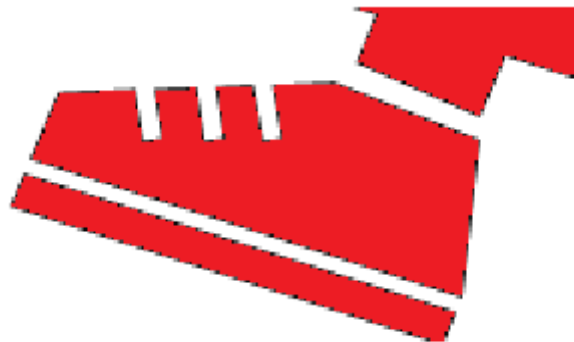


A STEP AHEAD

Child Development Services Ltd
Est. 2005

PARENT HANDBOOK
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
2026 -2027



A Step Ahead- Child Development Services Ltd **Parent Handbook**

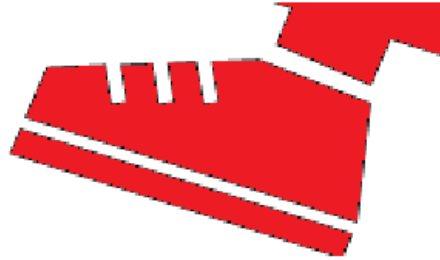


Table of Contents

Table of Contents	Page 2
Location and contact information	Page 3
Policies and Procedures	Page 4
Child Care Philosophy	Page 4
Out of School Care Hours of Operation	Page 5
Closure Dates	Page 5
Important Dates-Yearly update	Page 6
Monthly Fee Schedule	Page 6
Drop-in Rates	Page 6
Enrollment and Fees	Page 7-8
Attendance	Page 8-9
Late pick-up policy	Page 10
Parent Responsibilities	Page 10-12
Parent Involvement	Page 12
Emergency & Evacuation Procedures	Page 13-14
Medication Administration and Health	Page 14
Child Care Objectives	Page 15-16
Child Guidance Policy	Page 16
Supervision Policies and Practices	Page 17-19
Meals And Snacks	Page 20
Field Trips, Outings and Full-day Sign-up Sheets	Page 20
Neighbourhood Outings and Community Map	Page 21
Our Play Spaces	Page 22-23
Program Schedule – School Day	Page 24
Full-day Program Schedule	Page 25
Program Activities	Page 26
Our Staff	Page 27

Location and Contact Info



Welcome to A Step Ahead Child Development Services.

We are located in Calgary, Alberta, in the Southeast community of Douglasdale.

We operate from, and offer before & after school care for students who attend Douglasdale School: 400 Douglas Park Blvd. SE, Calgary, AB

We strive to serve the needs of busy parents who desire high quality childcare for their school age children in grades one through five.

Our OSC (Out of School Care) program is licensed and approved through the Ministry of Children's Services in the Province of Alberta who can be reached through:
Child Care Connect General Email Box – cs.childcareconnect@gov.ab.ca
Child Care Connect Toll-Free Number 1-844-644-5165

A Step Ahead Contact information:

Business phone # (403)269-7837 aka (403)269-STEP
This is a Land-line and only accepts voice calls and voice messages.

On-site cell phone (text message) is 403-921-4711

Our website is: www.asteahead123.com
Email us at asteahead123@hotmail.com

Our business mailing address is:

A Step Ahead
Suite 143
315 - 5155 130th Ave. SE.
Calgary, AB. T2Z 0N3

Policies and Procedures

A Step Ahead's Parent Handbook contains our Policies and Procedures that all parents must know and agree to upon registration of their child. Please read through this document carefully. Each year an updated Parent Handbook will be emailed to parents and will supersede previous parent handbooks. It's important to read the handbook for each year, as your agreement to our policies and procedures while your child is attending A Step Ahead programs, is for those policies and procedures detailed in the current parent handbook.

A Step Ahead's Childcare Philosophy

We strive to create a safe and engaging environment where each child feels valued and respected and where they can play, create, have fun and grow!

We believe in:

- creating opportunities to explore interests and discover abilities and strengths.
 - encouraging physical activity and social skills development.
- modeling respectfulness, empathy and consideration of others.
 - getting outside for fresh-air free-play time every day.
 - nurturing each child's self-worth and confidence.

Out of School Care Hours of Operation

School Age Care: Care is available for children enrolled in Douglasdale School in Grades 1 through 5. We operate a set-up / take-down program from the school common area, called the Piazza. This a shared space with Douglasdale School. As the school uses this space during the school day, we are unable to offer care for half-day kindergarten students, who require extended hours of care.

2026-2027 School Year

Monday to Thursday: Before School Hours are 6:45AM to AM entrance bell.

After School Hours are PM dismissal bell to 6:00PM

Friday:

Before School Hours are 6:45AM to AM entrance bell.

After School Hours are mid-day dismissal bell to 6:00PM

Full-day Program Hours (on a no-school or non-instruction day) are 7:00AM to 6:00PM

Closure Dates:

We are closed select dates throughout the school year. The following is a list of general dates we are closed. Please refer to the **'Important Dates'** document for a more comprehensive list for the current or upcoming school year.

General Closure Dates Between the Start of the school year at the end of August/early September and end of the school year in late June. A Step Ahead is closed:

Labour Day

Truth and Reconciliation Day

Thanksgiving

Remembrance Day

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve through to New Year's Day

Family Day

Good Friday

Easter Monday

Victoria Day

Last business days of June, following the last day of classes- Step Ahead year-end packing up/organizational days.

Tentative Closure Dates – A Step Ahead may be closed the following dates:

- Days between the last day of school before Christmas Break and the 1st day students return to school in January. (We endeavour to offer Winter Camp days either before Christmas or after New Years, but this depends on the school break and school access.)

- The first Monday of Spring Break due to a CBE 'In-Lieu' day and no school access.

SUMMER- A Step Ahead is not currently operating summer camps and is closed for the months of July and August. We are happy to refer families to many wonderful summer programs and day camps.

Important Dates – Yearly Update

Each year, an additional document will be available on our website and emailed to parents with a detailed schedule of closure dates, early dismissals and full-day programs. Please be aware that this document may require occasional adjustments over the course of the school year. Updates and reminders will be emailed to families when they arise.

Monthly Fee Schedule

One-time Registration Fee - \$100
School Age Care Monthly Fee - \$530

Parents with children enrolled in monthly programs do not have to pay extra for Professional Day/Organizational Days and Early Dismissals. Care and field trip costs are covered in monthly fees. Please be aware that pre-registration (sign-up) of regularly enrolled students is required for all Full-Day Programs and registration may be capped. A 'Notification of Attendance' email is sent and sign-up sheets posted (at the front of the Sign In/Sign Out binder) prior to all Full-Day Programs. It is the responsibility of parents to be aware of any upcoming PD days, to look for Notification of Attendance/sign-up sheets and indicate in advance through one of these methods, if their child will be attending or will be absent.

Drop-In rates:

- School Day AM only - \$35
- School Day (Mon-Thurs) dismissal (AM included)- \$45
- School Day (Friday) early dismissal (AM included)- \$60
- Full Day program - \$70

Drop-in care is available throughout the year, during school days and non-school days. Payment of the registration fee is required to use drop-in care. Parents must also confirm that space for drop-in is available beforehand. Please reference our Important Dates document for extra days we are open and days we are closed.

