



## PARENT HANDBOOK

2018-2019

**DESERT GARDEN MONTESSORI**

5130 East Warner Road

Phoenix, AZ 85044

**PHONE:** 480.496.9833

**FAX:** 480.705.8579

[www.desertgardenmontessori.org](http://www.desertgardenmontessori.org)

**HOURS OF OPERATION**

Monday through Friday

7:00 A.M – 6:00 P.M.

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## 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 book thoroughly and retain it for future reference.

The school does not require parents to sign a document stating that they have accessed and read a copy of this Parent Handbook. However, we do consider parents to be responsible for understanding and honoring the policies contained herein. If you should have any questions regarding this content, feel free to ask a staff member.

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.

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's mission is to create an environment for students where they are encouraged to explore, create, learn, socialize, and celebrate their unique talents. The school is committed to developing within each student a sense of responsibility and interdependence with their community and world. Accordingly, Desert Garden's philosophy encourages students to appreciate and respect nature and the environment. Like the flowers in a garden, students will learn and grow together in peaceful coexistence. Thus, the name "Desert Garden Montessori".

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

## 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](http://www.azdhs.gov)

## Facility Reports & Insurance

The Arizona Department of Health Services runs facility inspections annually. If you wish to see any facility inspection report, they are available upon request through the front desk.

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 the front desk.

## Teacher Credentials/Qualifications

A trained and certified Montessori teacher leads every classroom at DGM, with the exception off MYHS as part of our International Baccalaureate Candidate Program. 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 degrees, as well as Arizona state teacher certification.

The Middle Years and High School teachers who are responsible for core subjects have additional qualifications related to International Baccalaureate instruction. More information can be found in the Middle Years and High School (MYHS) Handbook.

In addition to the educational component, only lead teachers who have a passion for working with and educating students are hired. If you would like to review the qualifications of any teaching faculty, they are available upon request from the Human Resources director.

## Accreditation

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

DGM is also an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program Candidate school. More information on authorization can be found in the MYHS Handbook.

## 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 learning needs. Students will be considered based upon available class space at the time of application.

## 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 is 1:4, toddler is 1:6, and primary is 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 1:15 ratio during instructional times.

## Disclosure Policy

DGM's mission is to serve your student and your family to the best of our abilities. 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 during the application process. 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.

## Emergency Cards, Immunizations and Birth Certificates

Emergency Cards MUST be reviewed and signed before your student may start school. If we do not have your emergency card on file your student will not be allowed to attend.

Updates to information on a student's emergency card, including any changes to allergies and special needs, are the ongoing responsibility of the parent.

Immunization forms must be updated as changes occur.

A copy of a birth certificate is required for each enrolled student.

## Checking In and Out

DGM utilizes a check in/out system called Procure that allows DGM to automate the process of signing students in and out and eliminates the need for a paper-based sign-in book.

All students must be checked in/out each time the student is dropped off or picked up from the school. The Procure check in/out system can be accessed at a front desk computer or a curbside tablet. Once a child is checked out, the student is the responsibility of the parent, even if the student/parent remains on school grounds.

The Procure system accurately logs your student's attendance and clock-in/out times. Administration is also to leave parents individual or groups messages as needed.

Each person authorized to pick up a child must register for a Procure account. Registration can only take place at the front desk computer. The school will provide each authorized pickup person a unique 6-digit code which will be used to activate the authorized pickup persons account. An authorized user is a parent, legal guardian or person listed on a student's Emergency Card.

Parents of students who are in the MYHS program may complete an [Unaccompanied Minor Permission form](#), which will allow the student to check him/herself in and out. MYHS students may only check in/out themselves (no siblings) and must check in/out at the front desk.



All authorized pickup persons create a unique personal ID (PIN) and password combination when registering at the check-in computer. The PIN and Password combination is known ONLY to the individual and is not accessible to any other persons including staff members. This feature was developed to meet regulations in many states which require you to demonstrate that your attendance records accurately reflect the people who picked up or dropped off a child. So, please DO NOT SHARE your PIN and Password with anyone.

**Note:** The PIN and password numbers cannot be sequential (like 1234 or 4567) or repetitive (like 1111 or 2222). The password must be different than the PIN number.

**Note:** Administration will need at least 48 hours' notice to add an authorized user to the Procure system. Authorized users who are NOT parents will be required to show their ID prior to receiving their activation code.

## 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, 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.

If a person picking up is not listed on the Emergency Card, parents are required to complete an [Authorization to Pick Up form](#) and submit to the front desk in order to release the student at time of pick-up. Verbal notification for pick-up is not permitted. Authorization to Pick Up forms are also available at the front desk.

Parents of Infant Half Day students may pick their children from the Infant classroom. All other Half Day students will be brought to the lobby for pick-up.

## Curbside Drop-off & Pick-up Policy & Procedure

As a courtesy to families, DGM offers curbside drop-off and pick-up during regularly scheduled school days.

There is no curbside service on childcare-only or summer program days and DGM offers only drop-off service on early release days.

