

Desert Garden Montessori

PARENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026

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www.desertgardenmontessori.org

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday through Friday
7:00 A.M – 6:00 P.M.

Introduction

Welcome to Desert Garden Montessori (DGM). This Parent Handbook is designed to acquaint you with DGM and to serve as a guide that provides you with important school policies and information. Please read this handbook thoroughly and retain it for future reference. DGM Parents/Guardians agree and acknowledge that they are responsible for reading understanding and complying with the DGM Parent Handbook, which can be found on the school website and is subject to change at the school's discretion.

Our school is a place of continual growth, development, and learning for all community members. Our policy creation process includes input and perspectives from parents, teachers, administrators, support staff, and other stakeholders, and this ongoing collaboration is an important element of our philosophy. As we continue to grow, changes to this handbook will undoubtedly be necessary, and updated versions will be released and published on the school's website. The latest version will supersede any previously published versions of the policy book or any inconsistent verbal or written descriptions that may exist. If a change is made parents will be notified via email.

We hope that your family's relationship with DGM will be long-term, and it is our intention to provide your student with an exemplary environment in which to live and learn.

Mission Statement

Desert Garden Montessori creates an environment for children and families in which they are encouraged to explore, create, learn, socialize and celebrate their unique talents.

We are committed to developing within each person a sense of responsibility, belonging and interdependence with nature, the community and our world.

Desert Garden Montessori prides itself on its 5 core values, which are:

- Connection
- Diversity
- Authenticity
- Respect
- Integrated wellness

Ownership/Organization

Desert Garden Montessori School, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, under the direction of Shetal Walters, Executive Director. The Tax ID number is 83-0345361. We are listed under the Arizona Corporation Commission in good standing and our public records can be found there.

James and Shetal Walters, under Desert Garden Montessori, LLC., privately own the land and structures.

Arizona Licensing

DGM operates in accordance with the licensing rules and regulations for childcare facilities as outlined by the Department of Health Services through the State of Arizona. Infant, Toddler, and Primary programs follow guidelines as outlined for childcare facilities.

Arizona Department of Health Services

150 North 18th Avenue, Suite 400, Phoenix, Arizona 85007 | 602-364-2539

www.azdhs.gov

Facility Reports & Insurance

The Arizona Department of Health Services performs facility inspections annually. If you wish to review any facility inspection report, they are available upon request through support@desertgardenmontessori.org.

DGM is required by law to obtain liability insurance. If you wish to view the documentation of this liability coverage, it is available upon request through support@desertgardenmontessori.org.

Teacher Credentials/Qualifications

Infant through 6th Grade

A trained and certified Montessori teacher leads every classroom at DGM. Many of the classrooms have more than one Montessori-certified lead teacher and/or an Arizona state-certified teacher with a strong grounding in Montessori methods and philosophy. The Montessori certification typically requires intensive two-year training with a one-year supervised internship; however, this can vary from program to program. Many of the staff members at DGM also have a bachelor's degree, additional continuing education credits, and/or post-bachelor's degrees, as well as an Arizona state teacher certification.

Middle Years and High School

The Middle Years and High School Program continues the Montessori approach offered from infancy through Upper Elementary and seamlessly integrates the International Baccalaureate® (IB) Middle Years Program. It is staffed by educators who are highly qualified in their subject areas, ensuring both academic rigor and a deep respect for individual learning journeys.

The Middle Years and High School teachers who are responsible for core subjects have additional qualifications related to International Baccalaureate instruction. Teachers hold certificates from the IB Organization in their core subject area(s) and participate in regular professional development from DGM leadership throughout each school year. If you would like to review the qualifications of any teaching faculty, they are available upon request from the [Director of Human Resources](#).

Accreditations

The staff at DGM make every effort to achieve the highest level of education and standards for the students served. As such, DGM maintains its Montessori accreditation with **International Montessori Council (IMC)**.

Desert Garden Montessori was authorized in Spring 2019 as an **IB (International Baccalaureate) World School** for our Middle Years Programme, grades 7 - 10. We are proud to be part of an ever-growing global community of 5,000+ schools offering an International Baccalaureate program in 153 different countries.

We are excited to share that DGM is a **Cognia** Accredited School as of 2023. Earning this additional external certification is another way we are working to continuously grow and improve our program. Accreditation from **Cognia** is a valuable mark of distinction recognized around the world. They are the world leader in providing improvement and accreditation services to education providers of all types in their pursuit of excellence in serving students.

Admissions Policy

DGM admits students based on the [admissions process](#) and accepts students from six-weeks of age through high school. DGM reserves the right to place a student in a classroom according to age, gender, and/or learning needs. Students will be considered based upon fit and available class space at the time of application.

45 Day Screener

The 45 Day Screener is a screening tool looking at the overall present levels of a student. It provides an overview of the student's development in areas of social/emotional skills, academics, fine/gross motor, communication, vision and hearing. The tool is completed by the student's teacher after 45 days from the student's first day of school. Based on the findings, a team meeting with the parent/guardian and school team may be scheduled to discuss how to best support the student.

Non-Discriminatory Policy

DGM admits students on a non-discriminatory basis and complies with all applicable federal, state, and local laws. It is DGM's policy not to discriminate based on an individual's race, color, religion, gender, national origin, physical or mental disability, veteran status, age, or any other basis protected by federal, state, or local law. This policy applies equally to employees, applicants for employment, contractors, guests, and enrolled and prospective students and their parents.

Priority of Placement

DGM accepts students in the following order:

1. Current students
2. Siblings of current students
3. Students of current staff
4. Alumni students
5. New students

Teacher/Student Ratios

The state-required caregiver-to-student ratios for a childcare facility are as follows:

- Infant - 1:4
- Toddler - 1:6
- Primary - 1:13

The State Elementary and up ratio for childcare (non-instructional hours) is 1:20. As a private school, DGM is not obligated to maintain any stated ratio in elementary. However, DGM strives to maintain a 1:13 ratio during instructional times.

Disclosure Policy

DGM's mission is to serve your student and your family to the best of our abilities. **During the application process and throughout your journey at DGM, it is crucial that you inform our administration/staff of any diagnoses, special needs, and/or concerns you may have regarding your student's functioning.** Transparency on this issue is vital to cultivate the trust and communication necessary to attend to each level of your student's development as we suit his/her needs as they evolve within the classroom environment.

Mandatory Reporting

Please be aware that DGM staff are **mandated** by Arizona statute to report suspected child abuse or neglect to authorities.

Specifically, A.R.S. § 13-3620 requires school personnel who **reasonably believe** that a child is a victim of any of the following types (but not limited to) of abuse or neglect to immediately report the matter to a law enforcement officer or to the Department of Child Safety:

- Physical Injury
- Abuse (defined by A.R.S. § 8-201)
- Child Abuse (defined by A.R.S. § 13-3612)
- Reportable Offenses (including child prostitution and incest, among others)
- Neglect (defined by A.R.S. § 8-201)
- Denial or Deprivation of Necessary Medical Treatment, Surgical Care or Nourishment of an Infant (see A.R.S. § 36-2281)

Staff who fail to comply with this statute can face criminal penalties, but ultimately, we comply for the safety and protection of your child. We will in every case err on the side of caution and report.

Emergency Cards and Immunizations

Emergency Card forms, including a current immunization record or exemption form, **MUST** be completed before your student may start school. Parents will receive an email with a link to their child's Emergency Card form which must be completed in order to attend school. Updates to information on a student's Emergency Card form, including any changes to emergency contacts, allergies and special needs, are the ongoing responsibility of the parent. Parents must email admissions@desertgardenmontessori.org with any changes to the Emergency Card form.

Immunization Policy

Desert Garden Montessori is required to follow the Child Immunization Requirements as defined by the Arizona Department of Health Services.

Enrolled students at Desert Garden Montessori are required to maintain **one** of the following on file with the school at all times:

- An immunization record for the enrolled child with information documenting that the enrolled child has received all current, age-appropriate immunizations required in the State of Arizona.
- An exemption affidavit for the enrolled child provided by the enrolled child's parent that contains a statement, signed by the enrolled child's health care provider, that the immunizations would endanger the enrolled child's health or medical condition.
- A statement, signed by the enrolled child's parent, that the enrolled child is being raised in a religion whose teachings are in opposition to immunization.

Immunizations must be updated and new copies submitted as changes occur to admissions@desertgardenmontessori.org.

Checking In and Out

Desert Garden Montessori uses Transparent Classroom as its attendance tracking software. Parent/Guardians will be assigned a Dropoff PIN via Transparent Classroom and are **required** to use this PIN to sign their student in and out. All children will be released via Adult-to-Adult handoff. An exception may exist with the release of an MYHS student if an unaccompanied minor release form has been filed.

Parents can share their Dropoff PINs with any other Approved Adults (Emergency Contacts) who need to drop off or pick up children.

In the event that a parent/guardian or approved adult cannot pickup, a parent/guardian must fill out an authorization to pickup form to let the front desk know prior to pickup.

NOTE: Only parent/guardians receive Dropoff PINs.

MYHS Unaccompanied Minor Authorization Form

Students enrolled in the Middle Years and High School (grades 7–12) are permitted to sign themselves in and out of school independently each day. To grant this privilege, parents or guardians must complete and submit this [authorization form](#), formally consenting to their child's self-check-in and check-out.

Release of Students

DGM may release a student to a parent, legal guardian, or person on a student's Emergency Card. Before releasing a student to an approved individual other than a parent/guardian, DGM requires each individual collecting a student to present picture identification. Any staff member may require proof of identification from any adult picking up a student. Only persons listed on the Emergency Card form are eligible to pick up a student. If a person picking up is not listed on the Emergency Card form, parent/guardians are required to complete an [Authorization to Pick Up form](#) to allow the release of the student at time of pick-up. Verbal notification for pick-up is **not** permitted.

Curbside Drop-off & Pick-up Policy & Procedure

Desert Garden offers curbside drop-off and pick-up during regularly scheduled school days. Morning curb is mandatory for all programs. Afternoon curb must be requested daily by typing "curb" in the notes section of Transparent Classrooms.

Curbside Hours of Operation

Morning Drop Off

7:00 am – 9:00 am	Infant, Toddler, Primary
7:00 am – 8:00 am	Elementary and MYHS

All students are required to be dropped off at curbside during morning curb. Curbside for Elementary and MYHS closes promptly at 8:00 am. Students arriving at curb later than 9:00 am will be asked to return the next school day. Exceptions to this are made only by a Director of the school.

Afternoon Pick Up

12:00-12:15 pm	Half Day (Curb Only)
2:30-2:45 pm	Infant-Primary
3:15-3:30 pm	Lower EI
3:30-3:45 pm	Upper EI and MYHS

Parents are responsible to type "curb" daily in the sign-in note section if you wish your child to be picked up during their program's afternoon curb. If you have siblings, you can pick everyone up at the eldest siblings' timeframe.

Parents who do not arrive within the allotted times or note in the Transparent Classroom stating they need curb; are asked to come inside the DGM building to pick up during the end of the school day till 4 pm without being charged. Once a student leaves campus the student may not return to campus that day unless prior authorization has been approved at the Executive Director's discretion.

Curbside Protocol

- Please place car seats and students on the driver's side for safe loading and unloading.
- Please allow DGM staff or authorized personnel to take students out of the car. Do not let students out of the car or stop the car and get out of the vehicle to assist your child.
- During pick-up and release of students, if DGM staff does not recognize an individual, that person will be asked to show identification.
- Staff are not allowed to buckle children into their car seats. Parents must buckle children into car seats.
- Reference the DGM curb map that is located on the DGM app.
- **No car seats may be stored on campus.**
- **No parking in front of the school at any time. This is an Emergency Fire Lane as designated by the City of Phoenix and Fire Marshall.**

Parking

Parking is available around the retention area triangle in front of the school. At no time is parking allowed under the covered spaces adjacent to the medical building.

Attendance & Late Arrival Policy

In the Montessori classroom, students are expected to report to class promptly each day. Parents are asked to notify the school if their student will be absent or leaving early for any reason via Transparent Classroom or the Attendance Form on the DGM App. Late arrivals must have Director approval. Children are considered late if they arrive after 8:00am for Elementary and MYHS and 9:00am for all others. There is no reduction in tuition for absences and/or vacations. DGM asks that parents make a commitment to have their student attend regularly and be ready to begin class at the scheduled start time. Ten absent /tardy days per semester will be considered the limit. The Executive Director reserves the right to withdraw a student from the school for excessive tardiness and absenteeism. Allowances may be made in the case of illness, disease, or accident, as certified by a licensed physician

Additional MYHS Attendance Guidelines

A student's uninterrupted work time is highly valued in an IB/Montessori education.

Students weave their ideas together creating an understanding where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Students are expected to sign in through the DGM app each morning upon arrival, and attendance will be taken by teachers throughout the day in each class. Unexcused and excessive tardies or absences will be addressed by school administration.

