

# The Dome School

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## Cooperative Information for Parents Academic Year 2016-2017

The Dome School is a parent-cooperative learning center for families who want to participate in their children's education. We work hand-in-hand with families to ignite a lifelong love of learning and a deep caring for the diversity of humanity and the natural world. By weaving together school, family and community, we create a sense of belonging that empowers children to be leaders in a changing world.

### The Dome School:

- Teaches the whole child
- Uses a thematic curriculum
- Practices conflict resolution
- Has multi-level classrooms
- Nurtures self-esteem
- Welcomes community members as learning mentors
- Teaches non-violent solutions to problems
- Regards every child as a unique individual

The Dome School began in the early 1970's as a home schooling collective. Classes were held in a geodesic dome structure located on Takilma Rd. In 1976 The Dome School was incorporated as a 501©3 non-profit organization.

The Takilma Community Building, located in the heart of Takilma, is home to The Dome School. After school hours and during the summer, the building hosts programs such as the Garden Club and Rangers after-school/ summer programs. Similarly, community members utilize the building for enrichment programs and celebratory events. As a result, it is enjoyed regularly as a community center for music, art, education and other events. The Takilma Community Building has a certified kitchen for the preparation of wholesome meals for students and community alike. Other features of the building include a backup power generator, wood heat and a certified ultraviolet water purification system allowing it to serve as an emergency shelter. The ongoing viability of the facility depends on help from community volunteers for repairs and overall maintenance. We appreciate your support in this area, also!

The school maintains a facebook page at [www.facebook.com/TheDomeSchool](http://www.facebook.com/TheDomeSchool). Please like and follow our page to stay current on our activities and events.

**The Dome School does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or religion.**

## **Purpose**

The Dome School provides a healthful environment for educational goals on a non-discriminatory, non-hierarchical basis. We strive to achieve a high standard of academic excellence while allowing for full development of each student's social and emotional potential.

## **Community Involvement**

The Dome School needs and encourages the participation of the families of all students, as well as the involvement of the larger community to fully thrive. This collective process establishes an educational environment that nurtures self-image and further encourages social and emotional development along with other learning experiences.

## **Commitment**

Our devoted teachers are the backbone of The Dome School. In addition to academic training, they provide love, strength and consistency with the day's rhythm of work and fun. Exuding flexibility and enthusiasm, they face the changes of each year, appropriately employing the interests of the children and parents and community members into the curriculum of their classes.

Because we are a parent-cooperative learning program, parent involvement is integral to the functioning of our school. Each year, curricula are adjusted to reflect the interests of the unique group of students and their families. This is why we strongly encourage parents to share their hobbies and passions, skills and knowledge - even once a month if your schedule allows. Beyond the classroom, parent participation is paramount to the organization and orchestration of various events. To be immersed in the rhythm of your child's education is an enriching experience for both you and your child. This is, in part, what makes our school so special!

Fundraisers and community events provide opportunities to enjoy our diverse interests, talents and hobbies as a community. From bake sales, bazaars, dinners, dances and music, to the annual Barter Faire, we come together and thrive as a fun-loving community. Living and growing in the midst of this togetherness is truly a gift for the children. As well as enriching lives and the community as a whole, these events provide income for the school allowing tuition to remain as affordable as possible.

The Dome School Board of Directors sets the policy that directs the school. Any and all new policies and changes to policies must be approved by the Board of Directors. Parents and community members may serve on the board, may request an item be added to a board meeting agenda and may attend the board meetings. Board members may serve terms of two years, during which monthly meetings are conducted to manage the myriad responsibilities of directing the school such as setting school policy; establishing and managing the budget, ensuring maintenance of the facilities and fundraising. Elections for members are held at the Annual Meeting (October or November). Everyone has an equal vote. Nominations are taken at or prior to the meeting. Individuals may nominate themselves. Thought and consideration should be given to the time commitment involved.

