



The Rise School
O F A U S T I N

2019 – 2020 School Year
**Volunteer & Internship
Handbook**

The Rise School of Austin

4800 Manor Road

Building J

Austin, TX 78723

(512) 891-1682

Rise Mission Statement

The Rise School is a nonprofit Austin preschool, serving children ages 12 months through 5 years of age, whose mission is to provide the highest quality early childhood education for all children in an inclusive setting, where individualized learning techniques enable every child to achieve their maximum potential.

Six Core Features of our Program

An Inclusion Model for Diverse Learners

The best possible start for any child.

The Rise School of Austin provides a high-quality early childhood education for preschool children ages 12 months to five years of diverse abilities. Our classrooms blend an equal ratio of students with developmental delays and traditional learners. In this inclusion model, all students learn side by side in a loving, enriching environment where every child feels safe, accepted, and included.

Small class sizes and a 4:1 student-teacher ratio allow our team of early-childhood experts to provide the differentiated instruction and individual attention that ensure each student is learning at their highest level. Learning is encouraged with an engaging, research-driven curriculum that sets high expectations and provides the support needed to achieve them.

This inclusion model not only produces outstanding academic and developmental outcomes, but also fosters exceptional levels of empathy and compassion. As our students learn to value, support, and embrace those of diverse abilities, they become effective advocates for not only themselves, but for others. Our students are tomorrow's change agents, helping to create a more loving and inclusive world in which to learn and live.

A Dream Team of Early Childhood Experts

Led by a Master's-level teacher in every classroom.

All our children benefit from a "dream team" of early childhood education and developmental specialists who know how to unlock individual potential and help preschoolers of diverse abilities meet and exceed high expectations. Rise teachers are caring, dedicated, and highly trained. In our unique co-teaching model, every classroom is guided by a Master's-level lead teacher, a teacher, and a teaching assistant. This core team is augmented by licensed and certified speech, occupational, music, and physical therapists.

Our child-to-caregiver ratio of 4:1 allows teachers to provide the support each child needs to achieve their physical, social, emotional, and academic potential. Continuous training and a high-standard of professional development keep faculty and staff on the leading edge of research and best practices.

Rise preschoolers are encircled with the warmth and encouragement that builds self-confidence and fosters a love of learning. Students develop strong bonds with their school family and feel known, safe, and supported in a nurturing and loving environment.

*Within two years of hire date, lead teachers must enroll in a master's program for early childhood special education or related field.

A Research-driven Curriculum

High-performance learning, tailored to diverse abilities.

Our research-based, comprehensive curriculum offers a whole-child approach to preschool, fostering students' intellectual abilities, language skills, social/emotional intelligence, and physical and cognitive development. The program is academically intensive, developmentally appropriate, and highly-tailored to individual needs. High-performance learning is achieved through play-based, multisensory experiences that result in exceptional levels of engagement.

Faculty are trained in the Conscious Discipline® model for problem solving, which helps children understand their emotions and resolve conflict through cooperation. This pro-active approach to discipline transforms classroom tantrums into teachable moments that allow preschoolers to gain a foundation of personal agency and accountability. Our students' increased capacities for self-awareness, patience, and the ability to maintain self-control contribute to the exceptional ambiance of order and calm that permeates our campus and are proven to have the same effect on home and family life.

Rise graduates are not only well-prepared academically for kindergarten and beyond with a strong foundation for success, they display the empathy and open-mindedness instilled in them since day one.

Integrated and Enriching Therapies

Fostering growth in each area of a child's development.

Woven into the daily routine, play-based classroom therapies are an enriching part of a Rise School of Austin education. Licensed physical, occupational, speech, and music therapists support faculty as part of the classroom experience, collaborating on activities that foster holistic growth in small-group sessions throughout the day.

Because 90% of a child's brain development occurs before age 5, his or her future depends on the best possible early childhood development and education experience. All of our students benefit from the Rise team of specialists. With eyes on every child, they observe where preschoolers require extra help and offer comprehensive supports to advance each child's progress towards reaching developmental milestones.

