

# Guadalupe Montessori School



*Helping Your Child Reach for the Stars*

## Family Handbook

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## **Mission Statement**

By providing a peaceful and carefully planned learning environment, Guadalupe Montessori School supports children from diverse backgrounds in reaching their highest potential to become life-long learners.

## **Organizational Structure**

GMS is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. The GMS Board of Directors holds the fiduciary responsibility of the school and governs the policy and procedure of the school. The School Director administers school policies, manages staff, and defines and oversees the school's programs. The School Director also oversees the budget and financial policies and procedures. Faculty and staff implement the school's programs. The parent community plays an integral role in school operations as well, volunteering time, financially supporting the school and partnering with the school to support each child's success.

## **Organizational Philosophy**

The Guadalupe Montessori School is dedicated to delivering an accessible, authentic, high-quality Montessori education in a peaceful, supporting learning environment. We provide an accessible, high-quality choice that meets the needs of families and children in Grant County (GP 8). AMI and AMS trained guides deliver our curriculum, supported by a skilled staff. Our board, faculty, and staff reflect the diversity of our community (GP 1, 2, 3, 16). We adhere to evidence-based pedagogy and strive to foster a life-long love of learning in all children (GP 14). We provide the guidance and freedom for students to develop their current interests and discover new ideas. Our curriculum is built upon the core values of academic excellence, diversity, and social responsibility. We recognize that a highly trained, skillful staff is essential to our program, and we are committed to deep and integrated professional development that empowers our staff to grow personally and professionally (GP 17).

In adopting evidence-based Montessori teaching methods, GMS has adopted a framework that supports academic excellence, social and emotional development, safety, and quality (GP 4). Our program is flexible enough to address each child's developmental stage and learning style, while ensuring academic breadth and depth. We promote independence and self-confidence and recognize that every child has diverse strengths rooted in their unique family, culture, heritage, language, beliefs and circumstances (GP 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 15). We also honor each child's *entelechy*, a vital agent or life force that emerges only through individual exploration, expression, and purposeful effort. When the entelechy is honored, potential becomes realized and the individual becomes self-actualized.

*The Guiding Principles (GP) for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico's Early Learning System have been embedded in the Organizational Philosophy.*

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Guadalupe Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, socio-economic, national or ethnic origin in educational policies, hiring practices, or any school-administered programs.

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions Human Rights Bureau investigates complaints of discrimination and harassment in employment, housing, credit, and public accommodations.

Complaints must be filed with the Human Rights Bureau within 300 days of the last act of discrimination or harassment.

## **The GMS School Community**

Guadalupe Montessori School (GMS) was founded in 1979 with the goal of providing high quality Montessori education to the children of Grant County. The school continues to reach this objective, maintaining high academic standards while providing financial assistance to families with limited resources. For the last decade our total student population has ranged between 60 and 100, including children ages 18 months to 12 years in mixed-age toddler, primary, and elementary classrooms.

We are committed to maintaining as much ethnic and economic diversity as possible. We participate in the New Mexico PreK program (tuition-free for children who meet age requirements), and also offer financial aid for families in need.

### **Strengthening Families**

The children's respect for community includes respect for their families. Our families are very much appreciated and welcomed into the larger school community. Recognizing parents as a child's first teacher, GMS works to support families with parenting, approaching education as a partnership between teachers, parents, and children. The school hosts parent education events that include Montessori educational philosophy and practice, as well as parenting and family issues.