Students are expected to:

- Arrive on campus by 7:45 and prepared for class, that begins at 8:00 am.
- Arrive on time and prepared for each individual class.
- Stay at school for the entirety of the school day.
- *Each day a student is absent represents lost time in the classroom and lost opportunity to learn.*

Parents: We want each student to attend classes each day.

Successful attendance + behavior + grades = positive student outcomes.

TARGET ATTENDANCE	WARNING ATTENDANCE	CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM
5 or fewer class periods/days per semester - excused or unexcused - leads to positive outcomes & educational benefits	7-9 class periods/days per semester - excused or unexcused - can place the student several days behind classmates' learning opportunities	9 or more class periods/days per semester - excused or unexcused - leads to lost learning opportunities

MYHS Absence Allowance

A student who does not attend a class is considered absent. Absences can be defined as excused or unexcused. **MYHS students are allowed 9 absences (excused or unexcused) per semester.** The tenth total absence may result in loss of credit unless there are extenuating circumstances. If a student misses a class due to a pre-approved school-related activity, it will not count as an absence.

Chronic Absenteeism: Occurs when a student misses greater than 10% of school days due to absences - regardless of reason. Ten percent equates to nine (9) days of absences per semester regardless of whether they are excused or unexcused.

Consequences for Absences: The following actions will be taken after five (5) and after nine (9) excused/unexcused absences per semester and if a student reaches 10 consecutive absences in a semester:

- **5 Absences:** When a student reaches five (5) absences, whether excused or unexcused, they will receive the 5-Day Absence Warning Letter via email (or U.S. Mail if email is not available).
- **9 Absences:** When a student reaches nine (9) absences, whether excused or unexcused, they will receive the 9-Day Absence Final Warning Letter. The parent/guardian will receive the letter via email (or U.S. Mail if email is not available).
- **10+ Absences** Once a student reaches 10 or more absences, they will be referred to administration for excessive absenteeism. A parent meeting will be scheduled with Administration/Student Support Services and the student will be at risk of failure.

School Day Schedule

Infant, Toddler and Primary:	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Lower Elementary	8:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.
Upper Elementary	8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
MYHS	8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
	8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m (Fridays ONLY)

MYHS releases early every Friday after lunch between 12:30-12:45 at the MYHS Curb.

The school campus is open from 7:00 am until 6:00 pm except for Childcare days. Childcare hours are 7:00 am to 4:00 pm. Please check the School Calendar for details.

Illness Policy

Students must be free of any contagious symptoms without the assistance of medication, for 24 hours before returning to school. If a student develops symptoms while at school, parents will be called for immediate pickup and the student may not return to school until meeting the requirements above. When a parent is called to pick up their child, the child must be picked up within an hour. If the initial parent/guardian is unable to pick up, the next listed approved person will be contacted.

When Your Student is Ill or Becomes Ill at School

If your student has any of the following symptoms, do not send them to school:

- Temperature greater than 100.4; a student should be fever free without fever-reducing medications (Tylenol, Advil) for 24 hours before returning to school.
- Vomiting/Diarrhea within the previous 24 hours
 - If a child vomits once, they are sent home immediately.
 - On the 3rd diarrhea, a child is sent home.
- Pink eye/conjunctivitis while symptomatic (redness, itchy eye, drainage) or until 24 hours of antibiotic treatment
- Strep throat while symptomatic (sore throat, redness, possible fever, nausea, headache) or until 24 hours of antibiotic treatment
- Flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, fatigue, headache, chills, body aches)
- Undiagnosed rash or open lesions on the skin

Please notify the school if your student is absent due to illness or communicable diseases (such as influenza, strep throat, pink eye, COVID-19, etc.) via the Attendance Line at 480-896-6516 or via the Attendance Form in the DGM App. Desert Garden is required to post contagious illness information based on professional diagnosis; this is available and updated in the lobby and in Transparent Classroom.

When students are ill and are required to go home, please plan for immediate pick-up. DGM may request, at any time, a doctor's note indicating the student's diagnosis and approval of the student returning to school. All school attendance policies apply.

Medication Policy & Procedure

Prescription Medication

The authorized administrative staff will administer medications based on a doctor's prescription schedule. The only exceptions are Epi-pens and inhalers, which may be administered in the classroom if needed. Students who have Epi-pens must provide 2 Epi-pens for school, one for the front desk and one for the classroom. In addition to a doctor's prescription that accompanies the medicine in its original container, a Request for Administering Medication form must be filled out completely by a parent.

Non-prescription Medication

All nonprescription medicine must be in their original container. Please make sure that your child's first and last name is written on each piece of the medications packaging. A [Request for Administering Medication](#) form must be filled out for each nonprescription medicine. Topical medications such as lotions, diaper rash ointments, mosquito spray, and lip balm do not require a medication form but still need to be delivered to DGM administrative staff to process and deliver to the classroom to be stored out of reach. **Do not place any medication in your child's personal belongings.**

Any medication that requires a medication form must have the following information:

- First and last name of the student
- Name of the medication
- Prescription number
- Dosage and route of administration
- Instructions for administration
- If indicated, start and end dates of the dosage period.
- Times and frequency of administration
- Reason for the medication
- Date of authorization
- Expiration date printed on the label by a pharmacist

The authorization administrative staff will log dispensing of any medications per state requirements. DGM will maintain the record on facility premises for 12 months from the date the medication is administered. DGM will return all unused medication to a parent when the medication prescription date has expired, the medication is no longer being administered to the student, or when the Request for Administering Medication form has expired. The school will dispose of the medication if, after parent notification, it is not picked up in a timely manner.

Childcare Days Policy & Procedure

Childcare Days are optional days when the school is closed for classroom instruction, but open for care. Please see the school calendar for a comprehensive list of days when DGM is Open, Closed, or Open for Childcare Only. There is no organic lunch service on childcare days. Parents must provide a non-perishable NUT FREE sack lunch for their student(s) at the time of drop off. Please pack your child's lunchbox with cold packs to keep food cold, if necessary as we do not have space to keep lunchboxes cold.

Procedure for receiving care on childcare days is as follows.

- Parents must register their student(s) for childcare days at least two weeks prior to the childcare day. Registration information will be emailed to all parents.
- Parents who do not register during the registration period and miss the deadline, may email Support@desertgardenmontessori.org to add their student(s) to the waiting list. Parents of wait-listed students will need to call the school at 9:00 am on the childcare day to see if there is space available.
- Students must arrive no later than 9:00 am to receive care on childcare days.
- There is a "No Show" fee of the daily flat rate and no refunds will be issued for non-attendance and non-communication. The flat "No Show" rate of \$67 per day for Half Day and \$120 per day for School Day will be assessed.
- Parents who register for a childcare day, and need to cancel the registration, may cancel up to two school days prior to the childcare day requested. Registration cancelation must be emailed to Support@desertgardenmontessori.org.
- **No electronics of any kind are allowed on childcare days.**

Uninterrupted Work Cycle

DGM maintains a 2 ½ - 3 hours uninterrupted work period for all its programs, which is referred to as the "Great Work Period."

Curricular Participation

As DGM values student development in all realms of intelligence, the school seeks to provide an environment that offers rich opportunities through a diverse, experiential curriculum. As such, studies in fine arts, foreign language, physical education, music and peace education are mandatory for all students, along with the core academic subject areas. Should it become apparent, in an exceptional instance, that a student is not being optimally served by participation in one of the areas noted above, the school may allow for students to withdraw from that particular requirement of the curriculum, as detailed below. Because

DGM is aware that the consequences of this action might include long-term effects on a student's development, the school requires that a minimum of three good faith communications first be made to attempt to resolve any issues that might arise due to special needs or individual circumstances. These attempts must involve direct, reciprocal communication between the parents and the subject instructor via e-mail, phone, or in-person. Parents must complete a [Request for Curricular Modification](#) form via the DGM App to initiate this process.

Providing a trial period of no less than 45 days has occurred from the first communication with the subject instructor, and all attempts at problem solving have been unsuccessful, a meeting will be held with the Executive Director or her designee, any other staff members relevant to the discussion, and the parents. If an alternative solution still cannot be found, a student may be removed from the subject requirements at the Executive Director's discretion. Arrangements will be made as to what the student will be doing during the adjusted schedule period, and the school does not guarantee that alternate instruction will be available, though supervision and a positive working environment will always be provided.

Open-Door Policy

DGM has an open-door policy. All parents are welcome to visit their student's classroom for events, volunteering, observing, etc. once the normalization period is over, which is approximately the middle of October and/or 12 weeks from your student's start date. The normalization process is defined as an uninterrupted time in each classroom to establish routines and positive learning habits. Please contact the [Admissions Coordinator](#) for details, as times vary.

Although DGM has an open-door policy, it is important for anyone who would like to observe to schedule an appointment through the Admissions Coordinator. DGM's goal is to accommodate parents. Often, there are multiple activities and/or visitors in the classroom. DGM's priority is to preserve the structure of the classroom for the student's sake. Please be considerate of your student's separation issues as well as classroom etiquette during your visit.

NOTE: This policy does not apply to the Infant and Toddler programs.

Observations

Classroom observations are encouraged and may be scheduled with the [Admissions Coordinator](#) starting after October break and/or 12 weeks from a student's start date. There are observation guidelines that DGM hands out to optimize parents' time in the classroom. If a student is in distress, parents may be asked to take the student home at the end of the observation.

Parent Helpers and Visitors

All parents, visitors, and service providers must sign in at the front desk when entering the lobby and will be issued a badge at the front desk prior to entering the building. Upon completion of a visit, the badge needs to be returned to the front desk as the visitor signs out.

Volunteers and Service Providers

DGM values volunteerism as collaboration between family and school that contributes to building community, classroom programs, and to the enhancement of the school as a whole. All regular classroom volunteers will be required to fill out documentation and go through an entire volunteer preparation process with our Human Resources department. If you would like to volunteer, please reach out to our [Development Coordinator](#).

Student Records

DGM maintains a permanent file for each student during his or her enrollment at the school. All records are kept confidential. Records contain attendance, enrollment, behavioral and academic information, and include notes from special providers and/or outside agencies when applicable. DGM requires written authorization for all records to be released to other schools, agencies, or a student's parent. Transcripts are available upon formal request by emailing records@desertgardenmontessori.org. Please allow 7-10 business days for processing.

Parent Communication

At DGM, we try our very best to keep you informed of what is happening at the school and in your child's specific classroom. Aside from directly speaking with your teachers, DGM has various other ways to help keep you in the know.

Transparent Classroom for Infant through 6th Grade

Transparent Classroom (TC) is an online student record keeping and attendance tracking system. Transparent Classroom communication includes:

- Parents can view student age appropriate trackers (i.e., diaper logs, nap time, food event)
- Parents can access classroom parent directory
- Parents can receive notification of Classroom Activity based on the frequency of notification they have selected.
- Teacher Announcements
- Student [Mid Year](#) Progress [and Final Conference](#) Reports
- Student/activity/photos

Rediker

Academic Reporting and Classroom Communication

Weekly grades are updated in Rediker and are accessible through both the Student and Parent Portals. At the conclusion of each semester (fall and spring), students receive a formal report card that includes an overall achievement level for each course.

Classroom Pages

Each teacher maintains an individual class page, which serves as a central hub for important updates. These pages include announcements, assignments, quizzes, and discussion links, providing parents with convenient access to classroom activities and expectations.

Direct Emails

There will be a weekly Take 2 Newsletter communication to parents highlighting the coming week's activities and events that may include a feature video.

Action Required Emails will be sent out when parent response is required for child participation in an upcoming activity.

Text Messages

Reminder text messages for school days will be sent out up to two days prior to an Early Release, School Closed, Teacher In-Service, or Child Care Only day.

Notification text messages may also be used to communicate as needed for extended stay field trips and in cases of emergency.

Social Media (Instagram, Facebook Page)

Desert Garden Montessori has a [public Instagram page](#), [public Facebook page](#) for community interaction at large. DGM's Instagram account is purely for social interaction and sharing. Please refer to Take 2 Newsletters for official communications. If you have any questions or concerns regarding DGM's Instagram page, please contact our [Development Coordinator](#). Facebook pages and groups are NOT an approved source for Administrative/All School communication.

Website

Desert Garden Montessori maintains the website: <https://www.desertgardenmontessori.org/>.

DGM App

The DGM App has been created to provide you the essential tools that can connect you to various platforms that you may need. Please download the DGM App from your App Store as this is the parking lot for all things DGM.

Protocol for Parent Concerns

Communication is encouraged between school, parent, and student. The success and future of DGM depends largely on effective communication among all parties involved in the care and education of the students.

If there is a problem, question, or concern related to an incident or situation with a student at the school, parents are encouraged to do the following:

- Speak with the lead teacher first about the situation
- Email Support@desertgardenmontessori.org
- If necessary, a meeting with the Executive Director may be scheduled, which may also include teachers, parents and/or administration. To request a meeting with the Executive Director, please submit a written request to the [Director of Operations](#).

Solutions will be set forth, documented, enacted, and reviewed until satisfactory resolution of the situation has been reached.

