

**BUSINESS PROFILE**

BY DARCIE DUTTWEILER

**STEPPING STONE SCHOOL**

**Stepping Stone School**  
[www.steppingstoneschool.com](http://www.steppingstoneschool.com)

Rhonda Paver, owner

In 1979, Rhonda Paver, her husband, Bill, and her children moved from Washington state to Austin when Bill, who had just completed his Ph.D. in higher education, got a job offer from the University of Texas.

Paver was hired on as an elementary school teacher and needed to find day care for her kids, who were 5 years, 4 years and 7 months old.

"I found nothing that satisfied my expectations for my own children," Paver said. "Stepping Stone School was founded out of a mother's mission to provide quality care."

Paver purchased a day care center on Richcreek Road in Northwest Austin. The family moved in and Paver started her early child development program with five children, including her own three.

Now, almost 30 years and 40,000 children later, Paver owns 18 locations in the Austin area and

College Station, four of which opened in the last year. Her Richcreek location, where her four granddaughters attend programs, is still in operation.

With 3,000 children currently enrolled in Stepping Stone Schools, Paver said the schools are designed for the whole family. Parents are greeted warmly at each site with fresh coffee and the children are sent home with a small snack for the road.

"It's important for us to have daily interaction with the parents," Paver said, stressing that the school considers the parents as partners in learning.

Paver and her team utilize a progressive curriculum to teach kids in a unique environment. At one of the newest locations in Round Rock, the children gather in a central room decorated to look like they are inside a spaceship and peering out into space. They can sit on reclined chairs and point out Saturn and Jupiter. The Teravista spot also has a wall where kids can check out real Tyrannosaurus Rex teeth and chart the timeline of history. On another wall, a clear Plexiglas barrier demonstrates how the inner workings of construction function.

"We apply learning principles in all we do," Paver said.

This also includes naming each classroom after a different scientific principle. The infant room is labeled the Molecules. The toddlers are the Ions, and the older children are named the Editors and Spelunkers.

While educating the children in a fun atmosphere is the main goal, safety and hygiene are highly valued. No one can set foot into the facility without entering the combination on the keypad outside the front door. Everyone must sign in, and every room in the building is video monitored.

Paver also takes pride in the fact that the school is "hospital-grade quality." The infant room has a special air filtration system that is better for infants' developing lungs, and all personnel must wear booties in the room at all times. The

playground even has canopies that provide 98 percent UV protection.

Stepping Stone School has been voted as the Best for Childcare nine years in a row in Austin Family, a feat that Paver is humble about.

"We're here to support the schools and the families of the community," she said.

**STEPPING STONE SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

**Infants (up to 18 months):** Caregivers engage children in one-on-one interactions to stimulate brain development.

**Toddlers (18-36 months):** Teachers provide guidance and create routines that give kids the confidence to exercise new skills and encounter new experiences.

**Pre-K (3-4 years):** Learning centers act as hubs for challenging activities that build confidence, encourage natural curiosity and independence.

**Advanced Pre-K (4-5 years):** Professionals teach a curriculum that helps build the foundation children need to prepare for kindergarten, including confidence, curiosity, communication skills, intention and cooperation.

**"Future Leaders & Inventors School Age Program**

**(5-11 years):** This program provides a unique chance to learn and grow in a relaxed, group setting. During the summer, this program is extended to an all-day camp.

**NORTHWEST AUSTIN LOCATIONS**

- 1 9914 Woodland Village**  
258-4800
- 2 12301 Hymeadow Drive**  
331-4801
- 3 7700 W. Parmer Lane**  
336-5237
- 4 6616 McNeil Drive**  
258-9141



Location on McNeil Drive

