



Escuela Del Sol Montessori + Harwood Art Center

Family Handbook

2023-2024

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Mission and Vision

MISSION

To Inspire a Passion for Lifelong Learning

VISION

Escuela del Sol is an educational community rooted in the understanding of the interdependence of all life. We value diversity and encourage students of all ages to discover the role each plays in contributing to community. A not-for-profit organization, Escuela is comprised of multiple elements, including Montessori Early Childhood, Elementary and Junior High classrooms, and the Harwood Art Center, a community outreach program based in arts education and service.

As the school's facilities and landscapes are renovated and improved, the campus is becoming an urban oasis, celebrating our history and future in an environment specially prepared to give voice to the core values embraced and promoted by our community. This includes areas for study, exploration, rest and reflection; areas appropriate in size and scope for young people and the adults who are there to provide guidance and learn alongside the children. The campus has areas for play, for gardening and urban farming, classrooms and studios, areas indoors and out to support the programs of both the school and its outreach through The Harwood Art Center.

All families are encouraged to join the wider community in exploring the organization's two web sites in order to remain up to date with the organization and its programs. Please visit www.escueladelsol.org and www.harwoodartcenter.org frequently.

OUR WORK & CORE VALUES

Escuela del Sol Montessori is an educational community rooted in the understanding of the interdependence of all life; we encourage students of all ages to discover the role each plays in contributing to the community. A not-for-profit organization, Escuela administers multiple elements including Montessori Early Childhood, Elementary and Junior High classrooms, as well as The Harwood Art Center, our community outreach program based in arts education and service.

Philosophy

We recognize that every person 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, the world. Each classroom provides a learning environment that encourages independence, confidence, and cooperation while enabling each individual to grow and learn at their own pace.

Children, adolescents, and adults interact with their environment, peers and each other in a way that enables the learning process to occur in an optimal way through intellectual, social, and emotional support. This understanding provides the basis for all our educational programming, whether in Montessori classrooms or in an adult art class at The Harwood. Community service and outreach is an integral part of the program and philosophy here at Escuela del Sol and its Harwood Art Center.

Anti-Bias Anti-Racist • Building Awareness

Escuela del Sol Montessori recognizes that biases are inherent in our world. These can include biases for or against racial/ethnic backgrounds, culture, language, gender expression, sexual orientation, family structure, cognitive or physical ability, economic class, and religion. We recognize that every person—staff, parent, guardian, child, adolescent—experiences systemic privilege, oppression and marginalization differently.

We take an informed, dynamic approach to education that works to identify and respond to discriminatory policies and practices in education. Our school community is founded upon Dr. Montessori's philosophy that education is a catalyst to peace. It is our role as members of this community to mindfully model and guide students to discover their roles in creating social justice and equity, providing educational experiences in which all reach their full potential as learners.

In affecting social change, Escuela del Sol Montessori will work with children and adolescents in safe and supportive environments where they can communicate and investigate their individual interests and passions together in their community. It is our duty as educators to prepare our staff and environment to provide an inclusive space for every member of our community. To that end, Escuela is committed to:

- Taking a proactive approach to eliminating biases and racism in our environment.
- Providing opportunities for people to explore and celebrate each other's differences and similarities.
- Building honor and respect for Humanity's differences, recognizing bias, and beginning to learn how and why to speak up for what is right.
- Our staff will engage in investigations of our own identities through anti-bias, anti-racist training and continuous reflection.
- By providing guidance on equity, we hope to encourage socially aware and responsible citizens in their communities: locally, nationally, and globally.

Montessori education, while providing many academic opportunities also specifically teaches how to exist in a rich and varied social group that addresses race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, physical & learning abilities, and economic class; purposefully encouraging and empowering children to take an active, problem-solving approach to explore and create strategies for improving social conditions of their communities. We know that this work is never done and it will continue with each passing school year, but it needs to be done as a community of people lifting one another up in hopes of new intellectual, emotional, and social development. At Escuela del Sol Montessori we are lifelong learners.

Direct & Respectful Communication

Families with a child enrolled at Escuela del Sol become part of our community. This community thrives because we all agree to treat each other with grace, courtesy, and respect. Your enrollment indicates your willingness to abide by the following guidelines:

Grace & Courtesy

All Escuela staff and families are expected to meet every interaction from a place of kindness, generosity and respect. Commitments should be honored, criticism should be constructive and genial, recognition and consideration should be frequent. Parking and traffic laws must be followed, and Escuela's neighbors should be treated with the utmost respect. Treating everyone with respect and kindness is good for our community and for our children – we should model the very best behavior for them. Let's all strive to be what we wish to see.

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 Board, administration, and faculty of Escuela del Sol value the well-being and happiness of children and adolescents and know that if parents and guardians are unhappy, students soon will be. Talk to us as soon as you have any questions or feel any dissatisfaction. We will work together to resolve situations that may arise. If you have a problem with your child's Guide(s) or class, please first discuss this with the Classroom Guide and/or an administrator. Any administrative problems can be discussed with a member of our administrative team or with the President of the Board of Trustees.

Privacy & Discretion

Please help us maintain the mutual trust and respect we all need to keep our community healthy by safeguarding the privacy of students, families, and staff. Passing on confidential, damaging or harmful information is not acceptable.