Enrolment and Fees

- a) School Age Care Fees are established by the Board of Directors and are reviewed annually. A Step Ahead uses a membership-based fee model, where all school age care families pay the same fee/child/month and may utilize the program as needed.
- b) A non-refundable, one-time registration fee of \$100 is payable upon the registration of each child. At the time of initial registration, parents are required to pay the fees for the first month of care in advance. The first months' fees are fully refundable with proper notice of withdrawal.
- c) **Monthly fees are due on the first day of each month** and are payable by pre-authorized debit. Any fees not paid by the **5th working day of the month** are subject to having the child's enrolment suspended until all fees are paid in full.
- d) Any fees and fines in arrears must be paid by the first day of the following month. Failure to meet this deadline may result in termination from the Program. Any monthly fees that remain unpaid will be subject to a \$50 late payment penalty/month for every subsequent month that fees remain unpaid. If an account remains unpaid for 3 months, A Step Ahead will forward the collection of the overdue fees to an external collection agency.
- e) Parents are required to give a minimum **45 days** written notice when withdrawing their child(ren) from A Step Ahead.
- f) **A \$50.00 service charge will be charged on all NSF Pre-Authorized Debits or any alternate financial transactions that are returned NSF.**
- g) Refunds or credit are not given for days absent regardless of the reason.
- h) Receipts for fees paid will be given out in January/ February of the following calendar year for tax purposes. Should parents require a copy of their receipts prior to this time we ask that they submit a written request.
- i) Drop-in fees during the school year are to be prepaid at the beginning of each month for time booked or at the time of booking. Any money left over will be credited to the next month's fees. If a child attends drop-in unexpectedly or short-notice, drop-in fees for that day must be paid the day of by cash or email-transfer. Drop-in services that are booked, but unused and not cancelled ahead of time, will still be subject to the payment of drop-in fees. Please be sure to cancel ahead of time if you no longer need drop-in care or notify us first thing in the morning if your child is absent due to illness. Should any drop-in fees remain outstanding, drop-in service will be suspended until fees are paid in full.
- j) Parents who receive subsidy or intend to apply for subsidy, must pay the full fee for the first month of care in advance. The parent portion for the first month of care will be deducted from this payment. The balance of the money will remain as a credit with A Step Ahead while the child attends A Step Ahead programs. Should the subsidy a family receives be reduced, due to accumulated unexplained absences, or reassessment, the credit with A Step Ahead will be used to cover any additional parent portion owed for the monthly fees. Parents will receive a notice to

A Step Ahead

let them know when this has occurred. Any unused credit will be refunded upon final withdrawal from A Step Ahead, with 45 days proper written notice received.

- l) There is no provision in childcare fees for parents who wish to take a 'leave' from care for consecutive weeks or months. Wishing to stop childcare fee payments is considered a withdrawal, and the same notice of withdrawal is required.

Attendance

- a) **Duty to notify us of absences** (separately from notifying the school as well)

Parents are required to inform A Step Ahead if their child will not be attending **after** school. It is imperative that parents are diligent about providing A Step Ahead with absence information prior to the afternoon program beginning. **Short notice messages (within 2 hours of dismissal time) are best relayed by texting us at 403-921-4711.**

Please report directly to Step Ahead:

- ***After** school care absences
- ***Full day absences**
- ***If you picked up your child from school early.**

It is not necessary to report before school absences, however it will be assumed that your child will still be attending after school, even if they are absent in the morning.

Parents frequently find it easiest to 'CC' us on absence emails sent to the school, which works fine for us as well.

Much time is consumed when we need to search for a child or make phone calls to determine their whereabouts. This is time that takes staff away from supervising the children in our care. Thank you for helping us make our program safer by reporting absences to us directly and in advance.

- b) **Unexpected child absence** Should a child fail to arrive at A Step Ahead after school, staff will initially attempt to confer with Douglasdale School staff to determine if the student attended school or was picked up prior to dismissal. For this reason, parents may be asked to fill out the CBE form "Consent to Share Information". This allows Douglasdale School and A Step Ahead to share information with one another to determine the whereabouts and well-being of a child as quickly as possible.

If we are unable to connect with school staff, or if the information is contradictory or fails to satisfy Step Ahead staff concerns, we will endeavour to contact parents directly.

- c) **Parent Contact Information:** Please be sure to keep contact information up to date. In the event a child has failed to show up at A Step Ahead and is not supposed to be absent, valuable time that could be spent searching for that child is in jeopardy if parents cannot be reached by their contact numbers. Please be sure to update your contact information with us, should it happen to change.
- d) **Who's calling? /Junk mail mishaps:** Please be sure to program our numbers into your phone, so you won't accidentally dismiss our calls or text messages.

A Step Ahead

Sandi's cell phone: 403-921-4711

Amanda's cell phone: 403-466-9513

Please also set us up as an email contact so our messages are not dismissed or filtered out as spam or junk. AStepAhead123@hotmail.com

- e) **Dismissal Time Pick-Up:** If you are picking up your child right at school dismissal time, we ask that you come to the front doors to pick up from Step Ahead. This way we have seen you and recorded your child being picked up. There is no need to inform us ahead of time, it keeps the routine consistent for the kids and this helps minimize any possible miscommunication.
- f) **MESSAGES FROM PARENTS / COMMUNICATION PAGES**
To prevent any miscommunication and help ensure staff has the relevant information they need, all messages must be received in written form, or recorded voicemail message, even if parents relay information to us verbally in person.

Please convey messages to us in one of the following ways:

-writing a message in our "Communication Pages"-located within the Sign In/Out book.

-sending us a text message, email or voicemail message.

- g) **Attendance affects subsidy** Parents receiving government subsidy are strongly advised to carefully review how the provincial subsidy works with regards to the hours a parent estimates that their child will attend when applying for subsidy, versus the actual hours that a child will typically attend the childcare program. Actual attendance hours are recorded and submitted to the province each month. Unexplained absences or failure for children to attend the childcare program for the number of hours parents estimated they would need monthly, may result in reduced subsidy coverage, as determined by the province. Children who attend A Step Ahead full time, can typically accumulate 50 hours of care in a month (IE 1½ -2 hours a day Mon-Thurs, 4+ hours Fridays). Please carefully and conservatively estimate your childcare hours when applying. More hours estimated, does not necessarily equate to greater subsidy coverage or likelihood of approval. Rather, when children regularly do not attend the minimum number of hours subsidy is approved for, or if unexcused absences accumulate, the province may reduce a parents subsidy amount. If your child is sick, the absence is excused if you receive a doctor's note that we can submit with subsidy.

Late Pick-Up Policy

There are no provisions for early drop-off or late pick-up at A Step Ahead.

Parents or guardians unable to pick their children up on time, due to unforeseen circumstances, should immediately phone the staff at A Step Ahead.

A late fee of \$20 is charged for picking up any time after we close for the first 10 minutes and \$2.00 per minute for every additional minute thereafter. Parents are required to pay the late fee in cash within 24 hours.

If late pick-up becomes reoccurring and problematic, all incidents will be documented, and the Director will become involved in an attempt to reach a satisfactory resolution culminating in an additional signed agreement between all parties. Should the family and A Step Ahead be unable to reach a satisfactory resolution, all A Step Ahead services will be terminated for that family effective immediately.