Classrooms are integrated with developmentally-appropriate technology, including interactive smart boards that allow learning to come to life and make the curriculum more accessible for visual learners. A specially-equipped sensory gym and three playgrounds provide teachers and therapists the tools and resources they need to create engaging activities for children to enjoy as a natural part of the school day.

An Intentionally Designed Environment

Where preschool becomes state-of-the-art.

An intentional approach to early childhood education is evident from the moment you walk through our doors. Everything at the school has a purpose: From the classroom set-up to the daily routine, with its careful balance of active and quiet activities, each day is designed to maximize opportunities for learning and development.

Our state-of-the-art preschool facility features a soaring, two-story lobby enhanced with a vibrant mosaic mural created by staff, families, and students; a sensory gym well-equipped for students of diverse abilities; teacher-planning spaces that promote creativity and collaboration; and three playgrounds that offer preschoolers plenty of space to run, play, and socialize with friends.

Spacious, clutter-free classrooms feature all-natural wood furniture and a neutral color scheme to create a sense of harmony and provide the ideal backdrop to showcase the vibrant creativity of children's artwork. The main learning environment is organized to help children focus on interest centers and play areas that complement each week's unit of study, encouraging them to learn through discovery and exploration. Bathrooms and kitchens in each classroom provide the comforts of a home-like environment and offer children the chance to practice functional life skills. This external structure fosters a sense of inner calm. With an exceptionally qualified team of early childhood experts guiding the day, children are happy and excited to learn.

Family & Parental Support

A loving and supportive community.

At the Rise School of Austin, we are family – and we support each other as such. Welcomed as key members of the educational team, parents are equipped with the information and training necessary to help further their child's advancements in learning and development.

Ongoing communication is a distinguishing feature of the program: faculty and staff share weekly lesson plans and comprehensive 12-week reports, offer home enrichment ideas, and work individually with parents to provide supports and therapies for use at home. In addition, parent workshops equip families with the understanding and skills needed to support their early learner.

An active Rise Parent Committee helps organize frequent community-building events, weekly parent support groups, and learning opportunities throughout the year. Affiliations with the

University of Texas and the Austin-based social service organization VELA connect parents with providers and resources that help families of children with developmental delays thrive. For families who require an extended school day, we offer the Rise Enrichment Program (REP), an aftercare program offering a variety of activities that include dance, art, yoga, and other forms of active and quiet play. As graduation nears, step-by-step transition support services prepare students for the next stage of life and learning – ensuring that every child is ready to shine.

What does it mean to think inclusively?

- Inclusion means asking about access.
- Inclusion means asking about cultures and beliefs.
- Inclusion means valuing multiple forms of communication for everyone.
- Inclusion is about structuring our classrooms so that typical hierarchies of "smartness" are broken down and replaced with an understanding that there are many ways to be smart.

At The Rise School of Austin, children are educated in a highly intentional environment within the context of a developmentally appropriate curriculum. All children, with and without developmental delays, are provided individualized and research-based instruction alongside their peers.

Through the collaborative efforts of therapists, families, and teachers, The Rise School of Austin fosters a genuine culture of friendship and accomplishment for all children.

Research shows that inclusive environments produce better outcomes for all children- gifted, traditional, or developmentally delayed. Inclusion is **BEST** practice and provides an optimal learning experience for every child.

Rise Operating Hours

Program hours are from 8:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Rise Enrichment Program (REP) hours are from 2:30 until 5:30 p.m. Classroom staff contract hours are from 7:40 a.m. until 3:40 p.m., while floaters follow separate, yet full-time, schedules to accommodate for our aftercare program.

