



**DESERT  
MONTESSORI  
SCHOOL**

# Parent Handbook

*Please note that we do occasionally update our Parent Handbook. Parents will be notified in the event of any changes to our policies. A copy of the revised Parent Handbook will be made available to all enrolled parents upon completion.*

Desert Montessori School  
316 Camino Delora  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
(505) 983-8212  
[www.desertmontessori.com](http://www.desertmontessori.com)

## **Table of Contents**

<b>From the Head of School</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>General Information</b>	<b>5</b>
Our Mission	5
Core Values	5
Beliefs About Learning	7
Our Curriculum Statement and Philosophy	8
About Montessori	8
<b>General Program Information</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Legality</b>	<b>12</b>
Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect	12
Non-Discrimination Statement	13
Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Students	13
Statement of Title IX	14
Conflicts of Interest	14
<b>Health and Safety</b>	<b>16</b>
Accident Procedures	16
Illness Policies	16
COVID Policies	17
When to Keep Your Child at Home	17
Your Child May be Sent Home	18
Illnesses that Require Notifications	18
Allergies	18
Medicine at School	19
Immunizations	19
Missing Child Procedure	19
Fire Drills	20
Air Quality Procedure	20
Important Emergency Contact Info	20
Emergency Preparedness Drills	20
<b>Academic Policies</b>	<b>26</b>
Arrival, Dismissal, Aftercare, & Parking	26
Attendance Policy	27
Toys at School	29
Technology Devices at School	29
Birthdays & Celebrations	30



Snack and Lunch	31
Rest Time (Nap)	32
Field Trips & Guest Presentations	32
Appropriate Dress	34
<b>Academic Practices</b>	<b>36</b>
The Montessori Classroom	36
The Six Dynamic Areas of the Montessori Classroom	37
Children's Independence Zone	39
Classroom Guidelines	40
Conflict Resolution and Evoking Language	41
<b>Parent and Student Relations</b>	<b>42</b>
Communication	42
Open Door Policy	44
Opportunities to Give	44
Guidance and Discipline Policy	45
Positive Classroom Discipline and Communication Methods	47
Suspension and Expulsion Policy	53
Anti-Bullying Policy	54
Code of Conduct for Staff and Parents	55
<b>Snow Days</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Tuition Contracts &amp; Payments</b>	<b>57</b>
Financial Aid	59
Complaint Procedure	59
<b>In Closing</b>	<b>60</b>

## From the Head of School

Dear Families,

It is an honor and privilege to continue serving you as the Head of School at DMS. Desert Montessori School is one of those unique communities where quality education meets warmth and accessibility. Every day I am struck by how proud I am of each of our students and how grateful I am to be surrounded by our wonderful staff and families.

Our goal here at DMS is always to provide top-tier Montessori education through grace, gratitude, and guidance. My goal is to foster a community of togetherness, where families and teachers alike feel valued and respected. As DMS continues to grow, we treasure the foundation of our service-oriented parents who help make Desert Montessori a beautiful and enriching environment –we couldn't do it without you.

I know that the 2025-2026 school year is going to be a year to remember.

Warmly,

Keely Wirries  
*Head of School*

# General Information

## Our Mission

To provide a personalized, engaging education that inspires a life-long love of learning, fosters meaningful, independent thinking, social responsibility and self-confidence. Utilizing the Montessori approach and values, along with proven best-practices, DMS shines as an inspiring, respectful, safe and caring community for every student, parent and teacher.

## Core Values

**Students are our focus.** We make decisions based on what we believe to be best for them. We believe in every student's potential. If something isn't working, we never place blame, we try something else and we keep trying until we find a path. We maintain high-standards for all, while providing the necessary support and encouragement needed for every child to reach and exceed them. We champion for our students no matter what!

**Teachers are learners too.** Teachers are learning alongside our students at all times. Teachers at DMS are inspired life-long learners who take charge of their own professional development. At DMS, we are constantly improving ourselves through our own research, reading, peer collaboration, online training, school training and pretty much anything else that helps us improve. We operate from a growth mindset believing that there is always room for improvement and always more to learn. PD is teacher-designed based on your own professional goals and needs and school-supported.

**Open communication empowers us all to accomplish these first two goals.** We can't support kids if we don't communicate openly. Teachers at DMS are honest with themselves and others. Effective professional development only happens when we communicate honestly about our professional strengths, weaknesses, and needs. We foster a collaborative community of professionals committed to doing the work that matters most.

**We are all leaders in this school.** It is up to each one of us to carry the banner for our school through support, inspiration, and high standards for all. We believe that when all voices are heard, we are able to provide the best possible learning environment for our students and the strongest community for our staff and for our families.

## **Beliefs About Learning**

- We are a community of learners (Families, Students and Faculty)
  - Every child wants to learn and achieve their fullest potential
    - Every student needs a champion
    - Children have an innate and natural curiosity
    - Learning should be engaging and enjoyable
    - Learning takes effort and hard work
  - Mistakes are a vital part of the learning process
- Everyone is unique and learns differently and at a different pace
- Fair is not necessarily equal: every child gets what they need when they need it
  - Learning is not always visible or measurable
    - Process is as important as product
    - Time spent means relationships built
  - All humans need to belong and feel significant
- Scholarship can and should be combined with creativity
- Knowledge is the foundation for exploration, analysis, and creativity
- A clear purpose to serve students, create community with families, and support one another motivates what we do
- Strong character needs to be modeled, practiced and reaffirmed
  - Positive school culture is a shared responsibility
  - Lifelong learning is a journey of wonderful discovery

## **Our Curriculum Statement and Philosophy**

Desert Montessori integrates the Montessori philosophy with research-based educational practices. Our students are active participants in academically rigorous classrooms. We honor individual learning styles while preparing students for future success, aiming to empower our students with agency, creativity and integrity

Our program is based upon Montessori principles and values. Teachers thoughtfully prepare engaging environments and guide children to learn at their own pace to reach their individual potential. We use sequences of progressively more challenging work, which allows children to build independence, leading to a strong sense of joy, agency and accomplishment. The materials and lessons are designed to lead a child from the simple to the complex, from concrete to abstract concepts. Our classrooms cultivate an atmosphere of peace, respect and collaboration throughout our community. Finally, outdoor experiences and opportunities for service instill a love of nature and social responsibility as children begin to question and integrate their purpose and place within the family, school and broader community.

### **About Montessori**

Desert Montessori School (DMS) is dedicated to and inspired by the innovative educational principles developed by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952). During the early decades of the 1900s, she created a comprehensive method of early education based on years of astute observation of young children. Dr. Montessori created many extraordinary means for educating special needs children and subsequently applied those concepts in developing educational methods for all children. Maria Montessori was a scientist who used the scientific method to create her pedagogy. She used the methods of observation, trial and error to help children to be successful. With that in mind, educators today need to be mindful of ways to help their students to be as successful as they can be.

The Montessori Method uses a sequence of progressively challenging work which allows children to learn independently at their own pace, leading to a strong sense of joy, security, success and accomplishment. The work is designed to lead a child from the simple to the complex, from concrete to abstract concepts. We foster individual discovery and mastery, minimizing competition between students. The Montessori Method is not a mold into which children are poured, rather a pedagogy which can be implemented to fit each child. The Montessori approach recognizes that young children progress through special stages of

absorbing and learning called sensitive periods and possess an innate desire and capacity to learn. One of her most astute observations is that children of different ages will naturally teach and learn from each other. Hundreds of contemporary education tenets are based on her revolutionary findings, innovations, design of materials, and integrated whole-child principles.

In Montessori classrooms, work is designed to help children develop skills that have real world applications. At DMS, we hold space for the individual, while upholding the importance of community and class cohesion. Teachers observe children carefully, to identify what work they are developmentally ready for. When a child is met with work that is developmentally appropriate for them, work is a joyful, spontaneous experience. Teachers notice individual interests, behaviors and skills, and match instruction to meet each child where they are. For example, when a student is demonstrating a readiness for x, they are presented with the x lesson. Behavior is understood as communication, and careful observation helps teachers understand how to guide a child's natural inclinations, strengths and interests into meaningful, beautiful and joyful work.

Following a thoughtful and careful presentation of Dr. Montessori's materials and equipment by a teacher, children progress through an intentionally designed sequence of works which will enhance their individual temperaments, drive, innate abilities, and interests. At the toddler and primary levels, the materials are designed to be indirect preparation for the academics of later years. Repeated use of these materials strengthens and reinforces longer attention spans.

At the elementary level, the classroom reflects the beginning of the transition from concrete Montessori materials to more abstract concepts. Students have individual and group lessons, direct instruction, and experience small-group and individual projects in classrooms with a low ratio of students to teachers. They begin to integrate time-management skills through planning and implementing projects, and they are allowed long periods for research, development, and presentation. Grace and courtesy, community, and emotional regulations are key components of a Montessori classroom throughout.



# General Program Information

## Hours & Licensing

DMS is a ECECD-licensed, two plus-star facility. We enroll students beginning at age two (2) and offer enrollment through sixth grade. We are participants in ECECD's FOCUS program and comply with program's requirements.

DMS is open Monday through Friday, on the dates prescribed in the Annual Calendar. Our regular school day begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m.

Aftercare runs from 3:00-5:30 p.m.

Early Dismissal days end at 12:00 p.m.

Students ages 2-4 have the option of attending school for a 4-day week (Monday through Thursday) or a 5-day week (Monday through Friday). There are no half-day options available at this time.