Conferences & Consultations

Parents of all students are given a progress report that is all-encompassing at the end of each semester. This report will include details on the student's academic, social and emotional progress during the reporting semester.

Desert Garden Montessori will provide conferences twice a year for parents of students in the Primary, Elementary and MYHS programs. Parents will be able to schedule their own conference times. In the event a parent cannot attend, limited rescheduling may be available, if requested in advance, but it is not guaranteed.

Infant and Toddler teachers do not hold formal parent/teacher conferences, but parents may make an appointment with their child's teacher via email, as desired.

Late Day Charges

Any student participating in Enrichment Classes will not be charged Late Pick Up Fees if they are here beyond their scheduled pick-up time. Please note in Transparent Classroom that the student was in an enrichment class. Students must be picked up at the end of the Enrichment Class and sign them out, otherwise Late Pick Up Charges will apply.

Enrichment Classes

A full array of afterschool enrichment classes are offered after the regular school day. DGM strives to maintain high standards when selecting the personnel for these programs. A schedule will be provided twice a year explaining the scheduled programs. DGM manages all fees. An administrative staff member will manage questions and concerns regarding any of these programs.

Any make-up classes due to provider absence are the responsibility of the Enrichment Provider. Administrative staff will contact parents regarding the scheduling of any necessary make-up sessions.

A staff member from DGM will be present in the enrichment classroom at all times. All background checks and fingerprint materials are required from each provider and the front desk maintains a copy. Providers without these clearance documents will not be allowed on campus to provide services. At the time of the student's enrichment class, the Enrichment Provider will escort the students to and from their late day classroom.

Renaissance Testing (STAR)

Desert Garden Montessori administers a computer based, CAT (Computer Adaptive Technology), standards-based assessment from the Renaissance STAR suite to our students from 3rd year Elementary through 12th grade. This system uses a series of two assessments, depending on age level (Early Literacy, Reading and Math), to determine students' placement within state standards and compares their performance to that of same grade level peers.

At Desert Garden Montessori, we use this assessment as a practical life activity as it is real-world practice to have your knowledge assessed. Results of this assessment when placed in line with Montessori curriculum can vary 1 - 2 grade levels. This is because Montessori is a three-year cycle and students need the full three years within our classroom environments to show mastery of an abstract skill.

- This assessment is conducted three times a year: Fall, Winter & Spring
- This assessment is strictly a tool utilized for the teaching team to have an additional perspective on our student's academic progress. Results are not shared with parents, however parents may request the results from the Lead Teacher.
- A parent may opt-out their child from the STAR assessment by contacting your child's lead teacher directly.

DIBELS Testing

The purpose of DIBELS is to provide educators with standards for gauging the status and progress of all students. DIBELS subtests measure critical skills and abilities that are necessary for reading success, and most offer both benchmark and progress-monitoring forms.

Student Support Services

What are Student Support Services?

Student Support Services is a core group of professionals who work alongside students, teachers, staff, parents, and outside service providers to meet the individualized needs of the students both academically and through social-emotional well-being. Student Support Services continually aspires to provide services and support consistent with Montessori Philosophy and current scientific research-based practices. Desert Garden works within a framework that views the whole student within the context of their family, classroom and community.

A variety of resources and services are provided by our Student Support Services and outside organizations (this may come at an additional cost). These resources/services include:

- Parenting Classes
- In-class Peace and Mindfulness Education
- Brief Counseling for Students and Parents
- Conscious Discipline through Parent, Staff and Student training
- Case Management
- Social/Emotional Learning
- Social Skills Building
- Reading Services
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Crisis Intervention
- Liaison to public school's Exceptional Student Services
- Developmental Screeners (ASQ and ASQ-SE)
- STAR Testing for math and reading (3rd-12th grade)
- DIBELS Screening for reading (Primary 3rd years through 3rd grade)

How to access Student Support Services?

For Parents: If a parent suspects that their child may require support from Student Support Services, the parent may contact the student's advisee teacher. The teacher will then forward the request to Student Support Services during their weekly check-in.

DGM One-on-one:

- The first priority of the one-on-one is to make sure their assigned student is safe and their academic/physical/emotional needs are met
- If the assigned student's needs mentioned above are met, the one-on-one may collaborate with the lead teacher to see how they can best support the classroom
 - If at any time the assigned student needs support, the one-on-one **must** return to support the assigned student

Outside provider (one-on-one):

- The first priority of the one-on-one is to make sure their assigned student is safe and their academic/physical/emotional needs are met
- Student Support Services, the teacher, and the organization will have a meeting to collaborate
 - **If the outside organization agrees** and the assigned student's needs mentioned above are met, the one-on-one may collaborate with the lead teacher to see how they can best support the classroom
 - If at any time the assigned student needs support, the one-on-one **must** return to support the assigned student
 - At **NO** time may an outside provider be counted towards the teacher/student ratio or left alone with students

Behavior Policies

Desert Garden Montessori's discipline is centered on the philosophy that discipline is helping a child solve a problem and learn a new skill.

"Punishment is making a child suffer for having a problem. If we want a society of problem solvers, we have to focus on solutions not retribution" (LR. Knost).

Our goals at Desert Garden Montessori are to:

1. Ensure the safety of each child
2. Educate the child
3. Respect for self, others and environment

Procedure

When a child is engaged in a behavior that requires intervention, our staff follows the following procedure:

1. Composure is a must. The adult must always stay in their executive state. If the adult cannot (is triggered), get another adult to help.
2. Observe what you can learn from watching the child to understand their behavior. What is the function of the behavior or what is the need?
3. In most cases the adult acknowledges the child's feelings and then teaches the new skill.
 - *For example, in a toddler or primary classroom a child may take an item from another child. A composed adult would approach the child who had the item taken from them and say, "You have tears coming down your face... You seem sad... You were hoping that your friend would ask for a turn with your work." They would then go to the child who took the item and could say, "You were hoping to use the work that Joe was using so you took it out of his hands... Next time we are going to ask our friend to let us know when they are done so that we can have a turn... Here let's practice..."*
4. For all significant behaviors, an accident/incident report will be completed and sent to the parent.
5. For chronic patterns of behaviors (two or more incidents in 30 days) a Student Support Services referral form must be submitted by Lead Teacher. The student team (Parent/Guardian, Teacher and Student Support Services) will meet to develop a behavioral plan.

Behavior Goals

Our first goal is always the safety of the child. In the event a child needs to be sent home due to a high level of dysregulation or physical harm to self or others, a member of Student Support Services or Administration will make the call to parents for their child to be picked up. This is not intended as a punishment, but instead a time for the child to step out of the environment to help calm their mind and body. During the parent meeting a behavior plan may be set, prior to the child returning to class.

When a parent is called to pick up their child, the child must be picked up within 45 minutes. If the initial parent or other approved contact(s) is unable to pick up within the time frame, the next listed approved person will be contacted. If none of the approved individuals can pick up, the child must stay home the following school day and a parent meeting will be required.

Our second goal is to educate. All behavior is a form of communication. At Desert Garden Montessori we strive to use communication to help teach new skills. Skills often need to be taught over and over for a child to internalize them. Just like reading or math, social/emotional skills need to be taught many ways with many repetitions. Our hope is that through lots of practice, our students will begin to internalize an inner speech for problem solving that they will carry with them throughout life. *The Behavior Rubric by developmental level is available upon request.*

Accident/Incident

Any time there is an accident, incident, or injury involving one or more students, the following protocol is followed.

- Involved students are examined to determine the seriousness of the circumstances.
- If not serious, care is administered on site as needed, including, but not necessarily limited to, washing affected area, applying ice, providing redirection, and/or tender loving care as indicated.
- If a student hits his/her head, even if there is no outward apparent injury, parents are contacted and notified.
- If the accident/incident requires more extensive care than can be provided on site, parents will be contacted and asked to pick up their student.
- If the accident/incident is an emergency, 911 will be called, followed by a call to the parents.
- Only the name of the parent's child will appear on an accident/incident report that their child was involved in. Other children involved will not be referenced by name.
- DGM staff will handle incidents between students. Parents may not discipline, reprimand or re-direct other families' children.

For all accidents/incidents, an Accident/Incident Report will be completed by involved staff and emailed to parents and relevant administration on the day of the occurrence.

MYHS Code of Conduct

Behavior management occurs daily. In MYHS, teachers...

- are proactive in their approach to screening (seeing which children need additional and/or different assistance to be successful).
- monitor progress.
- provide interventions that meet the needs of the child (individualizing interventions to help children be successful).
- redirect students in a positive way and deal with minor issues that arise in the classroom.

Respect Self

- I will arrive on time and attend school every day when I am able.
- I will bring my materials and be ready to learn.
- I will follow the dress code.
- I will be cooperative in class.
- I will contribute in a positive way to the classroom.
- I will only turn in schoolwork that is my own.
- I will use the computer and other school materials responsibly.
- I agree to resolve my anger in a peaceful way.

Respect Others

- I will treat others with respect.
- I will speak courteously to teachers, staff parents, visitors, and other students.
- I will not make degrading, racist, or humiliating jokes.
- I will not make offensive remarks, demands, or advances.
- I will not tease, name call, swear, curse, or harass another individual.
- I will respect the learning environment by speaking quietly in the classroom and other areas of the school.
- I will avoid creating problems for others and myself.
- I will not disrupt learning or teaching.

Respect Your Environment

- I will respect school property and not damage objects, buildings, or materials belonging to the school or others.
- I will keep my hands to myself and respect the property of others.
- I will take care of my school supplies and classroom property.

Violations of Code of Conduct

The following violations at school or on trips and outings are subject to review and may result in consequences up to and including suspension and disenrollment.

- **Disrespect or Defiance** - Disrespectful or defiant behavior is defined as the direct and immediate refusal to comply with reasonable adult instruction within a specified period.
- **Threats or Threatening Behavior** - Threatening words and/or actions are taken seriously and seen as harmful to the well-being of others and the school.
- **Bullying Behavior** - Cruel, hurtful words and behaviors are taken very seriously. See Anti-Bullying policy.
- **Physical Assault** - Physical attack on another person, recklessly or intentionally causing any physical injury to another person, intentionally placing another person in reasonable fear of physical injury, knowingly touching another person with the intent to injure, insult or provoke the person is considered assault.
- **Vandalism and Stealing** – Removing school or personal materials without permission is considered stealing. Willful destruction or abuse of private or school property is considered vandalism.
- **Drug/Alcohol/Tobacco** – The possession, use, sale, distribution, and/or purchase of alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription, medication, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vaping supplies, or any other substance related to these (including matches, lighters, or paraphernalia) are never allowed. See Drug and Alcohol policy.
- **Weapons** – No weapon of any kind (real or fake), including knives, cap guns, and toy guns, is ever permitted on campus.
- **Gambling** – Gambling of any sort is prohibited.
- **Leaving Campus** - Leaving the schools grounds for any reason without following the school check-out procedure is prohibited.
- **Public Displays of Attention (PDA)**
- **Misuse of DGM Materials**
- **Misuse of Technology**
- **Disrupting or Impeding the Learning Environment**
- **Excessive Profanity**
- **Excessive Dress Code Violations**

The following list of possible consequences dependent on the severity of the behavior and represents guidelines only. They do not represent the full extent of all disciplinary consequences nor limit the judgment of the administrator who must assess the entirety of each situation and the student's behavior history.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Student Conference Parent/Guardian Contact Confiscation of items Loss of privileges/participation in extracurricular or school- sponsored activities Behavior Plan/Discipline Plan/Attendance Contracts Removal from classroom environment for remainder of period Community Service Restorative Conference	Student Conference Parent/Guardian Contact Removal from classroom environment for remainder of period Parent pick up for student reset Restitution Restorative Conference Short- Term off campus suspension Loss of academic credit Attendance meeting	Student Conference Parent/Guardian Contact Restitution Restorative Conference Loss of academic credit Long-Term off campus suspension Expulsion/Disenrollm ent Law Enforcement/Legal Action

Playground Rules

DGM allows free exploration of the outdoor playground with unstructured play daily. Safety is the school's priority. As students differ from program to program, so do the rules that apply to those students.

Biting Policy

An Accident/Incident report will be sent to parents of the child who bit and the child who was bitten. If the bite broke skin a call will be made to the parents to let them know of the incident. A picture will also be attached to the Accident/ Incident report for parents of the child who was bitten to view.

The child who was bitten will be taken care of first and the child who bit will be addressed either by a separate staff member or the observed teacher. It is important to remember that depending on the child's age they may recover or quickly forget what has just transpired. Both children will receive Social and Emotional support.

It is important to remember that biting amongst Infants and Toddler is developmentally appropriate as they do not have a lot of language yet. If biting becomes chronic the Lead will request a meeting with the parents and Student Support Services to review ways to support the child. It is the teacher's responsibility to provide emotional support to both children at the time of the incident.