Licensing

The Rise School of Austin is licensed by the Childcare Division of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (TDPRS). Rise adheres to these standards with monitoring through TDPRS site visits. The most recent compliance report is located in the Executive Director's office of the school. Rise keeps a copy of the Minimum Standard Rules for Licensed Child Care Centers on file. Parents may ask the Director for access to this document to review at any time. Parents are encouraged to contact TDPRS with any questions or concerns regarding the minimum standards for licensing at (512) 834-3389, or visit the TDPRS website at <http://www.tdprs.state.tx.us>. To report child abuse or neglect, call the TDPRS Abuse/Neglect Hotline at (800) 252-5400, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Rise Program Personnel

Administration

Executive Director – Meg Glass Bethune; mbethune@riseschoolaustin.org

Assistant Director – Hannah Bricker; hbricker@riseschoolaustin.org

Senior Development Officer – Jennifer Pool; jpool@riseschoolaustin.org

Development Director – Rachel Parr; rparr@riseschoolaustin.org

Events and Marketing Manager – Amy Winslow; awinslow@riseschoolaustin.org

Director of Finance and Operations – Danielle Martinson; dmartinson@riseschoolaustin.org

Office Administrator and Facilities Manager – Lou Thompson; lthompson@riseschoolaustin.org

Lead Teachers

Waddler II Lead Teacher – Rachel Elliott; waddler2@riseschoolaustin.org

Toddler I Lead Teacher – Nicole Payne; toddler1@riseschoolaustin.org

Toddler II Lead Teacher – Jenn Bipes; toddler2@riseschoolaustin.org

Preschool I Lead Teacher – Katie Thompson; preschool1@riseschoolaustin.org

Preschool II Lead Teacher – Marissa Bahrenburg; preschool2@riseschoolaustin.org

Pre-Kindergarten I Lead Teacher – Melissa Gardner; prek1@riseschoolaustin.org

Pre-Kindergarten II Lead Teacher – Luvy Wilson; prek2@riseschoolaustin.org

Therapists

Speech Therapist, Lead Therapist – Reagan Rives; speechtherapy@riseschoolaustin.org

Physical Therapist – Bethany Cheng; physicaltherapy@riseschoolaustin.org

Occupational Therapist – Sarah Sweeney; occupationaltherapy@riseschoolaustin.org

Music Therapist – Danielle Saunders; musictherapy1@riseschoolaustin.org

Music Therapist – Cara Griswold; musictherapy2@riseschoolaustin.org

Physical Therapy Assistant – Gil Gonzalez; ggpta@hotmail.com

Classroom Description

The Rise School of Austin currently has seven classrooms:

1. Waddler II (1 – 2 yrs.); 3 teachers; 1 floater
2. Toddler I (2 yrs.); 3 teachers; 1 floater
3. Toddler II (2 – 3 yrs.); 3 teachers; 1 floater
4. Preschool I (3 – 4 yrs.); 3 teachers; 1 shared preschool floater
5. Preschool II (3 – 4 yrs.); 3 teachers; 1 shared preschool floater
6. Pre-K I (4 – 5 yrs.); 3 teachers; 1 shared pre-k floater
7. Pre-K II (4 – 5 yrs.); 3 teachers; 1 shared pre-k floater

Rise provides a 4:1 student teacher ratio that is decreased to 3:1 when floater support is available.

Enrollment Process

Step 1: Interested families complete an online interest form. The child is added to the interest list for the upcoming school year. Rise spends an entire year enrolling for the next school year and does not have a “waitlist” that rolls over from year to year.

Step 2: Interested families visit the campus for a private tour or attend OPEN HOUSE. Open Houses are offered monthly. If interested in enrollment, an individual play date will be scheduled for the child/family. Playdates are scheduled by the office administrator, pending space in the desired age group and follow a specific schedule. No play date is ever left without the supervision of a therapist or an administrator.

Step 3: Interested families attend an individual playdate in their child's current age group.

Step 4: Enrollment committee members (therapists, lead teachers, and admin) complete feedback forms to the best of their ability in their specified area(s) of expertise:

- Members indicate:
 - their role and provide their expert opinion on whether or not they feel the child would require additional support (more than 4:1 child-to-teacher ratio) to meet their needs in their respective area (i.e. Physical therapist will provide feedback in the area of large motor.)
 - if they think a child will need additional support (outside of the typical small and large group setting)
 - whether or not they think the child can benefit fully from the group setting

Step 5: Administration considers the feedback from each expert and dynamic of the desired age group as well as the family's story, hopes, dreams, goals, and aspirations (What do *they* expect from Rise – is it a good fit for both parties?). They consider the “big picture” and make the best decision they can with the child, peers, family, and staff in mind.