### Curbside Hours of Operation

7:00 am - 7:55 am	Drop Off	All students
2:30 pm - 2:45 pm	Pick Up	Primary
3:15 pm - 3:30 pm	Pick Up	Lower Elementary
3:30 pm - 3:45 pm	Pick Up	Upper Elementary
3:45 pm - 4:00 pm	Pick Up	MYHS

## Curbside Protocol

- ❖ Please place car seats and students on passenger 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 car or stop the car and get out of vehicle to assist your child.
- ❖ Please pull car all the way up to the clipboard check-in location.
- ❖ Do not exit the vehicle at any time.
- ❖ No vehicles should be left running in the parking lot.
- ❖ Do not leave students or animals unattended in parked cars.
- ❖ During pick-up and release of students, it is difficult to check IDs at curbside. If DGM staff does not recognize an individual, that person will be asked to park and come in with identification.
- ❖ Please be patient while waiting in line at curb for your student, as the students' safety is DGM's main concern.
- ❖ Parents must check in their student(s) in at the curb.
- ❖ Parents may drop off MYHS students who have permission to check themselves in at the curb but must stay in the curb line before exiting. (Please do not pull out of the middle of the curb line as it is dangerous for pedestrians in the parking lot.)
- ❖ **No parking in front of the school at any time.**
- ❖ **No car seats may be stored on campus.**

## Parking

Desert Garden has a shared parking agreement with the medical building. Please honor the terms of the agreement so that we may continue to have the privilege.

- ❖ Parking is available in spots marked DGM around the Garden of Love.
- ❖ Parking in the medical building is acceptable for drop-off/pick-up only (15 min. maximum) and for DGM events after 5 P.M.
- ❖ At no time may parents park under the medical building's covered spaces.
- ❖ At no time are parents permitted to park at the curb and exit the car.

## Attendance & Late Arrival Policy

In the Montessori classroom, students are expected to report to class promptly each day. Arriving with the rest of his or her classmates will help the student adjust more easily to the school day.

Parents are asked to notify the school if their student will be absent, late (must arrive before 11:00am), or leaving early for any reason. There is no reduction in tuition for absences and/or vacations. DGM asks that parents make a commitment to have their student(s) attend regularly and be ready to begin class at the scheduled start time. Punctuality is a school value. This is imperative in efforts to maintain DGM's school structure and best practices in education.

## School Day Schedule

Infant, Toddler and Primary:	8:00 am - 2:30 pm
Lower Elementary:	8:00 am - 3:15 pm
Upper Elementary:	8:00 am - 3:30 pm
MYHS:	8:00 am - 3:45 pm

The School Day starts at 8:00 a.m. for all programs. Infant through Primary have until 8:30 a.m. before being marked tardy. Toddler and Primary students and any other students requiring assistance arriving after 8:30 a.m. will be escorted to class by a DGM staff.

In efforts to maintain the integrity of the Montessori program, unless there is a specific event, parents will not be permitted past the front lobby.

The Elementary and MYHS programs start promptly at 8:00 a.m. Elementary and MYHS students will be marked tardy after 8:00 a.m.

If you know that your child will be tardy, please notify the front desk. If the tardiness will extend beyond 11 a.m., please plan to resume school the following school day. Students will not be admitted after 11 a.m. Exceptions may be granted only for students who have begun the school day, left for an appointment, and are returning after 11 a.m.

Many educational opportunities and growth are missed due to absence and/or tardiness. Please schedule any planned absences or vacations in conjunction with the DGM's calendar. Five (5) 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.

In the case of illness, disease, or accident, as certified by a licensed physician, allowances may be made. Individual families with more than one residence may arrange for attendance exceptions in advance with the Admissions Director.

**Childcare Days:** End of day for most Childcare Days throughout the year is now 5:00 p.m. (with the exception of Childcare Days during Winter Break, which end at 4:00 p.m.). Please refer to the [At-a-Glance calendar](#) to confirm dates and end times for all childcare days.

## Illness Policy

When students are ill, they need special attention and tender loving care. The time between exposure to an infectious process and symptom onset varies with certain illnesses. With most illnesses, students are contagious for at least three to five days before they develop any signs or symptoms. Parents should be aware of any unusual behavior, such as pulling at ears or rubbing of neck, as this can be an alert to the presence of an early infection. Early symptoms may

include, but are not limited to, fever, sore throat, cough, vomiting, flu symptoms, or drainage from the nose that is not clear.

Please do not send your student to school when he/she is ill.

Students must be free of fever (100.5 degrees or higher), vomiting, and diarrhea, without the assistance of medicine for 24 hours, before returning to school. If any of these symptoms occur while the student is at school, parents will be called for immediate pick up, and the student may not return to school until he/she is symptom-free for 24 hours.

Students taking antibiotics must be on the antibiotic for a minimum of 24 hours or a full school day before returning to school in addition to being symptom-free as described above.

Additional symptoms identified by a staff member may include symptoms such as, but not limited to, lice, pink eye, cough, rash, and excessive discharge. Any of these symptoms observed may warrant a student being sent home and unable to return until symptom-free and/or cleared by a doctor's note. DGM may request at any time a doctor's note indicating the student's diagnosis and approval of student returning back to school. All school attendance policies apply.

Parents must notify the front desk when a student has a contagious illness. DGM is required by the State to post such information based on professional diagnosis; this is available and updated on the illness posting board (to the left of the lobby bulletin board).

To minimize incidences of communicable disease, direct notification may also be sent to parents of students who may have been exposed. A doctor's release may be requested upon the return of students who were absent due to a communicable disease and/or health condition (i.e., head lice).

When students are ill and are required to go home, please plan for immediate pick-up. **Pick-up is required within one hour of phone call/message from the front desk.**

## Medication Policy & Procedure

### Prescription Medication

The front desk staff will administer medications based on a doctor's prescription schedule. The only exceptions are Epi-pens, 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.