Lines of Communication

When a parent or guardian has a question, concern or grievance, they should make every effort to bring their issue to the appropriate person, as outlined below:

Program, Student and Classroom issues:

First: Child's Lead Guide and/or Level Director
Second: Administrative Director
Third: Executive Director

General School Operations and Policy issues:

Administrative Director

Questions Regarding Montessori Pedagogy:

Level Director (Early Childhood, Elementary, Jr. High)

Finances and Billing:

Business Manager

Student Health and Policies:

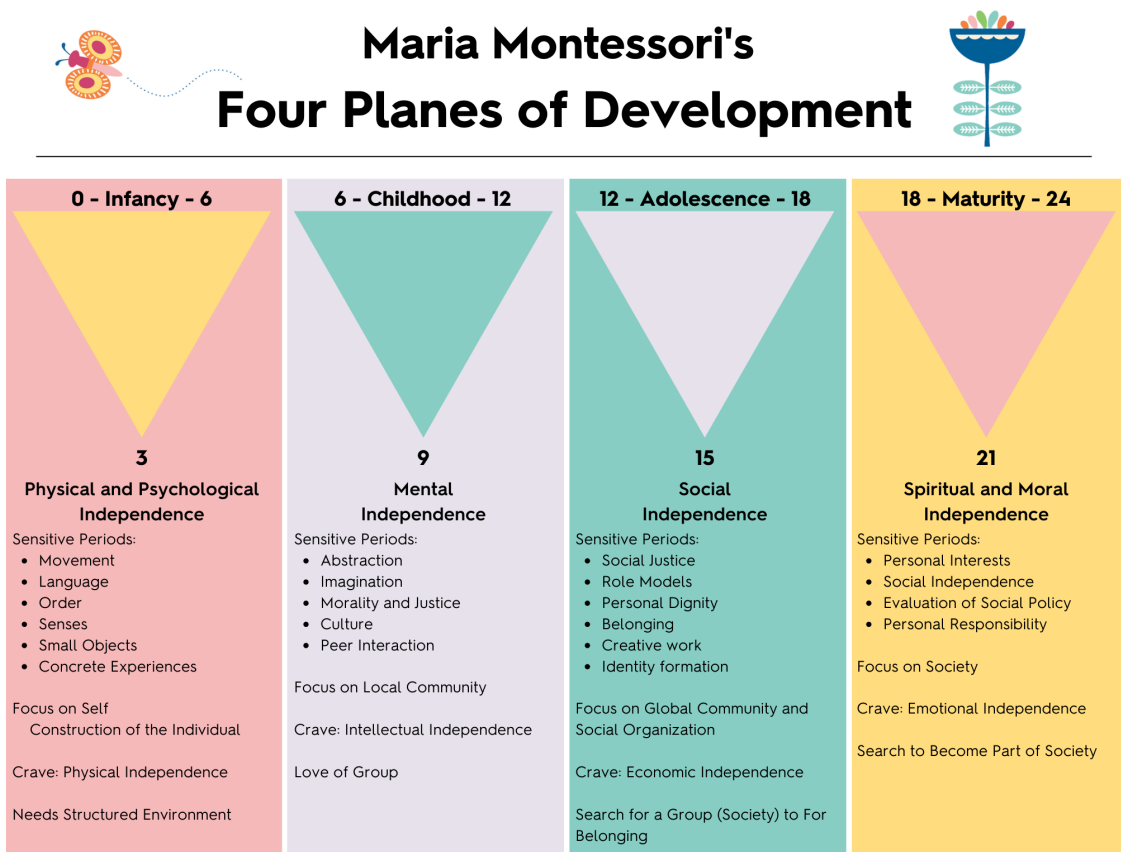
Administrative Director

Admissions:

Level Director or Administrative Director

THE CONTINUUM AT ESCUELA DEL SOL

You have chosen a truly remarkable educational community for your family. Montessori’s brain-based approach to learning not only supports the development of the whole person, but is also designed to meet the unique needs and optimize the distinct potential of each stage of development. Dr. Montessori termed the stages from birth to adulthood as The Four Planes of Development. These stages address the ways that personality, cognitive ability, and behavior manifest during each distinct phase.



The continuum here at Escuela includes students in the first, second, and third plane of development: early childhood, childhood, and adolescence. Our comprehensive program offers consistency and continuity, guiding each individual to explore their vast potential and gain assets unique to each stage of development.

Continuity is the hallmark of the Montessori experience, as children stay in the same classroom for two to four 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. In Montessori classrooms every student has opportunity to be one of the youngest learners, then middle, and finally one of the oldest within their classroom, and indeed the broader school community. This contributes to the child and adolescent’s personal growth in ways that conventional, single-age groupings cannot. Even so, children do make at least four transitions as they move through the entirety of the school’s levels.

EARLY CHILDHOOD (Toddler and Primary)

The child's school journey at Escuela begins in Early Childhood communities, encompassing the Toddler (18 months – 3 yrs.) and Primary (ages 3 yrs. – 6 yrs.) classrooms. Classrooms are carefully designed spaces where specially trained and experienced Montessori teachers guide each individual child's growth. The classrooms are places of exploration and respect, offering a range of opportunities for the young child's Absorbent Mind. Everything is child-sized, from the custom-made tables and chairs to the shelves, vases, plates and utensils, even (and especially) the toilets.

The Toddler Community is a young child's introduction to the larger world. Toddler Guides nurture the development of social skills, sensory exploration, independence and self-expression in an unhurried atmosphere of love, respect and dignity. Language is acquired and expands at a remarkable pace, a unique gift of the first plane.