Step 6: Enrollment is either offered or declined by administration on behalf of the enrollment committee. If enrollment is ever declined (for any reason), families are offered the opportunity and encouraged to join the interest list for the following school year. When applicable, additional resources will be provided to the families seeking more individualized supports such as Applied Behavior Analysis, public school services (PPCD), etc.

Curriculum

The Rise Austin Curriculum is organized in individual classroom unit studies. Teachers utilize the following curriculum programs to create unit studies that meet the individual needs of their students.

- Creative Curriculum
- Zoo-Phonics
- Handwriting Without Tears
- Conscious Discipline

Studies are a coherent, “spiral” approach in which children build understandings on the basis of previous learning. Studies have three phases: beginning the study, investigations, and celebrating learning. Children are challenged to pursue their interests and engage deeply in learning. There is

a clear beginning, middle, and end to units of study, sometimes called launches, investigations, and celebrations/culminations. The teacher observes children as they conduct investigations and bases next steps on children's interests, skills, and knowledge. Study topics are not the ONLY focus during a given period of time. Skills are practiced in the context of the study are also practiced in relation to other topics and in other contexts. This allows favorite toys and activities to remain accessible in the classroom and more flexibility in planning. Skills are embedded into play and are presented in ways that children will use beyond the classroom.

Conscious Discipline

Conscious Discipline is a comprehensive social and emotional intelligence classroom management program that empowers both teachers and students. Based on current brain research, child development information and developmentally appropriate practices, the goal of the program is to foster emotional intelligence of teachers first and children second. **Conscious Discipline** leads teachers, providers, schools and programs through a process that promotes permanent behavior changes in both teachers and children. The change is from a traditional compliance model of discipline to a relationship-based, community model. The key is a sense of community. The "school family" is the core of the program. The school family is held together through communication skills. These skills are taught during conflict moments in the classroom and through active learning lessons. The goal of the school family is to create problem solvers. Love, expressed through safety, cooperation and respect, is the tool used to imbue the system with power. Both teachers and students are empowered to control themselves and to relate to others. Believing we must *first* change ourselves and model our expectations for others through self-control, creates a classroom climate and culture that teaches the following values:

- You are in charge. You can become the person you want to be.
- Power comes within.
- You are responsible for your feelings and actions. Your choices impact others.
- You must teach others how to treat you. You cannot expect them to magically "know."
- Conflict is a part of life. Mistakes offer opportunities to learn.
- Love is more powerful than fear. Cooperation is more effective than coercion.

Confidentiality

A child's records are open only to their parent(s) or legal guardian, the Ris staff (including contract personnel), Rise Board of Directors, and TDPRS Childcare Licensing Representatives. Any authorized persons reviewing a child's file must sign in and out on the Access to Student Records Form.

A Consent for Release of Information form must be signed by the parent in order for Rise staff to share or obtain information about a child. In some instances, Rise Austin may be required to release personally identifiable information without parental consent (see section on child abuse and neglect).

- Never discuss a child when other children or parents are present.
- Never discuss a child within range of his/her hearing.

- Keep confidential any information concerning students, their families, school staff and operations.
- Photos and names of students cannot be shared outside of Rise.

Health and Safety Procedures

The following health and safety procedures are followed at The Rise School of Austin:

1. Fire drills are conducted monthly and severe weather drills conducted twice a year. Evacuation routes are posted in each of the classrooms.
2. All classrooms maintain a first aid kit and medical information binder.
3. Children and staff wash their hands as required per minimum standards.
4. Rise follows all sanitation and disinfecting procedures outlined by minimum standards (see attached for cleaning schedule and policies).
5. Diaper changing and toileting are performed in a separate area of the classroom (bathroom). Latex gloves are always worn by staff when diapering or assisting children with toileting. Soiled diapers and clothing are kept in separate, closed containers. Changing tables are sterilized after each use. Latex-free gloves are used if a child is allergic to Latex.
6. All classroom materials such as towels, washcloths, bibs, sheets and blankets are washed after single uses by the children and/or staff.
7. All electrical outlets at The Rise School of Austin are shock proof.
8. All instructional staff and the Director are certified in adult, child and infant CPR and First Aid.
9. All staff are required to receive a physical every two years and a TB test upon initial employment. Volunteers need to provide Rise with documentation of a negative TB test as well.

