



# Discovery Woods

Literacy Plan  
(Revised June 2018)

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# School Overview

**Vision:** Discovery Woods is dedicated to educational excellence, environmental stewardship, and personal growth. Our students will have the foundation to be critical thinkers and responsible citizens.

**Mission:** To provide the Brainerd Lakes Area families with a choice for high quality elementary education centered around the individual needs of the child with a focus on the environment.

Discovery Woods School opened in fall of 2011, serving grades K-5, adding grade 6 in the 2012-13 school year. Discovery Woods is authorized by Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW). Children in our Kindergarten program are in a multi-age Children's House, which operates in partnership with Discovery Woods Preschool. A private preschool, Discovery Woods Preschool has a mission to provide quality Montessori education to prepare children for success in life. After Kindergarten, children move to one of two lower elementary environments which include children in grades 1-3.

Discovery Woods School (DWS) aims to create a high-quality learning community that employs standards-based instructions to prepare children to achieve at their highest levels academically. As a Montessori-inspired school, DWS incorporates many elements of a Montessori classroom. The elements listed below are prevalent at one or all levels.

## Montessori Philosophy

Montessori pedagogy is driven by principles that are based on an understanding of human development established through observation of children and teaching practice in Montessori learning environments around the world for more than 100 years.

### ***Multi-Age Classroom***

DWS enrolls children across a three year age range in each of its classrooms.

- Children's House (CH): 3-6 year old children (Preschool & Kindergarten)
- Elementary 1 (E1): 6-9 year olds (1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders)
- Elementary 2 (E2): 9-12 year olds (4th, 5th, and 6th graders)

### ***Extended Work Cycle***

DWS strives to incorporate one of the keys to a Montessori classroom by scheduling extended, uninterrupted work time. The extended time can last up to three hours, allowing children to:

- Settle into deep and serious academic work without interruption
- Complete high levels of academic work
- Meet their social and movement needs without disrupting the learning environment
- Have skills, work habits, and progress assessed by teacher regularly through

- observation
- Receive lessons from teacher in small groups or individually
- Receive remediation or advancement from teacher
- Choose to help or receive help from other children in their academic and social work

***Freedom and Responsibility***

The balance of freedom and responsibility is a key tenant of Montessori education. Children have the freedom to move and choose if they demonstrate responsibility with that freedom. As the children demonstrate a certain level of self-discipline, respect, and responsibility, the teacher will then loosen up the structure of the classroom to allow the children to move more freely and have more choices in the materials as well as the duration and location of work.

***Teacher Observation***

One of the foundational pieces of a well-functioning Montessori classroom is the observation of students. Record keeping helps the teacher know the work choices and habits of each child, and which concepts and skills need strengthening or challenge.

## Project-Based Learning

DWS has an environmental focus and incorporates elements of environmental education (EE) in project-based learning at the E1 and E2 levels. During project-based learning, Science and Social Studies standards are incorporated into trimester themes - earth science, animals, plants. In addition, English Language Arts (ELA) standards for informational text and writing are met. Students in grades K-6 meet writing standards by writing a paper each trimester based on the EE theme. DWS strives for an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

## Standards-based Literacy Learning

**Foundational Reading Skills**

	<b>K</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6*</b>
<b>Print Concepts</b>	X	X					
<b>Phonological Awareness</b>	X	X					
<b>Phonics</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Fluency</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	

\* In 6th grade, foundational skills are no longer part of the standards, though they may be part of remediation. The focus of reading instruction turns to strategy instruction for text comprehension.

### Children's House (CH) - Kindergarten

Narrative Text	Informational Text	Foundational Skills	Language	Writing
Students analyze a variety of narrative texts throughout the school year.	Students analyze a variety of narrative texts throughout the school year.	Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, and Phonics skills are practiced through direct instruction and individual learning with use of Montessori materials.	Grammar and Vocabulary skills are learned through direct instruction and individual learning with use of Montessori materials.	Students write (through illustrations and/or dictation as necessary) an opinion, informational, and narrative text based on EE themes.

### Elementary 1 (E1) - Grades 1-3

Narrative Text	Informational Text	Foundational Skills	Language	Writing
Students analyze a variety of narrative texts throughout the school year. Students choose texts based on choice and teacher guidance. High quality texts are used for strategy instruction.	Students analyze a variety of narrative texts throughout the school year. Students choose texts based on choice and teacher guidance. High quality texts are used for strategy instruction.	Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Fluency skills are practiced through direct instruction, small group and individual learning.	Grammar and Vocabulary skills are learned through direct instruction, small group, and individual learning	Students write daily for a variety of purposes. Students write an opinion, an informational, and a narrative paper based on EE themes.

### Elementary 2 (E2) - Grades 4-6

Narrative Text	Informational Text	Foundational Skills	Language	Writing
Students analyze a variety of narrative texts throughout the school year. Students choose texts based on choice and teacher guidance. High quality texts are used for strategy instruction.	Students analyze a variety of narrative texts throughout the school year. Students choose texts based on choice and teacher guidance. High quality texts are used for strategy instruction.	Phonics and Fluency skills are practiced through direct instruction, small group and individual learning.	Grammar and Vocabulary skills are learned through direct instruction, small group, and individual learning	Students write daily for a variety of purposes. Students write an opinion, an informational, and a narrative paper based on EE themes.