Biting is not a typical response for an older child and may be a sign of underlying issues. As staff we will be able to share with parents' ways to help support what we may be seeing and experiencing in class as well as ways to support the child. If an older child has bitten another child and has broken the skin, a call will be made by the child's teacher to both parents (the child who was bitten and the child who bite) the child who bit will be asked to go home for the rest of the day and may return the following day. An Accident/Incident report will share with both parents a picture of the bite (to the bitten child only). If the biting becomes chronic, the child will be asked to stay home until the biting behavior subsides. *Financial considerations will be discussed on a case-by-case basis if this occurs.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The DGM community is committed to providing a caring and safe environment for all students so they can learn in an atmosphere of support and kindness. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, it will be dealt with promptly and appropriately. I ask that if anyone in our school community "sees something" that they "say something."

What is bullying?

According to the National Center Against Bullying, "Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behavior that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more people who feel unable to stop it from happening."

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.

Bullying can be:

- physical (e.g. spitting, pushing, stealing, hitting, kicking, or any use of violence)
- verbal (e.g. name calling, teasing, taunting, and making threats)
- psychological (e.g. social exclusion, extortion, intimidation, spreading rumors, and manipulating social relationships.)
- Emotional – being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Racist – racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact or sexually inappropriate comments
- Homophobic – due to, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Cyber – all areas of Internet, such as email, social media, and online communication. This includes all verbal and written communication, such as text messages or apps, using a mobile device.
- Bullying in any form is completely unacceptable at Desert Garden Montessori and will be addressed immediately and fully.
- Comments or actions referred to as "joking", "kidding", or "playing around" will not be an excusable reason for anyone's bullying actions.

What bullying is not:

- single episodes of social rejection or dislike
- single episode acts of mean or unkind behavior
- random acts of aggression or intimidation
- mutual arguments, disagreements, or fights

These actions can cause great distress. However, they do not fit the definition of bullying and they're not examples of bullying unless someone is deliberately and repeatedly doing them.

Steps to follow if you suspect your child is being bullied:

- Talk to your child and try to find out what the problem is.
- Contact the school immediately and request an appointment with the Director.
- Remember, there are always two sides to any problem, and we must look at all problems from all sides.
- We will discuss the problem with you and design a plan of action to suit the situation. We will work together to make students aware that bullying is not tolerated.

School procedures for bullying concerns:

- All reports of bullying will be promptly and fully investigated.
- Students found to engage in bullying behaviors will be held accountable, with appropriate parent consultation and disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension and disenrollment from Desert Garden Montessori.
- Police will be consulted in cases of extreme bullying and/or violence.

Drug & Alcohol Policy

Desert Garden Montessori has zero tolerance for a student's consumption of any amount of alcohol, misuse of prescription drugs, use of any amount of illicit drugs, or any substance that alters a person's mind/emotions. DGM strictly follows A. R. S. 13-3622 regarding all instances. Possession and being with those in possession, use/distribution/sale of, or being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs are prohibited on school premises and before or during school sponsored travel and activities.

Possession of drug paraphernalia on school premises or at school activities is prohibited. Being under the influence of illicit drugs and/or the possession, use, sale, purchase, or attempted sale/purchase of illicit drugs on school premises or at school activities are prohibited and will result in notification of the proper authorities and may result in required withdrawal from school.

For the purposes of this policy, drugs shall include, but not be limited to:

- Marijuana
- Prescription only drugs
- Narcotic drugs
- Inhalants/vapor-releasing substances
- Dangerous drugs – including, but not limited to the following:
Hallucinogens, Stimulants, Depressants, Barbiturates, and Anabolic steroids
- Alcoholic beverages
- Drug "look alike" or substances represented as drugs

Lunch and Snack Program

At DGM, we believe Lunch is a time of gathering and community.

- Classrooms eat with each other.
- Infant, Toddler and Primary programs eat inside their classrooms.
- Our Elementary and MYHS program utilize Beth's Garden.
- Sharing of food is not permitted.
- No meal delivery services are permitted (Postmates, UberEats, etc.) for students or adults.
- The infant/Nido Program serves food from our organic kitchen that is properly prepared for this age group. No animal products are served in this classroom unless it is animal products sent from home.

DGM takes pride in its all-organic lunch program with freshly prepared, homemade, hot meals and snacks made daily in the school's on-site kitchen. DGM serves all students wholesome and delicious food, beginning with the youngest. Infant teachers work closely with parents to introduce foods to babies that far surpass what is found in jars as they grow into an increasingly varied diet and, eventually, begin practice with utensils. Older students experience balanced meals from many world cuisines and learn to love spices and styles of cooking sourced from cultures across the globe as well as close to home.

DGM's kitchen is currently able to fully support students on regular, vegetarian, and vegan diets. We also support diets that are gluten and/or dairy-free. Other dietary accommodations cannot be met at this time. The monthly menu is viewable on our website and posted in the front lobby and in each classroom. The school invites parents to read the menu and supplement meals with appropriate items, when necessary, by providing substitutes to their student's classroom teacher.

All animal products are organic, and we do not serve any beef or pork products within our Organic Lunch Program. In addition, all students are required by the state to be served milk. If parents will be providing meals and/or supplementing DGM's, they must provide milk. If an approved beverage is not provided, DGM will provide one.

Lunches provided by parents must include the following:

- Variety of healthy foods
- Balance of protein
- Whole grains
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- An ice pack to keep food fresh (no refrigerator or microwave available)
- Student's name

The following food items are not allowed on school grounds, as there is little to no nutritional value in these types of foods:

- Fast food
- Soda
- Gum/candy
- "Lunchables" or other processed convenience foods

Students may not bring lunch items to school that contain nuts or nut products of any kind.

Heat/Air Quality and Sun Protection

DGM's policy on heat exposure and air quality advisories will be followed as local notices are released for public awareness. DGM adheres to HeatReady PHX standards. DGM will mindfully watch for these advisories and protect the students accordingly. As we strive for best practice in health and wellness, hats and sunglasses are strongly recommended.

Pesticide Policy

DGM is required to notify parents regarding pesticide application on the premises. Pesticide Application notices will be posted in the lobby.

Photo and Video Release Policy

Students attending DGM may, from time to time, be photographed and/or recorded on digital video. This may occur during school events, classroom instruction, or at other times while students are on campus or off campus on school-sponsored trips. DGM recognizes that the nature of digital media is such that it is impossible to consistently prevent the sharing or public display of such images, and therefore has issued the following policy:

By enrolling a student in DGM, parents/guardians give consent that the student may be photographed or recorded, and that his or her image may be used in future school publications and/or development materials, including online publications. Because the School does not have control of the social media of our families, images may also appear on other families' social media sites.

Birthday Policy

Birthdays are celebrated in the classroom with the traditional Montessori "Celebration of Life" theme. Each program celebrates birthdays differently, based on the developmental age of the student. However, no food or drink may be brought from home for birthday celebrations for any program.

Infant/Toddler Birthdays

There is no formal Montessori birthday celebration for students of the infant/toddler age group. This is due to the developmental needs of the child.

Primary Birthdays

Students may participate in the "Walk around the Sun." The Walk around the Sun is a Montessori tradition celebrating the growth and life of each student on his or her birthday; parents should speak with their student's teacher for details. On their child's birthday, parents are encouraged to send a poster with pictures of the student to represent each year from birth to present. Please contact your teacher with any questions about the Walk around the Sun.

Elementary and MYHS Birthdays

Parents should connect with their student's teacher for specific details.

- Birthday invitations are not to be passed out in class or to students individually at school.
- No food or drink may be brought from home for birthday celebrations.

Dress Code

DGM asks that students be modestly dressed and refrain from clothing that exaggerates the body inappropriately. Modest dress does not allow for halter tops, half-shirts, crop tops, straps on shirts less than 1 inch in width, clothing that reveals undergarments, or clothing with inappropriate text, symbols, or images.

Staff members may determine that a student is not meeting dress code policy and may contact a parent to bring appropriate clothing or request that a student put on school-provided clothing before they may attend class.

We ask that the parents provide comfortable, casual clothes. Students will be playing in the sand, experiencing water play, painting, and just being a kid. DGM does provide aprons for the appropriate works; however, students will get paint on their clothes at times.

Proper shoes are also very important for the student's success. Tennis shoes (sneakers) are preferred. Shoes with backs and closed toes are required (No Crocs). **Flip flops, Heelys or shoes with high platforms / heels are unsafe in DGM's environment. Students without close-toed shoes may not participate in Physical Education and Outdoor Play. **

We encourage all students and staff to show their DGM pride and wear DGM Swag on Fridays. Please consult with your student's teacher for additional dress code specifics based on program/age.

For MYHS students, the following dress code applies to all school functions including field trips:

- Undergarments cannot be visible.
- Clothing that features illegal items for minors are not allowed.
- The body shall be adequately covered.
- Clothing shall not expose the chest, abdomen, back or buttocks area, and shall be sufficient to always conceal undergarments.
- All tops must have straps on the shoulders that are wide enough to conceal undergarments.
- Clothing or accessories that depict violence or are sexual in nature are not allowed.
- Clothing or accessories shall not display lewd, vulgar, obscene, or offensive language or symbols.
- Flip-flops are allowed except when not appropriate for an activity (e.g. PE)

MYHS Students found wearing something that conflicts with our dress code will be given an article of clothing to wear. Students will also be given the opportunity to call home and request a replacement be dropped off.

If a student or parent has a question regarding whether an item of clothing, accessory, or hairstyle or color may violate these expectations, the student or parent needs to contact a school administrator for clarification.

Personal Belongings Policy

Student may not come to school with personal belongings other than necessary items such as lunch, jacket, extra clothing, and napping items. Personal items can cause a major distraction within the classroom and can easily be lost or broken. Students may not bring weapons or items that resemble weapons to school. Students younger than Upper Elementary should not bring backpacks and/or purses to school.

No electronics such as iPads, tablets, cell phones, smart watches, air pods, etc. are to be utilized or brought to school under any circumstances. This applies during all hours of the day and on Childcare Days.

If, for some reason a student does bring unnecessary items, DGM will remove the items from the classroom environment for later return to parents, based on individual classroom policies.

Cell Phone Policy

At Desert Garden Montessori, we strive to maintain a focused and engaging learning environment. While we recognize that many families choose to provide their children with cell phones for communication and safety before and after school, we ask for your support in helping us minimize classroom distractions. If you've determined it is necessary for your child to carry a cell phone, please review the following guidelines together:

- **Personal Responsibility:** DGM is not liable for any lost, stolen, or damaged personal items, including cell phones and accessories. If a phone is misplaced or broken during school hours or at a school-sponsored event, the school cannot allocate administrative resources to investigate or reimburse for the loss.
- **During School Hours:** Cell phones must be turned off and stored in students' backpacks throughout the school day.

Violations and Consequences:

- **First sighting:** The student will receive a warning.
- **Second sighting:** The phone will be confiscated.
- *A parent/guardian meeting will be scheduled to discuss appropriate next steps if a student's phone is confiscated three times.*

Instructional Exceptions: Occasionally, teachers may permit the use of cell phones for academic purposes—for example, capturing and sharing student artwork during Art Class.

We appreciate your partnership in keeping our classrooms centered on meaningful learning and connection. While we understand the role technology plays in today's world, we want students to be fully present during their time on campus. Please assist us in keeping our learning environment free from distractions. As teachers, we understand the value that cell phones bring, but we ultimately want our time with your children to be authentic, focused, and filled with the joy of connections. If you need to reach your child during the school day, please follow the DGM policy and call the front desk at 480-496-9833. All messages will be delivered promptly.

Consequences for Technology Violations

The use of DGM's technology resources and network is a privilege, not a right. In the event a student violates any of the Student Technology Use Code of Conduct, privileges may be terminated, access to the school's technology resources may be denied, and the appropriate disciplinary action shall be applied. The school reserves the right to determine which uses constitute acceptable use and to limit access to such uses.

Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension/expulsion for students. When applicable, law enforcement agencies may be involved.

Chromebooks

All Middle School MYHS students will be issued a DGM Chromebook to use during the school year. The student assumes responsibility for this device and will bring the laptop to and from school each day. High School students will have the opportunity to use a DGM issued Chromebook or may bring a device of their own to use at school. Please look for a detailed technology agreement in the first week of school.

Lockdown and Emergency Protocols

The safety and welfare of our students and staff are our highest priority at Desert Garden Montessori School. We practice safety drills throughout the year to help our students know what to do in an emergency.

Each month, Desert Garden Montessori conducts various security drills. The goals of the training drills are to improve our ability to protect students, save lives, and reduce injuries. These practice drills allow us to evaluate our emergency operation plans and improve our response skills.

For the safety of our children and staff, when the fire alarm is activated, all individuals exit the buildings and proceed to designated safe areas outside. Once the environment is clear and approved by administration and/or the fire department, all staff are notified and released to return to their classrooms.

