

Covid Operating Plan Fall 2021



Introduction

After considerable planning and deliberation, Escuela del Sol Montessori crafted a response to the global COVID-19 pandemic by staying true to our mission. Via decisions by our Board of Trustees and our leadership, we made a commitment to care for our community of children, their families and our employees while ensuring the sustainability of our organization. This was done by re-opening the campus with strict guidelines in place, establishing an organization-wide vaccination policy for all staff in May 2021, and by our continuing commitment to abide by all federal and state requirements for the health and safety of our school community.

Our classrooms are designed to activate the internal drive of each child and optimize development through experiential interactions with the environment. By doing everything in our power to keep our campus open, Escuela del Sol aims to fulfill our mission to guide the intellectual, physical, social and emotional development of each child along a path toward their full and unknown potential in ways that honor the complementary needs of the individual and the group.

A new phase in the continued mitigation of COVID-19 requires a continued commitment to our community's health and safety. Unfortunately, the pandemic continues to provide us with an ever-shifting landscape of challenges. With careful and thorough attention to guidelines provided by state and federal authorities, these updated policies and procedures for the 2021 – 2022 school year further our organization's successful commitment to our community. This document is intended to explain the procedures Escuela will employ to continue its mitigation of COVID-19 related risks at school.

The information in this document will provide clarity around the practices and procedures Escuela has established to minimize exposure to our community, but in no way warrants that COVID-19 or other communicable disease infection will not occur through participation in our programs.

THANK YOU for your support, your on-going patience and your collaboration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Chavez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Kate Chavez, Executive Director

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9/1/2021 update: negative PCR test results or note from medical provider is acceptable. Details are on page 6.

8/23/2021 updates are dated and in **BOLD**.

Updates to this operating plan from the previous version published July 2020 include but are not limited to:

- Details about acceptable masks have been updated.
- The current NM public health mandate requires that private schools must follow COVID-19 safety guidance put forth by PED.
- Before Care (as early as 7:30 a.m.) and Extended Day (as late as 5:00 p.m.) will be offered for all levels.
- Children's temperatures will no longer be taken by a staff member upon arrival.
- Nap bedding will be sent home once per week.

Glossary of Terms

For clarity and consistency throughout all of our communications going forward, we have created a Glossary of Terms for our community.

Remaining open during the on-going pandemic: School operates Monday - Friday, in person with limited options for contact. All procedures, including arrival, departure and classroom time, are modified to respond to health and safety recommendations arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Only staff and students are allowed into the interior of campus during regular school hours. Proper mask use, social distancing, and other safety and hygiene protocols will continue to be enforced as age appropriate.

Mandated Closure: In the event of a state mandated closure, Toddler, Primary and Junior Elementary may be permitted to remain open for families who require essential services such as childcare. Details regarding hours and available services will depend on the exact nature of the State DOH mandates. All classes that can move appropriately to Distance Learning via the Escuela Home Learning Workshops will do so.

Partial or Temporary Close: Escuela will follow the most current strict guidelines and recommendations. Details regarding which programs will close and for how long depend on the particulars of the event and on guidance from ECECD, NMPED, and/or the NMDOH.

Masks: Masks are well-fitting face coverings to go over the nose and mouth; they are meant to contain respiratory droplets and protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. Face masks must cover the mouth and nose and fit snugly against the sides of the face in order to contain respiratory droplets. Cloth masks must be made from two or more layers of cloth.

The following face coverings are not substitutes for face masks:

- Masks that have exhalation valves or vents
- Bandanas or scarves
- Neck gaiters (also known as a neck fleece)
- Face shields (unless they are hooded, or start at the forehead and wrap around the face from ear to ear and extend to the chin)

Quarantine: Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from their state or local health department.

Isolation: Isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus (those who are sick with COVID-19 and those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected. People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific "sick room" or area and using a separate bathroom (if available).

Proof of Vaccination Status: Proof of vaccination can be logged **using this form**. An image of the vaccination card can be uploaded on the form, or the card can be shown to a member of the administrative team.

Fully Vaccinated: Individuals are considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 after two weeks following receipt of the second dose in a two-dose series or after two weeks following receipt of a one-dose vaccine.

Confirmed Case: A person who has tested positive for COVID-19 by laboratory testing.