Available for review are the minutes from previous board meetings and a notebook displaying our written policy. They are located on the central bulletin board and in the office. Only through meaningful parent participation will The Dome School continue to achieve its mission of providing quality, community-oriented education. Commitment on the part of the parents and the community to serve on the Board of Directors is vital for our school.

Susan Gustafson and Ryan Forsythe are the co-administrators for the school. They are available in the office. If there are issues or concerns please feel free to stop in.

## Classes

Students follow a daily rhythm of individual exploration with guided academic lessons. Parents spending time in the classroom are encouraged to stay for half or all of the day as schedules allow. Students should arrive at 9:10 to eat breakfast and to socialize. Breakfast is over at 9:30. If children eat breakfast at home, they should still **arrive no later than 9:25**. Doors will be locked at 9:30. Therefore, students arriving late will need to first check in at the office before continuing to class.

**Elementary** classes meet Monday through Friday from 9:10 to 2:30. This group includes grades one through six. Students must be six years old by September 1st to register. Classes are directed by Kimiko Fujita, who has been an elementary teacher at the Dome School for the past two years, and Kaci Elder who begins at the Dome School this year after teaching at River's Edge Academy Charter School for two years. Kimiko and Kaci coordinate parent and community volunteers who regularly act as classroom learning facilitators. This year, Terry Davis will continue teaching clay and sculpting, Chad Free will continue teaching music and technology, and Rochelle Eidukot Gale will return to teaching sign language. In addition, Nancy Lewis is a Title 1 teacher one day/week, offering students additional academic assistance. The classroom philosophy is to instill a lifelong love of learning by allowing students to follow their interests and manage their classroom. Teachers act as facilitators and assist students in creating relevant learning projects that incorporate all academic disciplines. An ongoing classroom theme also offers high interest learning opportunities. In this low-stress environment, playing with manipulatives and being creative and imaginative is considered as valid learning work for students and fun is a priority.

The multi-level of ages and skills of students in our classroom facilitates peer teaching opportunities. This helps develop a better understanding of the learning material for all students and it also encourages empathy and cooperation. Time is devoted to cultivate conflict resolution and communication skills. Oral presentations and creative performances are regular events in the classroom. There is significant focus on the environment, multiculturalism and social justice. Our local forests and mountains offer us a daily natural outdoor classroom and hikes are a weekly practice. Our democratic philosophy empowers students to follow their own interests and to have a voice in their classroom's direction. Our goal is to build a classroom community of self-learners and free-thinkers.

The **Kindergarten** class meets on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9:10 to 2:30. This program is geared towards children from four to six years of age. Students must be four years old by September 1st to register. Directing this class for the third year are Rochelle Eidukot Gale and Ashley Beckman. Rochelle taught the Dome School Kindergarten class with Helen Kauffman for 8 years and has served as a Rangers facilitator, and Ashley Beckman has previous experience as a Preschool teacher in her hometown of Austin, Texas. Providing music lessons on Friday afternoons will be Jill Gruenberg. The Title I Program extends to the five-year-olds in this group. Nancy Lewis is a Title I teachers who will be available one day/week to provide these students with additional academic assistance. Parents are encouraged to integrate projects into the curriculum. If interested, please arrange a time to meet with the teachers to discuss activities and schedules. Otherwise, there are plenty of opportunities to plug into daily lesson plans!

**Preschool** is a program for children ages three and four that meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Directing this class are Jill Gruenberg who has taught typically developing and special needs preschoolers for twenty-five years, and Jenn Fogler, a Dome School parent who has served in numerous capacities at the school, including as Board President. Parents will need to stay with their child during the session if they are not potty trained. This class introduces socialization with an emphasis on play.

**Field trips:** Parents will be notified about field trips by newsletter, verbally or by flyer posted in school. There is a permission slip that parents need to sign that allows us to bring your child on planned trips. Spontaneous trips happen occasionally, usually walking or in the immediate neighborhood. If you do not wish your child to go on any spontaneous trips, please notify the school. Drivers must have current driver's licenses and insurance on file in the office (per our insurance company). Anyone whose driving is impaired in any way, including lack of sleep, stress, or under the influence of medication or alcohol will not transport students. State and federal laws regarding transporting children, including proper use of seatbelts and booster/car seats, must be followed when transporting students.