In the event of a lockdown, all classrooms are notified by the front desk administrator and proceed to follow steps for lockdown. This includes locking all doors and windows, gathering all students in the safest place in the classroom (or continuing class inside as appropriate) and notifying Administration if the classroom needs assistance. Once all classrooms are confirmed safe and/or the surroundings are deemed secure by the police department, the front desk administrator notifies all classrooms that they may proceed as usual. In order to protect your child, students will only be released to parents and/or other adults listed on the emergency information sheet in the case of an actual emergency. The dates and times of drills will not be announced. You will only be notified if there is a real emergency.

Weapons & Firearms on Campus

It is the policy of DGM that students and non-students, including adults and visitors, shall not possess, use, or distribute a weapon and/or firearm when in a school location except as provided in this policy. The school will act to enforce this policy and to discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, school employee, volunteer, or member of the public who violates this policy.

The "School Location" includes any school building or grounds, school activities or trips, school buses or school vehicles, school-contracted vehicles, the area of entrance or departure from school premises or events, all locations where school-related functions are conducted, and anywhere students are under the jurisdiction of DGM.

Exceptions

Licensed law enforcement officers, peace officers, or military personnel who are on duty or performing official duty.

Consequences

Any member of the public who violates this policy shall be informed of the policy and asked to leave the school location immediately. Depending on the circumstances, the person may be barred from future entry to school locations. If appropriate, law enforcement will be notified of the policy violation by the individual and may be asked to provide an escort to remove the individual from the school location.

Field Trips

A field trip is a school-sponsored and school-chaperoned activity intended to offer students experiences that cannot be replicated through regular classroom instruction. Field trips are an integral part of the Montessori curriculum, providing first-hand experience in the world beyond DGM's campus. Field trips are scheduled both on and off-site.

While most field trips are directly related to learning goals in the areas of culture, arts, or sciences, they may also be designed to enhance social and emotional growth in students and continue the development of the whole child. In the elementary and middle school programs, field trips include overnight trips such as campouts and Field Studies. Overnight trips are designed to meet multiple goals in academic and personal learning, including independence, team building, and leadership. For this reason, parent chaperones are invited on some day trips, but generally not on overnight trips.

Transportation for field trips is restricted to DGM's school van, approved parent chaperone vehicles, and commercially licensed carriers. When circumstances warrant an exception, an adult staff member may be approved to drive a privately-owned vehicle. Under no circumstances may a student be used as a driver for a field trip.

DGM will obtain written permission from a parent before a student participates in an off-site field trip. A daytime off-site field trip permission slip includes:

- The date and description of the field trip
- The times of departure and return to the school
- The name, address, and phone number of the destination, if available
- Cost of field trip, if applicable
- Transportation type

Students will not be able to attend the field trip unless a permission slip is filled out and returned on or before its due date.

DGM will not notify parents of missing permission slips after the due date, and any student without a signed permission slip will not be allowed to participate. Verbal permission is insufficient for student participation.

On all Field Trips, Going Outs and Field Study trips, DGM maintains a "Rule of 3" where there is always at least one DGM staff member and 2 other members in any group.

Going Outs

Going Outs are a part of DGM's Montessori curriculum for elementary and MYHS programs. In response to current learning areas or projects being explored by particular students, a teacher may choose to take a small group of students off campus to extend their learning. For example, if five students in Lower Elementary have been researching plant biology, a teacher might take them to a local desert preserve. Workplace environments, museums, libraries, other schools, and nature areas are all examples of potential locations for Going Outs.

Going Outs are different from field trips in that they typically do not involve the whole class, are not pre-planned, and instead arise in response to the students' ongoing studies. Permission for Going Outs is handled differently from field trip permissions.

Enrollment in DGM's Elementary and MYHS programs serves as parental permission for students to attend these periodic Going Outs throughout their enrollment in these programs. If parents prefer that their student(s) not participate in these activities, they are encouraged to contact the teacher via email no later than the school day before a Going Out.

Parents will be notified of each Going Out involving their student at least 24 hours in advance of the outing. Parents should contact their student's teacher with any questions related to this off-campus learning experience.

Field Study

Detailed Information on the Upper Elementary, MS and HS Field Study trips will be provided to parents during the course of the year. Full trip details and permission slips will be sent out once the final trip dates, locations and included activities have been thoughtfully scheduled and planned out by the students and teachers. There will be mandatory parent meetings published in the school's event calendar where parents will be presented with trip details and can ask any additional questions.

Transportation Policy for Elementary and MYHS

In the event a small group of students (13 passengers or fewer) in Elementary or MYHS needs transportation, they will be transported in an insured DGM van. The DGM van will only be driven by DGM employees who are legally licensed, insured adults aged eighteen years or older. If you wish to view our insurance information, it is available upon request via support@desergardenmontessori.org.

DGM will inform student parents prior to transportation.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism Policy

What is academic integrity?

According to Merriam-Webster, academic integrity is “the expectation that teachers, students, researchers and all members of the academic community act with: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.”

Breaching academic integrity is also known as ‘academic misconduct’ or ‘academic dishonesty.’ Academic integrity is not only a definition, but a set of values to uphold. The components of academic integrity are enacted in the following ways at DGM:

- Honest: be truthful, give credit, provide facts
- Trust: provide transparency, trust others, give credence
- Fairness: apply rules consistently, engage with other equitably, and take responsibility for our own actions
- Respect: receive feedback willingly, accept others’ thoughts, and recognize the impacts of our own words and actions on others
- Responsibility: follow institutional rules and conduct codes, engage in difficult conversations, and model good behavior
- Courage: take a stand to address wrongdoings, be undaunted in defending integrity, and endure discomfort for something you believe in ([ICAI, 2020](#))

What is plagiarism?

To plagiarize is to take someone else's ideas or work as your own. This is a form of cheating and may result in disciplinary action by the administrator and include a zero on the assignment. If you include facts or contexts that are someone's interpretation, you must cite the source. Even if you paraphrase, the ideas belong to the author, and you still must cite the source. Use a style guide to make sure your citations are done correctly, for example MLA or APA format.

What is copyright?

Poems, images, photos, stories, publications, music are all "owned" just like a computer or a house. Unlike owning physical things, the above is a kind of property called "Intellectual Property". The Copyright Law is designed to protect owners of Intellectual Property. Violation of copyrighting is still a form of cheating.

Cheating, plagiarism, and other copyright violations:

The instructor is to notify the administrator if a student is caught cheating, plagiarizing, or violating copyrights. Students found knowingly violating copyright, plagiarizing, or cheating in any other form will be subject to disciplinary action and a zero on the assignment involved.

Artificial Intelligence Policy (AI)

Purpose

In alignment with our mission to foster independence, integrity, and global citizenship through Montessori and IB principles, Desert Garden Montessori supports the thoughtful, ethical, and educational use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools by students and staff. This policy establishes clear guidelines to promote responsible exploration while safeguarding academic integrity, student agency, and community values.

Core Values Guiding AI Use

Our approach to AI integration is grounded in the following values:

- Human-Centered Learning: Technology should enhance—not replace—critical thinking, creativity, and personal expression.
- Academic Integrity: AI should not be used to misrepresent one’s work, understanding, or learning process.
- Digital Citizenship: Students should engage with AI tools responsibly, ethically, and with awareness of social and global impacts.
- Inquiry and Innovation: Students are encouraged to explore emerging technologies thoughtfully and critically, in ways aligned with IB and Montessori philosophies.

Scope

This policy applies to all Desert Garden Montessori MYHS students and staff and covers the use of AI tools both on and off campus, including generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, DALL·E, etc.), machine learning platforms, and automated writing, image, or coding assistants.

Acceptable Use of AI by Students

AI tools may be used by students under the following conditions:

- For learning support: Students may use AI tools to clarify concepts, generate study questions, or receive feedback—provided it does not replace original work or authentic understanding.
- For brainstorming and creativity: AI may be used to explore ideas, generate drafts, or prototype creative projects, as long as final products reflect the student’s own voice and thinking.
- For inquiry projects: AI can be consulted as a secondary resource in research, with full citation and critical evaluation of sources.
- For skill development: Students may use coding, language, or design AIs to build technical proficiency under teacher supervision.

Unacceptable Use of AI

Students may not use AI tools:

- To complete assignments or assessments.
- To plagiarize or submit AI-generated work as their own.
- To bypass the learning process or undermine academic honesty.
- To produce harmful, misleading, biased, or inappropriate content.
- In any way that violates school rules, privacy laws, or digital conduct standards.

Transparency and Accountability

- Students must disclose when and how they have used AI in any school work, including citations or reflection where appropriate.
- Teachers will assess both the process and the product to evaluate learning authentically.
- Misuse of AI tools will be treated as an academic honesty violation, in alignment with school disciplinary procedures and IB policies.

Ongoing Review

As AI technologies continue to evolve, this policy will be reviewed annually in consultation with students, faculty, and parents to ensure alignment with best practices, pedagogy, and values. For questions or clarifications please contact the MYHS Director for further information or support.

Hiring DGM Employees Outside of School

DGM recognizes that parents often hire school employees for personal services such as babysitting. DGM is not a party to these private employment relationships and all activities related thereto must not interfere with the employee's responsibilities to DGM. This poses a potential conflict of interest, and, while not prohibited, it is important to state that the employment relationship between DGM and the employee is the school's first priority. DGM does not serve as intermediary for parents wishing to make personal arrangements with staff.

Home Learning

The school believes that successful students will exercise their minds throughout life, not only during the school day. DGM promotes developmentally appropriate home learning expectations including daily reading and projects. Continuation of work begun during or inspired by school may occur at home. Mindful practice activities may be expected but should never become overwhelming. Students should take part in home chores and family events (i.e., real "homework" at home). This extends the school's practical life program and leads to success in maturity. Parents should communicate with teachers if they have questions about home learning at any time during the year.

Homework Policy

Traditional homework assignments like worksheets or excessive reading assignments are not typical in Montessori classrooms. We encourage students to take their work home only if they did not get it done in the classroom or if they are genuinely interested in it or need additional practice to master a concept. From time-to-time project-based work will be assigned based on developmental readiness.

MIDDLE YEARS & HIGH SCHOOL

7TH-12TH GRADE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

2025-2026

The Desert Garden Montessori School Middle Years and High School (MYHS) Program is a continuation of the Montessori program offered for students from ages of six week through the Upper Elementary Program. In line with Montessori philosophy and pedagogy, students entering the Third Plane, (ages 12-18) have a prepared environment that looks different than the classrooms for the students in the earlier planes of development. As such, children in the Secondary program have a program that looks more traditional in nature but includes many additional components that are meant to prepare students for life beyond high school.

At the Secondary Level, Montessori is less detailed regarding courses, curriculum, and lessons, but much more focused on delivery, student outcomes, executive function, and higher order thinking. Secondary Montessori teacher education prepares the Montessori Guide to work with children and deliver a whole child experience that includes academics, but also includes many other skills aimed to serve children beyond high school. A goal of a Montessori Secondary Program is to prepare children for success in whichever field they choose as they navigate post-Secondary life.

DGM is proud to be a fully authorized International Baccalaureate (IB) World School for the Middle Years Programme (MYP). IB is a natural offering for our secondary students because the philosophy is so complimentary to Montessori. The synergy between Montessori and IB is powerful because it encourages students to become engaged learners while simultaneously preparing them for the rigors of college life.

The MYP is implemented in grades 7-10. Students in grades 11 and 12 progress onto a secondary school course of study in which they continue with advanced academics focused on real world application of learning, experiences, and growth. In alignment with Montessori and IB philosophies, students in all grades 7-12 engage in rigorous academic study as they explore, develop, and celebrate their unique talents. The hands-on curriculum has a strong focus on individual and group inquiry, global awareness, and sustainability concepts. In keeping with Montessori philosophy and best practices, student achievement is measured using mastery-based rubrics instead of a more traditional grading system.

The International Baccalaureate MYHS is a curriculum that works within the Montessori framework and supplements the program but is NOT mutually exclusive with Montessori.

A Desert Garden Montessori Graduate

The MYHS program is designed to encourage students to become independent learners who can discover the relationships between school subjects and the world. The IB MYP emphasizes the study of traditional subject groups: English (Language and Literature), a foreign language (Language Acquisition), Social Studies (Individuals and Societies), Sciences, Mathematics, Arts, Design, and Physical and Health Education, as dynamic conceptual tools, constructed by experts with the purpose of helping students make sense of the natural, social and cultural worlds around them. Emphasis is on written and oral communication, as well as international mindedness.

When our students graduate, they:

- understand their role in a global world as a global citizen
- are prepared for college and the world
- exhibit the 10 IB learner profile traits: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective.
- are independent and active participants in their learning
- are inquisitive and curious about the world

DGM Graduation Requirements

Students at Desert Garden will complete a course of study during grades 9-12 that satisfy Arizona State Standards. They will complete these courses within the framework of Montessori, that includes many experiences that are not graduation requirements of the state of Arizona but are requirements of Desert Garden Montessori School. We ensure that each student in our high school (Grades 9-12) are on a pathway that meets the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) university admissions requirements, in addition to our International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme requirements in grades 9 and 10.