If a parent should fail to pick up their child, staff will attempt to reach the Child's guardians and emergency contacts and will notify the Director. Should staff be unable to reach anyone, the Director will contact Alberta Child and Family Services to notify them of the situation and be advised as to the next course of action.

Parents are required to sign a registration contract which states they have read, understood and agree to abide by all A Step Ahead policies. Should a parent refuse to pay the late fee they may face immediate termination of their child's enrolment in the program forfeiting any balance of fees paid for that month (for the portion of the month unused).

Parent Responsibilities

- a) Parents must inform A Step Ahead if their child will be absent, or if any changes to their usual routine are expected. Children may leave with another adult (other than their parent) if prior written consent has been given. In unforeseen circumstances, parents are asked to phone A Step Ahead and advise the staff that another adult will be picking up their child. Please be aware we will require photo identification from the person you have requested to pick up your child if we are unfamiliar with them. If, due to custody reasons, you do not wish your child's other parent to pick them up, a copy of the legal order must be given to A Step Ahead to be kept on file.
- b) Each morning before coming to the program or to school, parents are required to do an informal assessment of their child's health to ensure their child does not show any signs of illness. If a child has a fever or shows any signs of illness, they will not be able to attend the program until they are well. If a child begins to show signs of illness or appears unwell while attending A Step Ahead, parents will be notified and are required to pick their child up from A Step Ahead or Douglasdale School as soon as possible.

A Step Ahead

- c) A Step Ahead must be informed in a timely manner, of any changes to parent or emergency contact info. Parents must complete an emergency contact and child info update check, twice a year.
- d) Parents are required to sign their child in and out of A Step Ahead each day. Parents are responsible for **carefully** and correctly filling out sign in/out sheets to prevent any errors that may compromise the accuracy of these records. A Step Ahead requires these records be accurate in the event they need to be referenced in an emergency. Particularly when we are outside, Parents must communicate with the staff (wave, holler, chat etc) and receive an acknowledgement from staff when picking up their child after school (in addition to signing their child out).
- e) Parents are required to pay close attention to A Step Ahead postings on the “Parent Window” (above Sign In/ Sign Out trolley inside), at the front of the Sign In/Sign Out binder or emailed correspondence. These notices may contain information relevant to your child-care, our services or community alerts and may be time sensitive. These notices may change regularly so please check every day.
- f) Parents must sign up their child for full-day programs on sheets posted (usually 1 week) prior to the day. A Step Ahead uses these to adjust staffing, transportation and program needs and to attain parental permission for the listed activities. Please sign up at least 2 days before the full-day program to give us time to make any changes required. If parents do not wish for their child to participate in the full-day activities, it is the responsibility of the parent to make alternate arrangements for the care of their child.
- g) Parents are responsible for the timely payment of fees and any additional charges.
- h) Douglasdale students are welcome to assist teachers or stay late in class for various reasons, so long as they will be on their way to A Step Ahead within 30 minutes, and A Step Ahead has been informed by the student or teacher directly. If a student informs A Step Ahead, staff will confirm this with the teacher.
- i) Parents are required to ensure that their child is adequately and appropriately dressed for both indoor and outdoor play.
In winter: warm boots, water-proof mitts, hat, snow pants, and a winter coat are essential for daily outside play. In warm weather, sunscreen, caps, water bottle and appropriate clothing and footwear are required.
- j) All children are required to change into **indoor shoes** when they come inside. Children will require 2 pairs of indoor shoes, one pair for school and one pair for A Step Ahead. The shoes used for A Step Ahead will be kept with us to be used while children are at the program.
- k) Parents and children are required to remove wet, dirty, or snowy footwear when entering the school. We are very privileged to be situated in a school. Please help us by respecting school rules, by leaving wet, snowy, dirty footwear on the carpet and helping us keep our play environment safe and clean.

- l) Parents are responsible for providing their child with an adequate and nutritious lunch and snacks every day. Candy and gum are discouraged.
Each day after school children are encouraged to eat a snack brought from home. Due to allergies, we request that parents do not send any products containing peanuts to Centre.
- m) Please label your child's belongings with initials or last name. A Step Ahead is not responsible for clothing, personal belongings or toys brought from home that become lost, damaged or misplaced. It is much easier to return a misplaced item to its owner if it is labelled.

Parent Involvement

A Step Ahead has a parental and family open-door policy. Parents and families are welcome to actively participate in our program, so long as they are not ill and adhere to the same rules we expect of children and staff. This includes using respectful behaviour and language and leaving outside shoes at the school entryway.

Please feel free to discuss any small concerns that you may have with the staff at any time. For matters that may require more time, individual meetings can be set up with the staff and director at a time when we are not supervising children and running program activities. Telephone calls and emails are also welcomed.

Parents are welcome to come and join in with their child or participate as a special guest in our program.

Parents wishing to volunteer will be required to obtain a Criminal Record Check, aka Police Information Search, which will need to include a Vulnerable Sector Search, within 8 weeks of their first occasion to volunteer with us. Volunteers and Staff that do not yet have a Criminal Record Check completed and submitted to us, are only permitted to participate under the direct supervision of our regular, qualified staff.

To keep parents informed about program happenings, items will be posted on the bulletin board (Parent Window) or the first page of the sign in/out book, and emails will be sent out to convey current and upcoming events to be aware of and any necessary updates. Parents are expected to check the bulletin board and the front page of the sign in/out book regularly and take note of any postings that may be relevant to field trips or other program information.

Parents are welcome to bring ideas to the attention of the staff, including ideas for program activities, child-related practices, and their strategies for their children that they find helpful, etc. We welcome the opportunity to learn from the experience of others, collaborate with families and occasionally to explain the reasoning behind why we may do things a certain way.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to bring them to our attention. If families have any concerns that may require more time to discuss, we respectfully request that an appointment is made outside of our regular program hours so as not to interfere with staff supervision of children. Thanks everyone!

Emergency and Evacuation Procedures

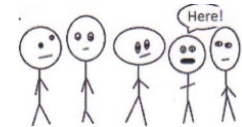
The Director, Staff and Volunteers will all be familiar with our evacuation procedures. This procedure is followed during our normal hours of operation while at Douglasdale School.

1. **LINE UP QUIETLY** – Children line up quietly beside the risers in the piazza. Outside children line up at the designated muster point (North side of the playground.) Gym children line up at gym door near compound exit.
2. **WAIT IN LINE FOR LEADERS**- Staff will collect all pertinent information, such as emergency binders and attendance sheets.
3. **SCHOOL CHECK**- Staff will check for kids who may still be in the washrooms and play centres, and ensure doors are closed.



4. **FOLLOW A LEADER TO EXIT SCHOOL**- Staff and children will proceed in an orderly manner to the playground compound doors (nearest exit).
5. **MUSTER POINT**- We move well away from the building and line up at our designated muster point- the North side of the school playground.

ATTENDANCE – Staff will take attendance to ensure that all children in attendance are outside and accounted for.