Our multi-age classrooms serve the following age-ranges, in accordance with the Montessori theory of child development:

Toddler: Ages 2-3

Primary: Ages 3-6

Lower Elementary: Ages 6-9

Upper Elementary: Ages 9-12

Morning drop-off is from 8:00 am-8:30 am. Students who are not picked up by 3:10 p.m. join our Aftercare program at an additional cost. Our Aftercare Program is available to all students for a separate charge and is available until 5:30 p.m. on days when school is in session, except for Early Dismissal days. Please pick your children up promptly at 5:30. The late pick-up fee is \$5 per minute after 5:30.

## Governance & Administration

Head of School: Liza M Frolkis

Facilitating Administrator: Erin Cherry

## Board of Directors

The Board manages the affairs of the Corporation, is responsible for overall policy, direction of the School, budget approval, and delegates responsibility for day-to-day operations to the Head of School and Circle Leadership. The Board consists of no more than 9 members and no less than 5, and members receive no compensation for Board membership. The Board meets no less than 4 times per school year with one meeting being an Annual meeting open to all parents, students, and teachers.

**Current 2025-2026 Board**

Terry Martinson: Board Chair

Lane Kneedler: Secretary

Lauren Pineda: Treasurer

Bethany Wells: Parent Representative

DeAnn Meadows: Teacher Representative

Travis DeGiorgis: Member

Danielle Lopez: Member

Carrie Frias: Member

**Daily Classroom Schedules**

Each classroom has a posted schedule indicating approximate times when students are receiving instruction, when they are at play, when they have snack and lunch, and when they are at rest. Inquiries into these schedules may be made with your child's teacher.

**Our Physical Site**

DMS is located at 316 Camino Delora, Santa Fe, New Mexico. The school occupies the top floor of the former Cristo Rey Catholic School across the street from the church at the top of Canyon Road.

The school has a large, completely fenced-in outdoor play space comprising an asphalt-surface area for basketball, jump rope, four-square, wagons, etc. and a sand playground equipped with climbers, slides, and swings.

DMS is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, as designated by the IRS. DMS maintains a long-term lease with Cristo Rey Catholic Church, but is otherwise not affiliated with them. DMS is a non-sectarian school.

# Legality

## Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect

### Mandated Reporting

DMS has a zero tolerance policy with respect to abuse. Any complaints that involve suspected child abuse or neglect on the part of parents or faculty must be referred to the Department of Children, Youth and Families, the Rape Crisis Center, the criminal Prosecution Division of the Office of the District Attorney and the County Social Services Office in the Judicial District in which the child resides. Solace Sexual Assault Services is an additional resource that can help guide the process. Below you will find the regulation as written by CYFD; please be aware that we are mandated to follow these guidelines.

Every person who knows or has reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected in New Mexico must report the matter immediately to CYFD's Statewide Central Intake child abuse hotline (**1-855-333-SAFE [7233] or #SAFE from a cell phone**), or to law enforcement or the appropriate tribal identity. Specific professionals mentioned under the law as mandated reporters are: licensed physicians, residents or interns, law enforcement officers, judges presiding during a proceeding, nurses, schoolteachers, school officials, social workers, and members of the clergy who have information not privileged as a matter of law.

*The DMS comprehensive abuse prevention policy is available upon request.*

### Reporting Abuse or Neglect

It is important for every person to take child abuse and neglect seriously, to be able to recognize when it happens, and to know what to do when you see it. Call CYFD's Statewide Central Intake (SCI) at 1-855-333-SAFE [7233] or #SAFE from a cell phone if you suspect child maltreatment is occurring.

When making a report of abuse or neglect, you may choose to remain anonymous as the reporter, and will be immune from liability, civil or criminal, as long as you have acted in good faith by reporting. We encourage reporters to provide information about who they are, as it assists us in the investigative process. The reporter's name remains confidential

unless ordered to be released by a court of law. In rare cases, a reporter could be required to testify in court if such testimony is necessary to protect the child.

While we make every effort to protect a reporter's identity, CYFD cannot guarantee that an alleged perpetrator will not figure out who has made the report. There do exist cases in which parents or alleged perpetrators are able to guess who reported the abuse based on the nature of the report. In these cases, CYFD's role is to attempt to redirect the alleged perpetrators and engage them in focusing on the concerns for the child.

As a reporter of abuse or neglect, it is important to include as many details about the suspected maltreatment as possible. In order for a report to be screened in for investigation, you must be able to provide enough information about so that we might be able to find the child. While certainly desirable, it is not necessary to know the name and address of the child and/or parents. All descriptive information you can provide about the child, parent, and location of the abuse helps, such as: the child's school, parent's work place, vehicle license plate, etc.

## **Non-Discrimination Statement**

DMS maintains a non-sectarian program and admits children of all abilities, races, religions, gender identities and expressions, and cultural heritages to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities of the school. Desert Montessori does not discriminate on any basis in administration of its financial aid policies.

DMS is in agreement with and dedicated to providing equal opportunity employment and educational opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, marital status, ancestry, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.

## **Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Students**

Desert Montessori's commitment to diversity and inclusivity means that as children and youth explore and/or assert their gender identity, it is our school's responsibility to respond with support that increases each student's ability to thrive at DMS and beyond.

*Our full policy (adapted from Santa Fe Public Schools AR 330) is available upon request and is designed to provide guidelines that reflect our values and create clear pathways to support for students, their families, and our staff.*

## **Statement of Title IX**

In compliance with regulations implementing Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972, and applicable state laws, DMS prohibits discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religious creed, age, marital status, military or veteran status, national origin, sex, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or past or present physical or mental disability. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, direct or indirect demand or requests for sexual favors, sexual comments, gestures or other physical actions of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's educational or professional success;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for educational or employment decisions affecting such individual; or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic or professional performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or work environment.

### **Title IX Coordinator**

**Name: Andree Volin**

**Address: 316 Camino Delora**

**Phone: 505.983.8212**

**Email: [andree.volin@desertmontessori.com](mailto:andree.volin@desertmontessori.com)**

## **Conflicts of Interest**

All teachers and staff are under contract to DMS. The employment contract prohibits work of any kind to be done for a DMS family outside of school hours. This means that we have asked our staff to avoid the conflicts of interest inherent in providing childcare, tutoring or performing other tasks for our families. We look at these on a case by case basis and will make determinations accordingly if work constitutes a true conflict of interest. Please make sure all work with DMS families is given prior approval from Leadership.

# Health and Safety

## Accident Procedures

### **If Your Child is Injured at School**

DMS has a first aid kit in the school office, every classroom, and in the school van (for use while on field trips). All staff members are required to have current first aid and CPR certifications, including the Directors. We do not call parents for the regular bumps and bruises a child may receive during the school day. If the accident has been severe enough, we will send home an Accident Report.

### **Non-Emergency**

Injuries and accidents that do not require immediate medical attention are handled by staff using the following procedure:

1. First aid is administered.
2. An accident report will be filled out and given to parents at pick-up.
3. A parent/guardian is notified immediately only if there is a head injury of any kind, if the child has a bad sprain, if the child may need stitches, or if it is suspected that they have a broken bone. If a parent cannot be reached, we call the emergency contact persons listed in a child's file.

### **Emergency**

DMS maintains updated records containing parental authorization for emergency medical transport in the unlikely event that a child might require emergency medical attention. In such a case we would use the following procedure:

1. DMS calls for an ambulance to transport the child to the hospital.
2. A parent/guardian is called with a status report and directions to meet at the hospital (likely Christus St. Vincent). A staff member will remain with the injured child until a parent is able to get there.

## Illness Policies

Health and wellness are of primary concern in our environment. The wellbeing of all members of our community is at the forefront of our decisions. In order to effectively manage infectious disease, vigilance is required. Because so many of the common illnesses we see at school have long-ranging contagious periods that may last from a day prior to the onset of symptoms to days after symptoms have abated, we ask that you respect and abide by the guidelines we have set.

## COVID Policies

We follow all state mandated guidelines as described by ECECD and PED. These guidelines change with some frequency and we will be in constant communication as they do.

### When to Keep Your Child at Home

Sick children are not permitted in school! Do not send a child to school if any of the following symptoms are present: fever of 100°F or higher, regardless of cause, rash, diarrhea, persistent cough, opaque (green) mucus, vomiting, sore throat, pink eye, impetigo, pinworms, chickenpox, or lice.

**We ask that children be kept at home until *a minimum of 24 hours have passed from the last incidence of one of the aforementioned symptoms. If they were ill the previous afternoon or evening, they should not be sent to school the following morning.*** Following an illness, a child must be well enough to fully participate in all the activities and daily routines, including unrestricted outdoor play. They will need a note from a doctor clearing them to return if they have had a diagnosis of a contagious illness.

### 10 Symptoms that Should Keep Kids Home

1. **Colds:** There are two big reasons to keep a child home with a cold. They are tired and need rest. Having children at school who need to rest means one teacher has to tend to a sick child and the other has the rest of the class! Tired kids who don't feel well don't want to participate in classroom activities, nor do they want to sit peacefully and rest all day. When they are here, they need to be willing and able to participate in the class and on the playground. They are also most likely contagious to others!
2. **Coughs:** If a cough keeps your child up all night or worsens when he or she wakes and is more active, they should stay home. They are exhausted and will not do well in school. If a cough is the remains of an old cold and they feel otherwise fine with no other symptoms, they can come to school. Help us by always reminding your child to cough into their elbow!
3. **Ear Infections:** They can return once they have started medication for the infection.
4. **Sore Throat:** If your child wakes up with a sore throat, try giving them something to drink and see if it improves. If the pain persists, they need to see a doctor and be checked for Strep Throat.
5. **Fever:** Children need to be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. That means if we send them home, they need to stay home the following school day. The CDC defines a fever as a temperature of 100.4. A low-grade fever is 99.7-100.3. If they are running only 100 degrees, but seem pale, achy, and tired, please keep them home.
6. **Vomiting and/or Diarrhea:** If they vomit, keep them home. If they have diarrhea, keep them home. Your student may return to school after 24 hours with neither vomiting nor fever.