Evacuation Procedures

Please see *The Rise School of Austin Emergency Preparedness Plan* located in the First Aid Kit of each classroom.

Injury to a Student

Children are under the visual supervision of an adult at all times. Staff will be proactive in making sure areas occupied by the children are free from preventable hazards. Staff will promptly intervene if children are observed engaging in unsafe play.

If a student is injured, the staff member(s) who witnessed the injury will assess the extent of the injury. If the injury is determined minor by the staff member, first aid will be administered, and the child will be comforted. The Rise staff member(s) will then fill out an incident report and have it signed by both the parent and the Executive Director. All incident reports are filed in the Program Director's office.

If the staff member determines that the injury is serious and professional help may be needed, the staff member will notify the Director immediately. The team will decide the appropriate action to

take, including calling the parent to take the child to the doctor or calling 911. A staff member is not permitted to transport an injured child home or to a medical facility.

If 911 is called, the family will be called immediately thereafter. A staff member will accompany the student in the ambulance if the student is taken from school to a medical facility destination. The staff member will stay with the student at least until the parent has arrived. The Director will follow-up with the parent regarding the status of the student's condition until the student has returned to school.

Incident Report

An incident report will be completed by the classroom teacher or by the person having knowledge of the facts when any accident, injury or significant event occurs. The report will be completed within 24 hours and will be filed in the Program Director's office. Parents will be promptly notified of any occurrence of an accident or injury.

Abuse and Neglect Reporting

If a Rise staff member has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person, s/he is required by the Texas Family Code to make a report to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services via the Child Abuse Hotline. The TDPRS child abuse hotline telephone number is (800) 252-5400. If a staff member is accused of child abuse or neglect, the Director will investigate any suspicion of abuse by staff and file a report in accordance with the Texas Family Code. The staff member may be relieved of his/her duties pending an investigation.

In accordance with the Texas Family Code, if a report of abuse or neglect is made on a child by any person, Rise is required to provide TDPRS with information they request without needing informed parental consent.

Positive Behavioral Supports

The Rise staff provides positive behavioral support and uses discipline measures that demonstrate kindness and compassion, but also firmness and consistency. Every attempt is made to help each child gain confidence and knowledge needed to develop their self-control. Children are not allowed to hurt themselves or others or destroy property. Promoting positive behaviors in children is a primary goal in the classroom setting (please refer to Conscious Discipline).

Guidelines for implementing this include:

1. Classroom rules are simple and geared towards the children's developmental level.
2. Teachers serve as models of appropriate behaviors. Yelling at children and the frequent use of "no" are not acceptable staff interactions with the children.
3. Children will be given specific praise for following the rules and for modeling positive behaviors.
4. Children will be reminded of the rules and limits will be consistently enforced by the classroom staff.

5. Conscious Discipline provides the framework for teaching social-emotional behaviors and self-regulatory skills (see section on Conscious Discipline).

Conviction Clearance

Rise denies employment, contract services, or volunteer status to an applicant if Rise determines that the applicant's criminal history record reveals the person:

- Has a conviction
- Is under indictment
- Is the subject of an official criminal complaint alleging violation of any criminal offenses included in the Texas Penal Code, sections 19-25 and section 43
- Has a felony violation of the Texas Controlled Substance Act.

Further, Rise terminates employment, contractual, or volunteer status with an individual if that individual engages in criminal acts which indicate that the person is no longer qualified or suitable for employment or volunteer status. Rise, as a licensed child care facility, is required to obtain criminal history record information for employees, contractors, applicants for employment, volunteers, or volunteer applicants who may be placed in direct contact with the students through procedures set forth by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. Rise is entitled to obtain criminal history record information relating to the following offenses:

- A sexual offense
- A drug related offense
- A theft offense
- A criminal homicide
- Assault or battery
- An offense involving personal injury or threat

This information is handled in strictest confidence solely by the Director and Child Care License Representatives. The Director is contacted by a Child Care Licensing representative if a conviction has been made and the offer of employment will be withdrawn. Falsification on the application for employment is grounds for dismissal, if employed.

