

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Notre Dame School of Dallas**

### ***Who do you serve?***

We serve students with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities. Students must be independent in their self-help skills and ambulatory.

### ***What ages/grades do you serve?***

We serve students ages 8-25. The students are grouped according to age and worked with at their functioning level within their age group.

### ***Why does Notre Dame no longer offer a class for the 6-8 yr old student with cognitive disabilities?***

We believe in the concept of inclusion and feel that students with cognitive disabilities can oftentimes be served in their neighborhood school in the early grades.

### ***Do you have to live in the City of Dallas in order for a child to attend the school?***

Notre Dame School serves students from throughout the Dallas metroplex.

### ***Does Notre Dame have school bus service?***

Notre Dame does not provide door to door bus service although we have several regional stops where our bus picks up students. In addition, our older students may be eligible to ride DART handi-ride which is a door to door service. We encourage our older students to use this service as it will allow for further independence for jobs and recreational activities after students graduate.

### ***Is Notre Dame a Catholic School?***

Notre Dame was founded by the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1963 because of the great need at the time to provide an education to students with intellectual disabilities. We serve students of all faiths and always have. 30% of our students and 20% of our staff are Catholic. We do not receive money from a parish, but our location is provided rent-free by the Diocese of Dallas.

### ***What is the cost of the education at Notre Dame School?***

The cost to educate each student at Notre Dame is more than \$13,000. This cost includes, speech and OT services for our younger students. In addition it allows for a student: teacher ratio of 5:1. It also covers the cost of transportation and vocational training as the students move into the upper school. The tuition charged this year (2011-12) is \$6300. The School Sisters of Notre Dame are committed to offering this education to all who need it regardless of their ability to pay. We provide tuition assistance to 30% of our students. This money is raised through foundation grants and tuition assistance through our endowment.

### ***Is financial aid available?***

Financial aid is available on a limited basis. Families complete an application on-line which is evaluated by the FACTS tuition grant and aid program. All families must pay something and 40 hours of volunteer service is required of all financial aid recipients.

***What is the student to staff ratio?***

The overall ratio is 5:1. This can be lower or higher based on the activity and the ability level of the student.

***What are the qualifications of the staff?***

All Notre Dame teachers have college degrees, as do many of our assistants and job coaches. All staff have experience working with students with cognitive disabilities and on-going training is provided. Notre Dame faculty and staff members are dedicated to the students they teach, which they show in a number of ways, not the least of which is a turn-over rate much lower than what is typically found in public school settings. The Principal has over 35 years of experience working with persons with disabilities and their families. She has been at Notre Dame School for over 25 years.

***Is Notre Dame an accredited school?***

Notre Dame is accredited by the Texas Catholic Conference Education Department and approved by the Texas Education Agency. The school is accredited in a process that occurs every 7 years. In the years between, Notre Dame submits annual reports and is committed to ongoing strategic planning that is directed towards best practices in special education.

***What kind of academic schedule do students have?***

Students have a typical school schedule, much like they would in a public school setting, with the addition of life skills for all students and job training for the older students (see question below for more information about job skills training).

***Does Notre Dame offer students any kind of extracurricular activities?***

Notre Dame has the largest Special Olympics groups in North Texas. We also offer several after school activities such as choir, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, cheerleading, Best Buddies and yoga .

***Do you provide job skills training for older students?***

Notre Dame has an extensive job training program supported by a Business Advisory Council. Vocational center students are trained at a variety of community job training sites including clerical office work, day care assistants, hospital work, retail and janitorial skills. Our goal is to have our students who are able working competitively in the community upon graduation.

***Is after-care available for students with working parents?***

Our after school program is offered until 6:00 pm. Activities include assistance with homework, games, computer time and outdoor activities as weather permits.