### **Family Engagement and Parent Participation**

We recognize that families have different styles and preferences, and make an effort to provide a variety of opportunities to engage in our program. Each year, there are several scheduled events that parents are encouraged to attend in order to learn more about Guadalupe Montessori School's programs and community. These activities and events include Parent Orientation, the Welcome Picnic, Open Houses, Parent/Teacher conferences, Winter and Spring Programs, and parent education evenings. All new families will be invited to have an orientation at the school before their child starts classes, or, if participating in the PreK program, to schedule a home visit with your child's teacher before they begin school. In addition, there are several opportunities to be engaged in the school through volunteer work. Parent involvement is a fundamental element of the success of our school. Through participating fundraising and making or soliciting financial gifts, families and community members help build our scholarship fund so children who might not otherwise be able to attend GMS can be a part of our community. Attending social and educational events at the school, parents strengthen their family's connection to the school, demonstrating that they value the school and children and serve as critical partners in their child's education. *We encourage parents to check the school calendar and reserve time to attend both classroom events like parent/teacher conferences and class meetings, as well as larger school-wide events like festivals and open houses.*

### **Our Staff**

GMS works hard to attract and retain an experienced, dedicated and knowledgeable staff members who are passionate about Montessori education. Our teachers, or 'guides,' are trained in child development theory and early childhood or elementary education. In addition to a minimum of a Bachelor's degree, they must be certified or working toward certification for their level of instruction through the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), or the American Montessori Society (AMS). Classroom assistants receive ongoing guidance and instruction from the School Director and their lead Montessori teachers. All of our staff are

required to pursue ongoing professional development, are certified in First Aid/CPR, and undergo a yearly evaluation and performance review.

## **Certification and Licensure**

Since 1984, GMS has received continuous AMI Recognition status, involving a rigorous review and consultation process by the AMI/USA. GMS also works with the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department with the FOCUS and free PreK programs, fully participating in their quality improvement and rating systems.

## **Curriculum and Program**

The GMS curriculum and program is based on Maria Montessori's scientific observation of children from and in many different circumstances. She observed universal "Human Tendencies" and identified "Planes of Development." Planes of development are 6-year cycles of human development that start at birth, each divided into 3-year sub-planes, with each demonstrating unique psychological characteristics that guide the curriculum and educational approach.

**PLANES OF DEVELOPMENT:**  
*(Adapted from the MISD Training Center handout: The Four Planes of Development)*

Plane of Development	Physical Changes	Psychological Changes	Needs	Motto
<b>Unconscious Absorbent Mind</b> <i>First Plane of Development 0-6 years</i> Sub-Plane 0-3 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learns to sit, crawl, walk</li> <li>• Acquires motor coordination</li> <li>• Learns to speak and forms the language center</li> <li>• Intensely fast growth</li> <li>• First teeth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences life without premeditation</li> <li>• Gains sense of self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love, warmth, protection</li> <li>• Order and sense of security</li> <li>• Opportunity to develop gross and fine motor skills</li> </ul>	
<b>Conscious Absorbent Mind</b> <i>First Plane of Development 0-6 years</i> Sub-Plane 3-6 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquires 90% of language</li> <li>• Physical growth slows</li> <li>• Builds up immune system</li> <li>• Full set of teeth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops memory, order, will, reason, intellectual thought, mental structure</li> <li>• Is a concrete thinker</li> <li>• Formation of ego</li> <li>• Goes through <i>sensitive periods</i> when they are particularly open to learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety, order, routine</li> <li>• Independence</li> <li>• Freedom within limits</li> <li>• An environment full of rich and diverse stimuli</li> <li>• To learn how to relate to others</li> <li>• Build self esteem and confidence</li> <li>• Exposure to and participation in culture</li> </ul>	"I want to do it by myself"
<b>Rational Mind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teeth change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greatest acquisition of knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More independence</li> </ul>	"It's not fair!"