Confidentiality of Information

An employee who gains knowledge within the scope of employment **may not** take advantage of such information for personal gain nor may such information be disclosed to anyone, except as required by the employee's position. Such information includes, but is not limited to, donor and membership lists, unpublished financial information, and protection and security systems of Rise.

Information gained about the children, their families, and volunteers through virtue of employment with Rise is considered confidential and is not disclosed to third parties without families or individual's consent. **A breach of confidentiality may cause an employee or family serious stress or other difficulties.** It is every employee's job to rigorously respect all families', employees' and volunteers' right to privacy. Therefore, **any breach of confidentiality will result in disciplinary action or discharge.** Any inquiries from the press or news media should be referred to the Director and, if appropriate, to the Board Chair of the Board of Directors.

Substance Abuse

Scope: This policy applies to all employees of Rise School.

Purpose and background: Rise is dedicated to providing its employees with a safe and productive workplace. It is recognized that alcohol, drug or other substance abuse by employees impairs their ability to perform properly and has serious adverse effects on safety, efficiency and the productivity of other employees, the students and the school as a whole.

Policy:

- a) The manufacture, distribution and dispensation of any controlled substance in the workplace are prohibited. Possession or use of any controlled substance is permitted only when the substance is prescribed for the use of a physician, and it is actively being used in the manner prescribed.
- b) For the purposes of this policy, "controlled substance" includes alcohol and prescription drugs as well as illegal inhalants and illegal drugs.
- c) Employees may not report to work while under the influence of alcoholic beverages or drugs that could adversely affect their performance, jeopardize their safety or that of other persons or endanger Rise property.
- d) Any violation of this policy results in disciplinary action up to and including discharge.
- e) Any employee who is convicted under any criminal drug statute for a violation occurring in the workplace must notify the Director of the conviction within five days of such conviction.
- f) As a condition of employment with Rise, every employee must abide by the terms of this policy.
- g) Alcohol and drug dependency are treatable conditions. Employees with current alcohol or drug abuse problems are encouraged to voluntarily seek assistance for their problems and will not be disciplined or terminated due to their request for help in overcoming a dependency. Information regarding drug and alcohol counseling can be obtained by contacting the Director.
- h) This policy does not require and should not result in any special regulations, privileges or exemptions from normal job performance requirements.
- i) Smoking and the use of tobacco products are prohibited in The Rise School of Austin. Rise employees may not use these products on the school premises or in the presence of children during Rise functions.

Personal Appearance

The Rise School of Austin, and our profession as a whole, is judged by families and by the public according to the appearance and professional attitude of each staff member. For this reason, employees must be neat, clean, dress appropriately and comfortably. In no circumstance should comfortable dress minimize adhering to an appropriate personal appearance.

Employees, Volunteers and Interns are discouraged from wearing:

- Blue jeans with holes or cut offs
- Any clothing that may be revealing

- Sweat pants
- T-shirts bearing advertisements
- Tank tops
- Shorts or skirts that rest more than 5" above the knee

Timeliness & Dependability

We expect all interns and volunteers to be timely, dependable, and responsible. Any adults in the classroom should be consistent, caring, and follow procedures as outlined by DFPS Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers and the Rise Austin Handbooks (Employee and Volunteer/Intern). All interns and volunteers are supervised by their classroom teams and should not be left alone with children for any reason. If an intern or volunteer does not comply with Rise policies and procedures or follow the guidance of Rise staff, they will be asked to leave the program.

Emergency First Aid Procedures

In case of a medical emergency to a child or a co-worker, the following steps should be taken:

- Assess the nature of the injury or medical situation/survey the scene/determine the best you can the severity of the injury or medical emergency.
- Send for help/notify the office immediately by sending adult staff. You will have medical procedures in your classroom for individual students that have medical needs.
- Under no circumstances should the school personnel move the injured person until the nature of the injury is assessed.
- The teacher must fill out an incident report.

Questions

Please do not hesitate to connect with your lead supervising teacher or administration if you have any questions or concerns about your Rise experience.