



Parent Handbook

**2022: 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



Table of Contents

Our Mission	4
Beliefs About Learning	4
Our Teacher-Led School	4
Our Philosophy	5
About Montessori Education	5
Non-Discrimination Statement	6
General Program Information	6
Conflicts of Interest	8
Children’s Independence Zone	8
Arrival, Dismissal, Aftercare, & Parking	8
Health Policies	11
Attendance Policy	14
Appropriate Dress	15
Snow Days	16
Rest Time (Nap)	17
Toys at School	17
Birthdays & Celebrations	18
Field Trips & Guest Presentations	19
Communication	20
Open Door Policy	22
Opportunities to Give	22
The Montessori Classroom	24
The Six Dynamic Areas of the Montessori Classroom	25
Our Classroom Guidelines	26
Guidance & Discipline Policy	28



Parent & Staff Code of Conduct	31
Snack and Lunch	31
Tuition Contracts & Payments	33
Financial Aid	34
Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect	35
Complaint Procedure	36
Missing Child Procedure	36
Emergency Procedures	36
Closing	41



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.

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
 - Every child gets what they need when they need it
 - Fair is not necessarily equal
 - 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
 - Critical thinking and problem solving are the application of learning
 - Strong character needs to modeled, practiced and reaffirmed
 - Positive school culture is a shared responsibility
 - Lifelong learning is a journey of wonderful discovery

Our Teacher-Led School

Our school operates by representative leadership and consensus. All of our staff are participants in our decision-making process and our Leadership Team synthesizes and implements these decisions. 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.

Our Philosophy

Desert Montessori is a modified Montessori School. We integrate 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.

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 challenging work, which allows children to build independence, leading to a strong sense of joy, security 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 Education

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. 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 constantly stress the importance of modifying to help each child to feel successful in the classroom. For example, when a young child loves to move with his body as a dancer would, the teachers need to figure out a way to give the child the space to be successful with that behavior in the classroom. In essence, to create a work out of the behavior; give the space and setting for the child and they will learn how to control an impulse in much less time than constantly redirecting them or giving them consequences.

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 preschool and kindergarten 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 teacher. They begin to integrate time-management skills through planning and implementing projects, and they are allowed long periods for research, development, and presentation.

Non-Discrimination Statement

DMS maintains a non-sectarian program and admits children of all abilities, races, religions, 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.

General Program Information

Hours & Licensing

DMS is a ECECD-licensed, two-star facility. We enroll students beginning at age two (2) and offer enrollment through sixth grade.

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. Early Dismissal days end at 12:00pm. Per our Annual Calendar, we have occasional Inservice Days when the school is closed and Half-Day Fridays.



Our primary students 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.

Morning drop-off is allowed beginning at 8:00 a.m. 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.

Daily Classroom Schedules

Posted outside of each classroom is a 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.

Governance & Administration

Elementary Director: Abbie Foley

Primary Director: Frances Serrano

Administrative Director: Liza Frolkis

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 Leadership Team and Committees. 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.

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.

Affiliations and Designations

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 not otherwise affiliated with them. DMS is a non-sectarian school. Our tax id # is 85-0423730.



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 or performing other tasks for our families.

In concert with their contracts, we ask that you do not request favors or outside work of any of our teachers. It can be uncomfortable for them to say no to a parent, so we ask that you please do not put them in a position to do so.

Children's Independence Zone

DMS refers to the classroom as the Children's Independence Zone. We ask that parents not cross the threshold into the classrooms unless asked to do so by the teachers. This zone is where students begin learning to start to do things for themselves and that they can always ask a teacher for help. Teachers have the ability to give children plenty of time to get their coats hung up or put personal belongings away. These accomplishments really allow students to feel proud of themselves and engender a sense of independence and responsibility.

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.

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.