<i>Second Plane of Development</i> <i>6-12 years</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skin and hair become thicker</li> <li>• Body becomes thinner and stronger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity to abstract</li> <li>• Wants to know <i>why</i> and <i>how</i></li> <li>• Concerned with right and wrong- strong sense of moral justice</li> <li>• Seeks group activities</li> <li>• More self aware</li> <li>• Need for order diminishes</li> <li>• Becomes more honest and frank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group activities</li> <li>• Moral values</li> <li>• Wider social contacts and cultural exposure</li> <li>• Contact with nature and outdoors</li> <li>• Control over activities</li> <li>• Love, respect and security</li> </ul>	
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Because development within these planes happen over a span of several years, it is important to place the children in mixed age groups with other children who are striving for and attaining similar developmental milestones. This gives older children the chance to be role models and leaders, and gives younger children the opportunity to look up to and learn from more masterful peers. An ideal Montessori toddler community is able to admit the very young child (preferably as soon as they are able to walk). As they are moving independently, this child is no longer an infant, and shows readiness to explore the larger environment. The toddler community includes children up to 2 ½ or 3 years old. When the children approach the age of three, they are moved next classroom (primary) when they show the signs and characteristics of readiness. A Montessori Primary classroom encompasses the sub-plane that includes 2½ to 6 year olds- including children who would be in separate preschool and kindergarten in traditional schools.

Once the child has begun in the Montessori classroom, it is important that she or he complete a full cycle (typically 1.5-2 years in the toddler community or 3 years in the primary class). If the cycle has not been completed, the child may have concentrated more in certain areas, with other areas not yet as fully developed. Often, work begun the first two years in primary will crystallize in the child during the third year - that is, information will come together in a new or more complete way for the child for a very satisfying learning experience.

At the heart of the Montessori approach is the prepared environment. Our classrooms provide a warm, inviting atmosphere that is both peaceful and spacious. Shelves have been carefully arranged and decorated with objects to attract the child for further exploration and to gain respect for the environment. Everything is child-sized and accessible, encouraging children to move about independently. The materials in the classrooms have been meticulously developed and refined to allow for maximum independence in the development of fundamental academic concepts and skills.

## **Toddler**

Children from 18 months to 3 years of age learn through hands-on activities in four main curriculum areas: **Practical Life:** Through physical activities such as sweeping, dusting, and various daily life activities, the children refine their movements and bring order to their thoughts through following sequenced steps. The children are also using the mathematical mind when doing these activities.

**Sensorial:** Sensorial material designed by Maria Montessori helps the child isolate and classify perceptions of sound, texture, color, shape and size. Sensorial activities can also be an introduction to Geometry and mathematic relationships.

**Language:** This is a very important component of the classroom where the child develops vocabulary and discovers the meaning of words and power of communication through specific work/material placed in the classroom. Counting and things like learning colors are built into language presentations as well.

**Movement:** Movement is a major part of the Toddler Community. The child is in the refinement stage of Fine and Gross motor movement and are given many opportunities through all the materials in the classroom to continue to refine these acquisitions.

**Art, Music, and More:** The classroom curriculum also includes exposure to art, music, movement, and culture.

## Primary/PreK

Our primary classroom provides a warm, inviting atmosphere that is both peaceful and spacious. Shelves have been carefully arranged and decorated with objects to attract the child for further exploration and to gain respect for the environment. Everything is child-sized and accessible, encouraging children to move about independently. Children are provided with real experiences matching developmental interests. We do not "pretend" to prepare food or to sew; the child really learns how to prepare food and to sew! Through observation, the guide carefully chooses activities that best meet the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of each individual child in the primary classroom. Once a lesson is presented, the child is free to choose this activity off of the shelf, work with it as long as desired, and return the activity back on the shelf when finished.

**Practical Life:** Practical Life is the point of entry for all children to life in the primary classroom. Children learn things such as how to behave appropriately in a community, how to coordinate big body and fine motor movement, how to care for oneself, and how to care for various objects in the environment, and for the environment itself. Children also learn how to prepare food for snack and learn how to eat a well-balanced meal.

**Sensorial:** In the Sensorial Area, activities are based on the five senses that we perceive: touch, vision, hearing, smelling, and tasting. Children are able to explore and interact with objects that isolate one sense and its quality. In turn, they are able to classify and categorize impressions of the world around them. Later work combines qualities in a more advanced format thus stimulating the intellect of older children and preparing for higher mathematics such as geometry. Sensorial helps build cognitive skills and is crucial to the development of long-term memory.