## Nonprescription Medication

All nonprescription medicine must be in their original container. Please make sure that your child's first and last name is written on the container. A [Request for Administering Medication form](#) must be filled out for each nonprescription medicine.

A [Request for Administering Medication form](#) must accompany all medications, including prescription, nonprescription and topical medications such as lotions, diaper rash ointments, and lip balm.

All medications must be dropped off at the front desk upon arrival.

## Prescription labels 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, starting and ending dates of the dosage period
- ❖ Times and frequency of administration
- ❖ Reason for the medication
- ❖ Date of authorization
- ❖ Expiration date printed on the label by pharmacist

## Staff members will

- ❖ administer a prescription medication provided by a parent from a container prepackaged and labeled for use by the manufacturer and labeled with the student's name.
- ❖ allow a student to receive an injection only after obtaining a written authorization from a physician.
- ❖ log name and amount of medication administered and the prescription number, if any.
- ❖ log the date and time the medication was administered.
- ❖ log the signature of the staff member who administered the medication.

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.

Sunscreen needs to be applied before the student arrives at school. Additional sunscreen will be applied on an as-needed basis only.

## Uninterrupted Work Cycle

DGM honors the need for an uninterrupted work period with exception for other program-wide curricular activities (assemblies, events, in-house field trips, etc.). Scheduling, including the time school begins, recess, lunch, and specialists is established to allow for 2 ½ - 3 hours of uninterrupted daily work time, 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 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. Parents wishing to

## Open-Door Policy

DGM has an open-door policy. All parents are welcome to visit their student’s classroom at any time once the normalization period is over, which is approximately the middle of October. The normalization process is defined as an uninterrupted time in each classroom to establish routines and positive learning habits. Please contact the front desk 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 front desk. DGM’s goal is to accommodate parents; even

unannounced visits are acceptable. However, it is still important to schedule through the front desk. Often, there are multiple activities and/or visitors in the classroom. DGM's first priority is to preserve the structure of the classroom for the students' sake.

Please be considerate of your student's separation issues as well as classroom etiquette during your visit.

## Observations

Classroom observations are encouraged and may be scheduled through the front desk starting after October break. There are observation guidelines that DGM hands out to optimize parents' time in the classroom.

Toddler parents are not scheduled to observe in their own student's classroom. Students at this age associate their parents' presence with "time to go home." As such, DGM recommends that parents observe in another toddler environment and speak to their student's teacher about activities that their student enjoys and how they interact with other students.

If a student is in distress, parents may be asked to take the student home at the end of the observation.

## Parents, Visitors, & Service Providers Badges

All parents, visitors, and service providers must check in at the front desk when entering the lobby. For example, a visitor, volunteer, tour, service provider, or anyone visiting the campus is required to sign in and will be issued a badge at the front desk prior to entering the building. Parents intending to stay on school premises are required to sign in and obtain a badge as well (except for major event days.) Upon completion of a visit, the badge needs to be returned to the front desk as the visitor signs out. For complete details, please see DGM's Volunteer Policy and Service Providers Policy.

## Parent Communication

At DGM, we try our very best to keep you informed of what's going on 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. The ways in which we do this are described briefly below.

### ParentPortal

The ParentPortal replaces the DGM Parent Corner website. DGM's main marketing website can still be found at <https://desertgardenmontessori.org> and will contain links to access the

ParentPortal. The ParentPortal is where we will house classroom specific information, supply lists, daily schedules as well as general parent information like lunch menus, parent forms and school calendar.

### **Facebook**

DGM also has a private community Facebook page for each classroom! This page will be utilized for Parent to Parent, Teacher to Parent interaction. Teachers will share photos, ideas and build community within our classroom here. Please accept our DGM School Account FRIEND REQUEST. If you did not receive one, please send a FRIEND REQUEST to our DGM School Account to be INVITED into your child's PRIVATE Classroom FB page.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Facebook, please contact Sallie Delfino. Facebook pages are NOT an approved source for Administrative/All School communication.

### **Montessori Compass**

Teachers will communicate with parents via Montessori Compass a minimum of once per week. This communication may include:

- ❖ Statements in parent communication section
- ❖ Activity Reports
- ❖ Conference Reports
- ❖ Record-keeping notes

### **Procare Messaging**

DGM has new automated check-in/out system called Procare. This system is located at the front desk check-in/out computer and curb check-in/out tablets. This system will allow DGM administration to give parents private personal or groups messages as needed.

### **Lobby Screen**

The lobby screen will rotate thru slides of upcoming events and/or marketing videos and important announcements for upcoming school childcare days and closures.

### **Direct Emails**

- ❖ Take 2 Emails/Video will be sent out weekly highlighting the coming week's activities and events as well as a feature video. This will be THE EMAIL parents should refer back to for information about what's happening at the school on a high level.
- ❖ Action Required Emails will be sent out when parent response is required for child participation in an upcoming activity.
- ❖ Teachers will also send one-on-one communication with parents as needed.



### Face to Face

Face to Face communication is always available by appointment during a teacher's office hour or informally immediately after school ends for 15mins. Parents may schedule an appointment at the front desk.

Additionally, teachers will conference with parents two times a year. During the fall and spring conferences parents will get to review the progress of their child in detail with the teacher.