7. **Pinkeye:** Conjunctivitis is highly contagious! Children can return once they have been on antibiotic drops for **48** hours.
8. **Head Lice and Nits:** Lice is the parasite, nits are the eggs. All the parasites and nits must be picked out of the children's hair and a suitable treatment program underway before they return.
9. **Rashes:** These include Chicken Pox, Impetigo, and Hand, Foot and Mouth disease. These are highly contagious. Keep them home. Severe poison ivy or other rashes that are severe enough as to impede the function of a normal school day.
10. **Sprained Ankle:** Keep it elevated and iced for 24 to 48 hours, until they can walk comfortably.

Some kids can be amazing actors and you are put in the position of diagnosing them when you really just need to get to work. Here are some clues to look for from *The Baby Book*:

- The Circle Test: Your child makes broad circle signs over his/her head or stomach instead of pointing to an exact spot where it hurts.
- The Vague Test: Your child announces he/she "doesn't feel well" but can't be more specific than that.
- The Time Test: The symptoms crop up just as you and your child are leaving the house.
- The Observation Test: You don't see a runny nose, red throat, paleness, fever, rash, or any other observable sign of illness.

### **Your Child May be Sent Home**

If a child shows symptoms which correlate to the above conditions while at school, a parent/ guardian will be notified immediately. If a parent cannot be reached, DMS will begin contacting the emergency contact persons listed in your child's file. Regrettably, we are unable to retain or quarantine ill children for extended periods. Once notified, parents/ emergency contacts will be required to pick children up within the hour.

### **Illnesses that Require Notifications**

The State of New Mexico requires immediate notification of some infectious diseases, including pertussis, measles, hepatitis, and dozens more. For more information you may call the Epidemiology and Response Division of the NMDOH at (505) 827-0006. If your child or someone in your home has such an illness, please also contact DMS immediately so that we can alert the other families and staff.

## **Allergies**

Parents are required to disclose a child's allergies to foods, medications, or materials to the school, and complete an Allergy Action Plan. Information regarding allergies is kept on file in the office and distributed to each classroom. If your child has an allergy that requires **an EpiPen prescription, please notify the office**. You will be required to bring an EpiPen and fill out a Medication Authorization Form to be kept at school. When children have a fever



due to allergies they will be sent home and required to be kept home the following school day.

## Medicine at School

If a child needs to take medicine while at school, **a parent must provide the medicine and complete a Medication Authorization Form to the office. *Do not send medication to school in your child's lunchbox.*** All student medications are stored in a locked medicine box until used. Unused medication is released directly to the parent or disposed of.

DMS is not allowed to *electively* administer medicine to students. We cannot apply any topical antibiotic ointments or creams, nor can we assist in removing splinters or eye irritants. Cold compresses and band-aids are the extent of our permissible interventions. The application of sunscreen is permitted with a parent-signed authorization form provided in enrollment packets. Parents will provide sunscreen labeled with their child's name. Teachers are to reapply sunscreen as necessary and if parents have given consent.

## Immunizations

The State of New Mexico requires all children to have the requisite series of inoculations current to the child's age. A current immunization record must be on file in the office.

For those families who choose to file the immunization waiver form with the State Department of Health, please be advised that the waiver must be updated every year. There is no cost involved. The waiver must be notarized and mailed or hand carried to the address indicated on the form. Two copies will be given to you – one for your records and an additional copy for the school. Please bring in the school copy as soon as you receive it. The waiver is now available on their website at [http://www.immunizenm.org/documents/Exemption\\_new.pdf](http://www.immunizenm.org/documents/Exemption_new.pdf).

## Missing Child Procedure

If a child is missing from the school grounds, the following simultaneous actions are taken: 1) 911 is called, 2) a parent/guardian is called, and 3) an immediate search begins of the school, grounds, area and neighborhood.

Parents may remain on the phone, come to the school, or stay by the phone to await information.

## Air Quality Procedure

In case of a forest fire or other fire in the area, DMS follows the following procedure (based on recommendations from [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov)):

- If smoke is seen at over 10 miles from the school, **staff will watch for changing conditions and moderate outdoor activities based on personal sensitivity.**
- If smoke is seen between 5-10 miles from the school, **staff will minimize or avoid outdoor activities with students**
- If smoke is seen less than 5 miles from the school, **staff will ensure that students stay inside.**

## Important Emergency Contact Info

Call Santa Fe's dispatch center 505-428-3710; they will be able to send Police, Fire and EMS. (You can also call 911.) Provide your location by address and city so the call center knows the location is in Santa Fe and not another city.

## Emergency Preparedness Drills

The following pages outline our Emergency Procedures in any given event. All of our staff are trained in these procedures. The safety of our students is our number one priority.

## Fire & Evacuation Drills Offsite, Outdoor or Indoor Location

Fire Drills are conducted monthly and are on the DMS calendar.

**Short Term Evacuation Site Safety Zone:** Church parking lot across from the school's front entrance.

**Long Term Evacuation Site Safety Zone:** Cristo Rey Church Gymnasium or Atalaya Elementary

### Criteria

Refers to any situation/event or disaster that renders the school building unsafe and requires that students are led out of the building and accounted for. Each room will have a map of the classroom posted with the evacuation route.

### Action Steps

1. Fire Alarm will sound



2. Assistant teachers will begin lining up the children at the exit door.
3. Lead teacher will collect the attendance sheet and emergency bag.
4. Primary Evacuation: Assistant teachers will lead all of the children out the closest door (indicated in evacuation mapping), leading them silently to the church parking lot directly across from the front of the school.
5. Lead teacher will be the last person to leave the classroom, doing a final sweep to ensure that all children and staff are out of the room. The lead will then follow the assistant staff and children to the meeting point across the street in the church parking lot.
6. When all classroom staff and children are safely at the meeting point, the lead teacher will take attendance and compare it to the daily attendance sheet in order to determine that all present children did indeed make it out of the building and are present and accounted for.
7. Children Present: If all children are present, accounted for, and uninjured, the lead teacher will hold up the Green Safety Card with the green side visible to the Director.
8. Children Missing: If a child or staff member is missing or injured, the lead teacher will hold up the Red Safety Card with the red side visible to the Director. At that time, the Director will make a determination on the best course of action from that point based on the situation.
9. Staff will stay with the children until instructions are given to return to the building or move to an alternate Safety Zone. Staff will remain calm and be reassuring to the children until the building has been cleared. There will be no talking!

## Lockdown

### No One In and No One Out

#### Criteria

A Lockdown will occur in the event that an unsafe person/persons is inside or in the direct vicinity of the school. The goal is to seek protective cover in locked sections of the building or classroom. It is of the utmost importance that staff move quickly in order to protect themselves and the children in this situation.

#### Action Steps:

1. An announcement of a **Lockdown** will be sent via the Remind App and/or the **SL Force Pocket Alarm** will sound.
2. Assistant Teachers will gather the children into the area of the classroom that has been determined by the lead to be the most protected from visibility to the outside. **\*If students are away from their classroom or outside, they should proceed via the quickest route possible into the closest lockable area (art room, or classroom). If there is something unsafe already in the building the teachers should lead the students as far away from the building as quickly as possible.**
3. Lead Teacher will use their personal discretion to first determine the safety of the situation. If they feel comfortable, they will lock the classroom door, close window coverings, gather the attendance sheet and emergency bag, and then proceed into the safe area with the children.



4. Lead Teacher will take attendance. It is important that you know if there are students that are missing. If there are missing students, trust that they are with another teacher or hiding safely. **Your job is to keep the students in your room quiet and safe.**
5. If everyone is safe and accounted for, the teacher will report attendance to the Director via Remind app, or conversely, the teacher will report via Walkie Talkie or Remind who is missing from the classroom.
6. **The goal is for everyone to remain silent and safe. Text messaging or the walkie talkies can be used to communicate specifics**
7. Teachers will quietly keep the children occupied while maintaining a vigilant awareness of noises occurring in the school.
8. If a staff member hears gunshots, an explosion, or a physical struggle occurring somewhere in the school, the Lead Teacher will instruct all students and staff to **lie close to the ground or evacuate** through the exterior door. **The teacher will use their discretion to make the safest choice possible.**
9. The Director will make an announcement that gives the **“All Clear”** over the school text system. When this occurs, classrooms may resume their normal school day schedule.

## Lockout

### No One In and No One Out

#### Criteria:

A Lockout will occur in the event that an unsafe person/persons is somewhere in the **greater vicinity** of the school and the police department has notified our facility.

#### Action Steps:

1. An announcement of a Lockout is made over the school-wide text based messaging system.
2. Any children/staff on the playground immediately proceed into the building.
3. All staff/children/parents must stay in the building; however, they can proceed with normal activities.
4. All Lead teachers will take attendance and report attendance to the Director via Remind app.
5. Administrator will do a safety walk through to ensure everyone is safely inside.
6. No person is permitted to enter or exit the building until the **“All Clear”** announcement is made.

## Shelter In Place

## Restricting Movement

### Criteria:

A Shelter in Place will occur in the event that there is an unsafe environmental or chemical hazard outside or in the greater vicinity of the school and the police or fire department has notified the facility.

### Action Steps:

1. An announcement of a Shelter in Place is made over the school-wide text messaging system.
2. Any children/staff on the playground immediately proceed into the building.
3. Close all classroom windows and doors
4. If directed, cover door and window cracks with duct tape.
5. If the air within the classroom appears to be contaminated, inform the office and proceed to the nearest safe space.
6. Students and staff may need to get on the floor.
7. Once students are in a safe shelter area take attendance and notify the Director via Remind app of any unaccounted or extra students in your room.
8. If the building is safe All staff/children/parents must stay in the building; however, they can proceed with normal activities.
9. No person is permitted to enter or exit the building until the **"All Clear"** announcement is made.

