



# FAMILY HANDBOOK

09/10

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# MISSION

## Escuela del Sol Montessori, Inc.

Escuela del Sol Montessori is an educational community which promotes the understanding of the interdependence of all life, values diversity, and encourages students of all ages to discover the role each plays in contributing to his or her community.

# PHILOSOPHY

We recognize that each child is unique and that individual differences, when supported in a positive way, will allow each person to make a positive contribution to the community. That community can be a small group of friends, a classroom, a school, etc. Each classroom provides a learning environment that encourages independence, confidence and cooperation while enabling each child to grow and learn at his or her own pace.

Children interact with their environment, their peers and their teachers in a way that enables the learning process to occur in an optimal way through intellectual, social and emotional support.

Community service and outreach is an integral part of the program and philosophy here at Escuela del Sol and its Harwood Art Center.

# HARWOOD ART CENTER

The Harwood Art Center is the community outreach program of Escuela del Sol Montessori. It serves people of all ages from the diverse communities of New Mexico. Harwood initiates opportunities for people to enrich their lives by experiencing and/or creating visual, performing and literary arts. The Art Center provides studio, performance and gallery facilities and offers programs, events, exhibitions, lectures, classes and workshops for students and artists of all ages and skill levels. Escuela del Sol, through its Harwood Art Center, fosters community involvement, promotes the arts, encourages advocacy and provides opportunities for life-long learning.

## Membership

As members of the Escuela del Sol community, you also have a family membership to the Harwood Art Center. As such you will receive the newsletter, invitations to special events and special rates on Harwood classes. You will also receive discounts from several local

businesses. For more information, please call Jessie Rogers at 242-6367.

# HISTORY

Escuela del Sol Montessori was founded in 1968. Families of the school who volunteered their time and efforts formed a Board of Directors, which ran the school for its first decade.

In 1980 the building in the University area that housed the school was sold. A new home was found near Old Town. The buildings were renovated and a new program was started with Ms. Friedje vanGils as Escuela's first Head of School.

A second campus at 1114 7th St. N.W. was added in 1986 to accommodate a new toddler program and the elementary school. With community support and careful planning, Escuela was able to purchase the property in January 1997. Realizing a long-term goal, Escuela purchased an adjacent property in 1999 to build a new Primary building and consolidate the school on one campus. August 2001 saw the completion of the new classroom building designed by architect Eileen Devereux.

Escuela's facilities include the historic red brick building known as The Harwood Art Center. In 1991 this art center was added to the repertoire of Escuela's educational programs to further serve the community. Escuela del Sol received the 1995 Bravos! Award from the Albuquerque Arts Alliance for the school's support of the arts.

As we finish celebrating 40 years of service, Escuela del Sol Montessori faces a bright future with ensured stability, growing recognition for its outstanding programs and wide spread community support.





## MONTESSORI HISTORY

Maria Montessori, Italy's first woman physician and one of the great educators of the twentieth century, pioneered the work with children that we carry on today at Escuela del Sol Montessori. She was born in Chiaravalle, Italy, in 1870. Her first association with children began in 1898 with the "mentally deficient" at the University Psychiatric Clinic in Rome. Through intense study, observations, and long days of working with these children, she discovered that their problems were more emotional than medical, so she designed special learning materials to meet their needs and trained teachers to present them in a special way. Montessori's success was proclaimed miraculous. Many of these children went on to pass state examinations that were written for "normal" children. In 1904 she turned her attention to "normal" children. She opened her first school, *Casa de Bambini* (House of Children) on January 6, 1907 in the San Lorenzo slums of Rome. Word of this "new education" began to spread, and many more schools were opened in Italy and other countries.

In half a century, her work became known as the *Montessori Method*. In 1929 she founded the Association Montessori Internationale to continue her work. During the war years, it was regarded as a movement for world peace. Indeed, she saw the child as the most legitimate hope for a new world. Honorary doctorates, recognition, and awards were bestowed on her from countries all over the world. By the time of her death in 1952, she had gained an international reputation as an educator and had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times.

Montessori fervently believed that children have an inner force that gives them the power and drive to achieve their full potential. When children are given the proper measures of guidance and freedom, this inner force enables them to focus on what they need to know and they learn with wonder, joy, and confidence. A vital part of the Montessori approach is a carefully prepared environment that is beautiful and orderly. It includes didactic materials designed to meet the needs of each child at her/his particular level of development. Through skilled observation, the adult is prepared to offer children the kind of instruction that will stimulate their interest and activity.

The special relationship between the child and adult in a Montessori classroom is conveyed by these words of a young child: "Help me to do it myself".

To read more about the Montessori approach, may we suggest:

### **Core Reading**

Montessori, Maria

*The Secret of Childhood*, Ballantine, 1982

*The Absorbent Mind*, Owl Books, 1995

*Education for a New World*, ABC-Clío, 1989

*From Childhood to Adolescence*, ABC-Clío, 1994

*The Discovery of the Child*, Ballantine, 1986

Lillard, Paula Polk

*Montessori: A Modern Approach*, Schocken, 1988

Lillard, Angeline Stoll

*Montessori: The Science behind the Genius*, Oxford University Press, 2005

### **Background Reading**

Kahn, David (editor)

*Montessori Talks to Parents*, North American Montessori Teachers Association, 1998

McNichols, John Chattin

*The Montessori Controversy*, Thomas Delmar, 1991

Standing, E.M.

*Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work*, Plume, 1998

Nelson, Jane Ed.D

*Positive Discipline*, Ballantine Books, 1996

Useful Catalogs:

*The Joyful Child, for Birth to Three*

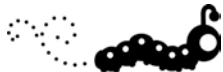
*Child of the World, for Age 3-12+*

The Michael Olaf Montessori Company:

65 Ericson Court, Arcata, CA 95521

Toll-free order number 888-880-9235; website [www.michaelolaf.com](http://www.michaelolaf.com)

Also available for review in the school office



# ADMISSION

Escuela del Sol Montessori is coeducational and accepts qualified students regardless of race, color, family structure, religion, nationality, or ethnic origin.

To enroll a child, parents or legal guardians must visit the school for an enrollment interview, then complete and sign an enrollment application and contract.