Upon completion of grades 9-12, students will have completed:

- 4 credits of English
- 4 credits of Mathematics
- 3 years of Lab Sciences
- 4 years of Social Sciences
- 2 years of Foreign Language
- 3 credits of Fine Arts
- 1 credit of Design
- 1 credit of Physical & Health Education
- 4 credits of additional electives
- 10-20 hours of documented service work per semester of high school
- IB MYP Personal Project (10th Grade)
- Passing score on the Arizona Civics Exam
- 12th Grade Praxis Project

A total of 26 credits are needed for graduation.

The International Baccalaureate (IB)

The International Baccalaureate® (IB) is a global program recognized in 75 countries, at more than 2000 universities and colleges. IB aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end, the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

The IB continuum of international education, for students age 3-19, is unique because of its academic and personal rigor, challenging students to excel in both their studies and personal growth. The IB aims to inspire a quest for learning throughout life that is marked by enthusiasm and empathy. The IB aspires to help schools develop well-rounded students, who respond to challenges with an open mind, are confident in their own identities, make ethical decisions, join with others in celebrating our common humanity, and are prepared to apply what they learn in real-world, complex, and unpredictable situations. The IB offers high quality programs of international education that share a powerful vision. An IB education: focuses on learners, develops effective approaches to teaching and learning, works within global contexts, and explores significant and balanced content.

Middle Years Program (MYP) Overview

The MYP is part of the IB continuum for learning and is designed for students aged 11-16. It provides a framework of learning that encourages students to become creative, critical, and reflective thinkers. The MYP emphasizes intellectual challenge, encouraging students to make connections between their studies in traditional subjects and the real world. It fosters development of skills for communication, intercultural understanding, and global engagement. The MYP aims to address a student's education holistically, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. It provides student opportunities to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills in order to manage a complex world and future. The MYP also ensures both breadth & depth of understanding through study in 8 subject groups, service learning, and a foreign language emphasis. Finally, the MYP aims to prepare students for further education, the workplace, and a lifetime of learning.

Parents who want the best possible education for their children choose the MYP because it includes:

- rigorous learning objectives
- student-centered approach to teaching
- international perspectives
- concern for the whole child
- focus on learning how to learn
- the development of thinking that prepares students to evaluate information critically and apply knowledge in complex, unfamiliar situations
- teaching tools for lifelong learning and fosters responsible attitudes

The IB Learner Profile

At the core of all IB Programme is the learner profile, 10 attributes fostered in students that promote their development as responsible members of their local, national and global communities. IB learners strive to be inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective. In the MYP, students study eight subject groups, with a minimum of 50 teaching hours per subject group each year.

Curriculum Model & Classes

As an International Baccalaureate World School, our core curriculum consists of eight subject areas and a variety of electives. Electives vary from year to year based on student interest. In harmony with Montessori, these subject areas all have foundations in inquiry- based learning, experiential learning and promote the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. You will see many IB/cross-curricular ties throughout the program that are unique to DGM such as, global travel opportunities, field trips, Seed Spot (young entrepreneur program), our student run café, organic hot lunch, and social service projects.

DGM requires at least 50 hours of teaching time for each subject group in each year of the program. In grades 9 and 10, students have the option to take courses from six of the eight subject groups within certain limits, to provide greater flexibility in meeting local requirements and individual student learning needs. Each year, students in the MYP also engage in at least one collaboratively planned interdisciplinary unit that involves at least two subject groups.

MYP students also complete a long-term, capstone project in 8th and 10th grade, where they decide what they want to learn about, identify what they already know, discover what they will need to know to complete the project, and create a proposal and criteria for completing it.

Core Subjects	Electives
Mathematics Language & Literature Language Acquisition Individuals & Societies Sciences Design The Arts PE & Health	Photography Drones Coding Ceramics Physical Fitness Life Skills Rock Band Video Production Gardening & Sustainability Concurrent College Courses

Distinctive features and “big ideas” in the IB MYP include:

- Key and related concepts are big ideas, which form the basis of teaching and learning in the MYP. They ensure breadth and depth in the curriculum and promote learning within and across traditional disciplines.
- Global contexts provide shared starting points for inquiry into what it means to be internationally minded, framing a curriculum that promotes multilingualism, intercultural understanding and global engagement.
- Approaches to teaching and learning, a unifying thread throughout all MYP subject groups, are skills which help students manage their own learning. They provide a foundation for success in further education and the world beyond the classroom.
- Action and service, essential components of the MYP, set out clear learning outcomes that grow from students’ participation in local and global communities. MYP projects are informed by respected models of service learning and provide steppingstones toward the Diploma Program’s core requirements for Creativity, Action and Service (CAS).
- The personal project and community project are culminating experiences in year 8 and year 10 in which students apply their approaches to learning skills to complete an extended, self-directed piece of work. This required component provides opportunities for creative and truly personal demonstrations of learning.

Let’s dive deeper into each of these big ideas.

Concept Driven Learning

Concepts are big, enduring, and relevant ideas that transcend time and culture. Concepts enable inquiry into issues that have personal and global significance. Concepts have multiple dimensions and definitions, which enable student engagement with higher order thinking as they connect facts and skills with more complex conceptual understanding. As defined by the IB, “Concepts represent the vehicle for students’ inquiry into issues and ideas of personal, local, and global significance, providing the means by which the essence of a subject can be explored.” The MYP identifies 16 key concepts for curriculum exploration.

Each unit of study develops one key concept through a variety of learning activities and investigations. The key concepts are: Aesthetics, Change, Connections, Creativity, Form, Global Interactions, Perspective, Relationships, Communication, Communities, Culture, Development, Identity, Logic, Time/Place/Space, and System.

Global Contexts

Students learn best when their learning experiences have context and are connected to their lives and their experience of the world. Using global contexts, MYP students develop an understanding of their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet through developmentally appropriate explorations of these six ideas:

- identities and relationships
- personal and cultural identity
- orientations in space and time
- scientific & technical innovation
- fairness and development
- globalization and sustainability

When teachers select a global context for learning, they are answering the following questions:

- Why are we engaged in this inquiry?
- Why are these topics important?
- Why is it important for me to understand?
- Why do people care about this topic?

The six MYP Global Contexts inspire explorations of our common humanity and invite reflection on local, national and global communities, as well as the real-life issues.

Approaches to Learning

A unifying thread throughout all MYP subject groups, approaches to learning (ATL) provide the foundation for independent learning and encourage the application of their knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts. In our program, we teach skills from the same category each quarter across all subject areas. Teachers are responsible for explicitly teaching these skills throughout their classes.

Developing and applying these social, thinking, research, communication and self-management skills helps students learn how to learn.

Some of the key questions to be answered by students with respect to ATL skills include:
What are my present skills in this area and what evidence do I have of my development?
What skills can I improve?
What new skills can learn?

The skills are broken down into categories and more specifically into clusters.

ATL Skill Categories	MYP ATL Skill Clusters
Communication	Communication
Social	Collaboration
Self-Management	Organization
	Affective
	Reflection
Research	Information Literacy
	Media Literacy
Thinking	Critical Thinking
	Creative Thinking
	Transfer

The MYP Projects

Service as learning is a major component of the Middle Years and High School program. Students participate in service as action by completing the Community Project in 8th grade and the Personal Project in 10th grade. MYP projects encourage students to reflect on their learning and the outcomes of their work – key skills that prepare them for success in further study, the workplace and the community. MYP projects are student-centered and age-appropriate, and they enable students to engage in practical explorations through a cycle of inquiry, action and reflection.

The aims of the MYP projects are to encourage and enable students to:

- participate in a sustained, self-directed inquiry within a global context
- generate creative new insights and develop deeper understandings through in-depth investigation
- demonstrate skills, attitudes and knowledge required to complete a project over an extended period of time
- communicate effectively in a variety of situations
- demonstrate responsible action through, or as a result of, learning
- appreciate the process of learning and take pride in their accomplishments

Please make sure to attend out parent workshops in the fall with Ms. Krista to learn more. More detailed information will be sent home to our 8th graders and high school students participating in the MYP projects towards the end of 1st quarter each year.

The 8th Grade Community Project

The Community Project is a significant and experiential activity in which students participate and is a required project in 8th grade at DGM. The community project engages students in a sustained, in depth inquiry process that leads to service as action in the community. By focusing on community service students are given an opportunity to develop awareness of needs in various communities and address those needs through service learning. Students define a need in a local or global community that they feel passionately about and then develop a goal to address this need.

Examples of projects are things such as building a school or community garden, developing a fair-trade awareness campaign, raising funds to provide entertainment in the children's hospital, or organizing a pet adoption event. This project can be completed in groups of a maximum of three students. The choice of topic for the project is made in consultation with an IB teacher who has the responsibility for supervising the development of the project according to the Assessment Criteria which is based on International Baccalaureate Organization guidelines.

The 10th Grade Personal Project

The MYP personal project is a 10th grade requirement. This is a long-term project of approximately 25 hours of work. It is designed as an independent learning experience. The process and completion of the Personal Project assesses a student's Approaches to Learning skills for self-management, research, communication, critical and creative thinking, and collaboration. The goal of The Personal Project is for students to practice and strengthen their ATL skills, while simultaneously connecting classroom knowledge with personal experience.

IB states that students address personal project objectives through:

- the process they follow
- the product or outcome they create
- the report or presentation they make that explains what they have done and learned

Students document the process and development of their ideas by developing an outline of a challenging but manageable goal (such as a business plan, campaign, or scientific experiment). Students then document their project work in a process journal, which can take many forms and can be recorded in a variety of media. They represent an “evolving record of plans, ideas and accomplishments. The process journal provides a repository for essential reflections on learning and formative feedback on students’ work. The IB MYP certificate requires a satisfactory level of achievement in the personal project.

Grades 7-12 Yearly Plan

All students follow the MYHS Yearly Plan and take the courses outlined below in each program year. When students enter 9th grade, a graduate plan is created to ensure student stay on track for their post-high school goals and create individualized experiences, like taking college classes. Details on experiences and projects listed below are found in the pages following this chart.

Middle School: Grades 7 & 8 – IB MYP

Grades	Courses	Experiences	Projects
7	English 7 History 7 Transition Math or Pre-Algebra Science 7 Spanish 7 Art 7 Design 7 PHE 7	Electives Service/Volunteerism School Clubs SEL Program Campout Trip Field Study Trip Student Government	Mercado Semester Showcase
8	English 8 History 8 Pre-Algebra or Algebra 1 Science 8 Spanish 8 Art 8 Design 8 PHE 8	Electives Service/Volunteerism School Clubs SEL Program Campout Trip Field Study Trip Student Government	Mercado Semester Showcase 8th Grade Community Project

High School: Grades 9 & 10 – IB MYP

Grades	Courses	Experiences	Projects
9	English 9 World History or US History Algebra 1 or Geometry Biology or Chemistry Spanish 1 or 2 Art 9 Design 9 PHE 9	Electives Service/Volunteerism School Clubs SEL Program Campout Trip Field Study Trip Student Government	Mercado Semester Showcase
10	English 10 World History or US History Geometry or Algebra 2 Biology or Chemistry Spanish 2 or 3 Art 10 Design 10 PHE 10	Electives Service/Volunteerism School Clubs SEL Program Campout Trip Field Study Trip Student Government	Mercado Semester Showcase 10th Grade MYP Personal Project Award: The IB MYP Certificate

High School: Grades 11 & 12

Grades	Courses	Experiences	Projects
11	English 11 Gov/Econ or Social Science Elective Algebra 2 or Precalculus or Statistics/Applied Math Physics or Chemistry Art 11 Design 11 PE 11	Concurrent College Classes Travel & Internships Experiences Service & Volunteerism SEL Program Campout Trip Field Study Trip Student Government Post-Secondary Planning	Semester Showcase Portfolio/Resume Building
12	English 12 Government/Economics or Social Science Elective Precalculus or Statistics/Applied Math Art/Design/PE optional Leadership or EVIT College/Career Course	Concurrent College Classes EVIT Career & Tech Programs Travel & Internships Experiences Service & Volunteerism SEL Program Campout Trip Field Study Trip Student Government Post-Secondary Planning	Semester Showcase Portfolio/Resume Building Praxis Project

Experiences in MYHS

A student in Desert Garden's MYHS program has a wide breadth of experience that he/she will partake in as part of their time in the program. These experiences are designed to foster a love for learning, a sense of responsibility and caring for our community, and to prepare students for their futures.