All families are able to utilize our drive-through drop off. Drive-through drop off is most successful when parents remain in the car and allow us (teachers and staff) to walk with your child into the school building. Many children arrive simultaneously so special attention must be paid to the safety of all. You may need to wait a minute or so for us to get to your car if we are walking up with another student. We move as quickly as we can to bring children safely from cars to the school in the morning and appreciate your patience.

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 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.

If you arrive late and are walking your child into the school, please park either in the small lot across the street or on Cristo Rey Street. Always hold your young child's hand but allow them to walk on their own. We ask that you work towards allowing your child to do as much for themselves as possible; please have your child carry their own things.

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

School ends at 3:00 p.m. on most days. Each classroom has its own end of day dismissal routine. You will often find classroom doors closed until 3:00 p.m. at which time teachers say goodbye. Parents are welcome to wait in the front hall until that time. Communication with your child's teacher will help you learn what to expect with regards to pick-up routines.

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. will go to aftercare and his/her parents will be charged the appropriate daily drop-in aftercare rates.

Again, we ask that you do not allow your child to walk on top of the walls along the sidewalk.

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.

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 all of 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.



Health 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. These guidelines change with some frequency and we will be in constant communication with our families as they do. As part of your enrollment to DMS, you must read our COVID Policy document and sign a release stating that you've read it.

We have a Health and Safety Committee that includes both staff members and parents with extensive medical backgrounds. Our committee meets regularly to address changes in the current COVID landscape.

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.
10. **Sprained Ankle:** Keep it elevated and iced for 24 to 48 hours, until they can walk comfortably.

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.

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.

Allergies

Parents are required to disclose a child's allergies to foods, medications, or materials to the school. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 DMS 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 call or 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. If children are consistently absent or tardy we may schedule a meeting with care providers to come up with an attendance plan.



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
- dresses and skirts should always be worn with shorts, leggings or tights underneath
- no clothing/shoes that cause distraction (entertainment or cartoon characters often fall in this category). When in doubt, choose solid colors or simple designs over clothing with logos, images, or excessive decorations/frills.
- all shirts must cover the midriff
- no "dress-up" clothes or costumes
- no clothes that inhibit movement (ie: oversized T-shirts or pants with ill-fitting waistline -either too small or too large)

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)
 - no flip flops, please
 - 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
 - these shoes should have a rubber sole and be secured by laces or Velcro
 - no flip-flops or high heels
- for swimming or sprinkler play, students must wear water shoes with rubber soles

Children ages 2-7

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.

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) 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 and closures due to weather.

It is best to check 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. The Directors may make a determination that is in the best interest of the school, but does not align with the closing of other Santa Fe schools.



A two-hour weather delay means DMS will open at 10:00 a.m. and begin school at 10:30 a.m. Children may not be dropped off before 10:00 a.m.

If there is heavy snow during the day after school has begun and DMS decides to close early, a notice will be sent via email and *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 *anceled* on days when DMS closes early due to weather.

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.

Our primary goal with rest time 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. We occasionally 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.

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."



Birthdays & Celebrations

Birthdays at School

We enjoy acknowledging the specialness of your child's day with a 'Birthday Circle.' Birthday Circle includes a candle walk, your presence (if possible), and a special snack. Your child's teacher will provide you with detailed information about Birthday Circle and work with you to arrange the best day and time to celebrate near your child's birth date as well as *the most appropriate snack*. We ask that you please do not bring 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 your child's class are being invited, you are welcome to bring invitations to school 2) if only some school friends are being invited (only girls, only boys, a smaller group, etc.), please issue invitations 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.



Field Trips & Guest Presentations

Field Trips

As a supplement to classroom materials and work, we take small group field trips to local sites and events of interest. The youngest class never goes on field trips.

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. Please be aware when you offer to drive on a field trip that you are expected to be responsible for:

- Chaperoning the children in your assigned group
 - Staying with the group for the duration of the field trip
 - Not treating your group or your child to a special treat
- 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.



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.