**Language:** Spoken language forms the foundation for all other language activities in the primary classroom. Children are provided with a rich vocabulary experience through songs, poems, stories, conversation, and objects in the environment. As vocabulary increases, the child's confidence is gained and s/he delights in being able to effectively communicate with others. The child is invited to break down and reconstruct the individual sounds (phonemes) of words, and it is from this that an interest in letters and writing develops. Children will often spontaneously read their first word in the classroom, and love the opportunity to expand their knowledge.

**Mathematics:** All of the child's experiences in the Practical Life, Sensorial, and Language areas culminate to form the foundation for readiness and interest in Mathematics. Children are introduced to the Mathematics Area once they are able to make one to one correspondence with everyday objects and follow a logical sequence of activity. Through Mathematics, children work with concrete materials that help to develop abstract reasoning skills. The four mathematical operations and the decimal system are introduced in a way that is both fun and explorative.

**Extensions:** Additional subjects such as Biology, Zoology, Chemistry, Physics, Music, Geography, Geology, Archaeology, Botany, Art, etc., are presented as extensions of the Sensorial and Language areas.

The New Mexico PreK program's standards are fully integrated in our classrooms. We have cross walked Montessori lessons and activities with the New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines, demonstrating the ways in which the Montessori curriculum covers the Domains and Essential Indicators for Preschool/Kindergarten. (1. Physical Development, Health, and Well Being, 2. Literacy, 3. Numeracy, 4. Aesthetic Creativity, 5. Scientific Conceptual Understandings, 6. Self, Family and Community, 7. Approaches to Learning)

## **Elementary**

Children at the elementary level want to know everything. They no longer learn about the world primarily through their senses, but through the use of a powerful intellect and imagination. In order to challenge the blossoming capacities of this age child, the six-year elementary curriculum includes studies in Biology, Botany, Zoology, Geology, History, Geometry, Mathematics, Art, Language, Music, Physical Science, and more.

Subject areas are integrated through the larger context of the entire cosmos - what we call "Cosmic Education." We begin each year with Five Great Lessons which explain through story, hands-on demonstrations, and illustrated charts, the beginning of the Universe, Planet Earth, Life, Language, and Mathematics. These Great Lessons set the stage for the expansive curriculum which follows. The Montessori elementary classroom encourages creativity, curiosity, communication, cooperation, and concentration. Children work together or alone on projects of their own choice, guided by lessons from their teacher. The classroom extends into the community as children arrange their own "going-outs." The elementary Montessori classroom is an exciting and nurturing place to be.

### **Mathematics:**

Besides mastering all four operations of math (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division), elementary children learn fractions, decimal fractions, squaring, cubing, multiples, factors, square root, extracting square roots, cube root, extracting cube roots, and pre-algebra, as well as other topics relating to mathematics such as the history and writing of numbers. Through practice with hands-on materials, and by building on previous experience, the children eventually move from the sensorial to the abstract, coming to work their problems on paper, and often simply in their mind. Word problems are an important part of our math curriculum.

### **Language:**

The language curriculum starts with the history of language both written and spoken and moves on into a study of other areas like parts of speech, the noun, verb, adjective tenses, sentence structure, sentence analysis, prefixes and suffixes, literature, poetry, research, writing, grammar, oral reports, and more. Language is used throughout all areas of the classroom.

**History:** We begin with the history of early humans and continue through the development of early civilizations. We cover modern history as well, including US history and the history of New Mexico. Children are introduced to overarching themes such as migration, the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution, explorers, and so on. The children also pursue their own investigations into cultures and historical events and figures of their choosing.

**Geography:** We study the sun and the earth and the results of the rotation and revolution of the earth and the tilt of its axis, including day and night, the seasons, air currents, and weather. We also study mountains and rivers, erosion and the composition of the earth. The children explore elements and states of matter through hands-on science experiments. Individual interest will dictate the direction of further in-depth study.