Community Health Screening Form: An **online screening form** that must be completed for all students before they arrive on campus. Adults who have not logged their vaccination status must also complete this form before coming on campus to drop off for Early Care (7:30 a.m.) or to pick up children during Extended Day (3:45-5:00 p.m.).

Assisted Arrival: Any and all children dropped-off during regular school hours. Detailed procedure in the arrival section.

Assisted Departure: Any and all children picked-up before 3:45pm.

General Preparedness and Planning (ALL LEVELS)

Escuela del Sol Montessori has and will continue to comply with local health officials to help protect the whole school community. School plans are designed to complement other community mitigation strategies to protect everyone, and minimize disruption to teaching and learning.

This document was compiled using the COVID-19 guidelines and recommendations for schools and childcare programs published by the CDC, PED (New Mexico Public Education Department), the ECECD (Early Childhood Education and Care Department), and NMDOH (the Department of Health). Escuela's operating procedures meet or exceed the minimum standards of care and will be updated as new information or additional guidelines are made available.

Background information regarding Licensing, Accreditation and Governance

For clarity, please remember that the ECECD is the State's licensing agency that oversees and licenses all our Early Childhood programs; those are Toddler and Primary programs for children ages 18 months through Kindergarten.

PED (the Public Education Department) has no licensing authority for independent schools like ours. It governs K – 12 public school programs. Escuela del Sol stays up to date with all PED guidelines, opinions and informational materials, using this to enhance and strengthen our practices. **The current NM public health mandate, however, requires that private schools must follow COVID-19 safety guidance put forth by PED.**

Escuela del Sol Montessori is accredited by the American Montessori Society (AMS). We are the first school in New Mexico to be thus accredited, having met all the high standards of that national organization. Through this accreditation and membership Escuela gleans information, has collegial support and access to experts from around the world to support and enhance our programs.

Health Screening

Daily health screenings are important to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and other illnesses. Staff will confirm that the online **Community Health Screening** form for students has been completed and submitted daily before admission to campus.

Regardless of vaccination status, no individual is permitted on campus who

- has a temperature of 100.4 F or above; OR
- is experiencing any symptoms of Covid-19; OR
- has had close contact with someone with Covid-19.

Student Screening Prior to Arrival

Parents are required to conduct the pre-screening procedure every day prior to their child(ren)'s arrival at school. This includes taking the child's temperature and answering the questions in the online screening form. In addition, parents are encouraged to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and must keep them home when they are sick or exhibiting

symptoms. Staying home when sick is essential to prevent spread of COVID-19 infections to others.

The online Community Health Screening form includes the following criteria and questions. This form may be updated more frequently as needed and/or mandated.

If you answer “yes” to any of the following questions, do not send your child to school or come to our campus. Contact a medical provider or call the COVID-19 Hotline at 855-600-3453.

All persons (children and adults) who meet any of the criteria below will be denied entry:

- Temperature of or over 100.4°F (without temperature lowering medications); or
- In the last twenty-four hours, any of the following symptoms:
 - New frequent, dry cough (for students with chronic allergies/asthma, a change in the student’s baseline cough)
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fever or chills
 - Fatigue
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Diarrhea
 - Congestion or abnormally runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
- In the previous 14 days has anyone in the household been in close contact with someone confirmed to have or is under investigation for COVID-19
- Note: everyone needs to stay up to date with current travel restrictions as per Governor’s orders. More information about COVID-19 symptoms, testing, and travel restrictions are available from the New Mexico Department of Health, <https://cv.nmhealth.org/>

Students who have been kept home due to illness may now return to school if they are displaying zero symptoms and provide a negative PCR (not rapid) Covid test, or a note from a medical professional. We ask that, whenever possible, you continue to consult a medical professional, but understand that in some cases this is providing an undue hardship on our students and families.

The greatest factor in keeping our community healthy is that Escuela families continue to keep children home when there have been any symptoms or even the possibility that they have come into contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid.

Staff Screening Prior to Arrival at School

All staff members will conduct a self-assessment prior to arrival at school. If a staff member self-identifies as having symptoms listed in the screening criteria above, they will contact the designated administrator, **not come into work**, and follow the procedures in the section: COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Staff.