## Parent Participation Hours

Tuition is dependent upon completion of parent participation hours. Any adult family member may fulfill participation hours. If the hours cannot be completed, a monthly fee will be added to tuition at a rate of \$9.75/hour. Participation hours must be recorded on the Parent Hours sheet located on the central bulletin board. **Parents must understand and agree that they will not be paid for their parent hours.**

Preschool:	4 hours/month
Kindergarten and Elementary:	8 hours/month
Multiple children	10 hours/month

### Opportunities for Parent Participation Hours:

#### Classroom Activities:

- Classroom participation - please organize activities and schedules with the teachers beforehand. Younger siblings may come, too, if they are not disruptive in the classroom. The parent is responsible for their supervision.
- Playground supervision - helpful in the morning before class and during recess after lunch
- Field trip chaperones and drivers
- Organization of book orders
- Organization of bookshelves
- Fire-making in the morning, or stocking furnace room with firewood and kindling
- Washing blankets and costumes, or washing/ sanitizing toys

#### Kitchen Activities:

- Sit with children during breakfast between 9:10 and 9:30 a.m.
- Substitute lunch cook
- Sweep and mop the kitchen Monday and Friday after lunch
- Wash dishes after breakfast and/or lunch
- Assist with weekly and monthly cleaning jobs posted on the kitchen bulletin

**Fundraising Activities** *Parent participation is ESSENTIAL during fundraising events! The income from these activities provides a major portion of the revenue needed to balance our school's operational costs and keep student tuition low.*

- Making phone calls to sign up volunteers
- Poster design and sign-making; help putting up posters; assistance advertising via radio stations, online, etc.
- Preparing food to sell; assisting with food sales in the kitchen
- Setting up before event and cleaning up afterwards
- Removing classrooms before events and replacing afterwards
- Greeting committee / ticket sales at the front door

#### Building maintenance activities:

- Firewood contributions and chopping
- Removing classrooms and/or replacing during building rentals
- Repair and fix-it jobs
- Recycling glass, metal and cardboard - we have no pick-up service; dump runs
- Emptying compost and washing bucket
- Refilling paper towel holders and toilet paper
- Washing towels, rags and mop heads
- Cleaning gutters and roof for general upkeep and also for fire prevention

#### Office Help:

- Answering the phone, tech support, first aid, and assistance with lice checks

## Registration and Tuition

- Please note that spaces can be limited and registration is on a first-come, first-served basis, so parents are encouraged to register as soon as possible.
- Deposit: In place of the separate registration fee (discontinued beginning the 2015-16 school year), a deposit equal to the amount of a month's tuition (per student) will be required to register. This will be used to cover the last month's tuition and is a non-refundable deposit.
- Birth certificates and immunization records: Birth Certificates must be seen upon registration. Immunization forms need to be filled out using your records.
- **Tuition amounts listed below assume parent participation hours are current:**

*Elementary* (Monday-Friday, 9:10-2:30)  
Annual tuition: \$2,700, or monthly: \$300

*Kindergarten* (Monday, Wednesday & Friday, 9:10-2:30)  
Annual tuition: \$1,845, or monthly: \$205

*Preschool/Toddlers* (Tuesday & Thursday, 9:10-12:30)  
Annual tuition: \$1,035, or monthly: \$115