In the Primary classrooms, children from about three to six years old are in a period of amazing brain development and physical growth. They long for challenging, meaningful, authentic experiences with real materials and concrete concepts. These classrooms are perfectly designed for the early childhood years to meet the unique needs of this stage of life, fostering movement, intellectual development, and social awareness.

Dedicated and trained teachers, or Guides, lead activities that develop motor skills, build hand strength and refine movement. Running, carrying, climbing, grasping, doing puzzles, handling paint brushes and crayons, pushing carts, taking walks – all of these build skills and confidence. We also focus on building social skills, an area of challenge and growth. Children celebrate classmates' birthdays and other special occasions, learn each other's names and families, care for classroom pets and plants, and develop important skills of empathy, sharing resources and being part of a group.

For some children, entrance into a Primary classroom is their first school experience. Others move 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/guardians, in the ability to choose their own work in the classroom and in their ability to verbally express themselves. Some children benefit from spending more than three years in their Primary community before transitioning to Elementary.

CHILDHOOD (Elementary)

The transition from Primary into Elementary marks the end of Early Childhood, the first plane of development, and the onset of the second plane. The minimum age for beginning the Elementary Program is six years by the start of school. In determining a child's readiness for moving to the Elementary, faculty first considers social and emotional maturity. We also look at the child's academic skills, impulse control, and ability to self-regulate.

The Elementary years are split into two levels: Junior EI for students 6 to 9 years of age, or 1st-3rd grades, and Senior EI for students 9 to 12 years of age, 4th-6th grades. Elementary children have remarkable intellectual capacity, strong social drive, and a powerful imagination that serves both cognitive and moral development. Elementary classrooms look very different from Primary classrooms, intentionally prepared to feed the insatiable fires of children's curiosity.

Often called *Cosmic Education*, the elementary curriculum is broad and deep, and emphasizes the interconnectedness of all areas of learning. While the division of the world into separate "subjects" is perhaps a convenient way to write about school work, it is not the way people experience it. For the sake of organization, we can discuss the curriculum by areas of discipline, but in the classroom these subject areas do not stand alone.

Curricular areas include mathematics, geometry, literacy and language arts, visual and performing arts, science, music, Spanish, history and cultural studies. Physical education, movement and self-expression take many forms, as does social development and the building of communication skills and executive functioning.

At about age nine, students transition to the Senior Elementary classroom. Each student's transition is supported by Junior and Senior Elementary faculty, in conjunction with the Level Director and the student's family. To make this transition successfully, the student must demonstrate increased independence, in terms of both academic skills and personal responsibility. Academically, they need to be ready for complex research and mathematical problem-solving. The student needs a high degree of self-awareness and must be a respectful, contributing member of the classroom community.

Around age 12, humans experience another significant transition – the beginning of adolescence. Jr. High students, 7th and 8th grades, have very different needs and abilities and therefore require their own unique place in which to thrive. Jr. High is characterized by project-based learning; professional partnerships; exploration of identity and one's place in the world.

ADOLESCENCE (Jr. High)

The transition from childhood to adolescence is marked by many changes including physical, emotional and cognitive. Adolescents are increasingly concerned with who they are, how they will fit in, and how they will contribute meaningfully to their community. As with other levels, Jr. High offers a unique environment that meets the needs and characteristics of our 7th and 8th grade students, supported by purposeful work, choice, independence, opportunities for leadership, and real adult-level experiences in the context of social organization.

To meet the needs and characteristics of adolescents, the Jr. High is informed by Dr. Montessori's Plan of Study and Work and Educational Syllabus which is an integrated framework. The curriculum is multidisciplinary, weaving together self-expression, mathematics and geometry, language, moral development, life and earth sciences, human advancements in technology, and history as a way to develop social and economic independence in the context of social organization. The Jr. High community experiences all work in a social context which meets their need to associate and communicate through creative problem-solving and community contribution. The small urban farm and downtown location offers myriad opportunities for exploration by challenging and inspiring students to build critical thinking skills, multicultural perspectives, the construction of personal identity and independence, as well as fostering a deep understanding of interdependence and justice.

When students complete their journey at Escuela and head off to High School, they enter various schools with different structures. What are your hopes when you imagine your child in high school and beyond? What are essential qualities and characteristics you hope they will possess?

Over the years, we have heard from numerous alumni, families, and teachers. The true themes are self-awareness and the confidence this brings, strong communication skills, a love of learning, and knowing how to learn. These characteristics continue to serve students throughout their academic careers and beyond. Continuity, dignity, and freedom within limits coupled with home-school partnership and engaging, meaningful Work in the context of community lay an unparalleled foundation.

Montessori education is fundamentally about the self-construction of the child/adolescent. At Escuela, we present all academic and social/emotional lessons to support the students in developing a sense of personal dignity and self-awareness in order to participate fully and holistically in their society.

HISTORY

Escuela del Sol Montessori was founded in 1968. Families of the school who volunteered their time and efforts formed a Board of Trustees, 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 Street N.W. was added in 1986 to accommodate a new Toddler program and 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 celebrate many years of service, while setting goals for a sustainable organization, Escuela del Sol Montessori faces the future with ensured stability, growing recognition for its outstanding programs, and widespread community support.



THE HARWOOD ART CENTER

Since 1991 Escuela del Sol has operated a community outreach program known as The Harwood Art Center. The building that houses this program was The Harwood Girls' School, founded in 1925; therefore, the name of our art center.