*Generally, applicants will be given priority in the following order:*

1. Qualified siblings of students continuing at Escuela del Sol Montessori
2. Applicants whose parents have attended Escuela parent/faculty workshops
3. Children of Escuela alumni
4. All other qualified applicants

The school seeks to create classroom communities balanced by gender and age. In general, the school prefers to admit children at age three or younger. Older students will be considered on an individual basis, as space allows, with preference given to students with previous Montessori experience. If a family withdraws a child before the end of Primary, that decision may affect the admission of younger siblings.

All information obtained in the admission process is confidential and will be used only in the admission process. This information will not be available to the candidate, parents, or anyone outside the school's admission office.

## **A Special Note Regarding Admission to the Toddler Community**

Toddler Community classes are limited to 12 children. We strive to create in each class a community of young children, with a balance of ages from 18 months to three years old. Also, a child can receive the maximum benefit of the Toddler program by spending at least a year in the class, sometimes two. For these reasons admission to the Toddler Community can be challenging. We are fortunate that parents have recommended the Toddler Community to their friends with young children; each year, we have many more applicants than spaces available. While entry may not be successful to our Toddler program, we will usually have more openings at the Primary level.

# FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

All current and prospective Escuela del Sol families are eligible to apply for financial assistance. The amount of assistance is limited and varies from year to year.

*Criteria -*

1. Continue support for families currently receiving assistance
2. Provide funds that enable families already enrolled in the school to stay with the school in the event of changing personal finances.
3. Consider all other requests

Within this context, preference is given in the distribution of financial assistance to students in the Elementary program and in order to encourage racial, ethnic, religious, and economic diversity.

## Process

Parents must file a financial statement with an outside agency that makes recommendations to schools for financial assistance (More information is available in the Escuela office). The agency returns its assessment to the school. All forms filed by the March 1, 2010 deadline will be considered as a group by the Financial Assistance Committee, composed of the head of school and other board members who are not current parents. Awards will be announced by April 18, 2010. Parents must respond in writing by May 1, 2010, if they wish to accept the school's offer. After this date, the school considers the offer declined and the funds will be reallocated. To receive aid in the fall of 2010, the deadline for filing is March 1, 2010. Any forms filed after this date will be considered after other awards have been made. Each year a family must reapply for financial assistance. Awards are based on the relative need of the families that have applied, and on the funds available. While the school will make every effort to maintain financial assistance levels from year to year, conditions may change, so one year's award is no guarantee of awards in subsequent years.

# STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Our primary task is to help children construct themselves to flourish in an increasingly technical and competitive world. Graduates of Escuela del Sol leave with at least two critically important assets that we hope will sustain them throughout their lifetime: the ability to adapt and a love of learning. By the time our graduates are in the work force, it is estimated that they will have to change careers at least two or three times during their lifetimes.

Improvements in technology will increase the pace of life significantly. How do you prepare children for such a world? We try to enhance their ability to think logically, to cope with change, to cooperate with others, to pose creative solutions to old problems, to defend their right to their own opinions and values, and to respect the rights of others. Their ability to adapt to change and their love of learning will be the keys they need to open any door of opportunity.

We provide a qualitative evaluation of a child's performance that takes into consideration the whole child, including strengths, limitations, and social, physical, and creative achievements; the

education your child receives at Escuela del Sol extends far beyond basic skills in math and language. Traditional grades provide a quantitative evaluation of a child's work. Grading creates an environment of winners and losers, undermining the spirit of cooperation and community. Research indicates that grading actually reduces creativity, as students aim for work that will be safe and acceptable to the adult. Therein lies a third powerful reason not to use traditional grades: the children begin to work to please the adult rather than themselves, to work for the extrinsic rather than the intrinsic reward. For these reasons, Escuela del Sol does not "grade" children.

## Conference Reports

The teachers who have worked with your child (Toddler Community through Upper Elementary) will produce evaluations during the year of your child's performance in the classroom.

You will receive two written reports each year by mail. These reports will reflect your child's social, emotional, physical, artistic and academic work.

In the fall and spring of each year, you'll have an opportunity to discuss your child's performance at parent/teacher conferences. Throughout the year, if you have any questions about your child's progress, please call the teacher to arrange an appointment to discuss your questions or concerns.

## Homework

Generally speaking, *homework* refers to academic work. However, we Montessori educators like to broaden the term: all work that is done at home is *homework*. It falls into two basic categories, for adults and children alike. First is the work we do for ourselves, to improve ourselves, to pursue our own interests and dreams. This work could be an extension of work done on the job or at school, or it could be an unrelated activity or hobby that is meaningful to us individually. The line between *work* and *play* can become blurred here, just as work the children do at school is often *fun*.

## Homework for the Elementary Child

When children leave Escuela del Sol at the end of the school day, we hope they will have time to relax, and we hope they will do some "homework" as well. Our homework expectations for the Elementary children are outlined in the Parents at Escuela section (page 26).

## Standardized Testing

Beginning in the third year of elementary, children participate in achievement tests. The tests are first available as a work choice in the classroom, then administered later in the first and second semesters to the class as a whole. We believe test taking is a skill to be practiced in preparation for middle school. We also believe a child has multiple intelligences, not just those measured by achievement tests. Though we regard these tests as a reflection of how your child compares to other children in these areas, we don't believe these tests provide a complete assessment of your child's strengths or limitations. The areas of achievement and of difficulty noted by the staff in your child's evaluations will contain far more valuable information about your child's future.

## Outside Assessment and Guidance

The Montessori classroom can accommodate the needs of a wide range of children. Some children are able to receive special attention within the Montessori classroom. However, there are others who are not well served within a Montessori classroom.

The school and its staff are committed to open and ongoing dialogue with parents regarding special concerns about every child's progress. The classroom teacher, in conjunction with the program directors and the head, may, at times, request outside assessment and guidance for working with individual students. The reasons for such a request will vary greatly: often the teacher may need more information about the learning style of a student in order to work with her/him more effectively. In these cases, the school expects to receive a complete copy of all test results and recommendations and, if possible, to meet with the parents and the diagnostician. The school commits to implement all recommendations consistent with its mission and within its resources; the school expects parents to follow through on recommendations for tutoring, therapy, or other treatment.