# Research: Beyond Common Core

Student interest and choice are strongly linked components of a quality literacy program. Teachers at DWS strive to create opportunities for students to study information in which they are interested. According to Gambrell & Morrow (2015), “The most widespread recommendation for motivation is providing choices.” Teachers at DWS allow space for students to follow their interests and to make their own choices about the types of text they wish to read. When students have more control over their learning via interest and choice, their learning becomes more relevant and engaging. Interest and choice contribute to student motivation, but there is much more involved in student motivation. In order to become a motivated literacy learner, students must find success in literacy tasks. With success, comes confidence. Teachers at DWS challenge students, but not to the point of frustration. Gambrell & Morrow (2015) state that “Students need scaffolded instruction with texts that are at the appropriate instructional level, not too easy and not too difficult, in order to develop the skills and strategies needed for proficient reading.” When needed, students at DWS receive additional academic support in literacy development through Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), which is made up of three learning tiers. Tier 1 interventions occur in large group settings (i.e. the regular classroom). Tier 2 interventions are for students who need extra help and usually occur in small groups. Tier 3 receive intensive 1-1 interventions. MTSS, with proper tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions, can offer the scaffolding required for effective literacy instruction. However, even if students struggle with reading, they must still be exposed to critical thinking activities and higher level concepts. “When compared to ‘mainstream’ peers, low-income or minority students tend to receive a great deal of instruction in lower-level skills and little instruction in reading comprehension and higher-level thinking about text” (Gambrell & Morrow, 2015, p. 41). It is important to draw out big ideas from all students, especially the ideas of those students who may not fare as well on standardized tests or high-stakes academic assignments. All students have wonderful and insightful thoughts to offer. At DWS, teachers engage students in activities that open a doorway to learning, and allow them the freedom to share what they know and uncover their individual strengths. Critical thinking is the ultimate goal of education and students at DWS engage in critical thinking as part of daily learning.

Source: Gambrell, L.B. & Morrow, L.M. (Eds.). (2015). *Best practices in literacy instruction* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

## Multi-Tiered System of Support

- **Tier I** - Core instruction in the classroom based on state standards, Montessori pedagogy, and environmentally-focused project-based learning.
- **Tier II** - Individual and small group instruction in the classroom via the classroom teacher, the Title I teacher, and other support staff. Students who qualify for tier II interventions are diagnosed for need based on DIBELS, PRESS, text leveling, STAR, and teacher observation.
- **Tier III** - Individualized, intensive instruction will occur during Title I services for those student performing below benchmark. Students who do not respond to tier III intervention may be referred to Child Study for possible special education assessment.

# Title I Reading Services

Children who are assessed as reading below grade-level expectations will receive teacher-initiated interventions and receive Title 1 services. Children who do not respond to teacher initiated interventions and Title 1 services will be brought to Child Study with the special education team. The Title I Reading program assesses reading based on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Path to Excellence in School Sites (PRESS) three times per year in the beginning of the year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY), and end of the year (EOY). Based on the results of the DIBELS assessment, the Title I Reading teacher works with students who fall in the red and yellow zones, which mean the student is performing below expected levels (called benchmarks). Students in E1 and E2 who fall in the yellow and red zones are pulled out of the classroom for interventions. If the Title I schedule allows, E1 and E2 students in the green, who are at benchmark, may receive push-in interventions in the classroom. All Kindergarten students who qualify for Title services receive interventions in the classroom (called push-in). PRESS assessments will be used to gather more information about each student's specific area of need. Title I interventions are based on the needs diagnosed on DIBELS and PRESS. Progress monitoring on these specific skills occur on a weekly basis. Students may exit Title I services based on successful successive progress monitoring results or with successful results during the assessment periods.

## Assessment

<b>Assessment:</b>	DIBELS	PRESS	STAR	MCA-III	BAS/Text Leveling
<b>Content Area:</b>	Reading	Reading	Early Literacy Reading Math	Reading Math Science	Reading
<b>Grades Administered:</b>	K-6	K-5	1-6 K (Early Lit only)	3-6	K-6
<b>Times Administered per year:</b>	3	3	3	1	3
<b>Assessment Type:</b>	Diagnostic  Benchmark  Progress Monitoring	Diagnostic	Diagnostic  Benchmark  Progress Monitoring	Evaluative	Diagnostic  Progress Monitoring
<b>Formative or Summative:</b>	Formative	Formative	Formative Summative	Summative	Formative

**Assessment Goals:**

- By the end of Kindergarten, all children will be able to name and read the phonetic sounds of the letters, write and read phonetic words.
- 60% of all children in 1st & 2nd grades will read on grade level as assessed with STAR and DIBELS
- 65% of children in 3rd grade will be reading on grade level as assessed by STAR and 50% will score as meets or exceeds expectations on MCA-III tests.

## Professional Development

Discovery Woods has regular 60-minute professional learning community (PLC) meetings. At all staff meetings, staff members are able to partake in relevant topics that will enhance student learning and engagement. Teachers guide topics to support the needs of the children with whom they work. Discussion focuses on supporting staff to work more effectively with students regarding both social and academic areas. At PLC meetings, staff will learn about, discuss and make decisions about:

- Learning goals
- Lesson planning to meet standards
- Assessment results and processes
- Supporting student challenges

DWS staff are also given other opportunities to engage in professional development experiences, such as Montessori training and the annual environmental education workshop through ACNW.

## Family Engagement

DWS staff believe that supporting parents' understanding of the school's mission and vision is a priority. Parent involvement is also important to promote a positive and effective school climate. Opportunities for Family Engagement include:

- Annual EE exhibition
- Volunteering in the classroom
- Family Literacy Events
- Scholastic Book Fairs
- Family Picnic
- Track & Field Day
- Parent Action Committee (PAC)
- Field Trips
- Holiday Program
- Conferences
- School Garden

# Parent Notification

The DWS Literacy Plan will be available to parents on the district website. In addition, printed copies of the plan will be available in the school office, in each classroom, and will be made available at family events or upon request.