Harwood (as it's commonly known) is a creative center for community and the arts, established to build a sustainable and vibrant local, statewide and regional community by using the arts as a catalyst for personal empowerment, cultural enrichment and social change.

Through Harwood, the organization 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. Through its Harwood Art Center program, Escuela del Sol fosters community involvement, promotes the arts, encourages advocacy, and provides opportunities for life-long learning.

Membership

Members of the Escuela del Sol community, that is, families enrolled in the school, have a family membership to the Harwood Art Center. Members receive newsletters, invitations to special events, and special rates on Harwood classes. Several local businesses also provide discounts on their goods and services for Harwood members. For more information, please call the Associate Director of Engagement at 505-242-6367.

ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT

Escuela del Sol does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, creed, ethnic or national origin, religion, ability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression in its hiring practices, admission policy, tuition assistance program, or other educational policies.

Please refer to the website www.escueladelsol.org for detailed information, online forms and scheduling opportunities to visit the school. All information obtained in the admission process is confidential and will be used only in the admissions and orientation process. This information will not be available to the candidate, parents, guardians or anyone outside the school's admission office.

Applicants are given priority in the following order:

1. Families interested in continuing through Jr. High, the culmination of our program
2. Siblings of students continuing at Escuela del Sol Montessori
3. Children of Escuela alumni
4. All other qualified applicants

The school seeks to create balanced classroom communities. 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.

We meet the needs of children and families by creating a long-term educational community. Please note: if a family withdraws a child before the end of Primary, that decision may affect admission of younger siblings.

Tuition Assistance

All current and prospective Escuela del Sol families are eligible to apply for tuition assistance. The amount of assistance is limited and varies from year to year. Please find information and a link to the tuition assistance application at www.escueladelsol.org.

Families need to complete the application process every year they wish to receive tuition assistance.

Priorities:

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

Within this context, preference is given in the distribution of tuition assistance to families committed to staying through the entire educational program of the school.

Enrollment, Tuition and Fees

Enrollment contracts are completed online. After admission, parents/guardians are given a link to the enrollment contract. Currently enrolled families will be invited to re-enroll for the following school year in January. Please read the enrollment contract carefully as you fill it out.

Annual Tuition / Fee schedules are posted on the school's website: www.escueladelsol.org. Tuition-related questions should be addressed to Escuela's Business Manager, Jodie Martinez (jodie@edelsol.org).

For the Elementary and Jr. High: Note that signer(s) of the enrollment contract are obligated to pay the full school year's tuition, in its entirety, if a student is withdrawn after July 1 previous to the start of a school year.

For Early Childhood (Toddler and Primary): Signer(s) of the enrollment contract are obligated to pay the full school year tuition, in its entirety, if the student is withdrawn after January 1 of the school year. In addition, one month's notice, in writing, is required prior to withdrawal.

Records Required

An Enrollment Contract, Student Admission Record, Health Records (that include immunizations, allergies, and/or illnesses the school should be aware of), emergency contact numbers, permission for emergency care and transportation, as well as the student's doctor's name and number are all required by the State of New Mexico. This information must be kept updated. Parents/guardians should notify the school of any changes in these records (e.g., address, email and phone changes). For students whose parents/guardians are divorced or in any other situation where custody may be shared, clear direction regarding matters of custody must be filed with the school office and the Classroom Guide.

Every July the office will email Enrolled Student Forms to each family. It is required that these forms be completed and submitted **before** children may start school in August. Classroom placement information will be shared at this time, if applicable.

Classroom Placement

At each level, students are clustered in mixed-age learning communities for a multi-year period of time. These communities provide a number of advantages not found in conventional schools. Children and adolescents work with others who are older and younger than themselves. 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, while having the benefit of working with and learning from their peers as well as the Guides. Each level offers direct preparation for life in the family, workplace, and broader community.

In conventional school settings, a child's placement is often determined randomly, or according to administrative needs. Escuela del Sol is not an adult-centered educational system; it is student-centered. When moving from one level into another, their gifts and challenges are recognized; students are placed in a learning community that our faculty determines as best for that individual.

Administration and faculty work hard to make sure that each student is placed in an environment where their needs will be met. If parents or guardians have particular concerns about their child's learning style during a time of transition, we invite them to meet with the Level Directors to discuss those concerns.

SCHOOL POLICIES

Immunization

Enrollment at Escuela del Sol is contingent upon Escuela receiving satisfactory evidence that a student is "fully immunized", meaning the student is in compliance with the immunization requirements of the laws and regulations of the State of New Mexico. Exemptions, including approved accommodations, may be sought directly from the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH). For students, "fully immunized" means, at a minimum, that the student has received the immunizations required by state law and regulation for attendance at public schools. In addition, Escuela del Sol may add immunizations required for "full immunization" in consultation with the school's medical advisers.

Escuela del Sol reserves the right to decline admission or re-enrollment to any child who is not fully immunized and is not subject to an exemption approved by the NMDOH. Requests for a temporary waiver of immunization requirements in order to seek an exemption from NMDOH may be submitted to the Executive Director who has full discretion to approve or deny the same.

Escuela del Sol reserves the right, during outbreaks of illness, to exclude from school any student who is not fully immunized. In such cases, there will be no refund or adjustment of tuition paid or owed to Escuela.

