



DART Early Intervention Program Parent Handbook



Staff Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

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AIU DART Early Intervention Program

Vision and Philosophy

The DART Early Intervention Program believes that early childhood programs are places of excitement and enrichment. All children benefit from programs that respond to their individual uniqueness, work within the context of realistic developmental expectations and utilize meaningful learning experiences. The DART Early Intervention Program uses a model of learning that combines cognitive developmental and behavioral models. The cognitive developmental approach considers the developmental level of the child and readiness for learning. This model promotes initiative, independence, and self-confidence, and fosters social awareness. The behavioral model includes defined goals with set criteria and tasks planned to achieve this goal. The combination of these two models supports both spontaneous interactions with the environment and optimal skill development.

The goal of the DART Early Intervention Program is to provide early intervention services in the child's least restrictive environment. Recommendations for services are based on a child's strengths, needs, and eligibility for services. Providing services into the child's natural environment (e.g., childcare, home, or community preschool) is considered first before recommending that services be provided in more specialized settings.

Staff

All DART teachers are certified in Special Education and the vast majority of our teachers either have a Master's degree or working toward their Master's degree. The majority of our teachers also have a teaching certificate in either Early Childhood or Elementary Education. The speech-language pathologists are certified by the American-Speech-Language Hearing Association with a Certificate of Clinical Competence, which requires a Master's degree in the field of Speech-Language Pathology. All of our paraprofessionals are considered to be highly qualified. In addition, our paraprofessionals attend in-services along with the teachers and speech-language pathologists, providing them with higher level professional development opportunities. This assures that the early intervention paraprofessionals are prepared and highly qualified to work with the children enrolled in our program.

All DART staff have current criminal record, child abuse clearances, and Mandated Reporter Training (AIU Board Policy 806). Staff also remain current with CPR, First Aid, and Crisis Prevention.

DART Early Intervention Calendar

The DART program follows the Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines for year-long programming with breaks lasting no more than three weeks. The program takes a traditional nine month School District calendar and stretches it over twelve months. As a result, winter and spring breaks are longer than School District breaks. This allows DART to stretch services into the summer.

DART PARENT CALENDAR 2018-2019



NO CLASS IN SESSION

Aug 18

| | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |
|----|----|----|----|----|

Sept 18

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| | | | | |

Jan 19

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| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

May 19

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| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

Oct 18

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| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

Feb 19

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| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | |

June 19

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Nov 18

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Mar 19

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July 19

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Dec 18

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| 31 | | | | |

Apr 19

| Mon | Tues | Wed | Thu | Fri |
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Aug 19

| Mon | Tues | Wed | Thu | Fri |
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| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

Curriculum

The DART Early Intervention classrooms follow The Creative Curriculum (see Creative Curriculum Goals and Objectives at a Glance, page 6), which is a developmentally appropriate philosophy and is designed to meet each child's needs. The focus of the curriculum supports the interactions of children and their environment. Information about the Creative Curriculum can be found at <http://teachingstrategies.com/curriculum>.

DART connects the Creative Curriculum with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. This helps to prepare the children for school age programs and the standards that the state of Pennsylvania has set forth. Your child's teacher can share more information with you about the standards.

Information about the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards can also be found at <http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/Early%20Learning/Early%20Learning%20Standards/Early%20Learning%20Standards%20-%20Prekindergarten%202014.pdf>

The DART staff have taken part in early math and literacy initiatives as well as behavior initiatives. The staff has also participated in many professional development opportunities in the area of assistive technology, autism, and positive behavior support. DART has received grants to support children in early childhood environments in the area of assistive technology, inclusion, and positive behavior support.

The Creative Curriculum Goals and Objectives at a Glance

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sense of Self

- Show ability to adjust to new situations
- Demonstrates appropriate trust in adults
- Recognizes own feelings and manages them appropriately
- Stands up for rights

Responsibility for Self and Others

- Demonstrates self-direction and independence
- Takes responsibility for own well-being
 - Respects and cares for classroom environment and materials
 - Follows classroom routines
 - Follows classroom rules

Pro-social Behavior

- Plays well with other children
- Recognizes the feelings of others and responds appropriately
- Shares and respects the rights of others
- Uses thinking skills and resolve conflicts

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Gross Motor

- Demonstrates basic locomotor skills (running, jumping, hopping, galloping)
- Shows balance while moving
- Climbs up and down
- Pedals and steers a tricycle (or other wheeled vehicle)
- Demonstrates throwing, kicking, and catching skills

Fine Motor

- Controls small muscles in hands
- Coordinates eye-hand movement
- Uses tools for writing and drawing