Screening of Children at School

Teachers will make a visual inspection of their students for signs of illness which could include flushed cheeks, rapid breathing, or difficulty breathing (without recent physical activity), fatigue, or extreme fussiness. If a child exhibits any of these symptoms, or runs a temperature at any point during the day, parents will be required to pick up their child immediately.

During drop off, children's temperatures will no longer be taken and verified by a staff member. Parents, however, will take their children's temperature at home and enter this information in the health screening form.

Face Coverings/ Masks

Everyone 3 years of age and older is required to wear a mask while indoors. **As of August 23, 2021, mask wearing is required both indoors and outside.**

Additional Procedures to Mitigate Spread of COVID-19

At this time, parents and guests are only permitted on campus in very specific instances and if/when prior arrangements are made with the office. Specific instances include Extended Day pick up and special events such as Classroom Visits or Work Days. Before a parent comes on campus, they will be required to have either shown proof of vaccination or have completed the online **Community Health Screening Form**, including a temperature check by a staff member, and follow all current guidance from the CDC and state and local authorities to keep our campus safe.

Arrival and Departure Protocols

Please read carefully the detailed procedures for assisted arrival and departure. Careful attention to the proposed procedures and strict adherence to the guidelines will go far to ensure the health and safety of our employees as well as our students and their families.

Physical Distancing

Requirements and distancing practices will differ according to age and developmental abilities. Please see details in level descriptions.

Hand Hygiene

Washing hands can keep our community healthy and prevent the spread of infections from one person to the next. All children and staff will engage in hand hygiene at the following times, at a minimum:

- Arrival to the classroom and after breaks
- Before and after each work choice
- Before and after eating or handling food
- After using the toilet or helping a child use the bathroom
- After coming in contact with bodily fluid
- After playing outdoors

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Escuela del Sol Montessori follows the national standards for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfection of educational facilities for children provided by the CDC, ECECD, PED and the NMDOH.

Toddler and Primary: Each child's bedding is kept separate and stored in individually labeled containers. Cots and mats are labeled for each child. Bedding will be sent home to be cleaned weekly on Fridays.

COVID-19 Symptoms and COVID-19 Cases in School

COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Students

If symptoms of an illness begin while at school, the child will be sent home as soon as possible. Sick children will be kept separate as much as possible.

- Classroom staff will follow these procedures:
 - Classroom staff will inform the office of symptoms exhibited.
 - Additional cleaning in the classroom will be handled by teachers.
 - Office staff will contact parents to immediately come pick up the child.
 - A staff member will supervise the child until the parent arrives. Once a parent arrives, the office should be called to alert them of their arrival. The child will be brought to the parent's car and the parent will then assist the child into the car.
- If a student develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19, Escuela del Sol will follow all ECECD and PED guidelines with respect to requirements for self-isolation, quarantine, testing, and returning to campus. Consistent with all such requirements, an individual may be requested to provide a medical professional's note and/or a negative COVID-19 test clearing the individual for their return. All medical information will be kept strictly confidential.

COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Staff

Staff are required to monitor their health and to perform daily self-assessment for symptoms of COVID-19. Staff members must stay home if they are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19; they will be asked to contact their healthcare provider.

- Staff exhibiting symptoms of possible COVID-19 at school are required to:
 - Leave the campus immediately.
 - Obtain a COVID-19 test.
 - Follow the recommendations of their healthcare provider.
- Employees may not return to work until return criteria as per CDC and NMDOH are met.
- All medical information will be kept strictly confidential.

COVID-19 Exposure - Staff and Students

If a staff member or child has been identified as having had close contact with someone outside the classroom community who is diagnosed with COVID-19, that staff member or child will be required to self-quarantine and/or test as per CDC and NMDOH guidelines.

Positive Case of COVID-19 in a Classroom Community - Children or Staff

If COVID-19 is confirmed in a child or staff member in a classroom community, the school will strictly abide by all reporting requirements implemented by New Mexico Department of Health, the New Mexico Public Education Department, and the New Mexico Environment Department and follow their directives. This may include the following actions to be taken by school administration:

- Ensure the positive individual has been isolated/sent home and that all isolation and other procedures are followed before returning to school.
- Contact all required entities, including, Child Care Licensing, to report the presence of COVID-19 at our school.
- Shut down impacted facilities/classrooms and perform enhanced cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting in accordance with CDC guidance.
- Notify staff and parents/caregivers that a member of the classroom has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Confidentiality will be maintained.
- Notify the school community that a child in the school (not their community) has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Confidentiality will be maintained.
- Decisions about extending closure will be made in consultation with the New Mexico State Department of Health. Children or staff with a positive case of COVID-19 can return to school/work when the criteria set by ECECD and/or the NMDOH are met.