6. **WAIT FOR INSTRUCTIONS**- Staff and children do not re-enter the building until it is safe to do so. Fire department will give the all-clear.
7. **ALTERNATE LOCATION**- Should Staff and children be required to evacuate the building and relocate, we will move to our alternate location (Mountain Park School). Parents will be contacted from Mountain Park School to pick up children.
8. **RELOCATING**- Directions to Mountain Park School from our Muster Point:
In a 2x2 line of children, we head south on Douglasdale Blvd, remaining on the West side of the road. We cross 130th avenue and continue South until we reach Mountain Park School. Mountain Park School is located at 312 Mount Douglas Close. SE. Calgary. (403) 777-6442

LOCK DOWN PROCEDURE- If we are in the Piazza, children are gathered in the “Sunshine room” adjacent the school office. Doors are locked/barricaded. The windows are covered, and lights turned out. An email is sent to the principal of the school with information about the number of students in attendance, the number of students with us in the room, and the number of students that are not in the room with us. Should we be unable to connect to email, 911 will be called to record the information and pass it along to the appropriate persons. We practice lock-downs once each semester.

Medication Administration and Health

- a) Parents should not send any medication with children to A Step Ahead for children to administer to themselves, without attaining authorization from Step Ahead staff. Parents must sign an authorization form if they need the program staff to administer any medication to a child including over the counter medications such as Tylenol or cold remedies.
- All medication must be in its original container.
 - All prescription medication must have a label with the child's name and visible expiry date.
 - Staff will not administer medication with verbal permission alone. An authorization form must be filled out and submitted for both 'maintenance' medications and 'emergency' medications. Provincial legislation allows for parents to provide written authorization to A Step Ahead allowing a child nine (9) years of age and up to self-administer prescription medication.
- b) The program staff will administer medication as required, and document the time, date and dosage.
- c) Staff members are required to remove a sick child from the program and contact the parents to arrange for the child to be picked up (as soon as possible and must be within 2 hours) for all illness related events, including:
- 1> The child has obvious symptoms of illness (IE vomiting, diarrhea, high fever, presence of new and unexplainable rash or cough).
 - 2> The child requires greater attention and care than can be provided without compromising the supervision of other children in the program.
 - 3> Staff believe the child displays symptoms that may indicate they pose a health risk to other persons on site.
 - 4> A child is unable to participate in daily activities, for an example: If a child is too sick to go outside, please do not send them to the program, as they are too sick to attend.
- d) Children exhibiting signs of illness should not attend until they are well.
- e) In the case of a severe medical emergency, EMS will be alerted, an ambulance will transport the child to the nearest clinic or hospital. The child will be accompanied by a staff member to the hospital. Parents will be contacted as soon as it is possible and safe to do so. If there is any uncertainty about whether EMS should be summoned, A Step Ahead will err on the side of caution and call EMS.
- f) Parents will be fully responsible for any fees incurred for emergency medical attention.
- g) Alberta Child Care Licensing will be contacted and informed and a report shall be submitted, in the event there is any need to contact EMS, a child is hospitalized overnight, or a serious medical event has occurred.
- h) In all cases where an accident occurs at the program, which does not require emergency aid as above, parents will be notified on their arrival at the program and may be asked to sign an accident report form to confirm their awareness of the incident.

Child Care Objectives

- Ensuring a safe and secure place for children to be cared for.
- Creating an atmosphere of respect and acceptance so that all children feel welcomed and appreciated.
- Implementing fun and innovative programs to meet all areas of each child's development.

We strive to meet each child's developmental needs in the following areas:

- **Socially:** By giving children the opportunity to participate in small groups, large groups, and in leadership roles, in both free-play and organized activities. Children engage in play that strengthens their social skills and abilities to co-operate, communicate, compromise, empathize, build friendships and resolve conflicts with various groups of peers.
- **Emotionally:** Staff support children emotionally by encouraging each child's positive self-concept and fostering their self-esteem. When big emotions arise, we listen and acknowledging their feelings. We help kids be aware of their emotions and the emotions of others by encouraging them to:
 - express and label their feelings appropriately,
 - by teaching children tools and encouraging them to use strategies that help with emotional self-regulation and resilience,
 - by building positive relationships with each child in an environment that respects their dignity, uniqueness, and autonomy,
 - and by connecting and collaborating with families to work together to best support children when concerns arise.
- **Intellectually:** Children are encouraged to participate in the development of programs, expanding on their interests or school topics. We engage children in critical thinking, problem solving, riddles, challenges and trivia and present them in a fun context. We value their curiosity and inquisitiveness, and we provide opportunities for our kids to question, discover, learn and explore.
- **Educationally:** Age-appropriate games, educational activities and projects often expand on, or allow children to practice, core skills and concepts in language, science and mathematics. To assist with education a voluntary homework club is available to aid children with specific learning objectives or general guidance. Homework and reading challenges provide a little extra incentive for kids to partake in these activities while at Step Ahead.
- **Physically:** Many sports, group games, physical activities and fitness challenges are incorporated into our program, encouraging kids to be active and healthy. We are very fortunate to have access to the gymnasium and a large school yard with a playground and green space galore! We value daily fresh air and outside free time dedicated to physical activity and play.
- **Creatively:** Children are provided with a variety of organized activities such as arts and crafts, skits and drama games, special themes, and free play centers such as building toys, doll house, and dramatic free play. Many artistic materials are available for children to use and novel items are rotated through to keep the materials fresh and inviting. Children are encouraged to create and develop their interests and opportunities and avenues for them to do so are incorporated into the program on a regular basis.

Child Guidance Policy

- a) Expectations for Behavior: Each child is responsible for making their own choices. Children are expected to make choices that are safe (for themselves and others) and respectful (of themselves, their peers, the staff, and the property).
- b) Behavior Management Policy: To guide behavior staff will implement a number of practices, varied by the behavior or the escalation of the behavior. In all situations, the leaders (staff) are conscientious to treat the child respectfully and to communicate the reasons the behavior in question is not allowed, and what consequences (natural and/or logical) may result.

Practices to guide behavior include:

- Positive reinforcement of good behavior.
- Re-direction to new activity if poor choices accompany present activity.
- Renewal time, to allow the child to regain control and contemplate an acceptable resolution.
- Imposed consequences; IE loss of a privilege, limited choices, or an appropriate activity to address the behavior.
- Behavior will be communicated to parents verbally or via incident reports.

- c) Serious and Persistent Behavior: Should unsafe behavior or extreme disrespect persist then a *Serious and Persistent Behavior Plan* will be implemented, which includes 5 steps. The progression from one step to another is the result of the continued behavior.
 - 1> Written notification outlining the severity of the behavior and that a Serious Behavior Plan is being implemented and will detail the steps involved should the behavior continue.
 - 2> Parent meeting with director to discuss behavior as well as assist parents in establishing other community supports to help deal with the child's behavior.
 - 3> Parent and Child meeting. Written contract is established with the child outlining expected behavior and the consequences should the child deviate from expected, acceptable behavior.
 - 4> Suspension from program. Between 2 and 5 days as determined by the director.
 - 5> Termination of care may result if the behavior continues and is deemed to be a serious threat, or the parent refuses to acknowledge the situation. A Serious Threat includes, but is not limited to, physically harming staff or children, using loud, abusive or derogatory language in a continual manner, sexual assault or highly sexualized behavior, intentionally leaving the areas designated to be the boundaries, blatant destruction of property.

Supervision Policies and Practices

Supervision will vary according to the needs of each situation. Below details some general practices we use regularly.

Head counts and attendance check lists are completed and used throughout each day. This is especially true of any transition times, both while on-site at Douglasdale School or off-site while on a community outing or field trip.

Regular Program Supervision

-Upon arrival, parents sign children in. Parents are responsible for their children and the supervision of their children until the child has entered the program.

