



Parent Handbook

2025-2026

IRWIN COMMUNITY CENTER
18120 S. Highland Ave, Homewood, IL
708.957.7275 | hfparks.com

Registration & Payments

Welcome

Dear Parents: On behalf of the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and your child to Discovery Preschool.

This parent handbook has been designed as an aid for you. It contains all relevant information concerning Discovery Preschool. Please read through it carefully.

The Discovery Preschool team looks forward to working with you and your child during the upcoming year. It is our hope that your child's experience with us, and the friends they make within our program, provide them with a solid social and developmental foundation for the years to come in school. If you should ever have any questions, concerns, or comments, please contact Devin Frendreis at the Irwin Center 708-957-7275 or dfrendreis@hfparks.org

Sincerely,
Devin Frendreis
Recreation Supervisor

Philosophy

Play is an amazing way to teach young learners and to cultivate a lifetime love for learning. Discovery Preschool teachers focus on learning through play, games, crafts, physical activity and more. Preschoolers will learn the fundamentals to prepare them for the years ahead. According to Leong and Bodrova, play "...is linked to growth in memory, self-regulation, oral language, and symbol recognition. Play has also been linked to increased literacy skills and academic capabilities in other areas."

Registration Procedures

Tuition Payments are automatically processed online through SmartRec. Monthly installments are due on the 20th day of the month, prior to the start date of the program. Program costs are added for the entire year and divided evenly between Sept.-May. Even if your child misses days, you are still responsible for the regular rate. The Park District makes preparations based on the number of students enrolled.

Pay in Full

When registering before August 26, if you choose to pay for the entire school year at the time of registration, you will receive a 5% rebate.. This is processed the after the first installment bill (September 20).

Automatic Credit Card Billing

By signing up for this option, you give us permission to charge your credit card on the due date for each payment. Your registration fee will be due at the time of sign up. Payments are charged to this card on the 20th of the month through SmartRec.

Registration & Payments³

Late Payments

It is your responsibility to make sure the card we have on file is up to date. Late payments are subject to a \$25 late fee per child, per program. The last day to make a late payment and maintain enrollment is three business days before the start of the next month (see chart below). Failure to make payment by this date will result in forfeiting your spot in the program. If you do not pay by three business days before the end of the month you will need to re-register and wait three business days to rejoin, if space is available.

Important Reminders

Payment needs to take place during the business day. Do not use the Goldberg mail slot or slide payments under the Irwin Center's door.

Payment	Due	Last day to pay & maintain enrollment
1 st Payment	Upon registration	N/A
2 nd Payment	Sept 20	5 P.M. September 23
3 rd Payment	Oct 20	5 P.M. October 23
4 th Payment	Nov 22	5 P.M. November 22
5 th Payment	Dec 20	5 P.M. December 23
6 th Payment	Jan 20	5 P.M. January 23
7 th Payment	Feb 20	5 P.M. February 24
8 th Payment	March 20	5 P.M. March 24
9 th Payment	April 20	5 P.M. April 23

Registration is open year-round as long as space is available.

This is the last day to pay and start on the first day of classes.

Space is limited; and you may be subject to waitlist if your payment is not submitted by the last day to pay and maintain enrollment.

Inside The Classroom

Teacher Communication

Families may contact their child's preschool teachers by calling the Irwin Center and leaving a voicemail. Our instructors do their best to avoid returning calls during instructional time, but will contact you before or after class. Families may also contact their child's preschool instructors by email. Instructors have limited access to email and will do their best to respond to emails before leaving preschool for the day. If you have a pressing concern, please call or email the Recreation Supervisor, Devin Frendreis at dfrendreis@hfparks.org or 1-708-957-7275

Discovery 2s Teachers: Discoveryteacher2@hfparks.com

Discovery 3s Teachers: Discoveryteacher3@hfparks.com

Discovery 4s Teachers: Discoveryteacher4@hfparks.com

Discovery Preschool School Supplies Required

Please see website for classroom specific school supplies.

www.hfparks.com Under Discovery Preschool

All students must have the following items:

- Plastic Container or Shoe Box
- 1 4x6 photo of your child doing what they love (Swimming, hiking, playing etc)
- 1 8x10 photo of their family
- 1 4x6 photo of your child for their cubby
- Labeled water bottle
- Backpack
- Healthy **Peanut Free** Snack for 3s and 4s

Conferences and Progress Reports

Discovery Preschool teachers will routinely assess each child's development. Instructors will complete progress reports in the fall and in the spring. In addition to progress reports, conferences will be held in November in order to discuss your child's development, learning, and kindergarten readiness if applicable. Conference sign-up information will be communicated to parents via e-mail in late October.

Family Involvement

Family involvement in Discovery Preschool is important as it allows parents/guardians to gain an understanding of the program while showing the child that they value the school, the teachers, and the classroom community.

Parents/Guardians who have a special talent or career and would like to provide a preschool learning experience may contact Devin Frendreis to make arrangements.

Parking at Irwin Center

All vehicles must be parked in a legal parking space. It is not permissible to stop, park, or drop off in the fire lane or circle drive. Parking regulations will be monitored and strictly enforced; your cooperation is appreciated as it helps maintain a safer environment for all patrons and preschoolers.

Class Arrival and Dismissal

Teachers will open the door for drop-off a few minutes before the start of class time. Arrival activities are an important component of the daily schedule. Arriving promptly to preschool ensures that your child can fully participate in the arrival sequence and also reduces class disruptions. Students **MUST** be checked-in by 8:45am (Four Year Olds) 12:30pm (Three Year Old PM) 9:00 for the (Three Year Olds) and 9:15am for the Two Year Olds. Students and one parent/caregiver should approach the main door of their child's preschool building,

Please understand that when one parent/guardian lingers or peeks in the classroom, it is a distraction and can be upsetting for other children in the classroom. Classroom doors will be locked after the start of class. Children may experience separation anxiety at the beginning of the session or throughout the year. If your child experiences difficulty at drop off, please wait in your car for fifteen minutes. Teachers can typically comfort an upset child and engage him/her in an activity within ten minutes. If the child has not been comforted or engaged in activities within ten minutes, the teacher will seek assistance from the parent/guardian. Children must be checked-out promptly at the end of class by a parent/guardian or an authorized individual.

Classroom Communication

Discovery preschool staff are looking forward to providing your child with a positive and rewarding preschool experience. We hope to establish mutual relationships with each child and family. Your child will frequently come home with a note and/or project. Check your child's backpack on a daily basis in order to remain informed about classroom activities. Parents will be instructed to download the Homeroom app to view photos, notes and videos of their child's classroom experience. As a user of the app, you can "like" posts and download photos. Instructors will post photos, announcements, and reminders on a daily basis. The app invitation will be sent to the email account on file with the registration office. Families may not use the app for marketing or advertisement purposes.

Program Guidelines

Pick-Up Policy

All children must be signed out at the end of the day. **Children will only be released to parents/guardians or individuals listed on the Child Information Form.**

If you wish to authorize additional people to pick up your child, their contact information must be provided on the Child Information Form or in writing. Please be aware and inform anyone, including a parent/guardian, who picks up your child that they may be asked to show photo identification.

While we will always attempt to follow parental wishes, the Park District cannot prevent a parent or guardian from picking up their child unless there is a restraining order in place. Please provide the Recreation Supervisor or Teacher with any custody information so that our staff is fully informed.

H-F Park District Mission

To enhance the quality of life through diverse recreational opportunities, facilities and parks while caring for the environment.

Go Green

The Homewood-Flossmoor Park District loves being green! We want to encourage our campers to be green by bringing reusable water bottles and low-waste snacks to preschool.

Allergies & Snack Donations

What Nut-Free Means at Discovery Preschool

Discovery as made a commitment to follow nut-free guidelines for the safety and health of all our students. We need each student, teacher and parent to help us make Preschool a safer place for kids who have food allergies.