# Academic Policies

## Arrival, Dismissal, Aftercare, & Parking

Consistency of daily schedules, like arriving on time, assures a child's comfort, stability and security. This habit is also the start of positive inner discipline for meeting the expectations of future schedules at other schools and, later, jobs. The tone of your child's day is frequently established by the first social contact with his or her peers.

### Parking

Parking is available across the street in the small lot next to the Cristo Rey gymnasium and also along Cristo Rey Street. **Please be advised that the red curb on Camino Delora in front of the school is a Fire Zone and parking is prohibited.** There is limited parking available in the lot adjacent to the north of the building. Please do not park in any spot that is marked with a red placard as those belong to the Cristo Rey Parish Office staff.

### Morning Drop Off

Our day begins with morning drop off. We open the doors at 8:00 a.m. allowing a full half hour for on-time arrival. School starts promptly at 8:30 a.m. Your child should be settled in their classroom by this time.

There may be times when a staff member can come get your child from your car (if you are running late, or have a sleeping baby in the car, etc). If you are in need of this, please send a Remind to someone in the Front Office or your student's teacher. If we are able to come assist you, we will let you know.

In keeping with our ongoing efforts to have children learn independence during their time at DMS, we ask that students are encouraged or are allowed to carry their own backpack, lunch boxes, walk in on their own, and put their own belongings away. This sets the tone for an independent, successful day. Parents are always welcome to call the Office to check on their child any time of the school day.

Do not allow your child to walk on top of the walls along the sidewalk.

Infrequently you may see us carry a child into the school. We do this only for those rare *off* days that we all encounter. Our goal, as always, is to work with each child in moving toward independence.

### End of Day Dismissal

Each classroom has its own end of day dismissal routine. Communication with your child's teacher will help you learn what to expect with regards to pick-up routines. In general, Toddler and Primary are dismissed between 2:30-3:00. Elementary classes are dismissed between 3:00-3:15.

Students are dismissed by teachers to a parent, guardian, or other person listed with the office as an approved/emergency contact. DMS will not dismiss a child to anyone who is not on the list unless we have heard from the parent directly regarding a change. We may ask for a photo ID if a person is unknown to us.

**It is the policy of DMS that any student who has not been picked up from their classroom by 3:10 p.m. (3:15 for Elementary Students) will go to aftercare and his/her parents will be charged the appropriate daily drop-in aftercare rates.**

### **Aftercare**

DMS Aftercare program is open to all students. It runs every regular school day until 5:30 p.m. Aftercare is not offered on days with an early dismissal. Information on Aftercare fees and availability may be obtained from the office. Late pick up charge is \$5/minute for every minute after 5:30.

## **Attendance Policy**

DMS believes that attendance in school and participation in class are an integral part of academic achievement and the teaching-learning process. We also understand that occasional absences for illness, family emergency, medical appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours, or religious observance are to be expected.

If your child has a planned absence please notify the Office and your child's teachers at least a day in advance. It is essential that the teacher know ahead of time that a child is going to be missing school. A teacher may be able to reschedule the introduction of new material or postpone an important step in a project's completion, but this can only be done if advance notice is given.

You may send a Remind message, call, email the Office or speak to someone in the Office directly to notify us of any planned or last minute changes to your child's schedule. **Please be advised that a student's presence at school for less than 75% of the school day will be counted as an absence.**

Makeup work may be given to students who are absent. Determinations about makeup work are left to the discretion of the teacher(s). Completion of makeup work, if assigned, does not negate the child's absence from the records.

Regular attendance by every student in Kindergarten through grade six is compulsory by law. DMS adheres to NM's Attendance For Success Guidelines and follows the following protocol in case of numerous absences. *Please note that medical absences or planned absences due to travel are considered Excused Absences but STILL factor into the following procedures.*

**Definitions:**

**Habitual Absenteeism:** 5%-10% missed school. For the 25-26 School Year this translates to 8-16 days.

**Chronic Absenteeism:** 10%-20% missed school. For the 25-26 School Year this translates to 16-32 days.

**Excessive Absenteeism:** 20% or more missed school. For the 25-26 School Year this translates to 33 or more days.

**TIER 1:** The Whole School Prevention Tier is for students who have missed less than five percent of classes or school days for any reason. Whole school prevention strategies are universal attendance supports and may include activities such as whole school attendance campaigns, class attendance competitions, parental notification of student absences through robocalls or electronic communication, Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions (PBIS) to create welcoming school/ classroom climates, education nights, social contracts, extra-curricular activities, and attendance incentives, among others.

**TIER 2 (For Habitual Absenteeism):** The Individualized Prevention Tier is for students who have missed five percent or more, but less than 10 percent of classes or school days for any reason. In addition to whole-school prevention strategies and other supportive interventions, for Tier 2 elementary students, the attendance team shall talk to the parent/family and inform the parent/family of the student's attendance history, the impact of student absences on student academic outcomes, the interventions or services available to the student or family, and the consequences of further absences. For Tier 2 middle or high school students, the attendance team provides the same interventions as for elementary students, and involves the student in their conversations with parent/family.

**TIER 3 (for Chronic Absenteeism):** The Early Intervention Tier is for students who have missed 10 percent or more, but less than 20 percent of classes or school days for any reason. In addition to whole-school prevention strategies and other supportive interventions, for Tier 3 students, the attendance team shall notify the parent/family in writing of the student's absenteeism. The notice shall include a date, time, and place for the parent/ family to meet with school officials/staff to develop intervention strategies that focus on keeping the student in an educational setting. The attendance team shall be



convened to establish a specific intervention plan for the student that includes establishing weekly progress monitoring and a contract for attendance. To the extent appropriate, given the student's age, the student should be actively involved in the formulation of the attendance contract, the provisions of which should include a focus on both academic and extracurricular activities appropriate for and of interest to the student.

**TIER 4 (for Excessive Absenteeism):** The Intensive Supports Tier is for students who have missed 20 percent or more of classes or school days for any reason. In addition to wholeschool prevention strategies and other supportive interventions, for Tier 4 students, the attendance team shall give written notice to the parent/family, including a date, time, and place for the parent/family to meet with the school principal and the attendance team, and establish non-punitive consequences at the school level, identify appropriate specialized supports that may be needed to help the student address the underlying causes of excessive absenteeism, and apprise the student and the parent/family of the consequences of further absences.

**Students who continue to have unexcused absences** after written notification of excessive absenteeism, shall be reported to the judicial district in which the student resides (Attendance for Success Act, Section 12.B.), and schools are required to report for each reporting date and at the end of the year the students who were referred to the Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) because of excessive absences (Section 13.A.2).

## Toys at School

Toys of any kind are not allowed at school as they distract the children and often cause conflict and hurt feelings or end up lost or broken. The exception to this rule is "Show & Tell" or "Sharing Days." Books, educational materials, nature items, etc. of wide interest are welcome with prior approval from the teacher. Each teacher uses his or her own discretion about what may be allowed during "show & tell" or on "sharing days."

## Technology Devices at School

Technology devices are not allowed at school as they distract the children and often cause conflict and hurt feelings or end up lost or broken. Digital watches with date, time and step counting features are acceptable. Families seeking exceptions to this rule for safety concerns or for special projects must receive prior approval from teachers and Head of School. In the case that a student has approval to have a device at school, the device will stay in an agreed upon location outside of the times that it is being used for its agreed upon use.

We recognize that sometimes students are sent with smart watches or phones for safety purposes. This must be discussed and cleared with the Head of School prior to being sent to school. Phones must remain turned off and in the student's locker for the entirety of the school day. They may be turned on after dismissal. Smart watches must have texting and calling disabled, and not be used by the student for any purpose other than telling time, date, and counting steps. If technology of any kind (including digital watches) becomes a disruption to the classroom or any child's learning, or is not used in accordance with agreed upon rules, the device will be confiscated until the end of the day. After two such instances, this technology will not be allowed in school again. Teachers and DMS do not bear any responsibility for lost, damaged or stolen technology.

## **Birthdays & Celebrations**

### **Birthdays at School**

We celebrate a student's birthday with a 'Birthday Circle.' Birthday Circle includes a candle walk, parent participation (if possible), and a special snack. Teachers will provide parents with detailed information about Birthday Circle and work with parents to arrange the best day and time to celebrate near the student's birth date as well as *the most appropriate snack*. We ask for snacks with low or no sugar. Sugary snacks are sent home to be enjoyed with guardian permission. We discourage party favors or balloons to school.

### **Birthdays, Sleepovers, Play Dates, and other Celebrations Outside of School**

We ask that families planning get-togethers outside of school follow the invitation protocol that we have set up: 1) if all students in the child's class are being invited, invitations may be brought to school 2) if only some school friends are being invited (only girls, only boys, a smaller group, etc.), invitations are issued via mail, email, or phone and do not distribute them at school.

Students are discouraged from talking about sleepovers, play dates, events, and parties that take place *outside of school* while they are *at school*. Please also help us by not having conversations with students or other parents about these special events, and by refraining from issuing on-the-spot invitations for after school play dates. In this way we avoid hurting the feelings of students who may not have participated, and neither parents nor students are put in an awkward position.

### **Holidays**

Holidays are celebrated and acknowledged at school with sensitivity to diversity. We respect and welcome cultural, ethnic, and religious differences and encourage parents to share all important customs and celebrations with teachers and in the classroom.

## Snack and Lunch

All DMS students bring their own snack, lunch, and (where applicable) Aftercare snack to school daily; the school does not offer a lunch program. DMS will let parents know if there are other food opportunities throughout the year. It is the goal of a Montessori School to incorporate Snack and Food Prep into the curriculum.