## TRANSITIONS / CLASSROOM PLACEMENTS

Continuity is the hallmark of the Montessori experience, as children stay in the same classroom for at least two or three years. This stability provides for both security and growth, as the child's role within the group changes over time from being one of the youngest in the class to one of the oldest. The psychologist Alfred Adler identified birth order in the family as one of the most important determinants of personality. In a Montessori classroom, every child has the opportunity to be first a youngest child, then a middle child and finally an oldest child in her classroom family. This contributes to the child's personal growth in ways that traditional, single-age groupings cannot. Even so, children do make at least four transitions as they move through the school's different programs.

Dr. Montessori observed that each child passes through planes of development, each lasting six years, and each with distinct developmental characteristics and needs. She created learning environments to respond to each new plane of development. Some Montessori schools group children in six-year cohorts, corresponding to the full age span of a plane of development. This is particularly common at the elementary level, where schools may have grades one through six together in a single classroom. Most Montessori schools, however, split each plane of development into two sub-groups, so that classes have a three-year age range. Escuela del Sol follows this pattern.

### Primary

For some children, entrance to the Primary class is their first school experience. For others,

they move up to Primary from the Toddler Community. Independent care of self is one sign of readiness for the Primary; this may include toileting and dressing. We also look to a child's sense of order and independence. The sense of order can be seen in careful handling of classroom materials and in following a daily routine. Independence is shown by the child's successful separation from the parents and in the ability to choose her own work in the classroom. Some children benefit from spending an additional year in our Primary program.

### **Lower Elementary**

The transition from Primary into Lower Elementary marks the end of the first plane of development and the onset of the second plane. The minimum age for entry into the Lower Elementary is six years by the start of school. In determining a child's readiness for moving up into Elementary, faculty first consider social and emotional maturity. We also look closely at the child's academic skills; she needs to be reading and writing with some fluency to prosper at the Elementary level. She also needs to have a strong sense of self-direction and independence, and the ability to work with concentration – alone or in cooperation with a group.

### **Upper Elementary**

The transition into Upper Elementary occurs when a child enters the second half of the second plane of development, at approximately nine years of age. Some children benefit from spending an additional year in the Lower Elementary. Each student's transition is considered by a joint committee of Lower and Upper Elementary faculty, in conjunction with the head, and in consultation with the parents. To make this transition successfully, the child must demonstrate increased independence as a student, in terms of both academic skills and personal responsibility. Academically, he needs to be ready for complex research and mathematical problem-solving skills. He needs a high degree of self-direction to be able to consistently choose challenging work. Additionally, he needs to be a respectful and cooperative member of the classroom community.

### **Middle School**

Students enter Middle School as childhood ends and adolescence begins – at about twelve years of age. This is the beginning of the third plane of development. Students will demonstrate a high degree of personal responsibility, respectful engagement with the group, and well-developed academic skills. Escuela assists the transition to middle school by offering graduates opportunities to practice interview skills, meet Escuela alumni and other support. Also, you can best prepare your child for these transitions by attending a Moving Up Night (*Life After Escuela*), typically held in November.

### **What Is the Parent's Role During Transitions?**

#### *Observation*

When your child is about to move into a different level, we recommend that you come and observe a classroom at the next level so that you will have a better understanding about the

transition your child will be making (For specific information about observing the classrooms, refer to *Observations* in the *Policy and Procedure* section of this handbook).

### *Orientation Meetings*

In August, each level will have times devoted to orientation meetings for all parents in each class (Toddler Community faculty will arrange a home visit). These meetings are essential for helping your child get off to a good start, since they will cover both practical information and the Montessori approach.

### *Listen to your Child*

To help prepare your child for a transition, it is important to listen. She will probably express a mixture of excitement and anxiety. Change can be scary; listening to your child's feelings, and expressing your support, will make a difference. Parents with concerns about whether their child is ready for the next level should contact the teacher. Decisions will be based on the needs of the individual child.

## **What Does the School Consider During Placement?**

### *Multi-Age Grouping: Building Community*

At each level, children are clustered in small learning communities for a three-year period. These small communities provide a number of advantages not found in traditional schools. Children work with others who are older and younger than themselves. The older students serve as role models and tutors for the younger students, and in the process they gain confidence in their own abilities and self-esteem regarding their skill level and expertise. The younger ones watch the older ones, and in the process gain a clear vision of what's expected of them, and have the benefit of working with and learning from their peers as well as the teacher. This small community is a direct preparation for life in the family and in the workplace. Communicating and working well with others are important life skills.

### *Balance of Needs and Learning Styles*

Each small learning community develops its own personality. The placement of children in these communities as they move from one level to another is a very important task. Each community needs a blend of learning and personality styles so that it truly reflects larger communities. Grouping children by their intellectual abilities would defeat the greater goal of establishing a sense of community in the classroom.

### *Siblings*

Siblings are not usually placed together. A child grows from developing new relationships with others. Building community requires individuals to extend themselves beyond their immediate circle of comfortable relationships.

### *The Placement Process*

In traditional school settings, a child's placement in a classroom is often determined by the child's ability to get along with the teacher (and vice versa). Escuela del Sol is not a teacher-centered educational system: it is child-centered. When students are moving from one program into another, their assets and strengths are analyzed, and then students are placed in a learning community that needs their gifts. Placement is determined by matching the skills and needs of the individual with the skills and needs of the learning community. The teacher is one part of the learning community.

### *Three-Year Commitment*

Because the composition of a learning community is selected very carefully, it is rare for children to be transferred from one community to another during this three-year period. We ask parents and children to make a three-year commitment to the learning community and, within that three-year period, to take the opportunity of getting to know other parents and children so that adults can also experience the benefit of a community network.

### *Parent Requests*

Administration and faculty work hard to make sure that each child is placed in an environment where her/his needs will be met. If you have particular concerns about your child's learning style during a time of transition, you are more than welcome to meet with the program directors to discuss those concerns.

# THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

## Background

The purpose of this agreement is to clarify expectations. What can parents and the school expect of each other as we enter into a partnership to aid the development of your children? This section of the Family Handbook aims to articulate expectations we agree on: what parents can reasonably expect of the school, and what the school will ask of parents. It also aims to reduce the inevitable misunderstanding and disappointment that result when unstated expectations go unmet.