-When children enter the program space they are greeted by staff, and then proceed to post their name-tag on the designated wall. This provides a quick and easy visual reference for leaders, of all the children present.

-At least one morning staff member carries an attendance check list and notes any children that arrive.

-When children arrive after school, they soon become familiar with a routine of posting their name-tag, and joining their 'team table'. During this busy time of transition, having the children sit at a consistent table with their team-mates, keeps the kids busy working on team challenges, worksheets and activities, while also assists the leaders with determining which children have arrived and who still needs to be accounted for.

-Leaders proceed to sign children in and track down any children who have not arrived at Step Ahead in a timely fashion. Leaders may need to determine a Childs' whereabouts or if they are in fact, absent. Doing this as quickly as possible is important, and therefore it is imperative that parents notify us of any absences before school dismissal time.

-When afterschool attendance is completed and the group is dismissed to go play outside, they are met by a leader just outside the compound doors, where they quickly check in, on their way by, to confirm all children have joined us out in the school yard.

-Children learn and become familiar with rules for certain play areas. Some play areas require that a leader is present and supervising it before children may access that space. For example, a leader must be supervising the playground, before the playground is open and available to them.

-Staff are familiar with play areas and adjust when necessary due to safety or supervision concerns. Staff observe and inspect play areas for any hazards when they enter them. Children are encouraged to bring any hazards they notice to the attention of staff.

-We ensure that children are aware of their boundaries, inside and outside at the program, (as well as any off-site place we may visit), and that staff are vigilant at quick and frequent boundary checks.

A Step Ahead

- We ensure children are aware of the expectation for them to ask permission to change rooms (IE leaving the gym to go back to the Piazza), outside play areas (IE leaving the playground to join a group playing by the trees), or be excused to the washroom, etc.
- Staff endeavour to be actively engaged with the children nearest to them.
- Staff position themselves, as much as possible, with a wider view of the play area in front of them.
- All staff carry attendance check lists and note any children that are picked up by parents.
- New staff spend time shadowing experienced staff and learning the boundaries and expectations of all play areas.
- Checks to ensure all children are accounted for occur regularly and always when the group transitions to a new place or activity. This is accomplished by way of group attendance, head counts, or paper check-off lists.
- Staff will regularly review supervision practices to discuss any concerns that arise, consider any possible solutions, and determine if/what revisions may need to be implemented.

Distal Supervision

-Older children may earn the privilege of distal supervision. Distal supervision is permitted with small groups of children, for short amounts of time for specific activities. This will be an activity and location approved by the leader, who will periodically check on the children. Children are often quite close, so staff can easily check on them, or overhear their activity. Children understand the expectations and are reminded of these expectations before beginning any distally supervised activity. This allows children the opportunity to earn greater responsibility and trust. Distal supervision is considered a privilege that children earn by meeting expectations and by making trustworthy decisions.

-Where it's developmentally appropriate, older children may have the permission of their parents to 'meet them at the door' or 'meet them at the car'. This enables them to earn trust and independence in small steps. Parents indicate they have arrived by text messaging or calling staff. Elder children that live within close proximity of the program, may have parental permission to walk home from the program, once parents have arrived home and have contacted Step Ahead staff to let them know. Staff will see to the child being signed out and confirm with parents once the child has departed, so parents can monitor the child's arrival at home within 5-10 minutes.

Off-Site Supervision

Each trip has its own set of variables pertaining to layout and activity, that require assessment of the situation and which supervision strategies would be best. This assessment is thorough and thoughtful, and we endeavour to make all outings as safe as possible.

We currently do not provide any kind of regular transportation, rather charter bus transportation is reserved for special field trips which are planned well ahead of time. Parents are provided details about field trips in advance, including information about our supervision practices while

A Step Ahead

transporting children and while attending the off-site venue. Having been informed of this information, parents must provide consent for their child to participate in advance.

-Whenever departing the program or the off-site location, children line up for a roll call or headcount and stay together as a group. All staff carry a checklist of the days' attendance for roll call and reference, as well as an emergency contact book, first aid kit, and any precautionary emergency medication a child attending may need, with them at all times.

-At some off-site locations, or for certain activities, children may be split into small groups with an assigned leader. When we separate into smaller groups with a leader, staff remain in regular contact with one another and all leaders are well versed in the plan for the day, including when to check in, and when/where to meet back with everyone. All leaders have their individual group lists and regularly do head counts to confirm their group is accounted for.

-While on a field trip or off-site outing, leaders will discuss appropriate boundaries for children and ensure that children are given a proper orientation, so they also understand the boundaries and expectations of the new environment. We endeavour to make these boundaries clearly defined and as easy to understand as possible. There is an expectation that if a child is uncertain of a boundary or wishes to leave that boundary, that they ask a Leader and speak with them first.

-Staff explain to the children their expectations for behaviour and boundaries and confirm they understand. Expectations may include staying with the Leader, staying within certain boundaries and what a child should do if they find themselves separated or uncertain of where their group is, which will vary by location and situation.

-Whether children are in small groups with a leader or a large group all together, leaders will do frequent and regular head counts and always when beginning or ending a transition, such as arriving and departing an exhibit, building, or region of the field trip.

-When walking together as a large group to or from a venue, or on a neighbourhood outing (walking transportation), the group lines up with partners (two by two line) and leaders do an attendance roll call and head count. One leader will lead the line at a steady, measured pace so that no one falls behind. Another leader will bring up the caboose, so they have a visual of everyone in line and can ensure no one is struggling to keep up and that everyone is behaving safely and respectfully, in a manner befitting a group who is using walking transportation. Additional leaders are dispersed throughout the group.

-When using bus transportation, the group walks together in a line to get to and from the bus. Upon loading the bus, seat belts are checked, and children are reminded about safe bus behaviour. Head counts are done and verified before departing.

-A leader is situated at the back of the bus to see all the children while traveling. Additional leaders are dispersed throughout the bus. Upon returning to the school, the group walks together back into the program and a head count is done as they enter. The last leader to exit the bus checks all rows for kids and belongings to ensure the bus is safely vacated by everyone.

Meals and Snacks

Parents provide snacks and lunches, and each individual child brings their own in accordance with the Canada Food Guide. Healthy eating practices and guidelines will be made known to parents to ensure appropriate nutrition. If a child comes to the program without adequate snacks, parents will initially be notified verbally and then in writing. Extra snacks will be available in the event a child does not have a snack or lunch. If the lack of proper nutrition persists, a meeting will be held with parents to determine a reason, and endeavor to rectify the situation. If lack of proper snacks/meals appears to be indicative of an ongoing situation, efforts will be made to make connections with family supports and education. If the nutrition seems to be neglectful, the situation will be brought to the attention of Child and Family Services. Children eat snack shortly after they arrive at Step Ahead after school and are reminded to wash up prior to eating. Children will eat snack in the designated program space or wash up and take their snack outside with them for the 'after school recess' play break, in the school yard. On special occasions the Centre may provide snack, however children are still required to bring their own snacks and meals. Children are encouraged to bring a "freggie" snack (fresh fruit or vegetable) to be eaten for the first snack of the day during full day programs.