Staff must know of all allergies. On any given day students may participate in cooking projects or be invited to enjoy a shared Birthday Circle treat, and we try to avoid all ingredients to which a student may be allergic.

Snack and lunch are an important part of a child's day, from both social and nutritional viewpoints. The following is asked of families and staff must be aware of and, where applicable, follow the guidelines below. If your child has specific dietary or sensory needs with regards to food and eating, please share these needs with the school.

- We ask that, whenever possible, you send your child's snack and lunch items in reusable containers to aid in our efforts to have a "Trash Free Lunch Zone."
- If your child needs a spoon or fork to consume foods, please send the utensil in their lunch bag.
- Please include items that will sustain your child's energy throughout the day. Examples include whole vegetables and fruits, high-protein snacks like yogurt and hummus.
- A source of protein should be provided for both snack and lunch. Snack should consist of both a protein and a vitamin-rich fruit or vegetable.
- Foods should be in consumable portions (please diagonally cut up larger vegetables, proteins, etc. **Especially grapes and sausages or hotdogs.**) and easily assembled by a child without assistance.
- No beverages containing caffeine and/or sugar, including but not limited to soda, coffee, tea, sports drinks, or flavored milk. Students have ready access to water for drinking.
- "Special foods" can sometimes lead to social discord and class disruptions. To that end, please do not send candy or chocolate to school and check in with your student's teacher about their rules around other sweet foods.

## **Rest Time (Nap)**

ECECD requires that a designated rest time is provided each day for all students ages 2 to 5. Not all children will sleep at this time, but each child is asked to rest for a minimum of 30 minutes. They may then quietly participate in teacher-supervised activities or lessons.

Our primary goal is to provide a midday change of pace. To support this goal, you will find that the whole school is quiet. Each of the preschool classrooms has their own Rest Time routine, and many have a story or music playing softly.

If your child has had an unusually late bedtime or restless night, let us know and we will do our best to see that he or she has a thorough rest. Conversely, if your child is having a hard time going to bed at night please let us know so that we can limit their midday rest and promote evening sleep.

Nap mats are provided by DMS. Please bring bedding to school. We regularly send nap mat covers home for washing. Please return these promptly.

Students may bring a nap-specific comfort item if they require it. This may be a pillow, blanket, or other small article. These items are stored with the nap materials and are not accessible at other times of the school day.

## **Field Trips & Guest Presentations**

### **Field Trips**

As a positive supplement to classroom materials and work, we take small group field trips to local sites and events of interest. Toddlers stay on campus.

Your child's teacher will send home permission forms for each scheduled field trip. Students will not be allowed to attend a field trip if a parent has not signed the specific trip acknowledgement form. Regretfully we cannot allow a child to meet up with the group off site, in accordance with ECECD regulations.

If there is a fee for the field trip or event it will be indicated on the trip acknowledgement form. Please pay fees promptly.

The school has a van that is used for some field trips. If the van is not being used, parent drivers/volunteers may be requested. We cannot allow a child to meet up with the group off site, in accordance with ECECD regulations.

Chaperones understand their responsibilities to:

- Stay with their assigned group for the duration of the field trip.
- Ensure that all snacks, stops, and things shared with the group are approved by the teacher(s) and are shared with the entire class.
- Volunteers and collaborators who have access to children and youth must undergo a background check.
- Volunteers or collaborators who have not had a background check should not:
  - Be alone with one child in a private space.
  - Assist children who are not their own with bathroom, clothing, or diaper changes.
- Chaperones and volunteers must sign a document agreeing with DMS abuse prevention policies
- Visitors typically do not undergo background checks or interviews and thus, will always have a staff member or volunteer present with them when they are with youth.
- Your Vehicle:
  - Please give the administration a copy of your current insurance
  - Please only volunteer if you have a reliable vehicle and a clean driving record
    - Make sure it has plenty of gasoline and tires in good condition
    - Provide a functioning seat belt for each passenger
  - Allow only adult-sized students to sit in the front passenger seat
  - Utilize car seats or boosters for children weighing less than 75lbs

### **Guest Presentations**

DMS often welcomes guest teachers, leaders, and performers to the school. If you have an idea for a classroom or school-wide lecture or presentation, please do not hesitate to share it. Keep in mind that these speakers may present to the students, teachers, or parents. We are always looking for new enrichment opportunities and in-house workshops from which our teachers may benefit.

## **Appropriate Dress**

The primary goal of DMS in determining appropriate dress for its students is safety. This includes safety from harm and comfort in their surroundings. Your child should arrive at school everyday wearing clothes and shoes that fit their bodies, that they are able to manage independently, and that allow them to move through their day with ease and comfort.

At any moment students may be asked to evacuate the building for a fire drill or emergency preparedness; safely doing so requires the wearing of appropriate clothing and shoes. Please keep this in mind when shopping for your child.

If your child wears shoes or clothing that impedes or distracts from the lessons of the day or that inhibits their safety or the safety of others, DMS reserves the right to request that particular clothing not be worn again at school.

*Consider their Comfort:* Comfortable clothing is an aid to a comfortable day. Students of all ages sit on the floor to do work and are encouraged to play enthusiastically on the playground. Appropriate clothing choices take into consideration a child's need to bend and climb and run and jump and the likelihood that they may get dirty.

*Consider the Weather:* We go outdoors to play as often as possible. Because the weather in Santa Fe is ever-changing, layers of clothing are best. Reminders that the weather has changed and winter clothing is required will be issued by DMS and its teachers.

In addition to a warm winter coat that we expect children will wear to and from school, every student should have a set of warm and waterproof winter clothing that will remain at school throughout the season. This includes outerwear such as snow pants, boots, a hat, and waterproof mittens or gloves. These items should all be labeled with your child's name.

We ask that all students wear attire within these guidelines:

- always wear appropriate attire for classroom and playground activity
- Wearing shorts or leggings under dresses and skirts can help students feel comfortable being active on the playground and ensures that, from a hygiene standpoint, students stay sand-free.
- choose clothing that minimizes distraction from a student's work and the purpose of school.
- clothing options to stay away from are:
  - "dress-up" clothes or costumes - we want students to be their authentic and awesome selves at school. There are other times and places for playing dress up.
  - Clothes that inhibit movement: ill-fitting clothing can often cause a distraction to work and inhibit students from properly doing what is expected of them at school
  - Clothes with distracting imagery: we have mixed age classrooms and a wide variety of ages in our school. Please choose clothing with imagery that will be safe and approachable for all ages.

We ask that all students have shoes within these guidelines:

- students are never allowed to be barefoot while at DMS
- students should have a pair of "indoor" shoes or slippers that remain at DMS and will be worn while in the classroom and hallway
  - these indoor shoes should have a rubber sole
  - a closed back heel or strap that is always worn (as in the case of Crocs)

- o no flip flops, please
  - o remember that in the case of an emergency we will not have time to stop and change our shoes
- shoes that are worn to school are also worn on the playground
  - o these shoes should have a rubber sole and be secured by laces or Velcro
  - o no flip-flops or high heels
- for swimming or sprinkler play, students must wear water shoes with rubber soles

At least one complete spare change of clothes should be provided to DMS for all DMS students; please label a large zip-top bag with your child's name and include underwear, socks, shirt, pants, and a sweater/sweatshirt. Your child's teacher will email a list of all required items needed.

Your child's teacher will store this clothing in case accidental soiling or damage requires replacement of their clothes. The soiled clothes will be sent home and new spares should be sent the following day. Please no belts, overalls, or complicated fasteners on clothing for students for whom toileting is still an adventure – elastic is best.

## **Academic Practices**

### **The Montessori Classroom**

Montessori Classrooms have a cycle of sequentially more challenging/complex materials, allowing children to grow at their own pace. This independently motivated learning fosters a strong sense of joy and individual accomplishment as children begin to question and integrate their purpose and place in the family, school, the community and the world.

The Montessori Environment is specially prepared for each student. It is safe, simple, beautiful and orderly. The classroom is a place to concentrate and is maintained and monitored by compassionate adults. It reflects a slower pace, engaging materials that spark curiosity and joy in learning, a place to foster their growing language abilities, and preparation for socializing as an individual within a group.

**Safety:** From the first day of school we give children the words to use to resolve conflicts and then consistently ask them to "use their words." In a child's world frustration can be quickly, easily, but ineffectively, expressed in pre-verbal expressions of hitting, biting, crying, grabbing. A teacher intervenes primarily to model patience, use of correct words, and proper tones of voice. As children grow through our Primary and Elementary Programs

they are able to manage their conflicts with increasing confidence, kindness, and independence; always with the support of a teacher.

**Concentration:** This simple, yet increasingly scarce attribute is a hallmark of our classrooms and lays the foundation for a child's character and behavior. Staff aim to support intrinsic motivation and concentration by giving a student space to work, allowing a student to try on their own before offering assistance and offering constructive feedback as opposed to qualitative praise.

**Simplicity:** Wood, cloth, and natural materials are used as much as possible in the classroom. Our materials and their thoughtful placement and order in the overall layout of our classrooms add another layer of learning and appreciation for beauty, colors, weight, and texture.

**Adults:** Our roles are to prepare the environment, to present lessons to support the ever-expansive mind and person of the child, and to carefully observe each student so that we can tailor the educational experience to each individual student. We speak softly, model careful words, take a slower pace, and give simple directions. In other words, we are consciously slowing down the hectic world to a child's pace. Teachers constantly refine approaches to meet the needs of the individual child by adjusting the environment, keeping careful records, reading new research, making new materials, reflecting and stepping back as a trained observer, and being respectful of all efforts and achievements.