## What can parents expect from the school?

*Q. What can parents reasonably expect from the school*

A. Our community of children and adults comprise a social environment and culture that impacts the child's experience. We strive to make this environment emotionally supportive and safe for every child. This does not mean that there are no problems. It does mean that we will work with your child in developmentally appropriate ways to deal with problems as they arise, empowering him with social skills and aiding him in the development of emotional intelligence to prepare for a lifetime of working with others in different communities and organizations.

*Q. What can I expect of the school academically?*

A. Escuela del Sol aspires to fulfill its mission as a Montessori school.

As a Montessori school, we are different from traditional schools. Our first commitment is to the multi-dimensional development of the child. Montessori children do amass a great deal of factual knowledge in school. However, our aim is for each child to be far more than a repository of this information: we guide each child to think for herself. Cognitive development and a solid academic foundation are important, yet they represent only one dimension of our aspirations for your child. Equally significant is your child's social, emotional, spiritual, and physical development. Children are given choices and a great deal of freedom—within limits—during the school day. The choices a child makes, and the accompanying responsibilities, influence the emerging character of your child. Choosing his own work or shaping it to a considerable degree, following that work through to completion, while working independently or in cooperation with others, the Montessori child identifies his interests and develops his individual gifts. As an Elementary School graduate said, "Montessori students motivate each other to be self-motivated."

*Q. What can I expect in terms of communication from the school?*

A. We aim to maintain open, honest, timely, and respectful communication with you about your child and about information affecting the school community.

There are two regularly scheduled parent–teacher conferences each year, and two written summaries or progress reports. In the event of special concerns, your child’s teacher will contact you to discuss these concerns by phone, by email, or in person. In addition to conference reporting, we will communicate with you via classroom letters and newsletters, email messages, and short reports as needed for individual children. Each Escuela teacher is a well–trained professional and her evaluation is confidential and based on direct observation of your child. She will always offer her current best understanding of your child’s progress and her strengths and needs. For all children, this evaluation is based on the teacher’s observation, which may be augmented by input from the program coordinator and/or auxiliary staff.

Regarding ongoing, school–wide communication, the school distributes a newsletter, *Buenos Dias* (also available at [www.escueladelosol.org](http://www.escueladelosol.org)), as well as a *Parent Handbook*, *Parent Directory*, school calendar, parent/faculty workshop calendar, emails, and other occasional letters and publications.

*Q. What can I expect of the school environment?*

A. We strive to ensure an environment that is physically and emotionally safe and supportive, as well as aesthetically beautiful.

Dr. Montessori said that the classroom teacher’s first responsibility is to prepare the environment. This means that the learning materials should correspond to the developmental characteristics of the child at each level, and that those materials must be attractive to the child: correct in size, aesthetically pleasing, well maintained, and complete. More broadly, the whole school environment must meet these criteria: to appeal to the child and to inspire his work. We are ever vigilant to ensure that the school building and grounds are physically safe, secure, and well maintained.

*Q. What professional standards can I expect of the school and faculty?*

A. The school maintains accreditation by the North Central Association–Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA–CASI) and affiliation with the American Montessori Society. These two organizations represent the most exacting standards of excellence for Montessori schools and for private, independent schools. We are also licensed by the Children, Youth and Families Division of the State of New Mexico. Escuela has achieved their highest standard, having been awarded 5 “Stars.”

At minimum, all lead teachers have received diploma from an AMS or AMI (Association Montessori International) teacher–training center. Many hold Master’s degrees as well. Our teachers have a sense of mission in working with children and demonstrate high standards for themselves and their students.

The school promotes a culture of professional growth in a number of ways. Teachers work annually with the program coordinators and Head of School to create an individual action plan

for meaningful faculty evaluation, driven by goal setting for professional development.

*Q. What can I expect of the school administration?*

A. Integrity; a focus on the needs of the individual child in harmony with the life of the community; mission-driven decisions embodying good stewardship and responsible management; and an open door to your questions or concerns.

Administrative staff interface with all the various constituencies of the school: students, parents, extended family, faculty, board members, alumni, prospective parents, professional visitors, government officials, other schools and educational organizations, and the general public. In your interactions with administration, you can expect professional, courteous, and business-like conduct, as well as mutually respectful communication.

The head of school, assistant head of school, business manager, development director, and support staff comprise the administration. They often face decisions requiring a balance of competing priorities. Sometimes those factors are mutually exclusive; sometimes equally well-intentioned adults see matters differently. In making decisions, the administration will focus on the interest of the individual child in balance with the needs of the school.

### **What does the school ask of parents?**

*Q. What is the school's most basic expectation of parents?*

A. Make continuing efforts both to understand and to embrace the Montessori approach and to work in partnership with the school.

These efforts should begin before admission. Escuela desires parents who understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we help parents learn about the Montessori approach by providing information and opportunities for parent workshops – so that parents can make an informed decision in choosing to enroll their children – and continue to provide more opportunities throughout a family's years at the school. Once children are enrolled, the school asks parents to attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences and parent workshops, and to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in this *Parent Handbook* and other school publications. Children thrive when home and school work in harmony, with both environments sharing the same educational values and expectations.

*Q. What contribution can I make to a positive school community?*

A. Demonstrate respect for all adults and children, the school and the school's programs.

Model for your children respect—for them, their classmates, parents of classmates, teachers and other school staff—in short, for everyone associated with the school. Respect begins with civility and deepens into trust. Our most fundamental behavioral guidelines for the children

are, “respect yourself, respect others, and respect the environment.” We ask the same from adults, parents, and school staff, at all times and in all relationships within the school community. This includes speech and outward behavior. Support your child by speaking of her/his teachers, classmates, and school in positive terms. Respect and abide by the school’s policies and procedures. Honor your commitments. Look for ways to make a positive contribution to the life of the school.

*Q. How can I create consistency between home and school?*

A. Strive to parent according to Montessori principles. Learn as much as you can about Montessori principles as they apply to preparation of your child’s home environment as well as the way we parents interact with our children. This begins with the general principle; “Never do something for your child that he can do for himself.” Allow your child to engage in all of the simple tasks of practical life that a child can do for himself at each stage of development. Montessori education may also entail learning a communication style different from the way in which we were parented. Children develop a love of learning and become responsible, independent, and capable when parents’ values and expectations are consistent with those of the school.