Field Trips, Outings and Full-day Program Sign-up Sheets

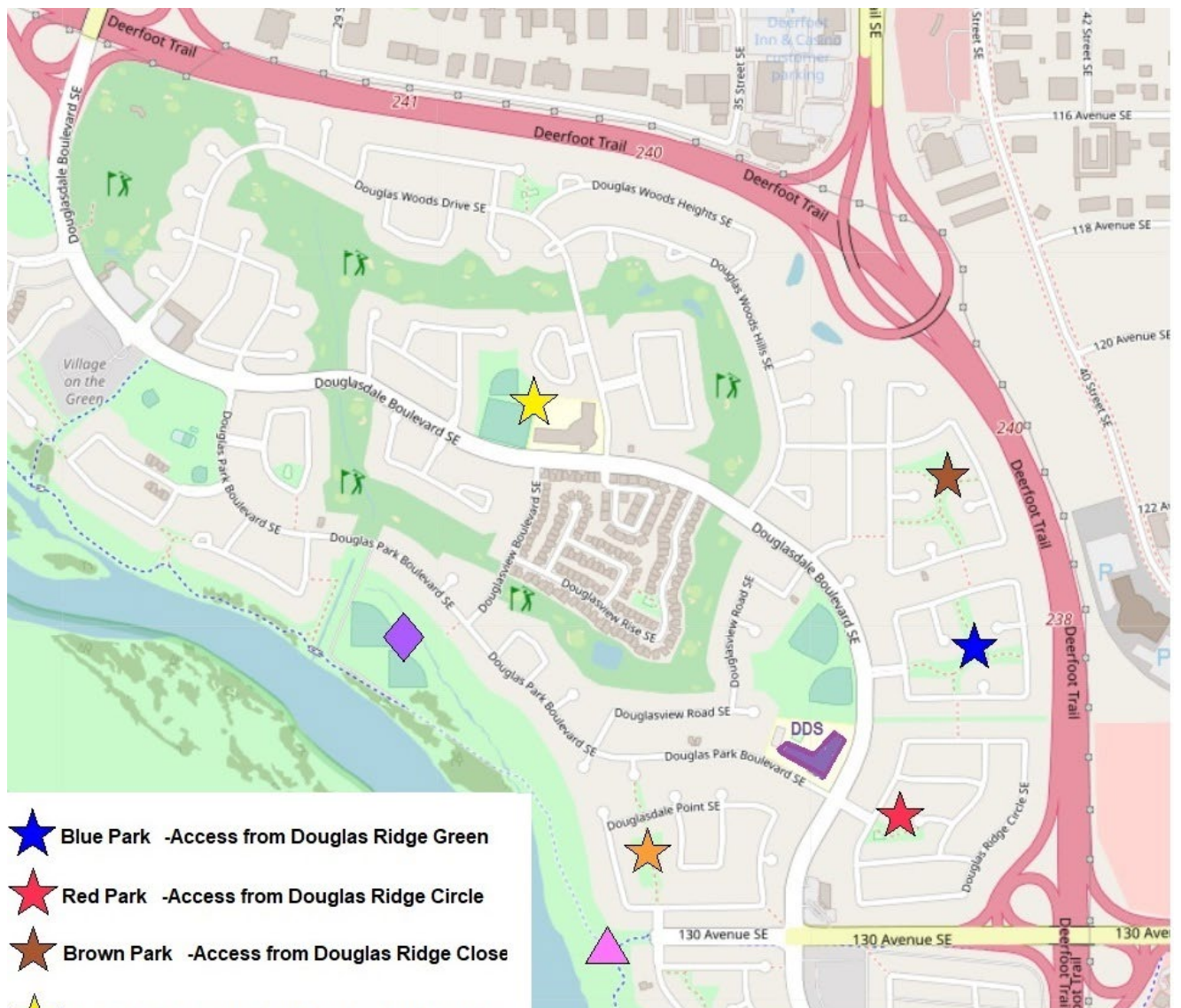
Parents will be notified of full day programs and field trips prior to the actual day, by a 'sign-up sheet' posted as the front page of the Sign In/Out book. Parents are required to indicate on the sheet if their child will be attending or will be absent. Although absence notification requires an extra step, this allows us to know that your child is indeed going to be absent, and you haven't missed the notice or just forgotten to sign up.








If your child will be attending, parents will also sign that they understand what activities are planned, and grant permission for their child to attend and participate. **The sign-up sheet IS our permission form and must be signed for all off-site field trips.** If a parent does not wish to send their child on a field trip or participate in the full day program activities, it is the parent's responsibility to make alternate arrangements for their child's care.

From time-to-time children may accompany staff on special outings within the community, which may include going on a walk, going to a local park, picking up other students, etc. Neighbourhood outings and activities such as these, are included in off-site trips and are covered under the permission granted on the child's registration form.

Neighbourhood Outings & Community Map

On suitable occasions, A Step Ahead may do a neighbourhood outing to a local area near Douglasdale School. These outings are frequently planned and parents notified in advance, but may also occur more spontaneously, when timing and circumstances permit. Parents are provided with a community map (see below) of locations within our neighbourhood we may visit. When we partake in a neighbourhood outing, our supervision practices will remain consistent with off-site supervision practices outlined in 'Supervision Policies and Practices'. A sign will be posted at our entrance to inform parents about where we are and how they may contact us.



-  Blue Park -Access from Douglas Ridge Green
-  Red Park -Access from Douglas Ridge Circle
-  Brown Park -Access from Douglas Ridge Close
-  Msgr. Smith School -2919 Douglasdale Blvd. SE
-  Teeter-Totter Park- Access off Douglasdale Point
-  Fish Creek Park access at 130th Ave and Mt Douglas Point
-  Fish Creek Park access - from Bow River Ball diamonds 1 and 2.