*Why do we call the materials and selections of those materials "work?"*

Maria Montessori observed that young children love to emulate the adult world they observe. One advantage of young children being asked to "choose work" is that they have the experience that work is enjoyable. Another advantage of this vocabulary is the implicit respect for the activity in which the student is engaged. One objective of our environment is to set a child on the paths of responsibility for self, successful use of time, accountability to others, etc. All of these are necessary practices for the increased academic expectations of middle school, high school, and college, and the workplace values of the adult world.

## **The Six Dynamic Areas of the Montessori Classroom**

### **Practical Life**

The Montessori classroom is a cooperative space where all students are part of co-creating their environment.



A tenant of our Toddler and Primary Programs, the use of small-scaled materials in pouring, folding, sweeping, sorting, and other “everyday exercises” helps the child develop small and large muscle coordination. A full cycle of completed work creates a sense of real purpose and deepening concentration, leading to an increased sense of accomplishment and independence. As children imitate the actions and uses of materials found at home, their verbal and expressive skills deepen.

The Practical Life curriculum established in our younger students flourishes in our Elementary Program as students practice independence and care for themselves, care for their environment, and care for their community. Practical Life in elementary also focuses on time management and responsibility for decisions and assignments.

### **Sensorial**

These exercises are used in the Toddler and Primary Programs to deepen the powers of observation and concentration, develop descriptive language and refine the senses necessary to making decisions, correcting errors, and engaging the world. Color, size, shape, sound, weight, touch, taste, and smell are all explored. Children gain an increased sense of mastery over their bodies and a sense of well-being while refining skills of discernment. These materials also introduce the child to units of ten in self-correcting patterns as a precursor to numbers, math, and geometry.

### **Cultural**

The Cultural Curriculum is used to explore the universe and our world. Through geography, art, music, drama, ritual, nature, science, peoples, etc. students begin to connect to the realms outside themselves and how they are connected to the broader world. As children acquire an understanding of how the world operates, they adapt to their own place and time and begin to gain a working knowledge of themselves in relation to the whole. Cultural activities and comparisons aid children in developing an understanding of the complexities, struggles, and triumphs throughout all of life as well as an understanding of the natural world.

### **Math & Language**

These materials provide the means to develop and refine a child’s fundamental academic skills. Starting with our youngest students, as a child holds, manipulates, invents, and explores, that which was once mysterious and subtle becomes real and concrete. These materials are highly sequential and increase in complexity. A child masters one level of understanding before moving on.

In Math, a child is initially presented with concrete materials which help build a strong foundation for later abstraction. Zero is introduced and the extensive counting of items

leads to combining numbers in sets for adding and subtracting. Multiplication and division at ages 5 and 6 lead directly to algebra, geometry, and fractions in elementary.

Language activities include extensive preparation for and development of reading and writing skills. The Montessori Method uses tactile, auditory, visual and kinesthetic exercises which gradually incorporate the phonetic system for sounding and naming letters. Songs, other languages, and poetry are additional avenues toward creating our own voices. The most important goal is to foster a predisposition for and eventually fluency in reading through joyful experiences.

### **Art**

Art, like language or music, is a means of expression. Opportunities for art should always be a part of the classroom environment and not reserved for a special project or event. When children are able to choose art materials freely, they feel respected and satisfied with their abilities. The adult is there to help prepare for art indirectly-- through the varied activities of Practical Life and the exploration of the senses—and directly, by presenting materials and techniques carefully, and by encouraging without judgment.

## **Children's Independence Zone**

DMS refers to the classroom as the Children's Independence Zone. Teachers ask parents not to cross the threshold into the classrooms unless asked. Reinforcement of this practice is important for the consistency of the school.

## **Classroom Guidelines**

These are the basic rules of the school:

- Keep Each Other Safe
  - Take Care of the Environment
  - School is for Learning and Growing
- 1) Children are free to work with any materials displayed in the environment as long as they have had a demonstration on how to handle the work and to use it with respect.
  - 2) Children may work either on a table or on a floor mat to define their own space.
  - 3) Children restore the environment after any exercise or accident. They are responsible for cleaning their own spills. They put their own mat or rug away. If they have been working at a table, they push the chair back into place.



- 4) Classroom schedule in time for a complete work cycle, the length of which is determined by the age of the students. Guidance from American Montessori Society outlines the following time windows:
  - a. Infant & Toddler: At minimum, a daily 2-hour work cycle. The time block allows for adult-assisted mealtime, snacks, hygiene, and nap/rest routines.
  - b. Early Childhood: At minimum, a 2-hour work cycle, 4 days per week. A 3-hour uninterrupted work cycle, 5 days per week is optimal.
  - c. Elementary: At minimum, a 2-hour work cycle, 4 days per week. A 3-hour uninterrupted work cycle, 5 days per week is optimal.
  - d. Secondary: At minimum, a 2-hour work cycle for core curricular subjects (math, English, history or humanities, sciences, and additional world languages).
- 5) Valuable lessons in grace and courtesy are taught throughout the school and throughout the year. Children respect the work and space of their peers. A child's right to initiate, complete, and repeat an exercise is protected.
- 6) Children are permitted to respectfully sit out from a group activity. It is a child's right to stand as an observer to group activities without becoming an active member.
- 7) A child is always free to simply observe others at work, to take time alone, to relax, or to think.
- 8) Children are not forced or even encouraged to share a work material or exercise with another child when they have chosen to work alone. We have consistently observed that generosity develops within a child as they mature and gain self-security.
- 9) We follow our conflict resolution and positive discipline guidelines when we encounter behavioral challenges.

## Conflict Resolution and Evoking Language

We aspire to teach conflict resolution skills as a third language in the school. Where the young child might revert to pre-verbal behaviors, the maturing student learns meaningful ways to communicate. Fluency in problem solving deepens as a child practices voicing concerns, mediating conflicts, achieving compromise, and making decisions. Consistent, respectful modeling by adults, together with successful social experiences, strengthens the young child's sense of self and security.

## Parent and Student Relations

### Communication

DMS strives for open and effective communication between all members of the school community. Highlighted below are just a few ways that together we can sustain a successful dialogue.

#### Contact Information

DMS asks for various forms of contact information from families. We rely on parents to provide us updated information whenever necessary. Because so many of our formal and informal communiqués are distributed through Remind and via email, please alert us if there have been any changes in how we can best reach you.

#### Email and Phone Numbers

The best way to contact the Directors, teachers, or other staff is email. A complete email list is included below. If it is urgent, you can call the Office.

The phone number is (505) 983-8212. If you get the voicemail, please leave a message; we check the voicemail and return calls throughout the day.

Front Office (reaches Office staff) - [frontoffice@desertmontessori.com](mailto:frontoffice@desertmontessori.com)

Classroom Teachers and Staff - [first.last@desertmontessori.com](mailto:first.last@desertmontessori.com)

#### Signing In & Signing Out

All children should be signed in each day. A staff member will be in the entryway to record the time that your child is dropped off and picked up each day, as well as who has picked your child up.

**Confidentiality**

All information you provide is confidential. Rumor or talk of a personal, sensational, or intimate nature is strongly discouraged. We remind you that questions or speculation are best addressed with the parties concerned.

**Parent-Teacher Communication**

Out of respect for every child's privacy and teachers' busy schedules, we ask that you please avoid impromptu, unscheduled meetings at drop off or pick up. Instead, please email the teacher to schedule a meeting or a phone call. Because they are working directly with children in the classroom, teachers are rarely able to speak on the phone unless a designated time is scheduled via email.

It is preferable that parents use the aforementioned methods to first communicate with teachers about classroom matters before asking Directors to weigh in.

**Parent-Leadership Communication**

Leadership is always open to communication and feedback from parents. For longer conversations it is preferable to send an email to schedule a meeting or a phone call. Having an appointment ensures that you have undivided attention. Drop off and pick up are very hectic times.

**Conferences**

Parent/Teacher Conferences are scheduled twice a year: mid-autumn and mid-spring. The dates of these conferences may be found on the school's annual academic calendar. Your child's teacher will communicate with you regarding specifics about conferences. We do not have school scheduled during conference days.

Additionally, a teacher and/or parents may schedule informal conferences as the need arises. On rare occasions, DMS may also suggest a home visit, allowing us to spend additional informal time in the child's primary place of comfort.

**Parent Week**

Scheduled once a year, this week is set aside for parents to get a feel for what happens in the classroom and how their student moves through their day. Specific information about Parent Week will be provided as the dates approach.

**Class Updates/Newsletter**

Families will be emailed bi-weekly or monthly classroom and school updates providing an inside glimpse of the exciting discoveries and learning that occurs daily as well as important dates, and community opportunities. It is important that you read these updates and each section of the newsletter to stay informed about vital school-wide information, events, homework, and projects. Newsletters are sent to the email addresses we have on file

for parents/guardians. Please let us know if you need to change your contact information with us.

**We use Transparent Classroom & MailChimp for school-wide communication which can be sent to the “Promotions” or “Spam” mailbox.** If you are not receiving communication from us, please check one of these folders. To remedy this situation, add your teacher’s email addresses as well as [frontoffice@desertmontessori.com](mailto:frontoffice@desertmontessori.com) to your email Contacts.

### **Communication between Parents and DMS: Changes**

Educating your children is a collaborative effort. Communication between home and school is essential to maintain your child’s positive experience. In the event that a significant change occurs in your home life, please inform us as soon as possible so that we can be of support and share consistent approaches with your child. We, in turn, will keep you informed of any significant changes in the school environment which might affect your child’s sense of security.

We prefer discussing these changes away from your child, so that we can communicate openly and honestly. Small changes can make a big impact on a student’s life. Please don’t hesitate to share the smaller things. Information about growing spurts, out-of-town visitors, or sleep interruptions can help us help your child manage their day.