All employees of Escuela del Sol are required to be fully immunized, per the above description.

[Illness* / Injury](#)

*Reference the current Campus Operating Plan for specific information.

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.

Please help minimize the spread of illness among our students. If your child has any infectious illness (cold or fever, chicken pox, diarrhea, strep throat, conjunctivitis, etc.) keep them home and contact the office so we can alert families. Students who are sick should not be at school. If a child is not well enough to play outdoors and interact actively with peers, the child is too sick to come to school.

A student at school who is not feeling well or who has a contagious rash or ailment such as “pink eye” will be sent home. When a student becomes ill at school, parents/guardians will be called. If parents/guardians cannot be reached, the family’s emergency contacts will be called to pick up the student.

If your child is going to be absent or is ill, please submit an absence form via the Student Portal hosted by SchoolCues (which can be located under “Permission Forms”) before 9 a.m.

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 100.4 °F)
- Rash
- Persistent cough
- Discharge of discolored or profuse amounts of mucus from the nose
- Earache
- Diarrhea
- Impetigo
- Pink eye
- Vomiting
- Sore throat
- Live head lice or nits

[Medication](#)

Our staff can only administer medication with written permission from a parent or legal guardian. Medication must be given to the student’s Guide and must be in the original container labeled with the student’s name, name of medication, dosage, and time it is to be given. Only prescribed medications such as antibiotics and medications for chronic problems (such as asthma) will be given, and only when the appropriate form is on file. Medical authorization forms are available in SchoolCues.

Make sure that the office and the classroom teachers are aware of any health conditions such as special diets, allergies, etc., your child may have. Contact the office to initiate or update an Allergy Action Plan.

[NO Nuts](#)

Escuela del Sol is a nut-free campus; this includes not only peanuts but all tree nuts as well (cashews, pistachios, almonds, walnuts, pecans, macadamias, piñon/pine nuts, hazelnuts, etc.) We ask that you do not send snacks OR lunches that contain any form of nut. (Please remember that every granola bar, whether the ingredient list includes nuts or not, most likely contains trace amounts due to shared processing/packaging facilities.) We understand that for some families nuts are a staple and a great source of protein, but for others exposure to tree nuts is, quite frankly, a matter of life or death. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter.

[Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect](#)

Faculty and staff are trained to recognize the indicators of child abuse/neglect. If a staff member suspects child abuse/neglect this will be noted in writing, the Executive Director alerted, and the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) notified, if warranted. If child abuse, in our opinion, may have occurred, it is our legal responsibility to notify ECECD.

[Emergency Procedures](#)

Escuela's Safety Procedures, Emergency Reference Guide, and Crisis Response Plan are available on the Parent Portal.

[Weapons Policy](#)

Escuela del Sol Montessori, Inc., prohibits anyone from carrying a handgun, firearm, or weapon of any kind onto its property. This ban is consistent with NMSA Section 30-7-2.1, as amended, except that this policy does not allow any exception for firearms carried by persons over the age of 19 on school premises, in a private automobile, or other private means of conveyance.

This policy applies to all school and art center partners and all persons who are on the premises of Escuela Del Sol or the Harwood Art Center for any reasons, except as noted below. The only exceptions to this policy are police officers and/or security guards who bring weapons on campus to carry out their duties as in the case of emergencies or illegal intrusions.

Prohibited weapons include any form of weapon or explosive restricted under local, state or federal regulation including all firearms, illegal knives or other weapons covered by the law. "School property" covered by this policy includes, without limitation, all buildings and grounds owned or leased by Escuela del Sol Montessori, Inc.

PROCEDURAL & PRACTICAL INFORMATION*

*Reference the current Campus Operating Plan for additional details and/or specific information.

Orientation

At the beginning of the year, Escuela will provide orientation for all parents/guardians. Orientation, whether in writing, on campus or personal visit, is essential for helping students get off to a good start. Orientation will cover both practical information and the Montessori approach; everything from drop-off to lunches, from developmental considerations to academic preparation will be covered. If you have any questions that are not answered, please do not hesitate to contact the school office for more information.

Arrival, Dismissal and Parking

Escuela del Sol is open Monday thru Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Arrival for the regular school day begins at 8:00 and classes start promptly at 8:30 a.m. Students should not arrive earlier than 8:00 unless signed up for extended care. All students should be picked up within 10 minutes of the end of their session. Anyone picking up their child more than 10 minutes late will be charged at an hourly rate, for a minimum of one hour. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of being on time and of making sure your child's Guides know your plans. Whenever there is a change in the student's transportation plans or pick-up time, please let Classroom Guides and the office know.

Students will be released only to persons known to the staff and to those for whom we have written permission on file. Unless Escuela is notified in advance, the student will not be released. Please be sure a staff member is aware of your child's arrival and departure from school. Park in our paved south parking lot (entering from Granite Street, exiting onto 7th Street). NEVER park in the fire lane. Please use extreme caution in the parking lot.

Extended Care

If you need to leave your child at Escuela for extended hours, please notify the office at least 24 hours in advance. The charge for drop-in extended care is noted in the applicable Tuition and Fee Schedule. Availability of drop-in Extended Care is subject to openings and may not be available.

Lunch

Lunch can be purchased from The Harwood Cafe. For questions regarding price and menu, please check out the lunch menu section in SchoolCues or visit the [lunch page](#) on the school website.