NO

- outside food with nuts
- peanut butter
- granola bars, snacks, candy or treats with nuts
- packaged foods with labels that read “may contain traces of tree nuts”

YES

- all kinds of sandwiches that don’t have nuts
 - soy butter, sun butter and non-nut butters
 - packaged foods with labels that do not have nuts listed in the ingredients
- packaged foods with labels that read “produced in a facility where tree nuts may be present”

Forgot Snack?

Sign up to donate a bulk snack so no child goes hungry! Please speak with your classroom teacher to see what needs they might have. Please contact your classroom teacher directly to see what needs their classroom might have.

Inside The Classroom

Discovery Preschool teachers will use ISBE guidelines and a modified Preschool For All schedule for their daily schedule.

Greeting/Departing

- Each student should receive an individual greeting upon entry to the room. This should include using the child's name, providing a greeting in their primary language, giving a smile or physical contact, and asking something personal about them (e.g., How was your dance class?). Students should also be given time to talk informally with the teacher.
- Each student should be given a farewell at departure time.
- Appropriate greeting and farewell practices help students feel welcome, build relationships with parents, and help the transition from school to home and home to school. This also provides a safety component so staff is aware of who dropped off/picked up students and who is present in the classroom.



Interest Centers/Creative Play

- The program plans purposeful, high interest, developmentally appropriate learning activities that support all domains of development and emphasize language and higher level thinking skills. Interest centers allow children to carry out their individual plans and choices, to move freely between centers, and to use materials in open-ended and creative ways.
- Three to five choices of different items within each center are present. Adults are actively involved in interest centers, initiating meaningful interactions, asking open-ended questions to prompt thinking, reinforcing vocabulary and concept development, and promoting positive social interactions among children.

Gross Motor

- Gross motor activities are scheduled daily and take place outdoors whenever weather permits. Each school district/program typically has policies relating to temperatures and outdoor play.
- Gross motor activities are provided for 30 (half-day programs)
- Gross motor activities include a balance of planned play and spontaneous/free play.
- Children have daily access to both age-appropriate stationary outdoor equipment and portable equipment (tricycles, wagons, sleds, balls, sand/digging toys, garden toys, bubbles, chalk, etc.).
- A variety of gross motor activities are offered to support a range of physical skills such as running, jumping, skipping, climbing, ball handling, etc.

Whole Group

- Whole group time includes when all children are participating in the activity.
- Whole group should be limited to short periods of time with activities that are age appropriate and meet the needs of all children, as whole group settings are not the best way for children of this age to learn.
- Teachers should monitor the length of time of whole group through student engagement. If students appear bored or are not paying attention, the time should be shortened.

Source: <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Preschool-For-All.aspx>

Inside The Classroom

Discovery Preschool teachers will use ISBE guidelines and a modified Preschool For All schedule for their daily schedule.

Transitions

- The number and duration of transitions throughout the day should be kept to a minimum (less than three minutes) and are planned to align with children's attention spans and developmental abilities.
- Whenever possible, efforts are made to avoid or minimize waiting time (such as waiting in line or waiting for all children to finish an activity) and interactive activities (songs, finger plays, movement) are utilized to support children during transitions. Routines can be completed in small groups to minimize wait time as well.
- Expectations for transitions are clearly communicated in advance and positively reinforced so that children understand the expectations.
- Transition routines and procedures are taught and reviewed regularly so that the process is both smooth and safe.
- Adults support children during transitions, such as cleanup time or moving from one activity to another, with positively stated reminders and guidance

Toileting

- Children must be able to understand explanations, commands, and responses, and express their own feelings about toilet use in order to learn about using the toilet.

Best Practices

- Provides for interactive/hands-on learning that promotes the child's construction of learning
Allows for concept learning and skill development in an integrated and natural way
- Allows for active learning and permits children to frequently make their own meaningful choices
- Provides opportunities to explore and inquire instead of focusing on "right" answers or "right" ways to complete a task

Source: <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Preschool-For-All.aspx>

Enrichment:

Children attending Discovery enrichment sessions, lunch bunch, or the 3 year old PM program will be walked by a Discovery staff member to the appropriate location of the program.