## **Open Door Policy**

### **Parent involvement is essential, highly encouraged, and deeply valued at DMS.**

We ask that you engage your child in conversations about the day’s events and activities, attend Parent Night and other parent events, and assist in the beautification of the building, grounds and special projects. **As a parent, we ask you to volunteer 10 hours a semester or submit an equitable financial donation.** Volunteering could be driving on field trips, sharing your talents and expertise, and offering to pitch in on small chores, fundraising, or other work. Volunteer opportunities are shared throughout the school year.

### **Parent Sharing & Volunteering in the Classroom**

DMS loves to have parents help around the school! Please check with your child’s teacher for opportunities for you to share in a classroom activity such as baking/cooking, reading stories, teaching a craft, showing slides of a wonderful journey, or writing stories or songs together. We often ask for volunteers for our field trips – whether as drivers or chaperones – and hope you’ll join us on one of these excursions.

## Opportunities to Give

### **Fundraising**

The truth is, the overhead of running a school is quite large. From faculty and staff salaries (which often accounts for a majority of school expenses) to facility maintenance and operations and daily supplies, the cash flow out can be staggering. Schools also offset their tuition for families who can't afford the full cost with financial aid. This is often funded by operating budgets, which is the result of charitable donations.

Here at DMS we realize that family circumstances vary greatly. We strive to keep our tuition prices reasonable and trust our families to value the quality of education we provide. We ask you to give to the greatest extent you are able so that we may continue to provide the best education for our students.

DMS does many fundraisers throughout the year. These efforts are meant to bridge the financial gap between tuition received and actual costs, which can number in the hundreds of dollars per student. We also encourage donations to our endowment and scholarship funds.

### **Classroom Parent**

Each year DMS asks for volunteers to serve as Classroom Parent for their child's classroom. Teachers work with these parent reps to determine the ways and levels of involvement appropriate. Tasks may include planning field trips, taking pictures, arranging classroom parties or projects, and more! Volunteer requests come at Parent Night (beginning of school) and via weekly updates, but don't hesitate to speak to the office about your interest.

### **Board Members**

DMS Board positions include Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, School Director (non-voting), Teacher Representative, and Parent Representative. All positions except for the Teacher Rep are appointed by the Board. All have varying term limits. If you are interested in being a Board member, please speak to Leadership or the current Board Chair.

## **Guidance and Discipline Policy**

### **Rules Teachers and Administrators Follow and Model:**

- We treat everyone (children, families and colleagues) with respect.
- We aim to communicate directly when problems arise and ask for support if needed.
- We use appropriate language at all times.
- We respect the personal space of others and avoid harmful physical contact.
- We refrain from giving medical advice.

### **School Rules We ALL Follow:**

- Keep Each Other Safe
- Take Care of the Environment
- School is for Learning and Growing

### **Positive Discipline**

- We follow the 5 Criteria for Positive Discipline:
  1. Is Kind and Firm at the same time. (Respectful and encouraging)
  2. Helps children feel a sense of Belonging and Significance. (Connection)
  3. Is Effective Long-Term. (Punishment works short term, but has negative long-term results.)
  4. Teaches valuable Social and Life Skills for good character. (Respect, concern for others, problem-solving, accountability, contribution, cooperation)
  5. Invites children to discover how capable they are and to use their personal power in constructive ways.
- The Positive Discipline model is aimed at developing mutually respectful relationships. Positive Discipline employs kindness and firmness at the same time, and is neither punitive nor permissive.
- We draw upon the following tools and concepts of positive discipline:
  - A. Mutual respect. Adults model firmness by respecting themselves and the needs of the situation, and kindness by respecting the needs of the child.
  - B. Identifying the belief behind the behavior. Effective discipline recognizes the reasons kids do what they do and works to change those beliefs, rather than merely attempting to change behavior.
  - C. Discipline that teaches (and is neither permissive nor punitive).
  - D. Focusing on solutions instead of punishment.





- E. Encouragement (instead of praise). Encouragement notices effort and improvement, not just success, and builds long-term self-esteem and empowerment.
- If students need to be removed from the classroom for behavior reasons, the goal is to help the student regulate and return to the classroom
- We agree to follow guidelines with respect to using the office as a space for children to reset.
  - a. As a sick bay until a parent comes
  - b. Students will be able to do quiet activities in the office
  - c. Teachers are welcome to come in and talk/regroup with the student
  - d. Otherwise, office staff will bring students back when they seem regulated

### **Prohibited Discipline Methods**

Corporal punishment (hitting, spanking, and grabbing) is never used. Children are never subjected to cruelty, punishment, or verbal abuse by faculty. Children are not denied food as a means of punishment. Children are not chastised for soiling, wetting, or not making it to the toilet on time. Material goods (stickers, etc.) are not used as rewards or punishments. Children are not deprived of full participation in any significant portion of the program unless safety is a concern (class decorum, however, determines field trip participation and thinking breaks may be used on the playground). Faculty does not threaten or report a child's behavior and consequence to the parent for the purpose of intimidating the child later at home. However, reflection sheets may be sent home to help foster parent-child discussions depending on the incident.

### **Recess Policies around Discipline**

Recess is extremely important and necessary for children. They need unstructured time to explore social dynamics and release physical energy every day. Recess time should never be taken away or used as a punishment unless a specific behavior plan has been put in place with the student and the family.

### **Behind on School Work**

If students are behind on school work, teachers will be in touch with families to discuss and help make a plan for them to catch up outside of school. If it becomes a chronic problem, teachers will meet with the family to develop a plan together to get the student back on track. Recess time will only be used to help make up work if all parties agree it is necessary and appropriate for the given situation.

### **Unsafe or Not Following Rules Outside**

If students are acting unsafe or not following the rules outside, they may take a brief "thinking time". If recess issues become chronic and a student is being asked to sit out or

take "thinking time" often, a behavior plan will be put in place to address what is at the heart of the issue.

### ***Demonstrate Consent***

It is important to always ask before touching a student and request they do so for you and others. If a student needs to be physically removed from a situation or needs help with their body, our policy is to talk through our actions beforehand and dictate to the student as we go.

### ***Reflection/ Thinking Area***

If a student is not following a ground rule, the teacher may verbally remind the child. This 'correction' is stated in a positive way, "we may run outside; inside we walk." You may also try saying "Show me you understand this rule." If the behavior is repeated, the teacher again reminds the child of the rule and asks if the child is ready to follow the agreement. You may hear us say things like, "are you ready to be successful?" If not, the child is invited to a thinking area to calm down and reflect on their actions until they are ready to rejoin the group or activity.

### ***Redirection and Logical Consequences***

We often suggest an alternative behavior or activity to the student; the attempt is to change the focus from the current, unwanted behavior to desired, positive behavior. Redirection can also be an alternative place in the classroom to work. If a consequence is merited, it should always logically flow from the challenging behavior. For example, if someone is throwing markers and cannot be redirected, a logical consequence would be that they have to take a break from using markers. *It is important to give the student an opportunity to succeed and participate in a positive manner. If a consequence has been given, after a time, the student gets another try.*

### ***Apology of Action/ Community Service***

Children ages 6 and older may be expected to perform a kind act or community service around the school on behalf of another as a consequence/to make amends for an unwanted behavior.

### ***If a Problem Persists***

If a child is exhibiting behavior that continues regardless of intervention from staff, we first determine (in consultation with the parents) if the behavior seems to stem from a persistent difficulty or is simply a phase of development. If the situation is determined to be a pattern, parents and staff hold a special conference to align the approaches to take with the child at home and at school.

If a child is exhibiting extreme behaviors which endanger self or others, or causes their peers to feel unsafe, the child is sent home immediately. The child may also be asked to stay

home from school the following day for further reflection (see Suspension and Expulsion Policy below).

When the child is not adjusting to our environment and there is a serious question of whether the child can function happily and safely at DMS, the staff may set a limited probationary period in an attempt to resolve the situation to meet the child's needs. At the end of that period, staff and parents will meet again to decide what further action is to be taken. It may be determined that a child must seek professional therapeutic assistance in order to continue at DMS. If the parents decline this assistance, or the negative/threatening behavior continues, DMS reserves the right to release the family from the enrollment agreement.

The following procedure will be followed for extreme behavior. The school counselor will be brought into the process as is deemed necessary by the team developing a successful behavior plan:

1. The child's behavior will be observed, recorded, dated and initialed by the Lead Teacher/staff member involved, reported to the appropriate supporting staff members and sent home.
2. Staff will meet with the parents to discuss the behavior and develop a plan to meet the needs of the children involved and to assure the remediation of the negative behavior. If services are required, proof of services must be rendered to the school.
3. The staff will observe and record the behaviors of the child in question, noting any changes. If substantial improvement has not occurred, the Head of School may ask the parents to disenroll their child.

### **Sent Home Policy**

Desert Montessori reserves the right to request a child be sent home for the following reasons. Incident reports will be provided for any and all of the following, and parents will be asked to be involved in a collaborative plan to address concerning behaviors and a success plan may be put in place.

1. If a student creates an unsafe environment physically or emotionally for themselves or others, including teachers, peers and staff.
2. If a student (excluding Toddler classrooms) has 3 or more bathrooming accidents within a day
3. If a student is not able to regulate and rejoin class after resources available have been utilized.

Students who are sent home for one of the above reasons are welcome to return to school the following day.

## Suspension and Expulsion Policy

Desert Montessori will not allow students to harm each other physically or emotionally.

1. If a student harms another student, an incident report will be written and both families and students involved will be notified. The perpetrating student/s will be removed from the activity.
2. If there is repeat physical/emotionally harmful behavior, DMS will work with the teachers and the families to put a behavior and observation plan in place to support the student in their growth.
3. A meeting will be requested with the family to address the concerns and modify the behavior plan as necessary.
4. If at this point the behavior continues, the student will receive a two-day out of school suspension and the family will most likely be asked to find outside support to help the child with their growth before they are allowed to return to school.
5. Upon the student's return, the student will be placed on a two week probation period. Staff will observe and record the behaviors of the child in question, noting any changes. If substantial improvement has not occurred, the Director reserves the right to expel and disenroll the child.