In Jr. High, students plan, shop for and prepare lunch every day. Lunches are planned with student allergies and food intolerances in mind, as well as nutrition, what is growing in the class garden and what is available seasonally. Students are free to bring their own snacks to supplement the lunches and snacks provided.

Delays and Closures

Escuela follows APS decisions regarding delays and closures. If APS is closed or on an abbreviated schedule due to severe weather or poor driving conditions, Escuela will follow suit. If APS is on a 2-hour delay, all classes (Toddler, Primary, Elementary, Junior High) will begin at 10:30 a.m. There will be no early morning childcare. Do not arrive before 10:00 a.m., as there will be no teachers on campus before this time. In the event of a snowstorm during the day it may be necessary to close early. We will utilize our text messaging alert system via SchoolCues to contact families and share updates.

Changes in Home Routine

Please keep the staff informed of changes in a child's/adolescent's normal routine. Occurrences such as parents/guardians being away, separations, deaths or illness in the family, etc., can sometimes be the source of changes in your child's/adolescent's behavior. When teachers can better understand the behavior, they can be more supportive.

Clothing

Students of all ages should come to school in clothing that is comfortable and allows them to work and play. Do expect your children's clothing to get soiled from playing and participating in activities such as cooking, gardening, painting, etc. Younger children are asked to bring extra changes of clothing (please see supply lists). Students' apparel should reflect respect for oneself and for others. When considering clothing, think about what kinds of behavior and conversations images may inspire. Please choose items that are practical and encourage students' independence and expression.

Adolescents are particularly drawn to self-expression through clothing, accessorizing and hair color. We accept that this is a normal and healthy part of adolescent development. Therefore, we ask that all students arrive ready to do the work of the day, which might include: cooking & baking, creative expression, gardening and working with animals outside, working with power tools and hand tools, walking in the neighborhood or other field experiences and/or shopping trips. Students are encouraged to leave sturdy shoes and other work clothes at school, so they can be prepared for work.

In-Service/Staff Work Days

Escuela faculty and staff will take up to four in-service days during the school year. These days are a necessary part of the school year because they provide professional development and work time (for making classroom materials, meetings, etc.) for the staff. Staff work-days contribute to the excellent quality of education students receive at Escuela. The school will be closed on these days; no childcare will be available.

STUDENT PROGRESS & ASSESSMENT

Our primary task is to help children and adolescents flourish in an increasingly dynamic and connected world. Graduates of Escuela del Sol leave with a range of critically important assets that we believe will serve them throughout their lifetime, including self-awareness, communication skills, the ability to adapt, and a love of learning.

While students are continually assessed using both formative and summative assessments, as well as through personal self-reflection, we do not give grades. Grades are not accurate representations of what a student does or does not know, and do not give a holistic picture of the student learner. However, expectations are high for all students. We believe in learning partnerships; through innovative curriculum all students can thrive.

We believe that education should be accessible and inclusive. To this end, each student's workload might look a bit different based on their specific learning needs. However, all students are guided to set and exceed personal goals, to reflect honestly about personal challenges and work at their own intelligent edge, to meet assignment expectations and to turn in work that reflects excellence, creativity and innovation.

Progress Reports and Conferences

Student growth is discussed and/or written about at least four times each school year. Twice a year, teachers will generate progress reports; and twice each year the school closes for parent-teacher conferences. Progress reports, provided via email at the end of each semester, will reflect student's social, emotional, physical, creative and cognitive work. To report on your child's activities and growth requires more than a simple progress report can encompass. No summary can adequately convey the growth and development of our students. Guides do their best to express students' skills and development while using a set of comments and abbreviations to represent the status of their activities and lessons.

Twice per year, parents/guardians must attend a parent-teacher conference to discuss their child(ren)'s development and experiences at school. Designated conference days are set in the school calendar. The school strongly encourages parents/guardians to contact their Classroom Guide(s) or Level Director if questions or concerns arise. Families are encouraged to communicate and meet as needed; conference days are a minimum amount of meeting time set aside in the school calendar. Our faculty is happy to arrange after-school conversations to stay in touch with parents and guardians, working together as a team on behalf of our students.

Outside Assessment and Guidance

Our Montessori classrooms can accommodate the needs of a wide range of children and adolescents. Some are able to receive special attention within that context, and there are times when outside support is necessary and required. The school and its staff are committed to open and ongoing dialogue with parents/guardians regarding concerns about every student's progress. The Classroom Guide, in conjunction with the Level Director, may, at times, request outside assessment and guidance for working with individual students.

Discipline and Confidentiality

Discipline will include positive guidance, redirection, and the setting of clear limits that foster the student's own ability to become self-disciplined. Disciplinary practices are designed to encourage people to be fair, to respect persons and property, and to assume personal and social responsibility. Student records, family situations, medical history, school performance, behavior, etc., are held private and confidential. Teachers will never discuss a student by name with anyone other than that student's own parent(s)/guardian(s) unless written consent to do so has been given by those parent(s)/guardian(s); or when consulting with another staff member or administrator.

COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

Our community expects students to:

- Respect themselves.
- Respect others.
- Respect the environment, including school property and individual belongings.

At Escuela we teach and model Grace and Courtesy beginning at the earliest ages. This process is continuous, and students demonstrate and are shown respect in different ways depending on their age and social development.