Students enrolled in both AM and PM programming will attend Lunch Bunch in lunch bunch room located downstairs in the PAR.

Please have your child's lunch made daily (Monday-Thursday) for Lunch Bunch.

The Park District does not supply lunches for students.

Staff:

Our teaching staff have worked with Preschool for a number of years

Our goal is to maintain a maximum student to staff ratio

Our ratios for the programs are as follows:

2 year olds—12 students max | 2 staff

3 year olds— 15 students max | 2 staff

3 year olds PM— 15 students max | 2 staff

4 year olds AM—15 students max | 2 staff

3-4 year old program will operate with 1 staff if under student ratio

Inclusion Services

Homewood-Flossmoor Park District is committed to promoting and encouraging positive interactions among participants with and without disabilities. Staff members are available to assist participants with accommodations needed for success in and enjoyment of our programs in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. To request inclusion services, please contact:

Program Supervisor:

Devin Frendreis - dfrendreis@hfparks.com | 1-708-759-7275

Policies & Procedures

Drop-Off Policy

Each child must be walked into preschool and checked in with the staff. No students may be dropped off prior to the start time of preschool.

Pick-Up Policy

All children must be signed out at the end of the day. **Children will only be released to parents/guardians or individuals listed on the Child Information Form.** If you wish to authorize additional people to pick up your child, their contact information must be provided on the Child Information Form or in writing. Please be aware and inform anyone, including a parent, who picks up your child that he or she may be asked to show photo identification.

While we will always attempt to follow parental wishes, the Park District cannot prevent a parent from picking up his or her child unless there is a restraining order in place. Please provide the Recreation Supervisor with any custody information so that our staff is fully informed.

Toilet Training

The different ages of preschool have different requirements regarding being toilet trained. We do encourage everyone to be toilet trained as soon as possible. Here are the following guidelines:

Two Year Olds

Toilet training is not required

Three Year Olds

Must be independently toilet trained

Four– Year Olds

Must be independently toilet trained

Children enrolled in Discovery Preschool must be able to use the restroom independently. The routine use of diapers or pull-ups is not permitted. Children should wear clothing that aids in bathroom independence (avoid difficult belts, buttons, and one-piece outfits). Children are able to use the restroom as needed and if necessary will be prompted by a teacher to take a restroom break. Children do not need to wait for classroom restroom breaks. Occasionally preschoolers will have a toileting accident. If your child has a toileting accident while at school, a parent/caregiver will be contacted, and the child will need to be picked-up from class at that time. Preschool instructors are not responsible for changing soiled clothing; however, they will do their best to verbally direct the child and follow-up with a phone call home. A parent/guardian or caring adult must be available within fifteen minutes to come and change/assist your child.

Emergency Closings

The Discovery Preschool will not operate when District #153 schools are closed for snow days or other emergencies. For information on school closing, check local radio stations, school districts web sites or emergencyschoolclosing.com.

Classroom Information

Clothing/Backpacks

Please dress your child practically and appropriately. We will be painting and playing outdoors, so dress your child in casual play clothes. Please send your child to school with a backpack everyday. We will be sending home frequent notes and projects.

Please note: It is required that a second change of clothes be kept in the classroom in the case a change of clothes is necessary. Please make sure that the set of clothes kept in the classroom continues to be seasonally appropriate. Keep these clothes in a Ziploc bag with your child's first and last name on it.

Field Trips/In-House Programs/Special Events

Throughout the school year, we will have many special events including field trips, in house programs, parent/child activities, guest readers, and holiday/theme parties. More details will be available closer to the events.

Snacks

Our daily routine includes a healthy snack. Each child will bring their own snack and a personal water bottle. A list of healthy snacks will be provided.

Food Allergies

For everyone's safety, our preschool classrooms have been designated as "nut-restricted" although we cannot guarantee that nuts/nut products will not be brought into the classroom. This means we attempt to avoid nuts, peanut butter, and foods containing peanut oils, of foods processed on machines that also process foods made with nuts from entering the classroom during preschool hours.

