

# Discovery Kids Child Care

Created: April 2018

1400 Montana Avenue, Door #33

Benson, MN 56215

320-843-2710

discoverykids@benson.k12.mn.us

discoverykidsbenson.com

*“The Benson School District has taken a lead in looking for solutions to the community’s day care shortage.”*

*- Swift County Monitor-News*

## Background

### Primary Contact

Shelly Vergin, Benson Community Education

### Development & Preparation

Benson business owners were feeling the impact of the shortages of home day care providers. It was a struggle to have moms come back to work after having children as well as attracting new employees with children because they could not find day care for their children.

Business owners and community members started to meet to discuss this shortage and look for a solution. Many locations were investigated to house a child care center. It was finally decided to expand the Discovery Kids program the school was already offering.

Benson Schools started Safe B.A.S.E. in 1994 offering summer, before and after school care for school age children. In 2015, Safe B.A.S.E. was renamed Discovery Kids when it added a preschool extended learning opportunity for families. It was a natural progression to expand the program to accept infant and toddlers to the program.

Benson Schools also had a facility it could offer in-kind for a center which took minimal remodeling. Though well received, the school was met with a little opposition from those in the community that felt the school should not be offering child care. The school, however, felt offering educational opportunities for children birth through age 18 made sense. Benson schools now offers "one stop shopping" for families.



Upper Minnesota Valley  
**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
Helping Communities Prosper

323 W. Schlieman Ave. Appleton, MN 56208 320.289.1981 www.umvrdc.org

## Established

September 5, 2017

## Discovery Kids Basic Info

### Food

Discovery Kids uses the Child and Adult Care Funding Program to pay for meals for the children. The school food service prepares meals for the childcare, and the costs of these meals are covered by the daily fee paid by parents.

### Building Information

Discovery Kids is housed in the Junior High / Benson Elementary school. Discovery Kids set their licensing limit based on the space available in the building since the school gave them the space. With that in mind, they have:

- 1 large infant room
- 2 toddler rooms
- 1 3 year old preschool room
- 1 4 year old preschool room
- 1 school age room

This allows room for 16 infants and 28 toddlers.

### Enrollment

There are 152 full time and part time children enrolled in Discovery Kids. The infant and toddler programs are licensed through Minnesota Department of Human Services. The preschool and school program are license exempt through Minnesota Department of Education. However, the preschool and school age program are a certified program through DHS.

Age Range	Number of Children
Infant	29
Toddler	25
Preschool	42
School age	56

### Schedule

Discovery Kids is open Monday through Friday from 5:30 A.M. to 6:30 P.M. They offer a range of schedule options for families. A minimum of 4 days of attendance is required.



## Fees

Age Range	Cost		
Infant (6weeks to 11 months)	Drop In: \$36/day	Scheduled: \$33/day	
Infant (12 to 15 months)	Drop In: \$36/day	Scheduled: \$32/day	
Toddler	Drop In: \$34	Scheduled: \$31	
Preschool :33 months to kindergarten	Full Day: \$29 Half Day: \$15	Before or After School: \$6	Drop in \$32/day
School age: Kindergarten to 12 years	Full Day: \$25	Before or After School: \$6	

## Staff

All Discovery Kids staff are employed by the Benson District. They currently have 12 full time and 8 part time staff.

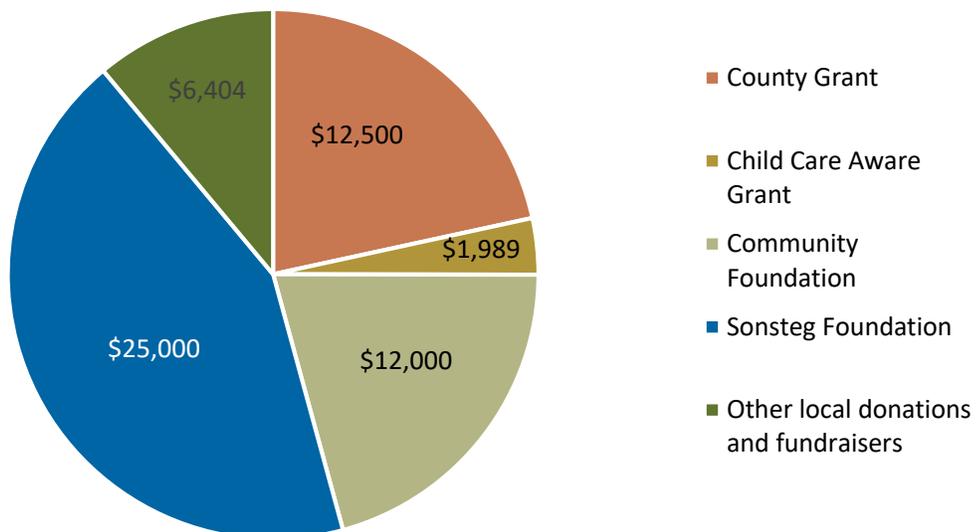
## Financing

### Start-Up Costs

Discovery Kids had about \$62,000 in startup costs, which do not include staff costs. This covers:

- Toys & storage
- Handwashing stations
- Tables & chairs
- Cribs & cots
- Playground & fence
- And other infrastructure

### Discovery Kids Benson Startup Costs



\*Budget Info is from April 2018



Upper Minnesota Valley  
**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**  
 Helping Communities Prosper

323 W. Schlieman Ave. Appleton, MN 56208 320.289.1981 www.umvrdc.org

## Loans and Grants

Discovery Kids applied for and received a forgivable loan from Swift County, which does not need to be repaid if they operate for 5 years, to help pay for the playground and the fence. They also applied for and received a Child Care Aware grant to cover cots, tables, and multicultural toys as well as a Benson Community Foundation Grant. The Swift County Benson Hospital held a fundraiser in April of 2017 and raised enough money to buy strollers.

The Benson School District is the fiscal host of Discovery Kids and has covered the startup funds not covered by grants and donations. Benson Schools also provides the space for the daycare center and covers the day to day operation costs such as heating, lighting, etc.

## Operating Budget

Annual Operating Revenue	Amount
Fees	\$295,000
Donations	\$66,500
Fundraisers	\$3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$364,500</b>
Annual Operating Expenses	Amount
Space Rental/ Utilities	In-Kind
Staff	\$385,600
Operational (food, supplies, insurance, dry goods)	\$28,900
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$414,500</b>
<b>Loss</b>	<b>-\$50,000</b>

## Challenges and Successes

### Biggest Challenge

According to Shelly Vergin, Community Education Director, the licensing process for the center is lengthy and detailed. It often takes many amendments and changes to the application, policies and handbooks. Once all of the pieces are in place and the application is complete, the time goes much faster, especially if the inspections are completed while you are waiting for the license approval.

Vergin recommends starting the equipment purchasing early as there are many toys, equipment and items needed for each room. This is also imperative as finding many of the items needed for licensing had to be purchased online.

### Greatest Success

Discovery Kids has been able to work with the community to provide much-needed childcare support. Also, their preschool program has a Parent Aware Rating so that preschool children can receive Pathway Grants. Discovery Kids is working towards a Parent Aware Rating for infants and toddlers as well.