- **Electives:** Every semester, students have opportunities to participate in electives and club options. These options are created organically based on student interest. In the past we have offered electives and club such as: Sustainability & Gardening, Yearbook, Chess, Ceramics, Video Production, Rock Band, Coding, Physical Fitness, Yoga, and many others!
- **Service/Volunteerism:** Service as action is a major part of the student experience in MYHS. Students must document 10-20 hours of service work per semester as a student in our program.
- **Post-Secondary Planning:** Students in high school have dedicated time each week to work through College Board curriculum that prepares students for applying to college.
- **Concurrent Enrollment:** We are proud to partner with Arizona State University and Maricopa Community Colleges to offer students opportunities to take college credit classes while still in high school!
- **Campouts and Field Studies:** Each fall students plan an annual campout at the end of the 1st quarter. This trip is a team and community building opportunity where students and teachers can bond before fall break. Throughout the school year students collaborate with teachers to plan for the Spring annual field study trip. Students plan service work and experiential learning while traveling to a destination. In the past, field study trips have gone to places like Texas, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico!
- **Internships:** Students in 11th and 12th grade have options for internship opportunities to earn credit towards graduation. We have partnerships with local businesses where students can apply and attend internships in the afternoons several days a week.
- **Partnerships:** Our partnerships EVIT, ASU Prep Digital, and the local community college system allows students to branch out and pursue passions in a wide variety of ways during their junior and senior years.

Projects in MYHS

Throughout the program, students participate in capstone projects. The projects are designed for students to have the opportunity to showcase their learning and synthesize work from all different subject areas.

- **Mercado: An annual tradition** beginning in the Elementary program at Desert Garden, students participate each year in Mercado - a marketplace hands-on learning project. Students work in groups to develop a product, sell it, and manage money. At the MYHS level, Mercado has is an annual fundraising event. Students work in teams to create businesses. They sell their product or service and use the funds to help support the MYHS field study trip in May.

- **Semester Showcase:** At the end of the second quarter each year, students participate in the MYHS Winter Showcase. During this event, students display projects from interdisciplinary from the fall semester.
- **MYP Projects:** As an MYP program, our students complete the IB projects during their time in 8th and 10th grade
- **Community project:** Each MYP 8th Grade student works on the community project. This project encourages students in to explore their right and responsibility to implement service and action in the community. Students may complete the community project individually or in small groups.
- **Personal project:** Each MYP 10th Grade student develops a personal project independently, producing a truly personal and creative piece of work that provides an excellent demonstration of their ability to conduct independent work. A unifying thread throughout all MYP subject groups is 'approaches to learning' which provide the foundation for independent learning and encourages the application of students' knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts.
- **12th Grade Praxis Project:** Our Praxis Project is an interdisciplinary project that requires students to explore academically an issue of their choosing. It calls on students to connect various disciplines and guides them to an understanding of the subject matter beyond the recall of facts and completion of single-subject projects. Through consultations and workshops with partners from ASU, students are led through the process of writing an academic research paper. Students then will present their year-long learning to our DGM community in a Ted Talk style presentation before graduation.

College Credit & Concurrent Enrollment

Desert Garden has an established partnership with ASU Prep Digital and EVIT (East Valley Institute of Technology). We also work with the Maricopa County Community College system. These organizations help us to provide students with college credit opportunities through our school as we continue to develop and grow.

Parent Education

Making the transition from upper elementary into our International Baccalaureate / Montessori blended program in Middle and High school is exciting, but also comes with a learning curve for students and parents. For this reason, we hold parent workshops throughout the year. Dates are available on the DGM circulation calendar. We will also share specific topics through our Take 2 emails and via Transparent Classroom. Topics will include things such as:

- Assessment and grading through IB rubrics
- the MYP projects (expectations & timeline)
- teaching through inquiry
- Field study trip
- and any topics that are of interest or need to be addressed as the school year progresses.

Assessment

In MYHS, we believe that assessment is an essential tool for developing engaging curriculum and encouraging active student learning. We believe learning occurs when teachers and students aim for purposeful and appropriately challenging learning goals.

The purpose of assessment is to:

- support curricular goals and encourage student learning.
- inform, enhance, and improve the teaching process.
- promote positive student attitudes towards learning.
- support the development of rigorous learning experiences and outcomes by describing clear and directed learning objectives.
- support students' developing responsibility for monitoring and sustaining their own learning.
- Assessment of student work, learning, and progress is a community effort. Teachers, administrators, parents and most importantly the student herself or himself will be responsible for participating in the assessment process.

In MYHS we use criterion-based assessment. This is different from traditional grading as we do not use an arithmetical average to calculate a final grade. Traditional percentage based final grades can represent achievement attained, but frequently fail to drive learning or support progress for all students. Our assessment approach establishes goals and practices to enable DGM students, teachers, and parents to use the information assessments provide to improve learning outcomes and instruction.

Criterion Based Grading

In accordance with the IB MYP and Montessori philosophy, assessments in MYHS are criterion-based. Grades are based upon pre-determined criteria set by the IBO (in grades 7-10) and DGM administration (in grades 11-12).

"Criterion-based" means that teachers measure student work and achievement against specific subject area criteria, not against other individuals in the class. Scores are a combination of qualitative and quantitative information. Each of our 8 core subject groups, as well as the Community & Personal Projects, have their own set of assessment criteria that increases in expectations as a student progresses in MYHS from 7th-12th grade.

The 4 assessment criteria categories for each subject are shown in the table below. Teachers develop task-specific rubrics with objectives and descriptive levels of achievement for each formative and summative assignment. The same subject specific criteria are used in each subject area throughout the entire MYHS program, with increasing expectations for mastery as they progress.

Assessment is transparent, meaning that students are given rubrics and know exactly what is expected of them prior to starting new learning. Criteria are focused on at different times in the year in each class and given final grades on report cards two times each year, at the end of 1st semester and the end of 2nd semester. The teacher uses professional judgment to determine the final achievement level of the student. It is NOT an arithmetical average.

MYHS Assessment Criteria Categories by Subject

Subject Area	A	B	C	D
English Language & Literature	Analyzing	Organizing	Producing Text	Using Language
Spanish Language Acquisition	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
Social Science Individuals & Societies	Knowing and Understanding	Investigating	Communicating	Thinking Critically
Science Sciences	Knowing and Understanding	Inquiring and Designing	Processing and Evaluating	Reflecting on the Impacts of Science
Math Mathematics	Knowing and Understanding	Investigating Patterns	Communicating	Applying Mathematics in Real-World Contexts
Art Visual Arts	Knowing and Understanding	Developing Skills	Thinking Creatively	Responding
PE Physical & Health Education	Knowing and Understanding	Planning for Performance	Applying and Performing	Reflecting and Improving Performance
Design Design	Inquiring and Analyzing	Developing Ideas	Creating the Solution	Evaluating

Types of Assessment

Assessments are part of every unit. These indicate student progress towards mastery of specific objectives that were taught, as well as challenge students to examine their work in its entirety and build skills necessary for advanced coursework in the future.

Summative assessments are designed to:

- Enhance student learning by providing feedback on the learning process.
- Provide opportunities for students to exhibit transfer of skills and knowledge across disciplines.
- Promote positive student attitudes towards learning.
- Promote a deep understanding of subject content by supporting students in their inquiries set in real- world contexts.
- Promote the development of critical – and creative – thinking skills.
- Reflect the international mindedness of the program by designing assessments to be set in a variety of cultural and linguistic contexts.

Summative assessments are typically at the end of each quarter and may include:

- Exams
- Portfolio
- Projects
- Formal presentations
- Formal essays
- Research projects

Renaissance Testing (STAR)

Desert Garden Montessori administers a computer based, CAT (Computer Adaptive Technology), standards-based assessment from the Renaissance STAR suite to our students in 7th through 12th grade. This system uses a series of two assessments (Reading and Math), to determine students' placement within state standards and compares their performance to that of same grade level peers.

- This assessment is conducted three times a year: Fall, Winter & Spring
- This assessment is strictly a tool utilized for the teaching team to have an additional perspective on our student's academic progress. Results are not shared with parents, however parents may request the results from the Advisory Teacher.

A parent may opt-out their child from the STAR assessment by contacting your child's Advisory Teacher directly.

Criterion Based Feedback

What does getting criterion-based grades and feedback look like?

Student work is graded using a combination of rubrics and traditional grading methods. As students complete their work and tasks throughout the semester, they are provided with grades and feedback in both ways.

Some assignments are graded on a 1-8 scale using subject specific rubrics, while some work is graded for completion using a point or percentage scale. Both types of grades are important and contribute to a student's final grade in a class. Teachers use a combination of both the qualitative rubric descriptors, as well as quantitative data from completion of student formative and summative work to determine a student's final grade at the end of each marking period using a teacher's "best fit" grade approach.

DGM's assessment policy allows for conversion of criterion-based grades to letter grades. Using letter-grade equivalents helps ease students into understanding criteria and rubric feedback.

Our assessment approach rewards progress and growth made over the school year. The next page's table shows how students learn and grow over the school year. You can use an analogy to understand this grading philosophy. Consider the process to earn a driver's license. When an individual takes a driving test, the score they receive is not averaged with all of their performances behind the wheel as they learned how to drive. In the example below, this student is not punished for learning, rather rewarded for their growth towards mastery.

English Class Assignments graded on Criterion A	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task 6	Other Work	Final Grade
<i>Example Student Grades</i>	3	3	4	6	5	6	92%	A

This student began the marking period at a beginning level and scored a couple of 3's on his work. By the end, however, he was consistently showing mastery, turned in all his work and showed consistent effort. This student was able to achieve an A at the end. This approach rewards students for progress and does not punish students for starting out at a beginner level.

Many assignments are graded using the 1-8 achievement levels on the rubric that corresponds with that assignment and skill. On the rubric below you can see an example of a Subject Specific Rubric showing ONE of the four criterion in science.

Criterion A: Knowing and understanding	
Maximum: 8 At the end of year 1, students should be able to:	
I. outline scientific knowledge II. apply scientific knowledge and understanding to solve problems set in familiar situations and suggest solutions to problems set in unfamiliar situations III. Interpret information to make scientifically supported judgments.	
Achievement level	Level descriptor
0	The student does not reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.
1-2	The student is able to: I. select scientific knowledge II. select scientific knowledge and understanding to suggest solutions to problems set in familiar situations III. apply information to make judgments , with limited success.
3-4	The student is able to: I. recall scientific knowledge II. apply scientific knowledge and understanding to suggest solutions to problems set in familiar situations III. apply information to make judgments .
5-6	The student is able to: I. state scientific knowledge II. apply scientific knowledge and understanding to solve problems set in familiar situations III. apply information to make scientifically supported judgments .
7-8	The student is able to: I. outline scientific knowledge II. apply scientific knowledge and understanding to solve problems set in familiar situations and suggest solutions to problems set in unfamiliar situations III. interpret information to make scientifically supported judgments .

The 3 strands (i, ii, iii) identified for Sciences Criterion A are the intended goals for a student's ability to provide evidence of their knowledge and understanding of course concepts and content. Full attainment of these objectives results in a score of 7 or 8.

All criteria have four bands and a maximum of eight achievement levels.

The bold print distinguishes the differences in the performance level for each band. These terms clarify for students what they need to demonstrate to move from one achievement level to the next. Students are taught how to interpret these terms.

Criterion scores are not averaged. 4 out of 8 does NOT represent a percentage score of 50%. The level descriptors are a better guide to identifying the depth of a student knowledge and understanding.

Accountability & Missing Work

Using the same analogy as above, if a student does not apply for their learner permit, practice regularly and hold their permit for a certain period of time, they are not eligible to get their license. The same approach applies to our grading system. Students are expected to complete their daily classwork and assignments on time and with diligence or will not be eligible for the highest grade. Although we do not calculate an average score at the end of the semester, students who are missing work or who have failed to meet expectations for effort and participation cannot obtain the highest outcomes.

The grade descriptors in our final grade scale include annotations on student work completion. Students who may be academically performing at a high level are at risk of having their grade negatively impacted by missing work.

Grade Reporting

Throughout the semester, students receive regular communication and updates from teachers on academic performance. Teachers focus on two criteria per unit and cover all four for their subject area by the end of each semester. This approach ensures that teachers provide students with authentic and meaningful assessment tasks throughout the year by defining which skills are each unit's focus.

Weekly grades are posted in Google Classroom. At the end of 1st and 3rd quarters students receive a written progress report. Progress reports and Google Classroom grades provide students and their parents with information about the student's engagement with the objectives of each subject group and will be supported with advice for improvement, where applicable. Some work will be graded on criterion-based rubrics, while other work will be graded for completion using a point or percentage system.

At the end of the fall and spring semesters students receive a final report card with an overall achievement level for each course.

Final Grades

The final MYP grade for all subjects can be calculated from the scores in the individual subjects. Each subject has its own table of grade descriptors that correspond with the assessment criteria (above). These descriptors show how the level is obtained (using all subject criteria A, B, C, and D).

To arrive at a semester final grade, teachers add together the student's final achievement levels in all criteria of the subject group to determine a final MYP grade on a scale of 1-7. The grade of 1-7 is an IB MYP grade consistent with MYP schools around the world. Desert Garden Montessori has established a corresponding local letter grade for each of the MYP grades. DGM uses these criterion grades, boundaries, and grade descriptors established by the IBO when grading assessments as described in the table on the next page.