### Lobby Folders

Teachers will frequently put student work that needs to be taken home in the student's lobby folders located in front of the DGM reception desk. Some teachers may use the lobby folders for curriculum related student contracts and other curriculum related parent communication so please be sure to ask your teacher what to expect in your student's lobby folder. Parents may also use the lobby folders for parent-to-parent communication.

### Text Messages

Reminder text messages for School Days will be sent out up to 2 days prior to an Early Release, School Closed, Teacher In-Service, or Child Care Only day.

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

## 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.
- ❖ If there is need for further assistance, speak with an administrative staff member.
- ❖ 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 Operations Manager at [Lexi@desertgardenmontessori.org](mailto:Lexi@desertgardenmontessori.org).

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

## Conferences & Consultations

Teacher Guides offer parent conferences for each student two times a year. The infant consultation is not academically based but rather developmentally based. The needs of a toddler are emotional, physical, social, spiritual, and intellectual.

Parents of primary, elementary and MYHS students are given a conference report or quarterly report (MYHS) that is all-encompassing. This report will include details on the student's academic progress, as well as all the areas listed above. A report will be given at the appropriate time to review these areas of a student's progress. Conference time is designed for the parent and teacher to speak without the student present, and parent attendance is required.

Desert Garden will provide available dates and times for conferences through an on-line sign-up sheet on our website. Parents will be able to schedule their own conference time. In the event a parent cannot attend, limited rescheduling may be available if requested in advance, but it is not guaranteed.

## Renaissance Testing (STAR)

Desert Garden administers a computer based, CAT (computer adaptive technology), standards-based assessment from the Renaissance STAR suite to our students from 1st year Elementary to 12th grade. This system uses a series of 2 tests, 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 we use this testing as a practical life activity as it is real world practice to have your knowledge tested. Results of this test 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 two or three times a year: Fall, Winter (for students who placed in the on-watch/intervention range in Fall), and Spring
- ❖ 1st and 2nd years take the test as a practical life activity
- ❖ 3rd-12th years take the test as one of many measures in abstract academic achievement
- ❖ Results are available upon request from the parent to the Testing Coordinator
- ❖ A parent can opt-out their child from STAR Testing by contacting the Testing Coordinator

## Student Records

DGM maintains a permanent file for each student during the course of his or her enrollment at the school. All records are kept confidential. Records contain attendance, enrollment, 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. The [Records Release Authorization](#) form can be found in the Forms folder in the School Links and Files section on the DGM Parent Portal.

MYHS Transcripts will be available the second Monday in June.

## Childcare Days Policy & Procedure

Childcare Days are days the School is open but there is no class instruction. Childcare is made available as a courtesy to our working parents. Please refer to our [At-A-Glance calendar](#) for a schedule of all childcare days for the school year and summer sessions.

### The procedure for receiving care on childcare days is as follows.

- ❖ Parents must register their student(s) for these dates two weeks prior, even if their child(ren) are on an Extended Day schedule. Registration information will be emailed to all parents. Parents may register for childcare for the entire school year in the month of October. It is the parent's responsibility to register for these dates before the deadline. Staffing will be provided based on registration.
- ❖ It is imperative that parents register if they wish to have their student(s) receive care on these dates. If parents are not registered, DGM cannot extend services for that day. DGM create staffing needs based on the number of students who are signed up for care.
- ❖ If parents do not register during the registration period and miss the deadline, they may see the front desk to add their student(s) to the wait list. Parents may then call the school at 9:00 am on the childcare day to see if DGM can make accommodations for that day.
- ❖ Parents must arrive no later than 9:00 am to receive care on childcare days.
- ❖ There is no organic lunch service on these days. Parents must provide a sack lunch for their student(s) at the time of drop off. (Please remember not to include any nut products in your child's sack lunch.)
- ❖ If parents register for a childcare day and their student(s) do not attend, a flat "no-show" fee of \$35 will be billed for that day. If parents register for multiple childcare days during a break and there is no attendance, this fee will be billed for each missed day. For parents with multiple children, this fee will apply cumulatively to each. This accounts for the school's expense in staffing based on registration.
- ❖ If parents register for a childcare day and need to cancel that registration for any reason, student(s) may be removed from the list up to two school days prior to the childcare day requested. (For example, for a Monday childcare day, the school must receive cancellation no later than 6:00 pm on the previous Thursday). This must be done via email or written notice to the front desk and will relieve parents of responsibility for that day; parents will not be billed the above fee in a case of timely cancellation.
- ❖ No electronics of any kind are allowed on Childcare days.

## Extended Care Service (Late Day)

DGM's extended care services begin at the end of each program's scheduled school day and end at 6:00pm. The late day staff will execute the same principles and philosophies as are upheld during the regular school day. DGM only offers late day services to currently enrolled students.

## Enrichment Classes

A full array of late day school enrichment classes is offered throughout the school year. DGM strives to maintain high standards when selecting the personnel for these programs. A schedule will be put out 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.

For parents with student(s) enrolled in an after-school enrichment class, all standard after school daycare charges apply. This is due to the fact that all students remain in DGM's care during the time of their class.

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.

Late day billing: If a child is in an enrichment class or club, the billing for late day hours will be reduced by the time of the enrichment or club, but only if the parent indicates that their child was participating in the enrichment or club when signing out.

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.

## Life Skills Team

### What is the Life Skills Team?

The Life Skills Team is a core group of professionals who work with students, teachers, parents, and outside service providers to meet the individualized needs of the students both academically and through social-emotional well-being. The Life Skills Team 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.