**Douglasdale Park Map
A Step Ahead**

Our Play Spaces

Inside Space

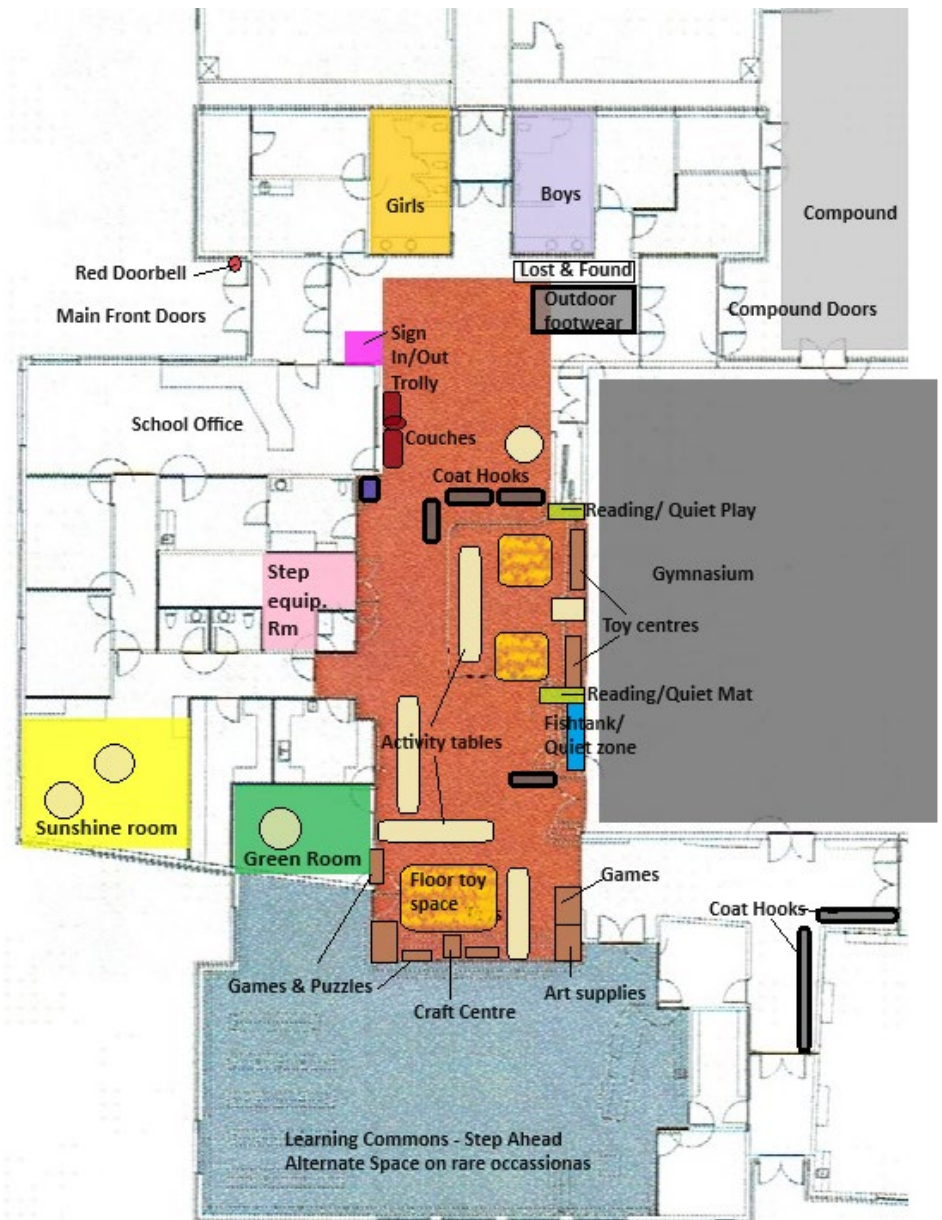
We run from the 'Piazza' common space, located at the heart of Douglasdale school, between the office, gymnasium, learning commons (library) and where the two main classroom hallways of Douglasdale meet.

A Step Ahead uses the main front entrance of the school (near the flag pole) as our front doors, for pick up and drop off when we are inside.

We use the compound doors directly across from the front doors, as our school yard access and is also where the carpets are located, and students place their outdoor footwear, while at Step Ahead.

We use portable risers that are rolled out and have hooks attached, as well as hooks that are situated on the wall near the learning commons, for children to hang up their backpacks and jackets.

Boys and Girls washrooms are located at the West end of the Piazza, and staff have a clear line of vision from our program space to the entrance of the washrooms. A water fountain located at the South side of the Piazza is freely accessible to children.



Because we are a set-up/take-down program that operates from shared space within the school, we must also be flexible to rearrange our centre somewhat, to accommodate any changes the school makes, according to their needs. Although our set up may not always be the same, we have not found this terribly problematic, and the children seem unfazed by occasional changes. Fixed cupboards and rolling shelves located at the East end of the Piazza house many of our craft materials, games and puzzles and "free play centres". Additional cupboards situated against the North wall, house floor toys and dramatic play materials. The Piazza area is set up with 4 long lunch tables to use for table activities and for eating lunch on Fridays. Floor play areas are tucked away from busier walking zones, against the East end wall, and the North wall. Risers and rolling shelves

A Step Ahead

are used to help partition the space from walkways and make the Piazza feel cozier, without obstructing clear views of the children for supervision. Cushioned floor mats serve as little couches, tucked against nooks and cubbies and allow for quiet places for children to read or unwind. The beautiful 'living wall' and fish tank, (complete with Jaws, the sucker fish, and his many friends) offers cushioned seats with a peaceful view. Additional floor mats are laid out on the floor, for comfortable places to play with floor toys. Easily visible, open spaces near the Piazza allow for children to spread out and do dances and dramatic play. Two smaller child-sized tables offer additional spots for children to draw and play. These different areas provide children with opportunity to choose from a variety of centres and activity/energy levels in the Piazza, be it

busy or quiet, groups or individual projects etc. The Piazza allows for many different play areas, but it is also fairly open with easy visibility, providing leaders with a clear view of the full room. We have established boundaries within the Piazza and the children learn and become familiar with them and are required to ask for permission to leave the boundaries. The gym, directly beside our program, offers another ideal space to offer high energy activities or group games and sports. On rare occasions when there are public or community events in the school, A Step Ahead uses the gym or the learning Commons as an alternate space to run our program from.

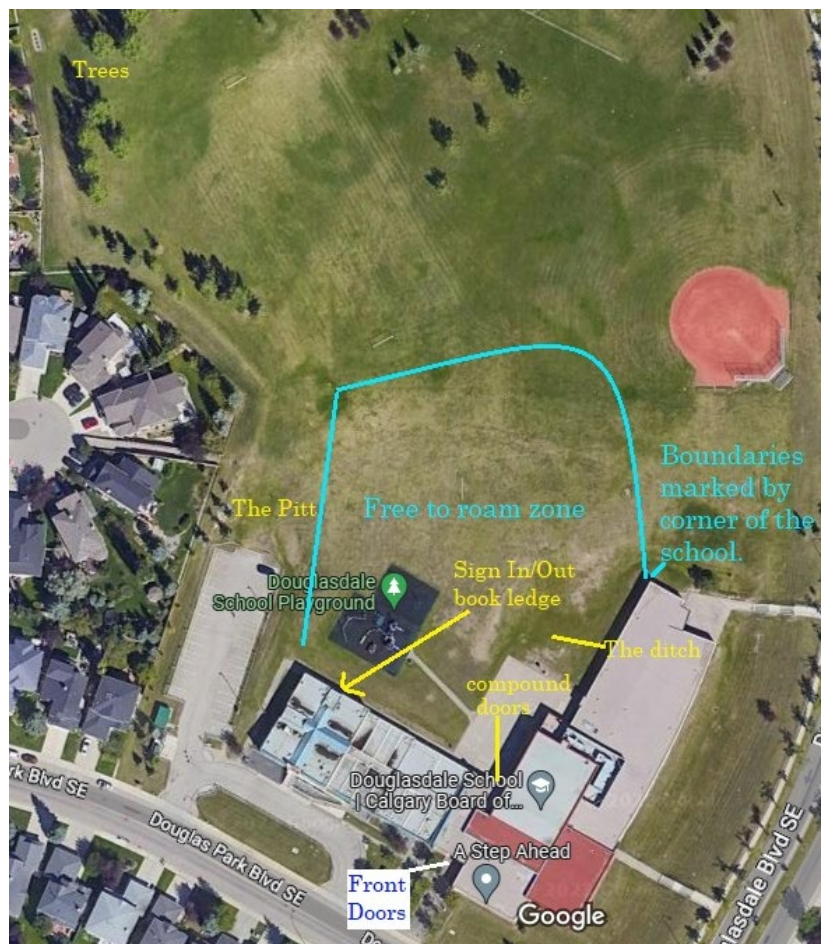
Outside Space

A school is the ideal space for an Out of School Care Program, and a big part of that is the amazing greenspace that surrounds us. We have wonderful access to fields, creative playground, compound, ball diamonds and ladybugs!