Communication

Escuela del Sol Montessori will communicate:

- With families, if their child has been in close contact with someone at school who has or has any household members who have:
 - Come under investigation for COVID-19
 - Tested positive for COVID-19
 - Been exposed to anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19
- With the entire school community if a classroom has been temporarily closed due to Covid-19 exposure.

Student Drop-off and Pick Up Procedures

August 23, 2021 Update to Early Care and Extended Day Procedures:

Following the Governor's updated [public health mandate regarding vaccination status](#), Escuela will require all visitors to submit Vaccination Verification to enter campus. Anyone unable or unwilling to provide proof of vaccination will not be permitted on campus during early care (7:30-8am) or after care (3:45-5pm), effective Monday, August 23, 2021.

Vaccination must be verified either by submitting your vaccination card via this [form](#) or filling out the form and showing your card to a member of the admin team. If you have lost or damaged your vaccination card, follow these steps:

- Contact your vaccination provider directly to access your vaccination record.
- If you can't reach the vaccination provider, contact your state health department's immunization information system. You can find state IIS info [here](#).
- If you enrolled in v-safe or VaxText, you can access your vaccination information through those tools.

Before Care

Before Care (**pre-registration* only; NO drop-in**): 7:30-8:00 a.m.

*A minimum of 24 hours notice and office approval is required.

Before Care will be held in the middle Toddler room and outdoor space. If dropping-off before 8:00, you may park and walk your child to the outdoor Toddler space to check them in. The online **Community Health Screening form** must be completed for every child before entering campus.

As of August 23, 2021, all unvaccinated adults and/or adults who have not voluntarily provided Vaccination Verification may not enter campus and should call the office for assisted drop-off.

Regular School Day

Arrival: 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.

Regular Classroom Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Departure: 3:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Toddler and Primary Arrival Procedures

NOTE: The school will provide each family with a placard to display in their vehicle. This placard will have each student's name and class assignment on it, so that staff monitoring arrivals can alert the appropriate teachers to come out for the students.

Toddler and Primary students will be dropped off in the main parking lot, on Granite, following the procedures outlined below. Toddler and Primary students will enter through the south gate. Children with a sibling in Elementary may also be dropped off with that older sibling in front of the Harwood building on 7th if their sibling is willing and able to walk them to class.

Parents are not permitted to enter campus during regular school hours (8am to 3:30pm).

- We request that parents participate in proper mask use during assisted arrival.
- Students 3 years and older must participate in proper mask use upon arrival.
- Each child must have had the online **Community Health Screening** form completed and logged by parent prior to arrival each morning; this includes the child's temperature.
- Pull all the way forward to the farthest open screening spot in the drop-off zone. If you have not completed the screening form you need to park, complete the form, and return to the back of the drop off line.

- Staff will walk to your car to greet your child(ren). We ask that children remain seated with their seat belt fastened.
- A staff member will confirm that the online **Community Health Screening** form has been completed for each child.
- If all is clear, your child will be invited to unbuckle the seat belt or you may assist them in getting out of the car as needed.
- As soon as your child is safely away from the vehicle, pull up to await your turn to exit the drop-off area.

Do not walk your child to the gate. Traffic safety is our utmost concern.

Toddler and Primary Late Arrival

Late arrival (after 8:30 a.m.) should be scheduled in advance with the main office (505-242-3033). Please follow this procedure:

- Contact the main office and indicate the time of your child's arrival.
- Office staff will notify the classroom community to make arrangements for receiving the child at the pre-arranged time.
- At the pre-arranged arrival time, please pull up to the drop-off zone in the south parking lot, call the office, and wait in your vehicle.

Elementary and Jr. High Arrival Procedures

Assisted Arrival for all classrooms will be from 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.

Parents are not permitted to enter campus during regular school hours (8am to 3:30pm).