Communication between Parents and DMS: General

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 and Leadership Team) - frontoffice@desertmontessori.com

Classroom Teachers and Staff - first.last@desertmontessori.com

Signing In & Signing Out

All children should be signed in each day by an adult (parent, guardian, staff, etc.). The class list/sign-in sheets are on the table in the front entryway. **Parents and guardians are required to sign-out and initial at pick-up. Teachers will perform sign-in for children who utilize the Drive-Through Drop Off. Please note that at pick-up, the person picking up the child MUST sign the child out in accordance with ECECD regulations.**

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-Director Communication

Directors are 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 the Director's 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.

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 Mailchimp for school-wide communication which is often 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 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 (beginning of school) and other parent events, and assist in the beautification of the building, grounds and special projects. As a parent, we ask you to volunteer some time on behalf of the wider school community by driving on field trips, sharing your talents via our Committees, and offering to pitch in on small chores, fundraising, or other work. Volunteer opportunities will be posted at the start of each school year.

Committees

Committees are action groups made of staff and family members that focus on areas of growth and involvement as identified by members of our community. Committees can be added throughout the year and include Garden and Grounds, Equity and Inclusion, Community and Growth. Activities will change depending on the committee and include (but are not limited to) organizing school-wide or community-wide events, beautification projects at our school, and hosting educational events for staff and families. We welcome parent involvement in our committees. Please be in touch with frontoffice@desertmontessori.com to learn more.

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.

Talking with the Leadership Team

The Leadership Team is available most days and at most times. However, it is always best to schedule a meeting via email.

Opportunities to Give

Parent Work Days

In addition to all of the previously mentioned ways a parent can volunteer at DMS, we ask every family to participate in Parent Work Days.

At least once a semester parents gather on a weekend morning to help keep the school looking and feeling wonderful. In the past we have painted, gardened, and removed or installed playground equipment. These beautification days are a terrific time to get to know new families



and to renew old acquaintances! Notice about these Parent Work Days is given in the newsletters and via email.

Fundraising

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. DMS has a “Guardian Angels” program where families can donate a portion of another child’s annual tuition in a confidential arrangement with the school. Please see the office if you have any questions.

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, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Fundraising Chair, School Director, Teacher Representative, and At-Large. 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 the Leadership Team or the current Board Chair.



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. Overdone praise, unasked-for help, or even a look may be enough to interrupt a child’s concentration and may even destroy the meaningful activity at hand. This can happen even if the child merely becomes aware of being watched.

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

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 and 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.

Our Classroom Guidelines

These are the basic rules of the school:

- Treat Others Well
- Make Smart Decisions
- Maximize Your Potential

1) Children are free to work with any material 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. They do not work on or at the shelves, as their presence there obstructs other children's access to the materials.



- 3) Children are expected to 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) Valuable lessons in grace and courtesy are taught throughout the school and throughout the year. No child may touch the work of another child or interfere with another's work. A child's right to initiate, complete, and repeat an exercise is protected in this way.
- 5) Children are not coerced into joining a group activity. It is a child's right to stand as an observer to group activities without becoming an active member. However, a child is not allowed to interfere or disrupt any activity in which he or she has chosen not to participate.
- 6) School is an inclusive environment. Children in a group are taught how to fairly include others and share equipment and materials during recess and free time.
- 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 he or she matures and gains self-security.
- 9) We do not use or encourage "time outs" as a means of discipline in the classroom. All classrooms have spaces and places for children to move away from the group and re-center inwardly. Some classrooms have 'quiet chairs' or 'thinking chairs' which serve as a place to view others at work and play. A teacher will check in with a child to see if they are ready to rejoin activities. Time outs may be used on the playground.
- 10) The aim of discipline is to assist a child's natural desire to control his or her self. In this way we are constantly observing when or whether to intervene, encouraging intrinsic (self) discipline vs. extrinsic (adult) disciplinary measures. Opportunities for changing behavior are always given as agreements meant to be kept, with logical consequences if not kept.
- 11) Rarely, a child may be sent home for breaking rules of the school, especially if a pattern has developed where a child cannot exercise self-control. If something has happened just before the end of the school day, a child may be kept in the office until dismissal.
- 12) Students are always offered the chance to try again – either later in the day or on the following day if sent home.



