

## EARLY DISCOVERIES INFANT & TODDLER PHILOSOPHY

The infant/toddler program at Discovery Tree is designed for children as young as six weeks through toddler age twenty-four months. The environments have been carefully planned to ensure that every child is surrounded by care, safety, stimulation, enrichment and love. The basic premise of our philosophy supports treating infants and toddlers as individuals and with respect. Theories of Child Development show that infants follow a series of developmental milestones based upon each child's individual rate of growth. Therefore, our program and activities provide for and encourage your child to explore independently as well as interacting with each other and their Teacher/Educators. Discovery Tree employees are professionals who exceed the state licensing requirements for Early Childhood Educators/Infant Caregivers. Our Teacher/Educators work closely with parents so that consistency can be maintained between school and home.



In an effort to further explain our developmental philosophy at Discovery Tree, we would like to share some facts regarding infant development. Infants develop in predictable stages, and yet at their own rate. We believe that it is critical to the child's physical and emotional development to not rush their growth. For instance, infants typically roll over before they can scoot or crawl, crawl before they can sit up unassisted, and later stand and walk. This is one of several reasons that we believe it is detrimental to development to prop or sit children up before they can do so on their own. We feel that being on the floor allows them the opportunity to explore their bodies capabilities as well as limitations. A child who cannot reach a sitting position on their own, has not yet developed the muscles in their abdomen and back to support that position and also leaves them unable to get out of that position. To further infant development we provide many stimulating floor activities, including a variety of climbing and crawling mats, soft climbing, activity gyms, crawling toys, low mirrors and other forms of tactile stimulation.

Children of all ages obtain such a feeling of accomplishment upon conquering these early tasks on their own, this in turn enhances their self-esteem. We feel that providing a safe and nurturing environment are our utmost concerns, but we firmly believe in fostering and encouraging independence in infants and children.

### Infants



Early Discoveries uses the R.I.E. philosophy. This philosophy is based upon the idea of a nonrestrictive, non-propping environment, thereby allowing infants to develop their motor skills at their own rate. Consequently, children are not placed in positions or situations which they cannot get into or out of by themselves, nor will be placed into restrictive devices such as highchairs or swings. Such devices prohibit an infant from exploring his/her body - both its capabilities and limitations.

The infant program is intended to stimulate your infant along individual developmental lines. Each child follows their own program/schedule, desires, needs and preferences. Sleeping feeding and diapering schedules are communicated daily via Daily Reports through our Parent Engagement App.

## R.I.E (Resources for Infant Educators)

Our Philosophy is based on the R.I.E. Philosophy. Not just infants and toddlers, but for all people. In order to foster quality care RIE encourages:

- ❑ Basic trust in the child to be an initiator, an explorer, and a self-learner.
- ❑ An environment for the child that is physically safe, cognitively challenging, and emotionally nurturing.
- ❑ Time for uninterrupted play.
- ❑ Freedom to explore and interact with other children.
- ❑ Involvement of the child in all care activities to allow the child to become an active participant rather than a passive recipient.
- ❑ Sensitive observation of the child in order to understand his and her needs.
- ❑ Consistency, clearly defined limits and expectations to develop discipline.



## Ten Easy Steps to R.I. E. Philosophy

There are not easy steps to anything in this life that is really worthwhile. R.I.E. is respect, synchrony, and quality.

- ❑ DO involve the infant in caretaking chores (such as diapering).
- ❑ DON'T just distract him so that you can get the job done faster.
- ❑ DO invest in quality time when you are totally available to the infant.
- ❑ DON'T settle for constant time together when you are only half there.
- ❑ DO respect the baby as an individual.
- ❑ DON'T treat him as a cute, empty-headed doll to be manipulated.
- ❑ DO learn the baby's system of communication and teach him yours.
- ❑ DON'T underestimate his ability to communicate.
- ❑ DO be honest about your feelings.
- ❑ DON'T pretend to feel something you don't.
- ❑ DO invest in the time and energy to build human relationships and the baby's personality.
- ❑ DON'T strive just to make the baby smart.
- ❑ DO build security for the baby by teaching trust.
- ❑ DON'T teach distrust by putting the baby in situations where he can't depend on you.
- ❑ DO worry about the quality of development in each stage.
- ❑ DON'T worry about reaching development milestones in a hurry.
- ❑ DO model the behavior you want to teach.
- ❑ DON'T preach.
- ❑ DO let a baby learn to solve his own problems.



## The Transitioning Infant/Toddler

Part of Discovery Tree's developmental philosophy is that we, as teachers really strive to meet your child's changing developmental needs. The infant who is beginning to transition to our toddler program will typically exhibit a number of these behavioral cues:

- is beginning to eat table foods and is showing less interest in baby foods
- is weaning from a bottle to a cup
- napping on a more consistent, daily sleep schedule (generally 1 nap a day)
- begins to show more interest in the social aspects of eating (wants to eat with their friends)
- can get into and out of the eating chairs with little or no assistance
- wants to feed herself/himself
- is typically around 12 months of age
- can stand by pulling up and is beginning to walk
- shows more interest in the higher activity level in the toddler program than in the infant area

These cues are a flexible guideline that the teachers and director use in making a decision in appropriate timing for transitioning. Ongoing parent communication is very important at this time as well as on a daily basis. Please feel free to talk to the teachers in your child's room about any questions or concerns you may have at this time.

## Toddlers



The toddler requires a delicate balance of freedom and adult supervision as their self-help progresses into autonomy. Songs, books, music, art and larger climbing equipment are added for the transitioning toddlers. While personal attention is our first concern, we encourage safe, gentle interactions between toddlers as their social awareness unfolds. Self-concept, independence, and imagination blossom during the toddler years. We offer tactile and sensory experiences to stimulate this stage of development. Water play, pudding painting, shaving cream, etc. are only a sample of what is available.

Toddlers from twelve months up to twenty-four months have very specific needs. Toddlers can have a fickle attention span and an endless interest in newness and change. The toddler program is dependent on the Teacher 'direction' in the children's play. Adult interaction and facilitation is essential to the teaching and reteaching of prosocial behaviors, Discovery Tree's most central goal. Adult interaction also allows the program to accelerate into more interesting types of discovery and play.

Toddlers come together as a group, strengthening social skills and complimenting the attachment group philosophy. However, toddlers are known for their parallel play and given many opportunities to explore their own interests. The age and development skills of the toddler range vastly, therefore, the activities

planned are simple in concept. This simplicity allows the children to initiate more complex play at their particular level of readiness.

Staff will communicate daily with parents concerning feeding, sleeping and diapering schedules.

In the Toddler Room, we try to make the children feel comfortable, just as if they were at home.

### **Infant/Toddler Ratios**

Discovery Tree maintains a staff/teacher-to-infant/toddler ratio of 1 to 3 for a majority of our day, and 1 to 4 during opening and closing hours.