**Geometry:** Study in this area covers congruence, similarity, and equivalence, lines, angles, plane figures, solids, Pythagorean and Euclidean theorems, volume, area, and how we derive the formulas for measuring these values, including the area of a circle, and pi.

**Biology:** This curriculum includes the study of both plants and animals in the context of scientific classification. Again, the study occurs simultaneously with the pursuit of other subjects. Our school garden

provides wonderful practical experience in the world of biology and helps the children integrate their learning in this area.

**Art and Music:** Art and music are integrated in to the daily life of the classroom. Children engage in free, creative projects and group singing, as well as individual study of music theory, and art techniques. Children are encouraged to embellish and decorate their work journals and final drafts of projects. Creative expression is encouraged through a variety of opportunities for public speaking and presentation of their work, as well as in organized, dramatic plays.

## **Homework**

In general, homework is not assigned. However, in the event of unsatisfactory effort in class, some assignments may be sent home for completion. Also, older students who are graduating may be assigned research or work to help them adjust to the procedures of more conventional schooling. Typically, students choose when and what work to bring home based on their knowledge of current classroom goals and expectations or project deadlines.

## **Parent Involvement**

We encourage and depend on parent participation at GMS. Not only does parent involvement make your child's school experience more successful and rewarding, it also enriches the entire school community. Sharing your knowledge with a classroom, offering to listen to elementary children read aloud, spending time helping out on the playground, or chaperoning a going out or camping trip are all ways your positive actions strengthen our program. Please talk with your child's teacher or with the School Director for more specifics on how to be involved.

## **Expectations**

You have chosen GMS for your child's education and expect the school to give its very best to each child, which we pledge to do. Likewise, the school has some expectations of parents in order to ensure a positive reciprocal relationship between the school and its families. As a parent of a child in GMS, you are expected to:

1. Pay your bill on time. Tuition and fees are the school's main source of income. *Tuition and fees for the basic program are waived for PreK families. Charges for After School Care still apply.*
2. Attend parent and teacher conferences. This is the best way to understand your child's progress in school.
3. Attend social and education nights. Connecting with other GMS families and learning more about Montessori education helps you and your child get the most from your GMS experience.
4. Know and abide by the school's policies, as outlined in this handbook.
5. Read the school newsletters, e-mails and other notes that go home with your child. These communications are the way in which we keep you informed of what's happening at school.
6. Be involved with the school's fundraising efforts by donating time and goods to fundraising events, by purchasing items or attending events. Fundraising is the way in which tuition costs are kept affordable and in which GMS aids low-income families through the Scholarship Fund.
7. Strive for positive and open communication. When you have questions or comments, please share them with staff members, as this helps to build a stronger, more interactive school.

## **Communication**

We view communication between parents and staff as essential. We make every effort to keep you informed about school events and your child's needs and successes. We ask that you also communicate with us. Please inform teachers of changes in your home life (new baby, parents separating, moving to a new house, etc...) which may affect a child's behavior at school and require special understanding from teachers. We also ask that you please contact the front office when your child will be absent from school.

We appreciate any feedback you have to share with us. We ask that you bring forward your concerns immediately. If your child seems upset by something at school, don't hesitate to discuss your concerns with the teachers and/or School Director. If you have questions about your child's academic or social development, please feel free to schedule a time to address these with your child's teacher at any time during the year.

Periodic updates will be sent home, which will include notes on what is happening, upcoming events, changes in policy, and other news briefs. Newsletters will include articles on Montessori philosophy and practice, on parenting, classroom news, and the calendar of events.

## **Confidentiality**

Children's records are kept strictly confidential, but individual parents may request access to their own child's record. Records will only be made available to other persons, schools, or professionals upon written authorization from the parents.

Likewise, all health or special needs, behavioral issues and other concerns regarding the children are kept strictly confidential between the staff and the parents of the child in concern, unless the parent has given permission to the staff that an issue may be made public (e.g., it may be necessary or desirable for others to be aware of a health condition, allergies, etc. for the child's safety). Issues within the classroom, before or after school care, of the family or of any school outing are not to be discussed with any persons other than staff and the parents of the child. We sincerely hope that other parents within the school who may observe behaviors or events regarding the children have the respect for the privacy of the child and family to keep those observations strictly to themselves.