### **Life Skills Team Services**

Our team provides several opportunities for Desert Garden families. These opportunities include:

- ❖ Case Management
- ❖ Social Skills Building
- ❖ Reading Support
- ❖ Speech and Language Therapy
- ❖ Occupational Therapy
- ❖ Direct Curricular Instruction
- ❖ Multi-sensory Tutoring
- ❖ Parenting Classes
- ❖ In-class Peace and Mindfulness Education
- ❖ Conscious Discipline through Parent, Staff and Student training

The tuition for Additional Learning Services is added to regular tuition costs to yield a total tuition amount. It is important to note that because these services are part of your child's tuition, they are eligible for payment using School Tuition Organization funds if your child is of eligible age.

We also serve as a liaison between Desert Garden and the Kyrene School District's Student Learning Support Services. We can help guide the family through the district process of evaluation at any time throughout the school year. If the family wishes to start this process they may email the LST Coordinator at: [mnavarro@desertgardenmontessori.org](mailto:mnavarro@desertgardenmontessori.org).

### **How to access LST?**

If a parent suspects that their child may require support from the Life Skills Team, the parent may contact the student's advisee teacher. The teacher will then forward the request to the Life Skills Team. The student's teacher may also make a referral if she/he identifies an area of concern.

## **Lunch & Snack**

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.

The school's organic garden is a place with many purposes: teaching ecology, botany, and biology along with gardening skills; instilling in students a care for the earth and a deeper relationship with our environment; and providing vegetables and herbs that often become a part of the meals students enjoy each day. These food-to-table relationships will become a part of the students' lifelong understanding.

Community service also plays a role in the school lunch program; elementary and middle school students take turns throughout the year to help serve their peers and younger students. With several students earning an official food handler's card after study in this area each fall, this is a point of satisfaction for the students who enjoy sharing this community responsibility.

DGM strives to serve every student in the program wholesome and delicious foods by making sure that everything is natural and organic; however, sometimes it is difficult to meet the dietary needs of each student. DGM's kitchen is currently able to fully support students on regular and vegetarian diets. We also support diets that are gluten and/or dairy free. Other dietary accommodations cannot be met at this time. The weekly menu is viewable on DGM's website and posted in the front lobby. 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.

#### **Foods that the kitchen uses on a regular basis include**

- ❖ Tomatoes
- ❖ Seeds
- ❖ Beans
- ❖ Lentils
- ❖ Wheat products
- ❖ Honey/Agave
- ❖ Soy
- ❖ Organic Olive oil
- ❖ Vegan "butter"
- ❖ Organic Canola oil
- ❖ Organic Coconut oil
- ❖ Rice
- ❖ Corn
- ❖ Spelt
- ❖ Quinoa
- ❖ Onions
- ❖ Garlic

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.

We do not include nuts in our organic lunch program and nuts of any kind may NOT be included in the lunches of students who bring their lunch to school. We are a NUT-FREE facility and depend on our families to support this effort for the safety of all students. An alternative to peanut butter that most of our students enjoy is sunflower butter.

### **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.**

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

Parent-provided lunches should be brought to the school at the start of each day. This policy will be enforced to support the student's need for proper nutrition. A forgotten lunch by a parent becomes a sad and embarrassing moment for a student. Please make no exceptions to this policy; in the event of a forgotten lunch, the school will offer organic lunch to that student at a cost of \$10.

If a student has a special diet or is allergic to certain foods, this must be noted on the student's Emergency and Immunization Card.

## **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 will mindfully watch for these advisories and protect the students accordingly.

As we strive for best practice in health and wellness, we have decided as a community to implement the use of hats and sunglasses in the strong Arizona sun. Please note that hats are mandatory for students spending time outside. Sunglasses are also strongly recommended.

## **Pesticide Policy**

DGM is required to notify parents 48 hours prior to pesticide application on the premises. These notices will be on all doors entering into an activity area, posted in the lobby, and on the parent bulletin board.

## Photo 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. Parents should see their student's teacher for more specific details.

### Infant/Toddler

There is no formal Montessori birthday celebration for students of the infant/toddler age group.

### Primary

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. Parents are encouraged to attend and bring one picture of the student to represent each year from birth to present. Please contact the front desk to schedule a student's Walk around the Sun.

### Elementary & MYHS

- ❖ Parents should see their student's teacher for specific details.
- ❖ Birthday invitations are not to be passed out in class or to students individually at school but may be placed in lobby folders.
- ❖ 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, 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 parents dress students in 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. **Flip flops or shoes with high platforms / heels are unsafe in DGM's environment. Students without close-toed shoes may not participate in Physical Education class.**

Please consult with your student's teacher and/or handbook for additional dress code specifics based on program/age.

## Pet / Animal Policy

No pets or animals may be brought on campus by any person without prior administrative approval. If an animal visit is planned and approved, parents of the classroom that will be visited will be notified by email seven days in advance of the visit and may request that their student is not present with an animal if they so choose.

The State of AZ requires that all visiting pets & service animals must have proof of vaccination.

## Toys & Electronics Policy

Student may not come to school with personal toys or belongings other than necessary items such as lunch, jacket, extra clothing, and napping items. Toys 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. All necessary items to be transported must be contained in the student's tote bag provided by DGM.

No electronics such as iPods, tablets, cell phones, 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 retrieval by parents, based on individual classroom policies.