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Learning and Problem Solving

- Observes objects and events with curiosity
- Approaches problems flexibly
- Shows persistence in approaching tasks
- Explores cause and effect
- Applies knowledge or experience to a new context

Logical Thinking

- Classifies objects
- Compares and measures
- Arranges objects in series
- Recognizes patterns and can repeat them
- Shows awareness of time concepts and sequence
- Shows awareness of position in space
- Uses one-to-one correspondence
- Uses numbers and counting

Representation and Symbolic Thinking

- Takes on pretend roles and situations
- Makes believe with objects
- Makes and interprets representations

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Listening and Speaking

- Hears and discriminates the sounds of language
- Expresses self using words and expanded sentences
- Understands and follows oral directions
- Answers questions
- Asks questions
- Actively participates in conversations

Reading and Writing

- Enjoys and values reading
- Demonstrates understanding of print concepts
- Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet
- Uses emerging reading skills to make meaning from print
- Comprehends and interprets meaning from books and other texts
- Understands the purpose of writing
- Writes letters and words

Section I

DART Early Intervention Program Information

Communication with Staff

Open communication among parents, teachers, speech-language pathologists, and administrators is important for child progress and for maintaining a healthy school climate. The proper line of communication in discussing any facet of your child's progress or program is to contact the teacher or related service provider directly (paraprofessionals refer all questions back to teachers or therapists). This may be done through a written message, email, or a phone call. Since each site has voicemail, you may leave a message and your phone call will be returned when the schedule permits. If there are unanswered questions following a discussion with your child's teacher or related service provider, you may contact one of the supervisors listed on the front cover.

Please note: Flyers, calendars, your child's art work, and/or teacher's notes may be sent home in your child's backpack. Please check your child's backpack daily for these important items.

Progress Reports and Conferences

Progress Monitoring Reports will be distributed, according to each child's IEP, to inform parents/guardians of their child's progress towards achieving their goals. In addition to your child's Progress Monitoring Report, you will be provided with a consultation note after each visit from a related service provider (e.g., speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist). If you would like other forms of communication regarding your child's progress toward his or her IEP goals,

please speak with your child's teacher or related service provider directly.

Educational Records

You have the right to access your child's educational records. Upon written request, access shall be granted within a reasonable time and no more than 30 days after the request has been made. Data that is collected, maintained, and used by the DART Early Intervention Program will be provided to you upon request, given prior notice (AIU Board Policy 216).

DART Newsletter

Each month, the DART Early Intervention Program distributes an electronic monthly newsletter entitled the *DART Board* that provides suggestions for family activities, parenting information, ways to support your child's development, a section on Pennsylvania's Early Learning Standards, and individual news about what is happening in the DART Early Intervention Program. It is a wonderful reference for parents and guardians. Since this is provided electronically, it is important that you provide your email address to your child's teacher.

DART/Head Start Co-Enroll

The DART Early Intervention Program works collaboratively with the AIU Head Start Program. Children who are enrolled in the DART Early Intervention Program may also be eligible to co-enroll with the Head Start Program. If your family is eligible for Head Start, your child and family will receive additional services through Head Start. If you have not already spoken to a Head Start representative, feel free to inquire about the co-enrollment program by talking with your child's teacher, or by calling the Head Start at 1-866-214-5437.

Moving

If you are moving, it is helpful if the teacher is notified in advance. This allows for paperwork to be forwarded to the next teacher and related service providers. It also gives the classroom team an opportunity to talk with your child and the child's classmates (when applicable) about the upcoming move or change.

Change of Address and Phone Numbers

You will be asked annually to complete a *Student Pick-Up/Emergency Authorization Form* to provide pertinent information regarding your child, including phone numbers and addresses. If you have a change of address or phone number anytime during the school year, notify your child's teacher, as well as the transportation provider (if relevant) immediately. This information is critical for emergency and administrative reasons. Also, if for any reason you no longer have phone service, please notify your child's teacher (and if your child is receiving transportation, the transportation provider) immediately.

Section II ***Classroom Information***

Daily Schedule

Each classroom is divided into centers such as block area and housekeeping. Research supports that children learn through play, and the Creative Curriculum fosters play and creativity. Children have the opportunity to develop their cognitive skills including literacy and math readiness, as well as personal/social, speech and language, fine motor, gross motor, and self-care skills. While the activities and the order of the schedule vary from site to site, most include such activities as:

- Arrival and Self-Help
- Opening Circle
- Learning Centers/Play
- Gross Motor Activities
- Small Group Activities
- Snack
- Closing Circle
- Dismissal

The goal is to create a consistent schedule that provides children the comfort of knowing what is expected, and to prepare them for the transitions between activities.

