

Desert Garden Montessori

Dear Parents,

We hope this email finds you well! We are so excited to confirm and share our plans for returning students in August! We are all in great anticipation to see you and, of course, your amazing students. All Desert Garden Montessori faculty and staff have been hard at work preparing for your arrival!

As schools around the globe are trying to figure out what to do this fall, I personally feel extremely fortunate to be a part of small, engaged, cooperative, and caring school community such as ours. We are unique in that we serve a population of students from infant all the way through high school. As result, we are being careful to address each age group accordingly. We are creating these plans and protocols with long-term vision in mind. Our goal is to keep the school open for in-person instruction, safely and consistently, for the duration of the school year. Safety as well as providing live instruction for the well-being of social and emotional needs are our highest priorities. We realize some families must take advantage of distance learning opportunities for now. But with a collected effort, we will once again shine as a community together and be united in one place – our beautiful campus.

I would also like to note, we know there is confusion, worry, and anxiety for so many educators, administrators, parents, and children during this time. We understand this. We also know we are not every other school out there. Please remember we have the ability to be autonomous and to create a successful, joyful scenario. Please do not get caught up in the nightly news. Although it is important to be educated and aware, it is also important to remain calm and to put our learning environment into context for what it is – a wonderful, dedicated, and adaptable school community! We have learned so much in these past months and we will apply all of that knowledge to benefit everyone in our community to be safe, happy, and healthy.

Our community plans have one important requirement, which is dedicated cooperation and commitment from *everyone* involved – faculty, staff, students, and parents. We cannot do this alone. To be part of this school community you will be required to make the pledge and promise as set forth in [this document](#).

Thank you for your continued partnership in serving what is most important – one another!

In Great Anticipation,



Shetal Walters
Executive Director

PLAN B

IN-PERSON and ONLINE learning options

General:

- School hours: 7:00 am – 4:00 pm.
- School buildings and campus open only to enrolled students and staff.
 - Drop off and pick up is curbside only. To ensure social distancing, curbside services are scheduled at staggered times. Details of this drop off procedure will be sent to you in a follow-up communication.
- [COVID-19 Safety Protocols](#) and [Isolation Recommendations](#) will be followed at all times. Protocols will be updated and communicated as health and safety guidelines evolve. Please review as these have been updated.

Mode of Learning – Online or In-Person:

- Parents have the option to start with IN-PERSON and move to ONLINE (and vice versa) learning with a two-week notice to the school.
- Parents will have until **Tuesday, August 4, 2020** to make their final decision before this school year starts.
- Any change from online to in-person will commence on the Monday *following* the two weeks' notice. A student moving from online to in-person will not be admitted to campus mid-week.
 - For example, if a two-week notice is provided to the school on Thursday, September 10th, the student would report to school for in-person learning on Monday, September 28th.
- We request that all families planning to return to IN-PERSON learning please self-quarantine as much as possible for the two weeks prior to your start date.

Classrooms:

- Each IN-PERSON classroom is considered a "Classroom Family," which consists only of the students and teachers/staff assigned to that specific classroom.
 - Classroom Families do not comingle/interact with each other throughout the day. I.e. Classroom 1 will not use the playground at the same time as Classroom 2.
- All Classroom Families have dedicated outdoor time, a minimum of three times per day.
 - Classroom Families do not comingle/interact during this time.
 - The playground areas will be disinfected between Classroom Families.

- Reduced classroom headcounts allow for a minimum of 36-square feet per student (and staff members). For this reason, headcounts may vary from classroom to classroom.
- Each student wears designated indoor/outdoor shoes. Indoor shoes remain on campus and are laundered, as needed, on-site by DGM staff.
- Possibility of very limited numbers of Infant/Toddler/Primary for IN-PERSON programs.
- DGM must adhere to Childcare Governmental Guidelines.

Extended Day:

Extended day will not be offered at this time. As the situation becomes safer, we will consider adding extended day options.

Masks:

Infant, Toddler, and Primary Students

Face masks are not mandatory for students. Personal masks will be on your supply list to support ongoing education and support of a practical life skill.

Lower and Upper Elementary

Face masks are not mandatory for students. Personal masks and fitted neck gaiters will be on your supply list to support ongoing education in the classroom. Teachers will present the proper use of face coverings as a practical life skill and as part of a social responsibility discussion for students of this age range. It is important to create understanding rather than a forced position as Desert Garden is a community that believes in educating the individual to create an understanding for the common good and for care of self and others.

Middle Year & High School Students (MYHS)

Face masks or fitted neck gaiters are required for students while on campus. * Students will be required to wear face masks or fitted neck gaiters in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Students of this age range have a much more developmentally-sound ability and understanding than our younger students. Due to the nature of the classes and experiences students have throughout the day, they will also be with various teachers. All teachers will wear PPE during instructional times.

* When safe social distancing is available, significant masks breaks will be provided within classrooms (per teacher's discretion and instruction). All

Classroom Families will also have dedicated outdoor time a minimum of three times per day. As weather permits, outdoor time will increase.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

At the time of this communication, we are planning to officially start the school year on Monday, August 17, 2020. We will update you of any changes by **July 30, 2020**. We strive to transition to Plan A when it is most appropriate and responsible for the health and safety of our students, staff, and families. We will continue to offer in-person learning and distant learning to all students.

WELCOME BACK WEEK

August 10th – August 14th

This week will be used to conduct an extended orientation for all the parents, students, and faculty. Logistics are a big part of the success of this plan, and it will take proper training of parents, staff, and students. Students will not be in class during this week. Please understand this time will be spent helping parents and students understand what is to be expected, routines, introductions, welcome meetings, online learning training, and more. A detailed schedule will be sent out by July 24th with specifics. It is important you get to know the members of your classroom families, especially during this unique time, so we will also be hosting classroom family Ice Cream Socials during this week!

CALENDAR ADJUSTMENTS

2020 – 2021 School Calendar Adjustment

- Start date changed to **August 17th**
 - Previous start date was August 10th
 - Designated make-up days for 5 of these days will be **October 5 – 9, 2020**, which was previously scheduled as Fall Break.
 - This is a dynamic situation, but we are committed to making up these additional five missed days throughout the school year. We will share details regarding these five dates as soon as possible.

PLEDGE FORM

Our community plans have one important requirement, which is dedicated cooperation and commitment from *everyone* involved – faculty, staff, students, and parents. We cannot do this alone. To be part of this school community you will be required to make the pledge and promise as set forth in [this document](#).

TO RECEIVE UPDATES:

Desert Garden is launching a brand new website that will be full of useful information! Please use this as your central point of finding relevant information quickly and efficiently. Coming soon at DesertGardenMontessori.org.

If you would like to make changes regarding your preferred Instruction Type (Online or In-Person), you must **Complete this Form** by **August 4, 2020**.

Our COVID-19 Safety Videos will be updated to reflect our Fall 2020 plans, but feel free to watch our current summer videos on our [Vimeo channel here](#).

We vow to continue to work hard on your behalf, and to preserve the integrity and commitment to our school community.