## Cellular Phones Policy

DGM prohibits the use of cellular phones at any time while on campus. DGM strives to model a cell-phone free environment for students and ask that all parents respect and honor this environment. To honor students with complete presence and attention, DGM asks that parents make sure cell phones are put away before entering the school. Staff members may request that parents turn off their phone if it is being used for conversation or text messaging while on campus. Exceptions to this policy may be made within private meetings for scheduling purposes and for certain staff members whose jobs require the use of cellular phones.

## 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 is notified and released to return to their classrooms.

In the event of a lockdown with an intruder and/or warning of danger nearby the school campus, 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.

## 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.
- ❖ The name(s) of any other student(s) involved will not be included on your student’s incident report.

- ❖ 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.

## Biting Policy

An Incident Report will be sent to parents whenever a student is involved in a biting incident in any way, and students will be separated and closely supervised following any such event.

If a student becomes a chronic biter, or in the case of a severe incident, the parent(s) may be asked to remove that student from school until the behavior disappears.

## Behavior Policy

Desert Garden Montessori's behavior and discipline policy 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).

### The goals of discipline are as follows:

- ❖ Safety of the student
- ❖ Education of the student
- ❖ Respect for self and others

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

- ❖ Composure is a must. The adult must stay in their executive state at all times. If the adult cannot (is triggered), get another adult to help.
- ❖ Observe to see what can be learned from watching the child to understand their behavior. What is the function of the behavior or what is the need?
- ❖ In most cases the adult acknowledges the child's feeling 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..."

- ❖ For significant behaviors, an accident/incident report will be completed and sent to the parent.
- ❖ For chronic patterns of behaviors (two or more incidents in 30 days) a Life Skills Team referral form will be submitted by Lead Teacher. The parents and the school team will meet to develop a behavioral plan.

Our first priority is always the safety of the child. For instances of physical aggression, a child's parents may be called and asked to pick up their child for the remainder of the day. This is not intended as a punishment, but instead a time for the child to step out of the situation completely and to help them settle.

When a parent is called to pick up their child, the child must be picked up within one-hour. If the parent or other approved contact fails to pick up within the time frame, the child must stay home the next school day and may be required to attend a brief meeting before the child returns to school.

In the event that a child needs to be sent home due to high level of dysregulation or physical harm to self or others, the front desk will make the call to parents for their child to be picked up. Parents can be advised that they will be receiving an incident/accident report by the end of the day to further explain the incident. A parent meeting may be required to create a behavior plan prior to the child returning to class. If parents have any further questions they may email their child's teacher and LST.

Our overarching goal is to educate. All behavior is a form of communication. At Desert Garden Montessori we strive to use that 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.

\*Behavior Rubric by developmental level available upon request.

## Playground Rules

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

**The following are the universal playground rules.**

- ❖ Water tables are not intended for sitting
- ❖ All sand toys must stay in the sand box
- ❖ Tricycles must stay on the bike path
- ❖ Walk while on the patio
- ❖ Walk outside of garden area

- ❖ No throwing of sand / rocks
- ❖ Students must sit while going down slide
- ❖ Use steps / ladder to go up / down climbing structure
- ❖ Water exploration is okay within limits
- ❖ Adult supervision is required for use of monkey bars
- ❖ Climbing is only allowed on climbing structures designed for this activity
- ❖ Equipment must be used properly and always keeping safety in mind

Students will be expected to follow these rules to the best of their ability.

## Parent Helpers & Volunteers

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.

Each year, DGM strives to facilitate even greater and more balanced support. DGM encourages parents to volunteer in activities in which they would most like to be involved. Some volunteer activities may require special training or requirements of which parents will be advised. Supporting students, the school, and the community is an integral part of the Montessori philosophy.

## Parent Helpers

DGM appreciates parent interest and willingness to be a parent helper in the classroom. Parents' time and dedication to their student(s) and the classroom supports DGM's goal to create a rich experience for all.

A parent helper is defined as a person who aids in his/her own student's classroom. Parent helpers must remain in the classroom and be accompanied by a teacher at all times. Parent helpers must be within eye or earshot of a staff member at all times.

If parents want to help in a classroom other than their own student's, they will be considered a volunteer and must follow the Volunteer Policy as stated in the Parent Policy Handbook.

### **The complete list of requirements for a Parent Helper is as follows**

- ❖ Sign in at front desk before entering school.
- ❖ Wear parent helper badge at all times.
- ❖ Sign out upon leaving.
- ❖ Only work in your student's classroom.
- ❖ Remain within eye and earshot of staff member at all times.

## Volunteers

DGM is pleased to have parents join the forces of the school with a desire to volunteer and enhance the experience for their student's classroom.

DGM is a school that is licensed (infant through five years) by the Arizona Department of Health Services through the Office of Childcare Licensure. DGM is mandated to follow strict protocols when it comes to any volunteers at the school.

Safety of students is DGM's main concern. Parents may view the list of requirements and find it to be quite cumbersome; however, please note it is imperative that DGM has this complete before parents are able to volunteer at the school.

A volunteer is defined as a non-employee who helps or works at the school at any time other than at a scheduled school event (i.e., Harvest Festival). Thus, all service providers and enrichment providers require a volunteer file. Volunteers must be within eye or earshot of a staff member at all times.

The only exception to this rule is if parents are volunteering in their own student's classroom. In this case, parents are called parent helpers and a volunteer file is not required.