Items Needed

Preschools are fun-filled and interactive places that can, at times, be messy. Care is taken to keep clothing and children clean, but accidents can happen. Please dress your child in play clothes that will accommodate active large muscle activities, toileting, and potentially messy art activities so that your child does not worry about ruining their clothing (i.e., avoid onsies, belts, overalls). For safety reasons, it is recommended that you do not send your child to school wearing sandals or flip-flops.

All children should have a backpack and change of clothing at school, including a shirt, pants, underwear, and socks. Label each piece of clothing with your child's name or initials and place it in a bag identified with your child's name. If your child wears diapers/pull-ups, please send in enough (diapers/pull-ups and wipes) for a one-week supply.

Please remember to label coats, hats, mittens, boots, and other outerwear. This can be done very simply with a permanent marker.

Calendars

Calendars will be distributed by classroom teachers. We encourage you to review the calendar to prepare your child for upcoming activities. Included on the calendar will be days when school is not in session, meetings, and special events.

Classroom Visits

You are invited to visit your child's classroom to observe the educational activities. Classroom visits must be arranged in advance with the classroom teacher. An hour visit is normally sufficient to see a representative sample of classroom activities.

Snacks and Treats

Snack time is a regular part of the preschool program. It promotes many language and social skills in a naturalistic setting. Please notify your child's teacher of any food allergies or special diets. Your child's teacher will inform you of the classroom policy for birthday treats and special holiday snacks and treats. If financially possible, the program asks each family to donate \$5.00 per month to help offset the cost of snack materials, food, and drinks. This will help the staff to provide snack foods which are high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt.

Section III

Health and Emergency Information

Immunizations

Children that enter the DART Early Intervention Program must have immunization shots (or an exemption) as stipulated by the American Academy of Pediatrics within 60 days of their classroom start. The shots which are needed include:

- 4 DTaP – Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (original series)
- 1 MMR – Measles (Rubeola), Mumps, Rubella (2nd needed for Kindergarten)
- 3 Polio Vaccine (injection)
- 3 Hepatitis B
- 2 Hepatitis A
- 4 Hib* – Haemophilus Influenza, Type B (*depends on the type and time administered)
- 1 Varicella (2nd needed for Kindergarten)
- 4 Pneumococcus (PCV), (depends on the time administered).
- Seasonal Influenza (for the most recent flu season)

The immunization proof (or exemption) may be given to your child's teacher or faxed to the Program Nurse at 412/394-5967.

Food Allergy Management

If your child has any severe food allergies, please let your child's teacher know. An individual health care plan will be developed by the program's Service Coordinator for Physical Health (AIU Board Policy 209.1).

Medications

DART staff are not able to administer medication to children. Epinephrine auto-injectors are the only exception to this rule as they are a standard of First Aid. An individual health care plan will be developed by the program's Service Coordinator for Physical Health (AIU Board Policy 210) to address your child's health needs.

Illness

We want your child to be at school with us as often as possible. However, if your child is ill please follow these guidelines developed from The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) regarding school attendance.

Colds: Children need not be kept home for every sniffle or sneeze; however, keep your child at home if:

- He/she has an elevated temperature (temperature more than 98.6 degrees F) and is uncomfortable, or unable to participate in school activities.
- He/she has a very runny nose and/or is coughing and sneezing frequently (every 15 minutes or so). Children this age are not very good at covering coughs and sneezes or blowing and wiping their own noses.

Diarrhea or vomiting: If your child has an episode of diarrhea or two episodes of vomiting (not due to diet or behavior issues) within 24 hours he/she should be kept home. Your child should be symptom free for twenty-four hours before returning to the classroom.

Fever: A temperature over 100 degrees is usually a sign of illness. Consult your child's doctor and keep a child with a fever home from school. A child should have a normal temperature for twenty-four hours before returning to the classroom.

Influenza: Influenza causes more hospitalizations among young children than any other vaccine-preventable disease. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recommends that everyone over six months of age receives a seasonal flu vaccination. The following healthy choices can also help to prevent the spread of the flu: cover your nose and mouth with a tissue for sneezes and coughs (and throw the tissue away after it is used), wash your hands frequently (especially after sneezing and coughing) and do not touch your eyes, nose and mouth (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/>).

Open wound: If your child has an open wound (a break in their skin), it must be

covered when they are in the DART classroom.

Please remember, frequent hand washing by both adults and children decreases the spread of all illnesses!

