis (IPV or OPV) - final dose on or after the 4th birthday
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella - 2 doses of each, normally given together as MMR
- Varicella - 2 doses or credible history of disease
New students entering grades other than 7th grade are not required to have Tdap

**Recommended (not required) Vaccines:**

Some vaccines against serious childhood diseases are recommended for all children, but are not required for school attendance. These include vaccines against influenza, and, beginning at age 11, meningococcal disease. All children should be age-appropriately immunized with all recommended vaccines to prevent these serious childhood infections.

**Children with medical or religious exemption to requirements**

*Medical* - Physicians (MD or DO) or Public Health Nurses are authorized to indicate specific vaccines medically exempted (because of risk of harm) on the certificate. Other vaccines remain required. The medical reason for the exemption does not need to be provided.

*Religious* - This exemption requires a signed statement by the parent/guardian that vaccination conflicts with their religious tenets or practices. If the child needs documentation of a health examination for the school, it must be noted by the healthcare provider on the immunization certificate. In that case, the provider should check the box in section 1a. that the parent has sought a religious exemption to explain why immunization information is absent or incomplete.

**Minimum ages or dose intervals** - Tennessee follows published CDC guidelines. For vaccines with critical minimum age requirements (e.g., MMR, varicella) or minimum dose intervals, doses are considered valid if given up to 4 days before the minimum age or dose interval. Doses administered more than 4 days early are considered invalid and should be repeated as recommended.

Injectable or nasally administered live vaccines not administered on the same day should be administered at least 4 weeks apart. The 4-day "grace period" should not be applied to the 28-day interval between injectable or nasally administered live vaccines not administered at the same visit. If injectable or nasally administered live vaccines are separated by less than 4 weeks, the second vaccine administered should not be counted as a valid dose and should be repeated. The repeat dose should be administered at least 4 weeks after the last invalid dose.

**Alternative proof of immunity for certain diseases** - A positive serology (year of test documented) is acceptable as an alternative to immunization for measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis A, hepatitis B or varicella. For varicella, documentation of provider diagnosed varicella or provider-verified credible history of disease given by a parent or guardian also is acceptable. By documenting a history of disease, the provider is asserting that he or she is convinced that the child has had chickenpox.
Cell Phone/Electronics Policy

Cell phones are allowed on campus, but may not stay on a learner’s person during school hours. Cell phones will be stored in provided locations within the classroom. In certain cases, including, but not limited to, emergency situations, students will be permitted to access their phones to contact parents if it is safe and feasible to do so. Phones should be on silent, airplane mode, or powered off during the school day.

Parents needing to contact their children during the day should contact the DLA office at 423-708-2621.

Other electronics are not allowed without special permission.

Cell phones, and any other electronics brought from home (with or without permission) are not the responsibility of DLA or DLA employees or volunteers. We are not liable for any damaged or stolen electronics. Families assume all risks should learners bring these devices to school.

A Chromebook or other similar device will be provided for all learners in the elementary, middle, and high school studios to use for educational purposes. These devices will remain at school/on the DLA campus and will not be sent home.

Homework Policy

We have a no homework policy. We believe that learners should spend their evenings with family and playing or participating in other meaningful activities.

The Exception
Should your high schooler elect to participate in dual credit/enrollment courses, there may be homework associated with these classes. Also, if a high school student is behind and needs to catch up in order to graduate on time, they may opt to do work outside of school.