* snack time will not be given the Two Year Old Program

Giving Tree

We always welcome the donations of items such as baby wipes, Kleenex, and antibacterial soap. Your teacher can provide you with a list of any specific items that we need in each classroom.

Birthday Celebrations

Each classroom will celebrate birthdays for each child during the school year. All summer birthdays will be celebrated at the end of the school year. Unless the whole class is invited to a child's party being held outside of preschool, please do not use class time to deliver invitations. If you are interested in having your child celebrate their birthday with the class, please view the snack list for appropriate birthday treats. Items not listed on here will not be permitted. We also encourage instead of food, small goody bags not containing food to ensure all children get to enjoy in the festivities. Please contact the teacher to make arrangements. There are certain guidelines we must adhere to, but we would love to celebrate with your child!

Behavior Expectations

Behavior Expectations

The goal of the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District is to create a safe and nurturing environment where children can build friendships, grow, play and have fun. It is at the discretion of the Preschool Teacher to implement the discipline procedures and the discretion of the Recreation Supervisor to suspend a child in violation of the behavior expectations. The H-F Park District appreciates your cooperation and understanding of our behavior expectations. Please direct any questions to your child's Preschool Teacher or the Recreation Supervisor.

1. Respect others

- Listen to staff and guests
- Keep hands to self
- Give personal space to others

2. Respect Property

- Use supplies, playground equipment and facility space appropriately
- Use respectful language
- Use manners
- Use kind words
- Talk through disagreements

3. Respect the environment

- Pick up after yourself and others

4. Respect yourself and your time in the program

- Make good choices so that you are able to enjoy all that the program offers

***Leave all electronics at home. The Park District assumes no responsibility for lost, broken or stolen personal property.**

***General Information on these policies is located in our Choices Guide .**

Discipline Procedures:

First Infraction:	Warning, age-appropriate timeout, parent notification
Second Infraction:	One day suspension, parent conference with Teacher and Recreation Supervisor
Third Infraction:	Two day suspension, parent conference with Teacher and Recreation Supervisor
Fourth Infraction:	One week suspension (no refunds)
Fifth Infraction:	Dismissal from program

Parent Conferences

If a child consistently displays unacceptable behavior during classes, parents may be asked to attend a conference with the Recreation Supervisor and/or the Preschool Teacher. Parents may also request a conference to discuss any concerns. Please feel free to ask questions at any time. We believe that open communication between parents and staff is essential for your child's success and happiness.

Specific Needs

If your child has any specific needs, check the appropriate box on the Child Information Form. Our goal is that everyone fully enjoys the preschool experience. Our staff will work with South Suburban Special Recreation Association (SSSRA) and parents when special accommodations

Illness & Medication

Illness

Make sure you have a plan in place in case your child becomes ill while at preschool. If you will be unavailable, please have someone lined up who is able to care for your child. This is important for the well being and comfort of your child as well as all of the other students and staff.

It is the parent's responsibility to verify her/his child's daily health is adequate before bringing her/him to preschool. A child who shows signs of illness should stay home for the benefit of all. If your child is exposed to a communicable disease, you must notify us immediately for the protection of the students and staff.

If a child becomes ill or injured while in class, his/her parent will be notified immediately. Staff will follow the directions stated on the Child Information Form concerning your physician and others who are to be notified if a parent or guardian is unavailable.

A doctor's note is required for readmitting a child after the following illnesses: Strep Throat, Ringworm and Pink Eye. A physician should diagnose any child who experiences symptoms of a contagious disease. If you have any questions regarding an illness, please call in advance before dropping off your child.

Medication Dispensing

If your child requires medication during the time they are in our care, please notify the Park District and complete the **Medical Information Form**. The Medical Information Form is available during registration, from the teacher or on the Park District website at hfparks.com under Forms and Resources.