The school grounds are bordered by a chain link fence and a post-and-cable fence and the children are taught and become familiar with the boundaries of their play areas. The boundaries and play space are easily visible for leaders to monitor the children and ensure safe play choices. Children are able to play further out, however only if a leader is accompanying them, or they have permission first.

The doors to the compound that children use for outside play are situated directly off the Piazza and ideal for supervising children transitioning from inside to outside play and vice versa.

When the group is outside, we post a sign indicating 'A Step Ahead is Outside' in the window by the front doors letting parents know. Parents walk around the school to the back to pick up their child. The Sign In/Out book is placed on a ledge at the side of the school, adjacent the playground.



Program Schedule – Regular School Day

Morning:

6:45 – 8:35 AM

Children arrive at the program and participate in supervised “free play” which consists of a variety of centre-based activities, toys and games, arts and creating, and usually a leader-lead craft activity. Towards the end of free play, staff may lead a gym or circle game while we prepare children for transitioning to school.

8:35 AM

Children put away their activities and toys and help tidy the centre. Children have a washroom break, wash up, and gather up their belongings. Children get jackets and outdoor gear on to go outside for a short fresh air break. School supervision is on the playground at 8:35. If children should arrive at the school to be dropped off between 8:35 and 8:50, parents should send them directly around to the back of the school, to join school supervision.

8:40 AM

Children are dismissed outside to join school supervision and their classmates. Children will go to their designated school doors with their classmates to head to their homeroom. A Step Ahead leaders sign out all children from A Step Ahead.

After school:

3:30 PM Dismissal

Children walk directly through the school to A Step Ahead, located in the Piazza. Leaders will sign children in. If a child fails to arrive or check-in with A Step Ahead within 10 minutes, staff will endeavour to locate the child. If available, staff will confer with the school office or the child’s teacher for info. Parents will then be contacted if information is still lacking or uncertain.

3:35 – 3:40 PM

Once checked in, children are to do a washroom break, wash their hands, fill their water bottles, and prepare to head outside for some fresh air while leaders complete sign-in attendance.

3:45 - 4:00 PM

Once outside, children sanitize their hands and are encouraged to have their after-school snack they brought from home.

4:00 – 4:45 PM

Outside play, playground, group games, extra outside centres and activities.

4:45 – 5:40 PM

Inside centres, activities, and free time. Outside time may continue or gym time may be offered, based on children’s interests. Some days we will return inside earlier for gym or additional centre and craft choices. Various structured and unstructured activities are available.

5:45 – 5:50 pm

Children have quiet centre choices while staff clean the program space and materials and prepare to close. Children tidy their activities up and the remaining children prepare to leave.

6:00 PM A Step Ahead closes.

Full Day Program Schedule – Non-School Days / PD Days

Morning:

7:00 – 9:00 AM

A Step Ahead opens at 7:00 AM. Children arrive at the program and are signed in by parents. Children have the choice of participating in a variety of supervised free play activities and centres.

9:00 – 9:30 AM

Children tidy up play areas, group meets for “T-time” – a group meeting time to talk about the day’s activities and ask questions. After T-time, the group often plays a circle game while children wash hands and have a snack brought from home (freggie snack encouraged).

9:30 – 11:30 AM

Various activities are planned for the children that include arts and crafts, drama, music, gym games/activities, outdoor play, special events, and off-site activities.

11:30 am – 12:00 PM

Children start finishing morning activities and clean up. Quick group gathering to hear the children’s thoughts and ideas about the morning’s activities.

Afternoon:

12:00 – 1:30 PM

Children wash hands and eat lunch and have free time. We will often head outside for unstructured free time once we are finished lunch.

1:30 – 3:00 PM

Various structured activities are planned for the children, which include arts and crafts, drama, music, gym activities, outdoor play, games, special events, and off-site activities.

3:00 – 3:30 PM

Children wash up and have a snack brought from home or occasionally one is provided by Centre.

3:30 – 5:30 PM

Children participate in a variety of free play activities, loose-parts centres, play outdoors, complete unfinished projects.

5:30 – 5:45 PM

Quiet centres and free time. The Centre is tidied up and the children prepare to leave. Parents sign children out at pick up.

6:00 PM

A Step Ahead closes.

Program Activities

In our daily programming we aim to provide children with a wide array of play experiences in hopes of fostering a sense of wonder and inspiring creativity and imagination. We encourage kids to be curious and ask questions, to learn by trying and making mistakes. Children can engage in free centres such as arts and crafts, dramatic play, games and puzzles, construction/ building/ creation toys and challenges, loose-parts activities, outside and park play, gym, and rotating stations such as carpentry, sewing, take-apart, investigation station, music, upcycling, science, nature, sculpting, dance and many more.

Children may also participate in leader-guided activities such as crafts or art creation, circle games, group and individual challenges, drama games and activities, special guests and presentations, scavenger hunts, sports, gym games, science activities and experiments, mindfulness groups, homework and reading challenges, or clubs and community projects.

We love to enrich our program with special events and activities! If you would like to suggest any, please do! Some we love to do are: Mad Science and Engineering For Kids workshops, Rocks and Rinks-curling for kids, pajama parties, Young Rembrandt artists, YWCA Mindful Moments courses for kids, Trixtan Entertainment magic workshops, Green Fools drama and circus workshops, Reptile and Petland presenters and SPCA guests... and many others! So many fun things to do... limited only by our imaginations!

Got ideas? Send them our way! The more, the merrier!

Our Staff

All Staff are a minimum of 18 years of age and are certified through Alberta Child Care Licensing. Staff are required to have valid *Standard Child Care First Aid* training and certification. Staff and volunteers must complete a Security Clearance and Background Check with a 'vulnerable sector search' from the City of Calgary Police Service verifying they do not have a criminal record within Canada.

Staff are required to attend training and are encouraged to partake in regular professional development to further their knowledge and education in child development and school age programming and continue to grow and learn as Child Care professionals.

Our primary staff includes Sandi Crowdis, Amanda Gillis, "Auntie" Chris McCrimmon, Shital Panchal, Alexia Coelho, Nancy Thornton and Kobe Hall. All staff have received Child Care Certification credentials through Alberta's Early Learning and Child Care Act and Regulation.

Amanda Gillis and Sandi Crowdis founded A Step Ahead together in 2005 with a desire to create an awesome school age care program that kids enjoyed and parents could count on. We love what we do, and we are so grateful to be part of such a supportive community.

Sandi serves as the program director at A Step Ahead and is certified as a Level 3 Early Childhood Educator. Drawing on a BA in Psychology and Art, with a focus on child development, she brings 20-plus years of experience working with children and youth of all ages in a variety of settings, including Out of School Care and camps, early-intervention preschool and kindergarten, and as an English teacher in Taiwan. Sandi loves snowy days, building forts in the school yard and creating art with the kids.

Amanda serves as the alternate program director and is certified as a Level 2 Early Childhood Educator. She draws on 20-plus years of experience with Out of School Childcare and school age summer camps. A mom of two school-aged boys, she knows well the busy days parents have and the peace of mind that comes with knowing her kids are safe and having fun. Amanda loves to share her enthusiasm for sports and gym games with the kids as well as her goofy sense of humour.

A Step Ahead works hard to find great staff that we respect for their skills and commitment and who we compensate fairly. As a break-even business, our priority is not profit, but rather an awesome program with a group of consistent and caring people that strive to create a great place for all of our kids.