*Q. What are my responsibilities regarding communication between home and school?*

A. Maintain active, direct and respectful, two-way communication with the school.

Read communications that are sent home, including letters, newsletters, email and calendars. Inform the school in a timely fashion of pertinent changes in your child’s life. Active communication involves parents sharing observations and concerns about their child with the child’s current teacher. In matters large and small, remember the principle of respect: even when there is disagreement, disagree respectfully. Children prosper most when the primary voices in their lives sing in harmony. Let’s work together for that music to happen!

## ESCUELA COMMUNITY (ECO)

Escuela del Sol Montessori has an extremely talented and involved parent body. Parent volunteer activities are coordinated through Escuela’s parent/teacher association – ECO. The school depends on the support of these parent & teacher volunteers throughout the year. When you donate your time and talents to assist the school, you make a valuable contribution to the children and also have the opportunity to connect with other parents. Along with having a great deal of fun, ECO volunteers help to build a community spirit and give a tremendous boost to our students, faculty and staff.

### Mentor Families

*How does drop off work? Where is Extended Care? Am I supposed to bring my child to Parent/Teacher conferences? What's the difference between a Parent Workshop and Bring Your Parents to School Night?*

Last year, a small group of Escuela parents were chatting and agreed that it can be bewildering (sometimes down right overwhelming!) when a new family to enters the school community. They decided to create a mentoring program and put plans in place to welcome new parents and help ease their transition.

Mentors will contact new parents as the school year begins and provide support and guidance throughout the year. We would like to establish this tradition and have called upon seasoned Escuela parents to help.

Some Mentor duties include:

- Calling and introducing yourself, as soon as possible.
- Suggesting a casual get together at a local park or meet for coffee in the Escuela plaza when school starts.
- Sitting together at the ECO meeting
- Planning to meet up at the Family Dance and Picnic

For those of you who love to throw parties, we are also looking for a volunteer to host a get-together for mentors and their mentees. As much as possible, we will do our best to pair mentors and mentees whose children are the same age, attend the same class or live in the same neighborhood.

We'll gladly tailor our "mentor training" to fit your schedule. If you're pressed for time, we can work out the details via email or for those who prefer to meet and discuss ideas we are here all year long, just give us a call.

## SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

**E**scuela del Sol Montessori is incorporated as a non-profit corporation and managed by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees. The board is governed by the school's articles of incorporation and by the school's by-laws. The board is comprised of members selected from the community who are chosen for the expertise in their respective field. Candidates for board service are evaluated by the board's development committee. The Board of Trustees serve as custodians of the integrity of the school, holding in trust the school's future as well as its present. Their collective judgment respects the interests of constituents and of the larger society that all independent schools serve. The board as a whole represents continuity and permanent responsibility. It is responsible for effective strategic planning and for the school's fiscal well being. The board selects and evaluates the head of school and delegates

responsibility for implementation of policies to the head. The head of school prepares and carries out the operating plan and the annual budget, as approved by the board. She also has the duty to report to the board on school matters, and is accountable to the board for effective, businesslike management of the school. The head of school serves as the professional educational leader of the institution. She has complete responsibility for faculty, staff, and student selection, evaluation and dismissal. The head of school articulates the mission of the school to its constituencies and is responsible for the professional quality and behavior of the faculty.

## **Appellate Function**

### *Background*

The Board of Directors is a strategic board and does not participate in the daily operations of the school or routinely review decisions made by the head of school. That said, the board has elected to introduce a carefully defined appellate function into the board. While the board expects the use of this process to be extremely rare, it is valuable to have such a process in place. The head of school will always be part of this process and will participate fully in any discussion of matters appealed to the board.

Because the board appoints the head with full responsibility to run the school and the head has the confidence of the board, it would be unusual for the appellate process to overturn a decision made by the head. However, there may be an instance when having a review process of decision-making would be helpful to be sure all sides of an issue have been examined. The appellate process can be used by parents for significant disagreements, such as the expulsion of a child from school, or by a faculty member who may imminently be terminated or whose contract has not been renewed. The process is not intended to be used for daily operating decisions or to challenge school policies. In all cases, it is expected that the complainant will have worked through the normal process of conflict resolution, following the lines of communication as outlined in this *Parent Handbook* and the *Faculty and Staff Handbook*. The appellate process is to be used only by the person affected by the decision.

### *Appeal Procedure*

Submit a written, signed, and dated statement to the board. No oral or unsigned appeals will be considered. The written statement should describe what the problem is and include specific facts, dates and names, where relevant. The statement should include why the position of the school is perceived to be wrong. Typically, the appeal will be reviewed in the next regularly scheduled meeting of the board of directors, which meets with the head of school in attendance. The head participates fully in this meeting.

The board will review the information submitted to make certain that all circumstances were considered in the decision and that the policies of the school have been followed. Please note

that the appellate process is not to be used for academic-related decisions. A written response will be sent to the complainant subsequent to the meeting.

# OFFICE RECORDS AND REQUIREMENTS

## Enrollment Contract

Please read your enrollment contract carefully. Note that you are obligated to pay the full school year's tuition, in its entirety, if your student is not withdrawn before July 1, 2009 for the Elementary School and February, 2010 for the Primary & Toddler Programs. One month's notice, in writing, is required for withdrawal from the Primary and Toddler programs.

## Records

An enrollment contract; Student Admission Record; health records which include immunizations, allergies or illnesses the school should be aware of; emergency contact numbers, permission for emergency care and transportation and the child's doctor's name and number are all required by the State of New Mexico. This information must be kept updated. Parents should notify the school of any changes in these records (e.g. address and phone changes).

Clear direction regarding matters of custody must be filed with the school office and the classroom teacher.

## Tuition and Fees

Tuition payments are made through the "SMART" Tuition Plan unless you have chosen to pay in one or two installments. Tuition - related questions should be addressed to Escuela's business manager, Chris Loss: (520) 577-2739. Fees may be assessed for late payments and/or students may be disenrolled for non-payment of fees.

## Illness / Injury

If your child has suffered a severe injury or is seriously ill, we will call 911. The emergency system transports all critically injured people and most seriously ill children to UNM Hospital, according to a citywide protocol. We will contact you after we call 911.

If your child is less severely injured or ill, we will attempt to contact you first. However, we will not delay needed care to do so and will call your pediatrician and/or emergency contacts if we think this is appropriate.

