

Dear Parents,

I hope this email finds you, once again, staying healthy and ready for the upcoming school year! We miss all of you and all of the children very much.

We know everyone is in a unique place with this pandemic and each family has a varied level of concern, understanding, and needs.

As the Director of Desert Garden Montessori, I have the tough job of leveling all of that variation to one voice, one decision, and one method, so everyone can be together safely. Below are the high-level points you need to know.

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 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. 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!

Infant/Toddler/Primary

Mode of Learning:

- In-Person Instruction – 5 full days per week
- Online Instruction – 5 full days per week

Mask Policy:

- Face masks are mandatory for adults on campus – inside and outside of all classrooms.
- Face masks are not mandatory for students. For Primary students, personal masks will be on your supply list to support ongoing education and support of a practical life skill.

Classroom Families:

- 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.
 - Campus closed to anyone other than staff and students.

Lower Elementary/Upper Elementary

Mode of Learning:

- In-Person Instruction – 5 full days per week
- Online Instruction – 5 full days per week
- *(new)* Alternating Days Option
 - Monday / Wednesday In-Person + Tuesday / Thursday / Friday Online *or*
 - Tuesday / Thursday In-Person + Monday / Wednesday / Friday Online

Mask Policy:

- Face masks are mandatory for adults on campus – inside and outside of all classrooms.
- Face masks on students are based upon teacher discretion and direction per activity and/or spatial allowance. We expect parents to support the effort in wearing masks in classrooms as needed.

We appreciate your ongoing support of our teachers in this effort as it protects the safety and wellness of not only your children, but our beloved on-site staff members as well. 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.

Classroom Families:

- 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 mingle/interact with each other throughout the day. I.e. Classroom 1 will not use the playground at the same time as Classroom 2.
 - Campus closed to anyone other than staff and students.

Middle Years/High School

Mode of Learning:

- In-Person Instruction – 5 full days per week
- Online Instruction – 5 full days per week
- *(new)* Alternating Days Option
 - Monday / Wednesday In-Person + Tuesday / Thursday / Friday Online *or*
 - Tuesday / Thursday In-Person + Monday / Wednesday / Friday Online

Mask Policy:

- Face masks are mandatory for adults on campus – inside and outside of all classrooms.
- 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 mask 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.

Classroom Families:

- 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 mingle/interact with each other throughout the day.
 - Campus closed to anyone other than staff and students.

Traffic Pattern for Entering Campus:

We are requiring all traffic to enter the school from the 51st Street entrance. No access will be admitted from the current Warner Road entrance. For your wellness and safety, we are preparing efficient and safe drop-off and pick-up procedures. To prepare for this, we will be sending all parents a drop-off and pick-up time selection email. You will receive this email Friday, July 31, 2020.

Mode of Instruction Change:

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

Upcoming Updates:

From this point forward, we will provide you a weekly update. Next week, you will receive the following:

- Detailed Safety Protocols
- Confirmation email with classroom assignments
- Links to our new website with complete information
- Welcome letters and supply lists
- Details on the week of Aug 10th Orientation Week
- First day of school details
- Daily schedules for all Modes of Instruction
- New software updates for Check-In and Daily Communication

I know you receive a lot of information with each update. The most important thing to understand is that we are in this **together**.

Parents, to take advantage of the benefits of in-person learning on campus, we truly need you to be serious regarding exercising safety precautions *outside* of school as well. Our on-campus safety protocols are only as strong as the families involved in them. We trust you will make social gathering sacrifices during this time in order to keep our community safe.

This reality is not forever. However, it is important we do our best to keep each other safe. Without our amazing teachers here to teach, there will be no school, no community, and no DGM. Please help us serve you and work with us to create a model school for which others can gain valuable insight. We can do this together.

I will be hosting another Zoom call next Tuesday for each classroom family. We will work together to make this a successful and joyful adventure!

With great anticipation and enthusiasm,



Shetal Walters
Executive Director