Elementary students will be dropped off in front of Harwood, on 7th, and Jr. High students will be dropped off at the Jr. High House, on 6th, following the procedures outlined below. Jr. High students with an Elementary sibling may be dropped off in front of Harwood and then walk through campus to the Jr. High House.

- Each child must have had the online **Community Health Screening** form completed and logged by parent prior to arrival each morning; this includes the child's temperature.
- Students must participate in proper mask use upon arrival.
- Stop at the farthest spot in the drop-off zone.
- Take a moment to verify that you have completed the online **Community Health Screening** form and that your child has all their belongings.
- Staff will either be at outside to verify screening form submission, or will be at the front desk of Harwood / inside the front door of the Jr. High House to check students in and verify completion of the online **Community Health Screening** form.
- As soon as your child is safely away from the vehicle, you may pull up to await your turn to exit the drop-off area.

Elementary and Jr. High Late Arrival

Late arrival should be scheduled in advance with the main office (505-242-3033).

Please follow this procedure:

- Contact the main office and indicate the time of your child's arrival.
- At the pre-arranged arrival time, please pull into the south parking lot, off Granite, call the office to let us know you have arrived, and wait in your vehicle.

All Levels Dismissal/Departure Procedures, Regular School Day

- School day departure for all classrooms will be from 3:00 - 3:30 p.m.
- We request that parents participate in proper mask use during assisted departure.
- Please pull up to your child's designated location:
 - Toddler & Primary: South parking lot
 - Elementary: in front of Harwood
 - Jr. High: in front of the Jr. High House
- **Wait in your car until your child has been walked to your vehicle.**
- Primary children will be with their classmates in the plaza waiting to be picked up.

All Levels Early Departure

Early departure must be scheduled in advance with the main office (505-242-3033) and your child's teacher. Please follow this procedure:

- Notify your guide and the office via email before 7:30 a.m., indicating the time of departure.
- At the pre-arranged early departure time, please pull into the south parking lot, call the main office, and wait in your vehicle.
- A staff member will assist the child following regular departure procedures.

Extended Day

Extended Day (**pre-registration* only; NO drop-in**): until 5:00 p.m.

*A minimum of 24 hours notice and office approval is required.

Extended Day for Toddlers will take place in Toddler (North) and the Toddler playground; for Primary, the White Room and Primary playground; for Elementary, Jr. El West and the North playground. To pick up your child between the hours of 3:45 and 5:00 p.m., follow the procedures outlined below.

If you have submitted Vaccination Verification, you may park in the south parking lot and enter campus through the blue gate to pick up your child(ren). **No visitors will be allowed inside the classroom. Vaccinated adults who come on campus to pick up a child must wait outside the classroom; a staff member will bring the child outside.**

As of August 23, 2021, all unvaccinated adults and/or adults who have not voluntarily provided Vaccination Verification may not enter campus and should call the office (505-242-3033) for assisted pick up from 4:30-5:00 p.m.

COVID-19 Safe Modifications for Classrooms

EARLY CHILDHOOD (Toddler and Primary, ages 18 mos. – 6 yrs.)

ELEMENTARY (Junior and Senior Elementary, ages 6 – 12, grades 1 – 6)

JR. HIGH (ages 12 – 15, grades 7 – 9)

Escuela del Sol Montessori does not expect that young children will distance themselves from other children or adults while at school. Young children learn by engaging with their environment, which includes the other people in it. However, Escuela del Sol Montessori will employ a variety of strategies for limiting the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.

Covid-safe modifications include use of indoor/outdoor classroom spaces. Special fencing and/or boarders will enable students to work outdoors as well as inside in the prepared environments created by their teachers. Outdoor classroom spaces are separate and distinct from each other, and from the playground areas. Other modifications include, but are not limited to:

- Children will have increased opportunities to be outside for work and play.
- Each child will have an individual supply of consumables such as crayons, scissors, Play-Doh, etc. (materials that would typically be communal).
- Jr. High students will continue to use designated school laptops, which can be taken home in the event of prolonged closure necessitating distance learning.
- During meals, children will be spread out as much as possible.
- For naps, mats will be spaced as far apart as possible and with head to toe placement.
- Enhanced hygiene protocols have been implemented, with special attention to handwashing:
 - Upon arriving at school / in the classroom
 - After using the toilet
 - Before and after meals
 - After they come in from outside