Consent: Your permission is needed before your child can be treated unless a true emergency exists. Make sure the consent statement found on your child's Student Admission Record is signed and dated by a parent or legal guardian.

The child's teachers will report any minor injuries and accidents to parents at the end of the day.

Please help minimize spread of illness among our students. If your child has any infectious illness (cold or fever, chicken pox, diarrhea, strep throat, etc.) keep him/her home and call us so we can alert our other parents.

Children who are sick should not be at school. If a child is not well enough to play outdoors and interact actively with other children, the child is too sick to come to school.

A child who is not feeling well or who has a contagious rash or ailment such as “pink eye” will be sent home.

When a child becomes ill at school, parents will be called. If parents cannot be reached, the family’s emergency contacts will be called to pick up the child.

If your child is going to be absent or is ill, please call the school before 9 a.m.

### **Medication**

Our staff can only administer medication with written permission from a parent or legal guardian. Medication must be given to the child’s teacher and must be in the original container labeled with the child’s name, name of medication, dosage, and hours it is to be given. Only prescribed medications such as antibiotics and medications for chronic problems such as asthma will be given. Medical authorization forms are available in the office.

Make sure that the office and the teachers are aware of any health conditions such as special diets, allergies, etc. that your child may have.

The following is a list of symptoms to guide you in deciding whether your child should be sent to school. Do not send your child to school on days when any of the following symptoms are present or were present the night before:

- Fever (temperature over 98.6F)
- Rash
- Persistent Cough
- Discharge of discolored or profuse amounts of mucous from the nose
- Ear Ache
- Diarrhea
- Impetigo
- Pink Eye
- Vomiting
- Sore Throat

# CLASSROOM INFORMATION

## Arrival and Pick-up of Children

Escuela del Sol is open Monday thru Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Elementary School classes start promptly at 8:15 a.m.; Primary at 8:30 a.m. Children should arrive no later than 5 – 10 minutes before the start of class and no earlier unless signed up for extended care. All children should be picked up within 10 minutes of the end of their session. Anyone picking up his/her child more than 10 minutes late will be charged for childcare at the rate of \$7.00 per hour. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of being on time and of making sure your child's teachers know your plans. Whenever there is a change in the student's transportation plans or pick-up time, please let teachers know.

Children will be released only to persons known to the staff and to those for whom we have written permission. Unless the teacher is notified in advance or the child has a note requesting otherwise, the child will not be released. Please be sure a staff member is aware of your child's arrival and departure from school.

## Sign-in and Out

There are sheets by each classroom to sign your child in and out. This must be done daily as your child arrives and leaves the school. We ask your cooperation with this important procedure. It is done for your child's safety and is a State requirement. If you have any questions about the sign-in/out procedure, please ask your child's teacher.

## Snow Days

If APS is closed or on an abbreviated schedule due to poor driving conditions, Escuela will follow suit. E.g.: If APS is on a 2-hour delay, the Elementary School will begin at 10:15 a.m., the Primary & Toddler programs at 10:30 a.m. (there will be no before care). In the event of a snowstorm during the day it may be necessary to close early. Please listen to KOB-AM/FM for announcements of schedule changes or early closures.

## Drop-in Extended Care

If you need to leave your child at Escuela for extended hours, please notify the office at least one day in advance. The charge for extended care is \$7.00 per hour.

## Parking

*Toddler Families:* Enter from Granite St., exit onto 7th St. NEVER park in the fire lane. **Please use extreme caution in the parking lot.**

*Primary & Elementary Families:* We hope you will take advantage of our curb-side drop off system. Between 8-8:15, elementary faculty are available to assist your student (s) in disembarking from your vehicle and walking to class. Drop off is available to Primary families between 8:15-8:30.

*Senior Elementary School Families:* Students can enter and exit from the front of the Harwood Art Center.

## **Snack/Birthdays**

Morning snacks are provided by parents.

*Toddler & Primary:* Please see Teachers for snack schedules.

*Elementary:* Students bring their own morning snack. Please see below for guidelines:

Snacks should be wholesome & sugar-free (even birthday snacks!). Some ideas for snacks: fresh, organic fruits or vegetables (celery, carrot sticks); whole-wheat crackers; etc. Do not send candy, gum, sodas, Kool-aid, etc.

## **Lunch**

If your child brings lunch:

- Please be aware that we have very limited refrigerator space.
- Mark lunches with the child's name. It is not necessary to provide a drink; the school will provide drinks for the children.
- Please do NOT pack sodas in your child's lunch.

Lunches can be purchased from Robin's Natural Food. For questions regarding price and menu, please call 350-6558 or email [rday252@gmail.com](mailto:rday252@gmail.com). The menu can also be viewed via Escuela's website - [escueladelsol.org](http://escueladelsol.org)

## **Changes in Home Routine**

Please keep the staff informed of changes in a child's normal routine. Occurrences such as parents being away, separations, divorces, deaths in the family, etc., can sometimes be the source of changes in your child's behavior. When the teachers are aware and understand the child's behavior, they can be more helpful to the child.

## **In-Service/Staff Work Days**

Escuela Faculty & Staff will take up to three in-service days during the school year. These days are a necessary part of the school year because they provide continuing education and work time (for making classroom materials, etc.) for the staff. Staff workdays contribute to the excellent quality of care your children receive at Escuela. The school will be closed on these days; no childcare will be available.

## **Discipline & Confidentiality**

Discipline will include positive guidance, redirection, and the setting of clear limits that foster the child's own ability to become self-disciplined.

Disciplinary practices will be designed to encourage the child to be fair, to respect persons and property, and to assume personal responsibility and responsibility for others.

Student records, family situations, medical history, children's school performance, behavior, etc. are private and confidential information. Teachers will never discuss a child with anyone other than that child's own parent(s) / guardian (s) unless written consent to do so has been given by those parents(s)/guardian(s); or when consulting with another staff member or administrator.

### **Behavioral Expectations**

If a child frequently behaves in an unacceptable manner, teachers will consult with the Head of School and with the child's parents. If necessary, the school will suspend a student for up to three days at a time. More extreme measures (disenrollment) may be taken if the student and his/her parents are unable to work with the school to resolve behavioral issues successfully.