### **The complete list of requirements for a Parent Volunteer is as follows**

- ❖ Volunteer Record form
- ❖ Vital Data form
- ❖ Immunization statement
- ❖ Fingerprint Clearance Card (copy of application required prior to service)
- ❖ Mantoux TB test and results prior to service
- ❖ High school diploma/GED certificate or resumé
- ❖ Written documentation of training (training must be completed prior to first day)
- ❖ Current driver license
- ❖ References (two)
- ❖ First aid certificate (optional)
- ❖ CPR certificate (optional)

These requirements must be fulfilled at the volunteer's expense.

## Transportation Policy

In the event that transportation is needed for a large number of students at DGM, a licensed and contracted bus company will be hired and/or parents will support transportation needs. Please see Field Trip Policy below for details.

In the event that a small group of school-aged students (13 passengers or fewer) will need transportation, they will be transported in a DGM van. The DGM van will only be driven by staff

members who are legally licensed, insured adults who are eighteen years of age or older and are DGM employees. If you wish to view our insurance information, it is available upon request through the front desk.

DGM will inform all parents and require a permission slip from each student prior to transportation.

## 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 overnights such as campouts and the Field Studies, which are planned to meet multiple goals in academic and personal learning, including independence, team building, and leadership. For this reason, parent chaperones are invited on some, but not all, of the school's field 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 a field trip. A 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. The due date is typically three days prior to the date of the trip; permission slips received on the day of travel may not be accepted, as transportation arrangements are made in advance.

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



## Field Trip Chaperone Policies

A teaching team member leads all school-sponsored trips. Support staff and parents, when applicable, may assist in supervision and transportation. Adult chaperones shall be provided for all field trips using the ratio of a minimum of one adult to five primary students, and one adult to eight elementary/middle school students.

A non-staff chaperone must be a parent/ guardian of a student enrolled at DGM.

### Requirements for Chaperones

- ❖ Be willing and physically able to participate in all activities.
- ❖ Arrive on time and bring a time-keeping device.
- ❖ Introduce yourself and be sure that you know the names of the students in your group. Name tags or a list of students' names will be supplied by the teacher.
- ❖ If a student refuses to follow your instructions, inform a teacher as soon as possible.
- ❖ Ask questions if you have doubts as to what should be done in a given situation. The teacher is in charge, and her/his directions must be followed at all times. Please speak to the teacher privately if you have any concerns.
- ❖ Watch carefully. Always think of the students' safety first. Be alert to potential dangers: stray animals, strangers, etc. Do not take chances. If necessary, move students to a safe place and inform the teacher. (Staff must be present at all times).
- ❖ Follow all safety rules. Keep the group together and, when necessary, escort students to the lavatory. (Staff must be present at all times).
- ❖ Ensure that the students in your care are wearing seat belts when being transported in any vehicle.
- ❖ Do not bring or use cigarettes or other smoking items on a field trip.
- ❖ Do not attend field trips while under the influence of alcohol or performance-affecting medications; do not bring or use these substances while on a trip.
- ❖ Do not bring along siblings or other students. Your responsibility is to the students in your group. Insurance regulations do not permit parent chaperones to bring other family members on school field trips.
- ❖ Do not use your cell phone for personal communication while chaperoning.
- ❖ Do not use your cell phone at any time while driving.
- ❖ Do not leave students alone or unescorted.
- ❖ Do not purchase souvenirs or food.
- ❖ Do not physically restrain a student. Unless a student poses an imminent threat to the safety of him/herself or others, chaperones should never physically handle a youngster.
- ❖ Do not release students to anyone other than their teacher.
- ❖ Do not administer any medications to a student. All medical situations must be referred to the classroom teacher.

## Emergency Chaperone Procedures

- ❖ Report all illnesses and injuries to the teacher.
- ❖ The supervising teacher will be responsible for the first aid kit.
- ❖ Use latex gloves (in the first aid kit) when handling all bodily fluid, including blood products.

Should parents, as chaperones, require any additional information, they are encouraged to meet with their student's teacher. Responsible and informed chaperones are an important part of successful DGM field trips.

## Going Outs

Going Outs are a part of Montessori curriculum for elementary and MYHS students. 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 and libraries, other schools, and nature areas, among others, are all 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 or 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 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.

## Financial Terms and Conditions

### Enrollment Commitment

It is understood at Desert Garden that enrollment is for the entire academic school year.

Completion of an enrollment contract serves as a binding financial commitment on the part of the family for the entire 10-month academic school year. Receipt of the enrollment contract and payment of the enrollment fee secures placement for your child for the academic school year.

## Enrollment Fee

There is a \$575.00 non-refundable annual enrollment fee per child or \$1,150.00 maximum per family. For new students with a start date between January and May, the enrollment fee is \$287.50 per child. Payment of the enrollment fee is due in full at the time of enrollment.

There is a non-refundable enrollment fee of \$100 per child for alumni students enrolling for summer months only.

## Tuition & Payment Policy

Parents have three tuition billing options at Desert Garden.

- ❖ Monthly automatic deductions from a checking, debit or credit card account, debited on the 1st of each month. A 2% service charge applies to the monthly payment option.
- ❖ Two semi-annual payments deducted from a checking, debit or credit card account, debited on July 1st and December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- ❖ One payment for the full 10-month school year with a 5% discount, due July 1st. This discount is available for the 10-month school year only.