Pediculosis (lice): Head lice infestation in children attending school is common and not a sign of poor hygiene. Head lice are spread through direct contact with an infested person or by storing together or sharing personal items. If live head lice are found on a child in the classroom:

- The parent or guardian will be called to take the child home immediately. Children with live lice are not permitted to stay in the classroom.
- The child will need to be treated.
- The child with lice may return to the classroom after he/she has received the first treatment (anti-lice shampoo), if live lice are no longer present.
- Children who have been infested with head lice will be checked to make certain that there are no lice. Also, children who are frequently scratching their scalp will be checked.

DART is following the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (September, 2002) and we are allowing children with nits to remain in the classroom. The reason that children with live lice are asked to leave is because (unlike with elementary school children) it is not realistic to prevent head to head contact within a preschool setting. Guidance for Head Lice treatment can be found on the National Pediculosis website www.headlice.org.

Communicable Diseases: There are many communicable diseases or conditions which the school should be notified. These include:

- Chicken pox

- Contagious conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Impetigo
- Ringworm
- Scabies
- Scarlet fever
- Streptococcal infections
- MRSA
- Any condition which your child's healthcare provider considers to be contagious.

Note: If your child has been out of school with a contagious disease, a note (which states that they are no longer contagious) from their healthcare provider is **required** before returning to the classroom. The teacher should be consulted if the parent has any questions or concerns regarding readmission to school.

Any questions regarding any health matters may be directed to Cindy Callaghan, CRNP, Service Coordinator for Physical Health, 412-394-3616, cynthia.callaghan@aiu3.net.

AIU Policies

In addition to the information in this handbook, the DART Early Intervention Program follows the AIU policies. For more information on AIU policies (which include health related information not discussed in this handbook), please visit the website <http://www.boarddocs.com/pa/aiu3/Board.nsf/Public> and click on the "policy" tab.

Absence

If your child will be absent from school it is important that you call his/her teacher and not the DART office. If relevant, please inform your transportation provider so they do not make an unnecessary stop at your house. Also, if your child has a nurse who accompanies them to school, you must inform the nursing agency. Your child's teacher will contact you if your child is absent for more than a week.

Accident or Illness at School

In the case of an accident or illness, initial emergency treatment will be given at the school. You will be notified and your instructions will be followed. If you cannot be contacted, and the situation requires additional treatment, the local emergency unit will be notified. Please note, 911 will be called for any situation which is perceived to be life threatening.

Emergency Information/ Release of Child

It is essential that your child's teacher have current telephone numbers and addresses of parents or guardians. Please notify the teacher if this information changes during the school year. It is also necessary to make arrangements with neighbors and/or relatives who have some mode of transportation and can pick up your child in the event that you are unavoidably detained and cannot pick up your child at dismissal time.

Children will only be dismissed to an adult whose name appears on the *Student Pick-Up/Emergency Authorization Form*. Those identified on the card must be able to come to school immediately in the event of an emergency. If special circumstances should arise, please give prior written notification to your child's teacher. Adults other than

parents who pick up children at school must have proof of identity. Please remember that children will only be released to those who have prior written authorization.

Custody

Your child's teacher is to be aware of all custody issues that arise in a family. A copy of any custody order and an explanation of how this affects the school should be provided by the custodial parent. Please keep the teacher informed of any changes throughout the year. As in any other case, identification will be requested when an adult other than a parent picks up your child.

Transportation

Your local school district will provide transportation, as a related service, when necessary. The school district may use video and audio recordings on school vehicles for disciplinary and security purposes (AIU Policy 810.2). Day to day concerns regarding transportation should be addressed with the bus driver or by using the contact information provided by the transportation provider. Ongoing problems that you are not able to resolve with the transportation provider can be directed to Cathy Irvine at 412-394-5830.

Transportation Emergency Policy

While most transportation arrangements work smoothly, it is important to know that if no one is at home to receive a child when they get off of a bus or no one picks the child up at school at dismissal time, Children, Youth and Families (CYF) will be notified to take custody of the child. This procedure is designed to protect your child. Please understand that the bus driver may not return a child to the Early Intervention program as staff may be gone, and staff cannot take custody of a child with no understanding of when a parent might be located. The number for Children, Youth

and Families is 412-473-2000. The teacher will attempt to leave a message as to the whereabouts of the child for the parent/guardian. DART office staff will be notified of the actions taken.