Guidance & Discipline Policy

Guidance and Discipline Policy

Rules Teachers and Administrators Follow and Model:

- We treat everyone (children, families and colleagues) with respect.
- We communicate directly when problems arise.
- 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:

- Treat Others Well
- Make Smart Decisions
- Maximize Your Potential

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/ Homework-If students are behind on school work teachers will communicate with the family about what they are falling behind on. Make a plan for them to catch up outside of school. If it becomes a chronic problem and we believe that work expectations are appropriate, we will meet with the family to develop a plan together to get the student back on track. *Recess time should only be used if all parties agree it is necessary and appropriate for the given situation.



Unsafe Behavior or Not Following Rules Outside-If students are unsafe or not following the rules outside, they will take some "thinking time". We will ensure they understand why they have been asked to sit out and try to make "thinking time" brief (no longer than 5 minute chunks). Some students may even use standing or walking "thinking time" so they can move their bodies. If recess issues become chronic and a student is being asked to sit out or take "thinking time" often, teachers will inform the family and make a behavior plan to address what is at the heart of the issue. Losing significant amounts of recess time is not good for anyone.

Positive Classroom Discipline Methods

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 he/she is ready to rejoin the group or activity.

Redirection

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.

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 may either be sent home immediately or sent to spend the remainder of the day in the school office. The Director may also ask that the child 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 school, the staff may set a limited probationary



period in an attempt to resolve the situation and to meet the child's needs. At the end of that period, staff and parents 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.

To recap, the following procedure will be followed for extreme behavior:

1. The child's behavior will be observed, recorded, dated and initialed by the lead teacher/staff member involved and reported to head of school.
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.
3. The staff will observe and record the behaviors of the child in question, noting any changes. If substantial improvement has not occurred, the school and the board of directors may ask the parents to disenroll their child.

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 and brought to the office for reflection. Incident reports and reflections will be sent home to the family/ families involved.
2. If there is repeat physical/emotionally harmful behavior, DMS will work with the teachers and the families to put a behavior plan in place to support the student in their growth.
3. If the behavior plan fails to be effective and the physical/emotionally harmful behavior continues or repeats, the student will serve a one day in-school suspension. The student will spend this time thinking about why they can't be in their classroom.
4. A meeting will be requested with the family to address the concerns and modify the behavior plan as necessary.
5. 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.
6. Upon the student's return, the student will be placed on a two week probation period. The staff will observe and record the behaviors of the child in question, noting any changes. If substantial improvement has not occurred, DMS 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 do their best to be aware of the subtle and not so subtle behaviors that are part of bullying. There are three roles in bullying behavior: The person doing the bullying, the target of the bullying, and witnesses (the audience). For more details on how the school will address instances of bullying behavior please ask for a copy of the bullying procedure teachers are trained to follow.

Parent & Staff Code of Conduct

DMS has the following policies in place for all members of the school community. Our aim, as always, is 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.



Snack and Lunch

All DMS students bring their own snack and lunch to school daily; the school does not offer a hot lunch program. DMS will let parents know if there are other food opportunities throughout the year.

It is important that we know if your child has any allergies – especially food allergies – regardless of whether they bring their own snack or lunch. 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 your child's day, from both social and nutritional viewpoints, and we'd like to highlight some ways in which we need your assistance.

- We ask that 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.
- Your child's snack and lunch should be sustaining and without sugar or chocolate.
- 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 cut up larger vegetables, proteins, etc. **Especially grapes and sausages or hotdogs.**) and easily assembled by a child without assistance.
- For students in preschool through kindergarten, nothing microwavable should be sent for snack or lunch. The students in grades 1-6 have limited access to a microwave.
- Limit the amount of foods you provide that contain naturally-occurring sugars such as fresh fruit, juice, fruit smoothies, jam/jelly/preserves, flavored yogurts, or canned or packaged fruits to *one* such item per day (not one of each).
- 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.
- No desserts of any kind, including but not limited to candy, cookies, cake, pie, pudding, jello, or others.