Occasional aggressive behavior towards others occurs and is developmentally appropriate throughout early and middle childhood. Some individuals have a more difficult time self-regulating. In these situations, the adults should avoid labeling students as 'bad' or 'difficult'. It is the job of the Guides and the Escuela community to support each individual as they learn and practice self-control and emotional-regulation. When challenging behavior occurs, the actions taken will be appropriate to the age and stage of the child/adolescent, protecting the emotional and physical safety and wellbeing of themselves, members of the community, and the physical environment, while also providing opportunities for learning, practice and the development of self-discipline, self-regulation, effective communication and other critical skills.

The nature of elementary-aged children includes a strong desire to seek out knowledge and assert independence. They want to know *Why?* and *How?* and *If?* In many ways they are scientists by nature, hands-on explorers driven to experiment. This applies to the social and moral realms as well. These children want to understand things on their own terms. They want to create their own structures and rules. The Senior Elementary classroom (students 9-12 years) functions much like a "practice society". And like all aspects of learning, this requires experimentation, experience and struggle; mistakes are invaluable.

As students grow, they are learning that becoming a member of a group requires a commitment from each individual to the group, and in order to be part of the group, each member must freely choose to obey the rules or principles. Individual and small group conversations, projects and lessons, as well as mediation, community meetings and collective visioning, support social-emotional growth and the development of intrinsically motivated prosocial behavior. It is worth noting again that mistakes and missteps are critical to this development.

In Jr. High, adolescents participate in purposeful work that is relevant to the community and allows for meaningful contributions. Social Organization is fundamental to the work of adolescents; it is in this context that they experience interdependence and a profound sense of worthiness, called valorization. Being an individual in a social context means students must learn how to navigate the moral fabric of the community, while developing their own identities. This is supported through Seminar, Advisory, Community Meetings, Community Work, Restorative Justice practices, and side-by-side work with adults in their community. Adolescence is a time of extreme emotions and major physical growth, as well as a time of seeking and risk-taking. Our aim is to provide a safe environment and multiple opportunities for students to express themselves, to contribute to the community and to learn about themselves through dialogue, discussion, work and joy.

There are times when a student may exhibit repeated behavior that is troubling or causes harm to themselves, other students, the physical environment, or other members of the community. The school retains the right to remove students from the classroom or even from school at the discretion of the Classroom Guide, Level Director and/or Executive Director. Below is a list of actions that the school may use to address such behaviors.

- Immediate verbal correction and/or redirection of behavior in a developmentally appropriate manner
- Call or email to parents/guardians
- Student removal from the classroom or visit to an administrator
- Student sent home
- Conferences between Guide(s), parents/guardians and Level Director
- Behavior Plan developed with the parents/guardians and Guide, with support from administration

- Requirement of seeking counseling, specific diagnostic testing, or full evaluation
- Timeline for assessing the success of the Behavior Plan
- A student's continued enrollment may be contingent upon adherence to the Behavior Plan

Allowing the process to take place with discretion and privacy is vital. A person who is concerned about the impact of another student's behavior on their child should follow the procedure outlined under [Communication section](#) and speak first to the classroom Guide and/or appropriate Level Director. The school (staff and administrators) will address the concerns brought forward, but in most cases will not share the personal situation of the student with other parties including the person expressing the concern.

[Behavioral Expectations](#)

If a student frequently behaves in an unacceptable manner, Guides will consult with the Level Director and with the student's parents/guardians. 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 their parents/guardians are unable to work with the school to resolve behavioral issues successfully.

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

[Bullying](#)

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- Physical bullying—when one engages in physical force against another, such as by hitting, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- Verbal bullying—when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- Nonverbal or relational bullying—when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, gossip, or intimidating another by using gestures.
- Cyberbullying—the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messaging, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
 - Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images;
 - Posting sensitive, private information about another person;
 - Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; and
 - Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
- Hazing—an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.

The school will accept and review all reports of bullying. The school will consider the ages and maturity of the students involved, the type of behaviors, the frequency and/or pattern of behaviors, the context in which the incident occurred, and other relevant circumstances. Follow up will be age-appropriate and aligned with Positive Discipline practices and our community values and ideals.

Positive Discipline

Research tells us that humans are hardwired to connect with others, and that people who feel a sense of connection to their community, family, and school are less likely to misbehave. To be successful, contributing members of their community, children and adolescents must learn necessary social and life skills.

Positive Discipline is a program developed by Dr. Jane Nelsen. It is designed to teach young people to become responsible, respectful and resourceful members of their communities. Positive Discipline teaches important social and life skills in a manner that is deeply respectful and encouraging for children, adolescents and adults. Please read more on the [Positive Discipline website](#).

Harassment and Threats

All members of the Escuela+Harwood community have a right to work, learn, create, and play in a safe and caring environment. Students, parents, guardians and staff members have a responsibility for creating and maintaining such an environment. Every member of the Escuela community is expected to model respectful behavior and work to eliminate disrespectful behavior from the community either by confrontation or reporting. Individuals in the community further agree to share in the role of the protection of each person in the community from harm and to engage in the vital work to create a community of safety and trust.

Any action, whether verbal or physical, that either intentionally or unintentionally causes a feeling of intimidation, abuse, or threat is considered harassment and is not acceptable. Any student who feels threatened or harassed, or witnesses harassment or a threat should report it immediately to a staff member. The staff member will work with the administration to clearly identify the issue and to facilitate timely, safe, and appropriate action.

PARENTS & GUARDIANS AT ESCUELA*

*Reference the current Campus Operating Plan for details and/or specific information.