Health Care Policies

The Park District is not licensed for the care of sick children. Staff have the authority to refuse any child who shows signs of illness using the following guidelines:

- **Temperature of 100 degrees:**
A child who is ill may not be at camp, even if controlled by medicine.
- **Vomiting:**
A child who vomits will be sent home immediately.
- **Strep throat:**
A child must take antibiotics for 24 hrs before returning
- **Diarrhea:**
A child who has diarrhea twice in one day will be sent home.
- **Chicken Pox:**
A child must remain home until all blisters have dried and formed scabs. This usually is 7-10 days after the pox began.
- **Ringworm:**
Children may return 24 hours after starting treatment. The ringworm must be covered until no longer visible.
- **Pink Eye:**
A child with pink eye or conjunctivitis will be sent home. Children may return after 3 doses of drops for re-admittance.
- **Head Lice:**
A child must remain at home until the first treatment is completed, with no further active lice or nits seen.

Late Pick– Up Policy

If you are running late, please call 708.957.7275. If you are stuck in traffic or unable to pick up your child for any reason, please contact someone on your Child Information Form to pick them up.

Our late pick-up policy is as follows:

Late Pick-Up Policy: If you are going to be late, please call the Irwin Center or Irons Oaks and they will contact your child's teacher. The first late pick-up will result in a \$10 late fee if within 10 minutes. If child is picked up late a second time and so forth you will be charged \$1 per minute.

This late fee will be added to your SmartRec account and must be paid prior to your child returning to the program. If you pick-up your child consistently late the child may be removed from the program.

- If 30 minutes has elapsed since the end of the program with no contact from the parent/guardian as to pick up, non-emergency police will be called.
- This policy is enforced for the entire school year for all program locations.

School Calendar

Day	Date	Events August—December
Monday	August 18	Supply Drop Off—9:00-2:00pm & Teacher Work Day
Tuesday	August 19	Teacher Work Day
Wednesday	August 20	Teacher Work Day
Thursday	August 21	Teacher Work Day
Friday	August 22	Teacher Work Day
Monday	August 25	First day of school for M-TH programs & M/W 2s
Tuesday	August 26	First day of school for T/TH programs
Monday	September 1	Labor Day No School
Tuesday	September 2	Taffy Apple Fundraiser Fall 2025 Kick Off
Thursday	September 4	No Lunch Bunch or PM program Splash Pad Bash 12:00-2:00pm or Party at the Park
Wednesday	September 10	Staff Institute Day No School
Monday	September 15	Benoit Pumpkin Farm Money Due Cost : \$10.00
Thursday	September 18	Scholastic Book Orders Due ONLINE ONLY
Monday	September 29	Fall Picture Day (Outside) 4s & M/W 2s
Tuesday	September 30	Fall Picture Day (Outside) 3s & T/TH 2s
Tuesday	September 30	Fall Picture Day (Outside) PM programming 3s & 4s)
Wednesday	October 1	Taffy Apple Fundraiser Money Due
Thursday	October 2	Fall Break No School
Thursday	Oct 9	Firehouse Walking Field Trip (3s & 4s) During School Hours
Monday	October 13	Indigenous Peoples' Day No School
Wednesday	October 15	Field Trip Benoit Pumpkin Farm No Regular Programming
Thursday	October 16	Scholastic Book Orders Due ONLINE ONLY
Monday	October 27	Walking Field Trip to Library— 3s and 4s (During School Hours)
Thursday	October 30	Parking Lot Halloween Trick or Treat Starts 10:00am Dismissal after event is done. No PM programming. PM students can attend at 10:00am for the event
Thursday	November 6	Scholastic Book Order Due ONLINE ONLY
Tuesday	November 11	School Improvement Day (AM program only) No PM 3s/4s
Wednesday	November 19	Parent Teacher Conferences No School
Thursday	November 20	Parent Teacher Conferences No School
Monday	November 24	Thanksgiving Break No School
Tuesday	November 25	Thanksgiving Break No School
Wednesday	November 26	Thanksgiving Break No School
Thursday	November 27	Thanksgiving Break Students return Monday, December 1
Thursday	December 4	Scholastic Book Orders Due ONLINE ONLY
Monday	December 22	Winter Break Starts No School Students Return Jan 6