- **Tuition is an annual commitment**, but may be paid in monthly installments. Vacations or other absences do not affect the amount of tuition due. Tuition is due on the first school day each month, September through May. If it is not received by the fifteenth of the month, late charges may be added at a rate of \$10 per month. Late fee deferment will only be considered if you are current on required parent participation hours. **Tuition not paid by the end of the month may result in exclusion from school until paid in full.** When the annual amount is paid at the beginning of the school year and parent hours are current, a 3% rebate will be issued at the end of the school year.
- A work credit is available when extra parent participation hours are fulfilled. Twenty dollars per month per child (maximum) may be credited towards tuition for each set of five parent hours that are worked and recorded in addition to (above and beyond) the required hours.
- A family credit of five dollars per month per additional child will be credited toward tuition for families with multiple children enrolled in the school.
- There is sometimes a small amount of scholarship money available to supplement tuition costs. Applications are available at any time in the office. Preference is given according to financial need and willingness of parents to do extra work. Also, preference is given to families current on their parent participation hours. Scholarships begin in October. Once the application has been submitted, parents can check availability of funds when paying tuition each month.
- Minimum wage janitorial work and school lunch work can be deducted from tuition. Inquire in the office if interested.
- Visitor fees: There is a fee and prior permission from the teacher required for all visiting children. No walk-ins will be accepted. The fee is \$15 per day for visiting any program (elementary, kindergarten, preschool)
- Late Pick-up fee: Children need to be picked up from school on time. There will be a grace period of 5 minutes, after which a charge of \$1 per minute late will accrue.

## Miscellaneous

Please plan car pools, play dates and after-school Rangers ahead of time. If you must speak with your child, please do so during the lunch hour. Otherwise a staff member will take a message. Students are not allowed to call their parents during school time.

A child must be kept home for 24 hours after experiencing fever, rash, vomiting or diarrhea.

Fire Drills and Earthquake Drills: Periodically, our school performs fire drills and earthquake drills. We discuss emergency situations and procedures with our students and encourage families to do so at home, as well. In case of a fire drill, children learn to exit the building through the closest exit and walk in an orderly fashion to the concrete slab on the playground where roll will be called. In case of an earthquake drill, children are taught to find shelter under the table while facing away from the windows.

There is a "No Dog" policy at school. If pets other than dogs are brought for sharing, they must be in a cage under the parents supervision until sharing time. They cannot be left at school.

Please check your child for head lice at home. We will do checks at school, as well. Children who have lice will be sent home and may return when all nits are gone. Head lice are very contagious.

Please respect our neighbors and help to reduce dust by driving slowly (5mph) on the driveway. Please do not block the mailbox with your vehicle. Please turn off your vehicle's engine! Otherwise exhaust will make its way into the building and will affect us all. Also, there is a blind curve on the driveway; pedestrians, cyclists and drivers should proceed with caution.

Helmets are required for children riding bikes, skateboards, roller blades, etc.

The Dome School and Staff are not responsible for lost or stolen items. Students are discouraged from bringing valuable items to school.

Adults with children of the opposite sex may assist their children in the bathroom. The unisex or family bathroom may also be used for this purpose.

The Dome School has a no-weapons policy. This includes toy weapons.

Please label your child's clothes, lunch box, shoes, etc. Children should have a change of clothes in a marked bag to be kept at school in case of accidents. Shoes are required for younger children and recommended for everyone. Instruct them to keep shoes and socks in cubbies or on the mat by the door.

As required by law, all of our staff members have had background checks.

There is a no cell phone policy in the classroom. Computer and electronic use in the classroom will be limited to lessons.

There is a USDA sponsored breakfast and lunch program. Free meals are available for all children. However, applications for the program (available in the office) must be completed by the first day of school. All children may eat breakfast at the beginning of the school day. We do not allow candy or soda. Volunteers are requested to make a donation in the office. Parents who are not working/volunteering are charged \$3 for lunch.

During extreme weather conditions we will have the same school closures as the Three Rivers School District, Illinois Valley schools. View local TV stations, listen for information on the radio, or check online at [ThreeRiversSchoolDistrict.com](http://ThreeRiversSchoolDistrict.com) - click on Illinois Valley. When they have a late start, we start on time.

The staff would like to reiterate to the parents of the Dome School community that we have an Open Door policy. Please bring any issues or concerns to our teachers or office staff to keep channels of communication open. We also provide a suggestion box for anonymous feedback. A grievance form is also available at school.