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, is based on enrollment from 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and covers the academic term. Actual dates for each school year are specified in the agreement, and are decided upon by the Board.
- 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 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 credit card with credit card information kept on file in the office.
- A 3% processing fee is added to all credit card charges.

Tuition Payment Dates

- **Tuition payments are due one month in advance. Any payments received after the 1st 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 requires parents to have their method of payment on file in the office along with their tuition contract.
- Either a signed Credit Card Authorization Form or post-dated checks must be submitted each year. *Re-enrollment payment method should be submitted by February.
- Tuition may be paid:
 - In a lump sum for the entire school year, due July 1st
 - By semester (tuition is divided into two equal payments. Those two payments are due July 1st and December 1st)
 - Via a ten-month payment plan (tuition is divided into ten equal payments. Those ten payments are due July 1, August 1, September 1, October 1, November 1, December 1, January 1, February 1, March 1, and April 1)



Other Non-Tuition Fees

- A re-enrollment 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.



Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect

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. Below you will find the regulation as written by CYFD; please be aware that we are mandated to follow these guidelines.

Mandated Reporting

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 (1-800-797-3260), or to law enforcement or the appropriate tribal entity. 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.

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 1-800-797-3260 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.



Complaint Procedure

In accordance with the licensing division of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, you are encouraged to speak first with the faculty and/or administration regarding any concerns or complaints. If you feel that further action needs to be taken, you may contact CYFD at (505) 827-1259.

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.

Emergency Procedures

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.



Evacuation

Offsite, Outdoor or Indoor Location

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 Cafeteria

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.) Assistant teachers will begin lining up the children at the exit door.
- 2.) Lead teacher will collect the attendance sheet and emergency bag.
- 3.) 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.
- 4.) 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.
- 5.) 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.
- 6.) 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 Administrative Director.
- 7.) 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 Administrative Director. At that time, the Administrative Director will make a determination on the best course of action from that point based on the situation.
- 8.) 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 come over the school-wide cell phone communication system.
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 possible.**
3. Lead teacher will use his/her personal discretion to first determine the safety of the situation. If she/he feels comfortable, he/she 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. If there are missing or injured staff or children the lead teacher will text the front office staff a notification. State the classroom name, "Code Red" means we have a problem and need help as soon as possible. If students are missing please say the classroom name, "Code Red" along with the first names of the students who are not in the classroom. Only communicate if there is a problem. Once you've communicated the problem, focus on the students who are with you.
5. If everyone is safe and accounted for, the teacher will place the Green Safety Card facing out in the window.
6. If students are missing or there is a problem the red card should be placed in the window. If no card is visible in the window, emergency crew and the school leadership will assume there is a problem and act accordingly.
7. **If possible and necessary**, Directors will use the communication system for a quick safety check-in to each classroom. The teacher will write back one of the following responses "All Safe", "Need... (students names who are missing)", "We have...(extra students collected)". **More likely than not the goal will be for everyone to remain silent and safe. The communication system should only be used if absolutely necessary.**
8. Lead teacher and assistant teachers will quietly keep the children occupied while maintaining a vigilant awareness of noises occurring in the school.
9. 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.



10. The Administrative Director will make an **“All Clear”** announcement. 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 cell phone 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. 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 Lockout is made over the school-wide cell phone 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.
8. Once students are in a safe shelter area take attendance and notify the Administrative Director of any unaccounted or extra students in your room.
9. If the building is safe All staff/children/parents must stay in the building; however, they can proceed with normal activities.
10. No person is permitted to enter or exit the building until the **"All Clear"** announcement is made.

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.

Revision Date 7-21-21



Desert
Montessori
School

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