## Anti-Bullying Policy

“Bullying’ is defined as behavior by a person or group that establishes, asserts, or maintains social power over another person and causes pain or humiliation. Bullying is one sided, there is an imbalance of power, and the bullying behavior hurts and humiliates the person who is targeted.” *How to Bullyproof Your Classroom p. 3*

Teachers have much to watch for. Being aware of the subtle and not so subtle behaviors that are part of bullying is very necessary. There are three roles in bullying behavior: The person doing the bullying, the target of the bullying, and witnesses (the audience). Parents may also participate in this process by calling to staff attention signs of bullying. We never label students or people. We name behavior.

1. To address the **bullying behavior**, the person is immediately moved away from the target and reminded in one sentence that the behavior is not allowed. e.g. “Your words were

unkind and we have a rule to respect everyone.” Leave this person by themselves to continue work, or reflect at recess. Do not give attention as that is what is wanted.

2. Go immediately to the **targeted** person. Let them know that you care and that you want to support them. Just a simple check in usually suffices. Be open if they want to talk.

3. For the **witnesses**, teach specific lessons on being an ally, when and what to report to teachers, and how to stand up for others. Bullies want an audience that approves in order to gain status. Training the students not to be an audience and show disapproval will end the behavior quickly. Great lessons for Kindergarten and up can be found in *How to Bullyproof Your Classroom*.

4. For continued bullying behaviors, use logical consequences such as working away from classmates, or not allowing to play a particular game at recess where the behavior has occurred, or teacher assigning teams for a few days until there is an understanding that fair teams are important.

5. It is also important that redirection be “public” letting everyone know that we have a classroom or school where each child is valued and respected, if the behavior was “public.” Language such as “Rewind, and use Mark’s name when speaking to him” can show this.

6. A class meeting about the topic but without naming names can help all children understand the issues and that the adults care about them while modeling respect for each person.

Should the behaviors continue, use the above guidelines for If A Problem Persists and Suspension and Expulsion.

## Code of Conduct for Staff and Parents

DMS has the following policies in place for all members of the school community. Our aim is always the ongoing safety and security of the students. Consistent, respectful modeling by adults, together with successful social experiences, strengthens the young child’s sense of self and security. Fluency in problem solving deepens as we practice voicing concerns, mediating conflicts, achieving compromise, and making decisions.

Help us provide a positive example to all students by following these guidelines:

- Speak kindly and treat every child with respect
- Speak kindly and be respectful to all fellow parents and families
- Speak kindly and be respectful to all teachers and staff
- Avoid disciplining another’s child, unless the child’s immediate safety is of concern.



- Avoid confrontations while on school grounds.
- Use appropriate language.
- Please keep personal conflicts out of the school.
- Use social media responsibly.
- Avoid making negative comments about students, families, teachers and admin in the public forums of social media.
- Parents understand that teachers will give recommendations for behavioral health, academic, or diagnostic services if they have established that a child would benefit from the service. All recommendations are made in the best interest of the student and are in alignment with DMS community and our values of compassion, equity, and inclusion.

Appropriate action will be taken to protect the rights of all in our school community. DMS suggests that parents use mediation or other methods to properly address conflicts. Violation of these policies will call for an immediate review of a family's position at the school.

## Snow Days

***\*Please note that these guidelines are subject to change. We will always notify parents in case of a change in our policies.***

Notifications about DMS delays, early releases, and closures due to weather are given to KOB-TV (the local NBC affiliate), so please check their crawl or website ([www.kob.com](http://www.kob.com)) for updated information about the school. Administration will also do its best to send timely notification to families using **email** and the **Remind App**.

**DMS follows the Santa Fe Public Schools for delays, early release, or closures due to weather.** The SFPS website is also updated frequently with information about closings and delays ([www.sfps.info](http://www.sfps.info)).

It is best to check Remind and KOB and not rely solely on the closings of the SFPS because DMS may be open when the public schools are closed for in-services or conferences. DMS may make a determination they feel is in the best interest of the school but does not align with the closing of other Santa Fe schools. Please be aware that in either case you will not find closure information via SFPS.

A two-hour weather delay means DMS will open at 10:00 a.m. ***Children may not be dropped off earlier than 10:00am.***

If there is heavy snow during the day after school has begun and DMS decides to close early, a notice will be sent via Remind and all parents will be asked to pick up their child(ren) as soon as possible. If school remains open, parents may pick up early due to weather conditions at their own discretion. Aftercare and any planned after school activities or meetings are considered *canceled* on days when DMS closes early due to weather.

## Tuition Contracts & Payments

Every year DMS enters into an agreement (contract) with families regarding tuition and the payment thereof. A new contract is issued in the spring for each subsequent academic year. A brief overview of the terms may be found [here](#). If you have questions regarding your tuition contract, do not hesitate to speak to the office. **We rely on timely tuition payments in order for us to pay our teachers and cover our operating costs. Thank you in advance!**

### General Tuition Info

- Tuition is an annual fee, based on enrollment from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday or Friday, and covers the academic term. Actual dates for each school year are specified in the agreement, and are decided upon by the Board.
- We are able to break the annual fee into ten monthly payments. *The amount of the ten monthly payments is not equivalent to a month's worth of tuition; it is simply the annual tuition divided into ten payments.*
- Tuition is not prorated for any time periods when there are closures due to holidays, weather, in service days, nor for any absence due to illness or travel.

### Tuition Payment Methods

- DMS accepts payment by cash, check, ACH, or credit card (Visa, MasterCard, and American Express).
- A \$35 fee is assessed for any NSF check returned by the bank. If a parent has two or more returned checks during the school year, DMS requires future payment be made via bank transfer, credit card, or cashier check/money order.
- A 3.6% processing fee is added to all credit card charges.

### Tuition Payment Dates

- **Tuition payments are due on the first of the month. Any payments received after the 3rd of the month will incur a \$50 late fee. An additional 1% fee will be incurred each day, after 14 days.**
- In an effort to avoid charging "tuition insurance," DMS requests that all checks be pre-dated and deposited in the office at the beginning of the school year.

\*Re-enrollment payment method should be submitted by February.



- Tuition may be paid:
  - In a lump sum for the entire school year, due August 1st
  - By semester (tuition is divided into two equal payments. Those two payments are due August 1st and January 1st)
  - Via a ten-month payment plan (tuition is divided into ten equal payments. Those ten payments are due August 1, September 1, October 1, November 1, December 1, January 1, February 1, March 1, April 1, and May 1)

### **Tuition Refunds**

The only conditions under which tuition refunds (excluding the enrollment fee) will be considered are the following:

1. If the family moves more than 25 miles from the school, and more than 10 miles from the present address, 60% of the remaining prorated tuition, excluding the enrollment fee, will be returned provided 30 days written notice is given by the parents or guardian.
2. Upon written notice from a doctor that a child will be unable to attend school for the remainder of the school year for medical reasons, 80% of the remaining, pro-rated, tuition, excluding the enrollment fee, will be credited towards the following year's tuition.
3. If a student is requested to leave by the school, prorated tuition will be refunded in full.

***Full annual tuition will be expected in all other situations.***

### **Other Non-Tuition Fees**

- An enrollment fee, insurance fee, and materials fee is due each spring and secures your child's enrollment for the following year. These fees do not, at any time, accrue to tuition payments.
- Occasionally there are non-tuition fees incurred by a student. These may include but are not limited to supplies, field trips, and aftercare expenses. These fees do not, at any time, accrue to tuition payments.
- Summer camp is a separate fee from tuition. These fees do not, at any time, accrue to tuition payments.

### **Our Responsibilities to One Another (parents/school)**

- Both parents are responsible for the full year's tuition, regardless of marital status.
- The leadership of DMS reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to suspend or revoke a student's enrollment if a parent falls behind the tuition schedule.
- Parent will provide DMS with sixty (60) days prior written notice in the event of a decision to withdraw their child. Withdrawing parents are required to sign a form stating that they are leaving the school in good standing with all tuition paid. No tuition refunds will be given.
- The leadership of DMS reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to dismiss a student at any time where the school determines that A) the child is not benefiting by



attendance at the school, or B) the student's behavior is an impediment to the safety and well-being of the child's peers.

## Financial Aid

Our Financial Aid Program supports the mission of DMS to build community and to create and maintain diversity of perspectives, viewpoints, experiences, and cultures. **There are a limited number of financial aid funds available each year.**

Information about the Financial Aid Program, what is required to apply, and deadlines for application may be requested from the Front Office.

In short, financial aid awards are given based on a family's ability to pay, the total number of requests received and the Board approved funds available in a given year. Desert Montessori School considers financial need to be the difference between what it costs to attend DMS and a family's ability to pay tuition; financial aid is not a loan.

## Complaint Procedure

In accordance with the licensing division of the Early Childhood Education and Care Department, you are encouraged to speak first with the faculty and/or administration regarding any concerns or complaints. If you have a concern regarding the care that is being provided within a child care facility or home, please report your concerns to the ECECD Intake Hotline at 1-888-351-0037 or email us at [ChildCare.Complaint@state.nm.us](mailto:ChildCare.Complaint@state.nm.us).

## In Closing

Thank you for spending the time to review this manual. It is important that all families are familiar with our standards, procedures, and expectations so that we can work together in providing the safest and most enriching experience possible for all of our students.

We see the relationship between our families and our staff as a collaborative one, and we look forward to forging and strengthening our relationship throughout this upcoming school year.

Warmly,

The Teachers and Staff of Desert Montessori School