Behavior may reflect a need for counseling or educational/psychological screening. Parents are expected to work with faculty for the child's best interest. This may include hiring an outside consultant to work with the family and school.

We ask your cooperation in seeing that money, toys, gum, candy, balloons, etc. are left at home.

### **Dress**

Children of all ages should come to school in clothing that is comfortable yet neat and clean. Do not expect your children's clothing to get soiled from playing and participating in activities such as cooking, painting, etc. Children in our Toddler and Primary are asked to bring extra changes of clothing (please see supply lists). Students' apparel should reflect respect for oneself and for others. Do not allow your child to wear clothing that is torn, overly baggy or improperly tight and/or revealing. We ask that clothing not display wording or graphics that are disrespectful and/or rude. Hats may not be worn inside the classroom.

### **Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect**

Staff are aware of the indicators of child abuse/neglect. If a staff member suspects child abuse/neglect this will be noted in writing, the Head of School alerted and the Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) notified, if warranted. If child abuse, in our opinion has definitely occurred it is our legal responsibility to notify CYFD.

### **Emergency Procedures**

Escuela's Emergency Procedures, Safety Policies and Disaster Preparedness Plan are available in the school office.

## **PARENTS & ESCUELA**

As a parent at Escuela del Sol, you will have the opportunity to be actively involved in your child's education away from home (see ECO, page 17). At Escuela, we strongly believe that the process of education cannot be separated from the home and family life. Being a part of your child's schooling will be a rewarding as well as an educational experience. Parent nights, newsletters and a standing invitation to visit, participate or observe in our school give parents the opportunity to continue their understanding of the Montessori philosophy and their children's activities.

### **Observation**

After a settling-in period of 2 to 4 weeks, parents are invited to observe. This is your school, and you are always welcome. We do ask that you make an appointment through the office. Out of respect for the children, we limit the number of adults in a classroom.

## **Conferences**

Parent/Teacher Conferences are held twice a school year (see calendar). At other times, conferences between the staff and parents can be arranged by appointment. The school will be closed for conference days; daycare is available on a limited basis for children who are pre-registered.

## **Suggestions/ Complaints**

If you become dissatisfied with the school in any way, please seek to resolve the matter with the person or persons involved rather than spread criticism. Please know that the administration and faculty of Escuela del Sol value the well being and happiness of children and know that if parents are unhappy, children soon will be. Talk to us as soon as you have any questions or feel any dissatisfaction. We will work together to resolve any situation that may arise. If you have any problems with your child's teacher or class, please discuss this with the teacher and/or the Head of School (Ms. Friedje vanGils). Any administrative problems can be discussed with a member of our management team or with President of the Board, Maria Geer.

## **Communication**

The school's newsletter, "Buenos Dias", provides a means of communicating school news, general information, fundraising efforts, and educational news. It is a means of continuing our families' education about the Montessori philosophy and it is a source of articles about parenting. This newsletter is compiled and edited by parent volunteers. We urge you to contribute to this publication by submitting ideas, articles, requests for articles and notices. Please watch for the newsletter and share it with your friends and relatives. For Escuela families it is an important means of communication; please read it promptly and thoroughly so you will be aware of classroom needs and activities. Help us stay in touch with you through our newsletter!

## **Workdays**

Workdays are scheduled for various events and/or needs. If you cannot attend workdays, a tax-deductible donation will be appreciated. These donations in lieu of work go toward tools, paint, etc. for the projects to be done. There is always plenty of work to do in the way of repairs (building and classroom materials) and improvements. Most work is organized through ECO but teachers are always glad to know if you are available to help with something.

## **Escuela Students at Home**

Escuela del Sol Montessori welcomes and values diversity of every kind. The Escuela community includes a large variety of families with diverse child rearing practices and values; people who differ widely in their behavior and beliefs. The common thread among our families is a commitment to their children and to parental involvement in education.

There are a few basics that the faculty and staff of Escuela del Sol know will help all our students. Please give some consideration to the following:

- Children need consistency. It is especially important for children from toddlers through elementary ages to experience consistency in caregivers, mealtimes, bedtimes and waking up times.
- Please pay attention to your children’s television watching habits. Consider both the content and the duration of TV viewing. A thoughtful book on the subject: Endangered Minds by Jane M. Healy, Ph.D. Consider the following:
  - The content of many shows are clearly unsuitable for young children, including those in sixth grade.
  - TV (fictional) situations as well as language do influence behavior. Some shows may not have objectionable language or situations, but do convey values which you do not share and which merit, at least, family discussion.
  - Much of prime-time TV falls into the unsuitable category.
- Children need active play. Even though there is playground time and P.E. in school, imaginative, active play at home (alone or with siblings) is crucial and productive.
- Children need a good breakfast. We understand that some children do not want to eat much right after waking up. Please try to adjust their schedule so there is time to eat.
- Encourage your child to read. Depending on the age of your child(ren), this can mean looking at pictures, reading together with a parent, listening to a story, or reading on one’s own. Reading as a fun, relaxing activity is an easy habit to nurture.

### *Homework for the Elementary Child*

When children leave Escuela del Sol at the end of the school day, we hope they will have time to relax, and we expect they will do some “homework” as well.

### *Junior Elementary (6-9)*

Our homework expectations for Junior Elementary children are as follows:

1. Activities appropriate to family life and the home environment: see list below.
2. Continuation of both academic work and self-development:
  - A love of reading is the single best indicator of and influence on academic success. Reading and being read to daily are thus very important for Elementary children. Sharing a joyful moment with your child can reinforce their love of learning.

### Suggested Homework Activities:

- Go on a walk and talk about it later, over dinner: what we saw, how it felt, and what animals, plants, etc. did we notice. That's language / vocabulary development, conversational skill development, relationship building, conversing w/ people of different ages, etc!