For families utilizing the monthly payment option, tuition is billed 30 days in advance. August tuition is due July 1st and will be billed on the 1st of every month through April 1st of the following year to complete the 10-month billing cycle.

When applicable, June summer tuition is due May 1st and July summer tuition is due June 1st to complete the summer billing and financial commitment. Summer tuition is subject to the 2% administrative fee unless it is paid for in full by May 1st.

All families are required to register with FACTS and maintain a checking, debit or credit card account on file with them and are responsible for keeping account information up to date.

## Other Charges, Fees and Discounts

**Sibling discounts:** A 10% discount is applied to the tuition of additional enrolled siblings. Sibling discounts are applied according to age with younger siblings receiving the discount and apply only to siblings concurrently enrolled. The sibling discount may not be applied in addition to, but may be applied instead of, the full academic year discount of 5%.

Late Day hours are billed at \$7.00 flat rate per hour for the hours used (this does not apply to students in the Extended Day program).

Late Pick-up Fees apply after close of school or Half Day end time (late pick up fees begin: 6:01 p.m. on regular school days, 5:01 p.m. on childcare days, 4:01 p.m. on pre-scheduled early release days, and daily at 12:16 p.m. for Half-Day students). The charge is \$25.00 per child for the first 15 minutes and increases an additional \$1.00 per minute per child thereafter. As a

courtesy and respect to our staff, please pick up your child on time. No children are received prior to 7:00 a.m.

Childcare Days are billed at a half day or school day flat rate per day. If your child is registered for a half day schedule, the daily rate will be \$30. If your child is registered for a school day schedule, the daily rate is \$50. Late day charges will apply if your child stays past their regularly scheduled time. (This does not apply to students in the Extended Day program).

A cancellation fee of \$35.00 per day will be billed on Childcare Days when you are registered to attend and then do not attend. Staffing is based solely on registration; therefore, when you register to attend a commitment is made to the staff to be employed for the Childcare Day. If you have a change in plans and need to cancel registration, notice of cancellation to Childcare Day registration must be received in writing at the front desk two (2) business days prior to the Childcare day; only at that time will you be relieved of the fee for non-attendance.

Organic Lunch is included in the tuition for some students, depending on the program and year of enrollment. Organic lunch may be purchased for all other students for \$145/month.

Enrichment classes are available after the School Day for students of toddler age and older. The cost of enrichment classes varies depending on the class. Payment for enrichment classes is due at the time of sign-up. If payment has not been received before the first day of the class, the registration is cancelled.

If a child is in an enrichment class or club, the billing for late day hours will be reduced by the time of the enrichment or club, but only if the parent indicates that their child was participating in the enrichment or club when signing out.

Enrolled families who refer a new student receive a \$200 discount on one child's tuition 90 days after the referred student's starting date.

### **School Tuition Organization Funds**

Students at Desert Garden Montessori who are 5 years old or older, who are enrolled full-time and who are in grades K-12 may be eligible to receive scholarship awards through School Tuition Organizations (STOs).

Families are responsible to keep their balances current for the entire school year using one of our three payment options. Refunds due to families who receive STO awards will be disbursed at the end of the school year after all STO disbursements have been received.

Should you have any questions about the school's payment policies please contact Valerie Wessel at [valerie@desertgardenmontessori.org](mailto:valerie@desertgardenmontessori.org).

## Payment and Collections Policy

Amounts that are billed to parents by Desert Garden Montessori for tuition and fees are due in full upon receipt of the invoice. By authorizing FACTS to automatically deduct invoices from a checking, debit or credit card account, a parent can avoid the following collections process. Balances owing that are carried for parents by the school will be subject to the following collections process.

- ❖ All invoices are due upon receipt with a 5-day grace period. A late fee of \$35 is assessed on the 6th of each month on outstanding invoices.
- ❖ Balances that are over 30 days past due will be charged a monthly fee of 1½% of the amount that is more than 30 days in arrears.
- ❖ In the event that a balance is over 60 days past due, enrollment will be suspended until the account is brought current. Once the account is current, the student will be considered for continued enrollment.
- ❖ Families with balances over 90 days old will be responsible for any and all fees that may be assessed by a collection agency or a court. Should legal action become necessary the laws of the state of Arizona will apply.

## Financial Aid

Desert Garden offers tuition assistance based on financial need to current and incoming students. Please contact the Admissions Director at [karen@desertgardenmontessori.org](mailto:karen@desertgardenmontessori.org) for more information.

## Early Withdrawal

There are occasions when a student may need to withdraw from the school before the end of the academic school year due to extenuating circumstances. In these cases, the family is responsible for notifying the Admissions Director in writing as soon as possible and indicate the child's expected last day at the school.

The School's Tuition Insurance Plan provides protection from financial loss due to the unanticipated early withdrawal of a student from the School before the end of the school year. The cost of the insurance is 2.5% of the annual tuition for the 10-month school year and is due in full on July 1st or with the first tuition payment for students starting after the first of the school year.

Participation in the Tuition Insurance Plan is optional. For those families who decline to purchase Tuition Insurance there is a \$2,000 flat fee per student for withdrawal any time after July 1<sup>st</sup> and before the end of the school year. The early withdrawal fee is due at the time of withdrawal.

## 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.

## Student Phone Usage

Students are not allowed to use cell phones during the school day.

Students may not use the school phones at any time; if a student needs to communicate with a parent in an emergency, the parent will be contacted by front desk 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 "home-work" 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.