Please see the Final Grade Scale on page 49

Student Transcript Requests

Transcripts are available upon formal request by emailing records@desertgardenmontessori.org. Please allow 7-10 business days for processing.

Semester Grade Calculation

At the end of the semester grading period, a teacher will make a best judgment for each of the four prescribed criteria. All criterion points are added together, and it used to determine a final grade for the semester.

If a student is missing a significant amount of formative work, teachers may make an adjustment the final grade to reflect the descriptor most appropriate on the overall scale. **significant** is defined as below 75% or missing 5+ assignments.

Here are two examples of a semester's grade for a language and literature student:

Language and Literature – Semester Final Grade Example A
Criteria: A: Analyzing – 5 B: Organizing – 6 C: Producing text - 6 D: Using language – 6
Classwork and Formative Tasks: 93%, all assignments turned in
TOTAL = 23
Equivalent of 5 = Letter Grade of A
Final Grade: A

Language and Literature – Semester Final Grade Example B Grade Adjustment Example
A: Analyzing – 5 B: Organizing – 4 C: Producing text - 5 D: Using language – 5
Classwork & Formative Tasks: 63%, missing 5 assignments
TOTAL = 19
Equivalent of 5 = Letter Grade of A
Final Grade: B <i>*Teacher determined that due to missing work a low percentage grade on assignments that the student best fit the description of a B in the MYHS final grade scale.*</i>

Final Grade Scale

Final Grade	Grade Boundaries (Total of 4 criteria added together)	Grade Descriptor	Letter Grade Equivalent
1	1 - 5	<p>Produces work of very limited quality. Conveys many significant misunderstandings or lacks understanding of most concepts and contexts. Very rarely demonstrates critical or creative thinking. Very inflexible, rarely using knowledge or skills.</p> <p>Student requires significant teacher assistance: prompts, directions and reminders. Significant absences and missing/late work are impacting grades. Student does not participate in class.</p>	F
2	6 - 9	<p>Produces work of limited quality. Expresses misunderstandings or significant gaps in understanding for many concepts and contexts. Infrequently demonstrates critical or creative thinking. Generally inflexible in the use of knowledge and skills, infrequently applying knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Student requires significant teacher assistance: prompts, directions and reminders. Significant absences and missing/late work may be impacting grades. Student needs prompting and does not participate regularly in class.</p>	D
3	10 - 14	<p>Produces work of an acceptable quality. Communicates basic understanding of many concepts and contexts, with occasionally significant misunderstandings or gaps. Begins to demonstrate some basic critical and creative thinking. Is often inflexible in the use of knowledge and skills, requiring support even in familiar classroom situations.</p> <p>Student requires some teacher assistance: prompts, directions and reminders. Absences and missing/late work may be impacting grade. Student needs prompting and is hesitant to participate in class.</p>	C
4	15 - 18	<p>Produces good-quality work. Communicates basic understanding of most concepts and contexts with few misunderstandings and minor gaps. Often demonstrates basic critical and creative thinking. Uses knowledge and skills with some flexibility in familiar classroom situations, but requires support in unfamiliar situations.</p> <p>Student completes tasks with little teacher assistance, is rarely absent, turns in most classwork on time, and participates without much prompting.</p>	B
5	19 - 23	<p>Produces generally high-quality work. Communicates secure understanding of concepts and contexts. Demonstrates critical and creative thinking, sometimes with sophistication. Uses knowledge and skills in familiar classroom and real-world situations and, with support, some unfamiliar real-world situations.</p> <p>Student completes tasks without teacher assistance, is on time and rarely absent, and participates regularly. Student completes all classwork on time and demonstrates strong study skills.</p>	A
6	24 - 27	<p>Produces high-quality, occasionally innovative work. Communicates extensive understanding of concepts and contexts. Demonstrates critical and creative thinking, frequently with sophistication. Uses knowledge and skills in familiar and unfamiliar classroom and real-world situations, often with independence.</p> <p>Student completes tasks without teacher assistance, is on time, rarely absent, and participates regularly. Student completes all classwork on time and with diligence and thoroughness. Student demonstrates strong study skills.</p>	A
7	28 - 32	<p>Produces high-quality, frequently innovative work. Communicates comprehensive, nuanced understanding of concepts and contexts. Consistently demonstrates sophisticated critical and creative thinking. Frequently transfers knowledge and skills with independence and expertise in a variety of complex classroom and real-world situations.</p> <p>Student completes tasks without teacher assistance, is on time, rarely absent, and participates with enthusiasm. Student completes all classwork on time and with diligence, thoroughness, and exceeds expectations. Student demonstrates exceptional study skills.</p>	A+

Financial Terms & Conditions

2025-2026

Enrollment Fee

There is a **\$595 non-refundable** Enrollment Fee for each **student**. The Enrollment Fee is **due in full upon enrollment** and before the student's start date. No extensions or payment plans are permitted, and the Enrollment Fee is not pro-rated for late enrollees.

Annual Tuition Commitment.

DGM requires and enforces an Annual Tuition Commitment for the entire academic school year, regardless of attendance.

- Receipt of your signed Enrollment Agreement and payment in full of the Enrollment Deposit secures your child's placement at DGM for the entire/remaining academic school year, unless your child is suspended or dismissed for "good cause," in which case you will not be relieved of the Annual Tuition Commitment.
- "Good cause" includes violations by your child of law or school policy, your failure to pay tuition and fees when due, or your failure to otherwise comply with the terms and conditions of the Enrollment Agreement or with the DGM Parent Handbook.
- **A signed Enrollment Agreement creates an immediate and binding financial commitment to pay tuition for the entire academic school year, regardless of attendance.** For students who start late, the Annual Tuition Commitment applies to all days remaining in the academic school year, i.e., from the student's start date through the last day of school.
- No refunds or credits will be issued for absences, including lengthy absences for family travel during the academic school year.

DGM enforces the Annual Tuition Commitment without exception unless:

- You withdraw your child based on DGM's recommendation, i.e., DGM determines the school cannot meet your child's specific needs; or
- You provide 30 days written notice that you intend to voluntarily withdraw your child and to cancel this Enrollment Agreement, and you pay in full a **\$2,000** Withdrawal Fee at the time you submit the required written notice. You will remain responsible to pay tuition for the final full month during which your 30-day written notice period ends.

Payment Processing

DGM uses FACTS Tuition Management to bill and process payments. DGM families are required to create and maintain an active FACTS account with a valid automatic payment source. All payments are made to FACTS via automatic deductions from a checking, savings, debit, or credit card account. A service fee of **2.95%** applies to debit/credit card payments. DGM is not a party to your separate contractual relationship with FACTS.

Payment Plans

- The **Monthly Payment Plan** requires 10 equal automatic payments due on the 1st day of each month, billed 30 days in advance. August tuition is due on July 1 and the final payment for May tuition is due on April 1 of the following year. If you enroll late, the billing cycle is shortened/prorated according to the date of enrollment and the final payment remains due on April 1 of the following year. An Administrative Fee of **3%** of Annual Tuition applies to the Monthly Payment Plan.
- The **Semi-Annual Payment Plan** requires 2 equal automatic payments. The first payment is due on July 1 and the second payment is due on December 1. This payment plan is not available to late enrollees.
- The **Annual Payment Plan** requires 1 automatic payment due on July 1, or before your child's late start date, for the full 10-month academic school year, or for all days remaining in the academic school year, less a 5% discount applied only to Annual Tuition.

A fee of **\$30** will be assessed for Payment Plan changes, which must be requested in writing by sending an email to finance@desertgardenmontessori.org at least 7 business days before the desired change date.

Late Payments

For all Payment Plans, payments are due on the 1st day of the month, or upon receipt of a FACTS invoice with a 15-day grace period.

- A late fee of **\$40** will be assessed for all late payments.
- If your balance is past due more than 60 days, your child's enrollment will be suspended until the account is brought current.
- Balances past due more than 90 days will be subject to collection and/or legal action. You will be responsible for collection/legal fees, costs, and interest as permitted by Arizona law.
- DGM reserves the right to deny or suspend enrollment and to withhold diplomas, progress reports, and transcripts if your account is delinquent.

Other Charges

Organic Lunch: DGM offers Organic Lunch to all students.

- Organic Lunch is billed annually at **\$2,060** (\$206/month) and is prorated monthly (not weekly or daily).
- No refunds will be issued for meals missed during the month, regardless of the reason.
- Notice of cancelation must be submitted in writing to the Admissions Coordinator by the 15th day of the month, and cancelation will take effect on the first day of the following month. There is no cancelation fee, but there is a **\$100** fee if you later re-enroll.
- The cost of Organic Lunch is included in tuition for Infant/Toddler/Primary Programs.

Extended Day: Extended Day care/supervision is available until the school closes, which on most days is at 6:00 p.m. Please see the 2025-26 At-a-Glance Calendar for dates when closing times vary.

- Extended Day care/supervision is billed annually at **\$4,820 (\$482/month)** and is prorated monthly (not weekly or daily).
- No refunds will be issued for absences, regardless of the reason.
- Notice of cancelation must be submitted in writing to the Admissions Coordinator by the 15th day of the month, and cancelation will take effect on the first day of the following month. There is a \$100 cancelation fee.
- The cost of Childcare Days (see below) is included for those enrolled in Extended Day.

Childcare Days are days when the school is closed for academic instruction but open for care/supervision from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Please see the 2025-26 At-a-Glance Calendar for scheduled Childcare Days.

- The cost of Childcare Days is included for those enrolled in Extended Day (see above) and is billed separately for all others at a flat rate of **\$67** per day for Half Day and **\$120** per day for School Day.
- All students, including those enrolled in Extended Day, must pre-register for Childcare Days.
- There is a "No Show" fee of the daily flat rate and no refunds will be issued for absences, regardless of the reason.

Late Pick-up Fees apply after 12:15 p.m. for Half Day, after 4:00 p.m. for School Day, after 4:00 p.m. on Childcare Days, and after the school closes, which on most days is at 6:00 p.m. Please see the 2025-25 At-a-Glance Calendar for dates when closing times vary. You will be billed **\$30** per child who is picked up 1 to 15 minutes late, plus an additional **\$1** per child for each minute thereafter. **YOU MUST SIGN OUT YOUR CHILD WHEN PICKED UP!** If you fail to sign out your child when picked up, you will be billed **\$5** per child per occurrence.

Summer Session: DGM offers a Summer Session during June and July for current and alumni students. Information about Summer Session registration and fees will be available in March.

Athletic Fees: Additional fees ranging from **\$200** to **\$300** may apply for students who participate in individual sports (e.g., Spartan and Pickleball), for which you will be billed separately by invoice.

Enrichment Classes/Other Incidentals: DGM offers various Enrichment Classes after the school day for students age Primary and older. The cost varies depending on the class and you will be billed separately by invoice, which also is used to bill for other incidentals, e.g., Hearing and Vision testing and the Yearbook.

Student Support Services: DGM's Student Support Services offers various interventions for students in need. Rates vary depending upon the services recommended for your child and you will be asked to sign a separate Student Support Services Agreement. Discounts do not apply to Student Support Services Tuition, but Financial Aid and Scholarships may be used to pay Student Support Services Tuition.

Discounts and Credits

Sibling Discount: A 10% discount applies to the Annual Tuition of younger siblings concurrently enrolled. The Sibling Discount may not be applied in addition to, but may be applied instead of, the Annual Discount of 5% (see below)

Annual Discount: A 5% discount applies to Annual Tuition that is paid in full by July 1, or before your child's late start date. The Annual Discount does not apply to students who receive the Sibling Discount.

Referral Credit: Families who refer a new family to DGM receive a one-time **\$500** credit to the Annual Tuition of one currently enrolled student. The credit will be applied upon completion of the referred student's first academic school year at DGM. **The Referral Credit does not apply to siblings.** If applicable, provide the name of the currently enrolled student who referred you.

Financial Aid

DGM offers Financial Aid to families who demonstrate sufficient need by submitting an online application to FACTS. We rely on our generous donors who support our families in need; resources are limited and vary each year. We begin accepting Financial Aid Applications in March and we make award decisions in June. Applications submitted thereafter will be considered if additional funding becomes available.

School Tuition Organization (STO)

Students ages 5 and older who are enrolled full-time, and who are in grades K-12, may be eligible to receive scholarship awards from School Tuition Organizations (STOs). STOs receive income tax credit contributions that fund scholarships for students to attend qualified Arizona private schools. STO awards are applied to your FACTS account when received. Payment due dates are not deferred for pending STO awards, and you are obligated to honor your selected Payment Plan. If a credit balance exists at the end of the school year after all STO awards have been applied, DGM will issue a refund directly to you.

Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA)

An Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) is an account administered by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and funded by state tax dollars to provide education options for qualified students. Families must sign a contract with the ADE and agree not to accept STO awards concurrently. ESA awards are applied to your FACTS account when received. Payment due dates are not deferred for pending ESA awards, and you are obligated to honor your selected Payment Plan. If a credit balance exists at the end of the school year after all ESA awards have been applied, DGM will issue a refund directly to you.