As a parent/guardian at Escuela del Sol, you will have the opportunity to be actively involved in your child's education away from home. 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 and educational experience. Parent nights, newsletters, and a standing invitation to visit, participate, or observe in our school give parents and guardians the opportunity to continue their understanding of the Montessori philosophy and their children's activities.

The organization has two websites; one for [the school](#) and one for its outreach program, the [Harwood Art Center](#). These two sites provide a wealth of information; you are strongly encouraged to visit both sites regularly. One of the most important features of the school's website is the link to our Student Portal hosted by SchoolCues, where you will find school communications, forms, classroom sign-ups, the school calendar, and more.

Observation

After a settling-in period of six to eight weeks, parents/guardians are invited to observe. This is your school and you are always welcome. Simply make an appointment through the office. Out of respect for the students, we limit the number of adults in a classroom and encourage parents/guardians to observe in a classroom other than the one their child attends (as this can be confusing, distressing, and distracting especially for younger children).

Family/Faculty Work Days

Family/faculty work days are scheduled for various events and/or needs. Not only do these gatherings help keep our campus in tip-top shape, but they also provide opportunity for connection, community building, and fun. If you have a particular skill you'd like to contribute, please let the office know how and when you can help.

Fundraising and Events

The tuition you pay covers the school's basic operating costs. Tuition is not sufficient to provide tuition assistance to families, funds for additional classroom materials, and renovations to playgrounds and buildings.

While basic operating expenses are covered through tuition and fee payments and earned income, the school does engage in fundraising, as does virtually every independent school. Each year the school has one main fundraising program, our annual end-of-year campaign in which we raise money for our Escuela Fund, Tuition Assistance, and areas which change annually, such as professional development or playground equipment. Escuela engages in other fundraising campaigns throughout the year as needed. This could be for a class trip, a specific need in the community, or a fundraising campaign instigated by students for an important cause or project they are working on.

Escuela Fund

Donations to Escuela 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% family 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 and December are designated as Annual Appeal season. Contact Executive Director Kate Chavez for more information.

Other Ways of Giving

Beneficiary organizations receive a biannual payout reflecting a percentage of the purchases made by participants. The more people who participate, the more money the school is able to raise. Amazon Smile can be accessed through our website. Please help us make the most of these 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 the Executive Director, Kate Chavez, at (505) 242-3033.

Sol Mates

Escuela's parent group is called Sol Mates. Sol Mates is an inclusive parent, guardian and caregiver volunteer organization designed to support teachers, classrooms, and families at Escuela del Sol. Please see the Sol Mates page on Escuela's website for more information.

To help new families orient themselves to the school community, Sol Mates created a mentoring program. The program aims to match new and experienced families to answer questions, explain traditions, and introduce Sol Mates. Reach out to SolMates@edelsol.org for more information.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

Escuela del Sol Montessori is incorporated as a non-profit corporation, managed by a Board of Trustees. The Board is governed by the school's Articles of Incorporation and by its By-Laws. The Board is comprised of

members selected from the community who are chosen for expertise in their respective fields, their commitment and ability to work on behalf of the whole organization (Escuela del Sol and its Harwood Art Center). Candidates for board service are evaluated by the Board’s Development Committee. The Board of Trustees serves as custodian 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, hires and evaluates the Executive Director (ED). The Board delegates responsibility for implementation of policies to the ED, who works with the Business Manager to prepare the Annual Budget for approval by the Board. The ED also has the duty to report to the Board on organizational matters, and is accountable to the Board for effective, businesslike management of the organization. The ED serves as the professional educational leader of the institution and has complete responsibility for faculty, staff, and student selection, evaluation, and dismissal. The ED articulates the mission of the school to its constituencies and is responsible for the professional quality and behavior of the faculty and staff.

HOW TO REACH US

Escuela del Sol Office, office@edelsol.org 505-242-3033
Kate Chavez, Executive Director of Escuela/Harwood, Kate@edelsol.org
Elizabeth Marcilla, Administrative Director, ElizabethM@edelsol.org
Jodie Martinez, Business Manager, Jodie@edelsol.org
Dana McCabe, Early Childhood Level Director, Dana@edelsol.org
Sarah Louderbough, Elementary Level Director, Sarah@edelsol.org
Tanesia Hale-Jones, Jr High Level Director + Adolescent Guide, Tanesia@edelsol.org
Carmela Chavez Liberman, Media and Communications, Carmela@edelsol.org
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Gloria Lucero, Administrative Assistant, Gloria@edelsol.org

Escuela Fax 1-800-317-4752

Harwood Art Center, info@harwoodartcenter.org 505-242-6367
Julia Mandeville, Chief Programs Officer, Julia@harwoodartcenter.org
Jennifer DePaolo, Director of Outreach, Jennifer@harwoodartcenter.org
Jordyn Bernicke, Associate Director of Engagement, Jordyn@harwoodartcenter.org
Helen Juliet Atkins, Associate Director of Opportunity, Helen@harwoodartcenter.org
Ruby Rodriguez, Art Education Coordinator, Ruby@harwoodartcenter.org
Chandler Wigton, Building & Facilities Manager, Chandler@harwoodartcenter.org

WEBSITES:

Escuela, www.escueladelsol.org
Harwood, www.harwoodartcenter.org

EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

Joseph Marcilla, Facilities Manager 505-315-0033
After-hours school-related emergencies 505-397-8665