Emergency Evacuations/ Fire Drills

The DART staff is well prepared for a variety of emergency situations. Practice evacuations are conducted once each month in compliance with Pennsylvania School Law. In the unlikely event of an emergency, and a site needs to be evacuated, an alternate location has been secured for each DART site. Go Kits that include a first aid kit, children's emergency contact information, health plans and individually prescribed medication will accompany the children if an evacuation takes place (AIU Board Policy 705 & 805).

Emergency School Closing/ Snow Days

Check KDKA website <http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/tag/school-closings/> for a complete listing of school closings. DART classrooms follow closings for the school district in which your child's classroom is located. If a DART classroom closes, the school calendar is adjusted and the school day is made up. If there is a two hour delay for that school district, the program will run on a modified preschool day. Morning classes will be from 10:00-11:45 and afternoon classes will be from 12:30-3:00 (usual times).

If your child is transported by bus, you must also listen for information about the school district in which you reside, **if this is different from where the school is located.** If the district in which you live cancels classes, then there will be no transportation for your child. You have the option of bringing your child to school if school is in session.

2018/2019
DART PROGRAM EMERGENCY DAY POLICY

Listen to KDKA Radio 1020 AM or check online at <http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/tag/school-closings/> for a complete list of school closings/delays in Allegheny County. DART classroom buildings will not be announced separately.

| SERVICES AT THESE SITES WILL BE DELAYED OR CLOSED | IF | THIS SCHOOL DISTRICT IS DELAYED OR CLOSED |
|--|----|---|
| Allegheny Valley site at Acemetonia Primary School | | Allegheny Valley School District |
| Baldwin Whitehall site at Baldwin High School | | Baldwin–Whitehall School District |
| Bethel Park sites at Pathfinder School | | Bethel Park School District |
| East Allegheny site at East Allegheny Jr/Sr High School | | East Allegheny School District |
| Elizabeth Forward site at Elizabeth Forward Early Childhood Center | | Elizabeth Forward School District |
| Gateway site at Sunrise School | | Gateway School District |
| Glenshaw site at Glenshaw Valley Presbyterian Church | | Shaler School District |
| McKeesport site at Founders Hall | | McKeesport School District |
| Moon site at Brooks Elementary School | | Moon School District |
| North Allegheny site at The Woodlands | | North Allegheny School District |
| Northgate site at Northgate High School | | Northgate School District |
| Penn Hills site at Redeemer Lutheran School | | Penn Hills School District |
| Riverview site at Verner Elementary School | | Riverview School District |
| Sharpsburg site at Sharpsburg Center for Children and Families | | Fox Chapel School District |
| South Park site at South Park Elementary | | South Park School District |
| Sto Rox site at Sto Rox Primary Center | | Sto Rox School District |
| Upper St. Clair site at Baker Elementary School | | Upper St. Clair School District |
| Woodland Hills site at Edgewood Elementary School | | Woodland Hills School District |

Section IV. *Parent Resources*

CELL: Center for Early Literacy Learning provides research based ideas and activities for everyday home and community activities that encourage young children to listen, talk, and learn the building blocks for early literacy. <http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/pgparents.php>

Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Learning focuses on promoting the social emotional development and school readiness of young children birth to age 5. <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>

Child-Care Information Services provides parents with a listing of childcare providers in their area who may be able to address any special needs, and helps parents make informed childcare choices. Child care subsidy information is also available. (412-261-2273)

Childcare Provider Search provides written information about quality childcare in Pennsylvania. <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/Compass.Web/ProviderSearch/Home#>

Family Resource Guide provides information on medical, developmental, therapeutic, education, support and recreational services in Allegheny County for children with medical and developmental needs. <http://www.familyresourceguide.org/>

Head Start provides information on Head Start in PA and nationally. Pennsylvania Head Start Association <http://www.paheadstart.org>, National Head Start Association <http://www.nhsa.org>

HelpLine offers information and referral to local support groups (e.g., autism, ADHD) and resources available in our community. www.unitedwaypittsburgh.org or (412-255-1155)

Keystone Stars provides information about quality early childhood programming. www.pakeys.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children promotes excellence in early education at www.naeyc.org

Parent To Parent links families with children and adults with disabilities. www.parenttoparent.org or (888-727-2706)

Positive Behavior Support website gives the ABC's of child development at www.pbs.org/wholechild/abc

Special Kids Network is a statewide information and referral resource for children with special needs. www.health.state.pa.us/skn or (800-986-4550)

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI) creates free products and resources to help decision-makers, caregivers, and service providers apply best practices. <http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/index.htm>

WARMLINE-Family Resources provides confidential telephone counseling, referral and information services for parents and caregivers with non-medical parenting questions and concerns. www.familyresourcesofpa.org or (800-641-4546 or 412-641-4546)