- Assist in meal planning, shop with a parent, count change or keep a tally of grocery costs, read a recipe, help prepare the meal
- Read to younger siblings
- Sort white clothes from dark clothes
- Prepare his/her own lunch
- Vacuum or wash the floor
- Walk a well-behaved pet
- Play games together – through much repetition children learn to take turns, to win and lose
- Make a simple breakfast
- Set the table
- Clear the table and sponge it off
- Help wash and dry dishes
- Put away groceries
- Take out the garbage
- Take out the recycling
- Make the bed
- Clean the room
- Take phone messages and write them down
- Fold laundry
- Arrange clothing in drawers
- Hang up clothes in the closet
- Dust
- Take care of pets
- Water plants
- Clean out the inside of a car

### *Upper elementary (9-12)*

All of the above, plus:

- Memorization of spelling words
- Book reports
- Monthly school projects (topic of the month)
- Memorization of math facts
- If possible, allow your child a plot of land, or at least a flowerpot, in which to experience growing things
- Plan menus for the upcoming week
- Write out a shopping list (as dictated by a parent)
- Take a calculator to the store and compare items (“How much will we save if we buy Brand X? Do we like Brand Y better? How much more sodium is in this one?”)
- Keep a record of family expenses for a week
- Sort clothes by color and learn to use the washing machine. Do her/his own laundry or some laundry for the family.

- Sew on buttons
- Vacuum
- Rake leaves, pull weeds
- Help an elderly neighbor (by taking a paper to the door, or rolling a trashcan out to the street)

This list is meant to suggest possibilities. Children may be able to accomplish tasks at ages above or below those given. When making decisions about household responsibilities, keep the following principles in mind:

- It is best to involve children in identifying the work that needs to be done and in choosing who will be responsible for each job (Not doing anything is not one of the choices!).
- Use common sense in deciding the number of tasks a child will do.
- He or she may wish to give input about which jobs can be accomplished efficiently alone, and which would be more easily done with you or another family member.  
**Remember the social nature of the elementary child:** household jobs are more enjoyable when done with someone else. Your child may resent doing certain jobs alone, but delight in doing them with you.
- It is also best if children help set the standards for the work and evaluate the completed job.
- Ask children to set an appropriate time limit for completing tasks.
- Vary the tasks: children like the challenge of a new or unusual job.
- Remember you are a model to the child. Expect no more order or cleanliness from the child than from yourself.

# FUND-RAISING AND EVENTS

## Fundraising

The tuition you pay covers only the school's basic operating costs. Tuition is not sufficient to provide financial aid to students (which keeps diversity alive at Escuela), funds for additional classroom materials and renovations to playgrounds and buildings.

It is the goal of Escuela del Sol Montessori to fully cover basic operating expenses through tuition and fee payments and earned income. At the same time, the school does engage in fund-raising, as does virtually every independent school. Money raised through the Annual Fund and specific fund-raising events help to support:

- Student financial assistance
- Teacher training and faculty development
- Physical and programmatic enhancements and enrichment
- Capital expenses (including principal payments on the long-term debt)

This year the school will have two main fund-raising programs:

- Annual Fund Campaign
- Benefit Dinner and Auction

### *Annual Fund Campaign*

Donations to the Annual Fund campaign support every activity listed above. Annual Fund contributions are tax-deductible, and payments can be made until July of the giving year. Gifts may also be eligible for matching funds from employers. Reaching 100% parent participation in the Annual Fund is as important as reaching our financial goal: it is vital to the school's continued success in obtaining gifts and grants from corporations and foundations. Each family is strongly encouraged to give to its ability, and to fulfill pledged commitments. November is designated as Annual Fund Month. Contact Communications & Development Director Kristina Nguyen or Head of School Friedje vanGils for more information.

### *Benefit Dinner & Auction*

Escuela del Sol holds a benefit dinner and auction every other year. The event includes both silent and live auctions, featuring donated items from individuals and local businesses, and unique items created by Escuela's students. If you would like to be involved in the 2010 auction, please contact your ECO officers or Head of School Friedje VanGils for more information.

### *Other Ways of Giving*

Escuela del Sol endeavors to enlist the support of all parents, grandparents, faculty, staff, and other community friends in securing funds from a number of grocery store rebate programs. Currently the school is enrolled in programs operated by Smith's and Target. Beneficiary

organizations receive a quarterly check reflecting a percentage of the store purchases made by participants. The more people who participate, the more money the school is able to raise. Program cards for Smith's are available at the office. The forms are required to link your card to our school. Please help us make the most of these programs by participating.

You can also give to the school through planned giving, vehicles, stock, insurance policies, and by inclusion in your will. If you are interested in this method of ensuring your continued support, please contact Kristina Nguyen, Communications & Development Director, at 242-3033, ext. 104.

It is very important for each family to support Escuela's fundraising efforts!

# HOW TO REACH US

Escuela del Sol Office ..... 242-3033

Friedje vanGils, Exec. Director, Escuela Et Harwood, [friedje@edelsol.org](mailto:friedje@edelsol.org)

Chris Loss, Business Manager, (520) 577-2739, [chrisloss@edelsol.org](mailto:chrisloss@edelsol.org)

Elizabeth Marcilla, Assistant Head of School, [elizabethm@edelsol.org](mailto:elizabethm@edelsol.org)

Annie Greenwall, Administrator, [annie@edelsol.org](mailto:annie@edelsol.org)

Penny Hicks, Administrator, [penny@edelsol.org](mailto:penny@edelsol.org)

Kristina Nguyen, Director of Communication Et Development, [kristinan@edelsol.org](mailto:kristinan@edelsol.org)

Harwood Art Center ..... 242-6367

Stephanie Gabriel, Director, [stephanie@harwoodartcenter.org](mailto:stephanie@harwoodartcenter.org)

Kathy Meidell, Site Manager, [kathy@harwoodartcenter.org](mailto:kathy@harwoodartcenter.org)

Wade Patterson, Director of Arts Et Community Development,  
[wade@harwoodartcenter.org](mailto:wade@harwoodartcenter.org)

Darbi Photos, Director of Arts Education, [darbi@harwoodartcenter.org](mailto:darbi@harwoodartcenter.org)

Jessie Rogers, Marketing, [jessie@harwoodartcenter.org](mailto:jessie@harwoodartcenter.org)

Escuela Fax ..... 1-800- 317-4752

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

Don Hebb, Facilities Mgr. .... 217-5202

email: [office@edelsol.org](mailto:office@edelsol.org) or [info@harwoodartcenter.org](mailto:info@harwoodartcenter.org)

Web Pages: [www.escueladelsol.org](http://www.escueladelsol.org) Et [www.harwoodartcenter.org](http://www.harwoodartcenter.org)

See the Escuela web pages for updates, monthly lunch menus and announcements ...

Stay In Touch!