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect. In order to comply with these laws, GMS staff may not release children to parents, guardians, or other authorized adults if they have reason to believe that the adult is intoxicated, impaired, or behaving inappropriately such that releasing the child may endanger the child's health or well being. In this case, the child will be removed from the situation, and GMS staff will contact the proper authorities. Once the authorities have arrived, they will have jurisdiction over the matter and will make the decision concerning the safety and well being of the child.

## **Grievance Procedures**

Should you have concerns regarding your child's experience at school, please speak about them directly with your child's teacher. He or she is the one most closely acquainted with your child and the workings of the

classroom, and can best answer your questions and concerns. Making an appointment ensures you will have the time to be fully heard and attended to.

If you have spoken with your child's teacher and feel the matter is unresolved or have further questions, please make an appointment to address your concern with the School Director, who is available to hear your concerns, has the authority to address any issues, and will endeavor to rectify errors or resolve possible conflicts. She may suggest an appointment together with the teacher present to better address unresolved issues.

Questions or concerns regarding the operation of the school, major financial concerns, or matters concerning the program should be taken directly to the School Director. The School Director is responsible for all school operations.

Certain school policy decisions, especially those of a financial nature, are made by the GMS Board, and the School Director may suggest addressing such questions with the Board. Issues to be considered by the Board should be addressed to the Board President. You may be asked to attend a Board meeting to discuss the issue in person. However, addressing any grievance or issue is solely at the discretion of the Board.

## **Observations**

Observation is an important and integral part of a Montessori environment. It is through observation that teachers discover the children's interests and abilities and what lessons to give next for optimal learning. Parents also benefit greatly from observation, gaining insight into their child's inner and outer worlds as well as Montessori education in general. Primary and Elementary classrooms are open for observation beginning in October, continuing throughout the year. In order to give the children time and space to settle into their new environment, build relationships, grow in independence and concentration, and develop their work cycle, we protect the children's early weeks from visitors. ***Please say your good-byes at the door when you bring your child in the morning, confident that she/he will soon feel at home in her/his new class.***

Starting in October, you are invited to schedule an observation of the class by arranging a date with the teacher. Parents who would like to observe in the Toddler environment should be prepared to bring their child home with them when they are finished, as a second separation is very difficult for our youngest students.

## **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Regular parent conferences are scheduled for the fall and spring. Dates for these conferences are noted on the school calendar. Teachers will contact families in advance to schedule your individual conferences. You might consider making an appointment to observe your child in the classroom before conferences. A third Parent/Teacher conference will be scheduled for all children in our Toddler and Primary/PreK classrooms. We schedule an Open House so your child can show you some of the materials they have been working with during the school year.

It is beneficial for parents and staff to establish and maintain an open channel of communication and a partnership in supporting your child(ren)'s development. You are encouraged to communicate regularly with GMS teachers throughout the year, not just at conferences. If you would like to set up a meeting outside of conferences to discuss your child's progress or any concerns you may have, please arrange this with your child's teacher.

## **Parent Education Nights and Workshops**

You and your child can receive the greatest benefit from Montessori education if you understand its principles and their application. Parent nights and workshops are held during the school year to provide opportunities for you to learn more about Montessori education, to become better acquainted with the staff, and to get to know other parents. As the staff and parents join together in these opportunities, a bond of understanding, communication and support develops. We look forward to your active participation.

All parents are encouraged to attend, as an aid to their child's education.

### **GMS Policy on Parent and Adult Behavior**

GMS holds parents and other adults to the same high standards of behavior and conduct to which we hold our students. All adults involved with the school are expected to follow the outlined behavior policies, as well as be responsible for ethical behavior in regard to the school, its employees, Board, students, and families.

The basic ground rules and organizational values of GMS include direct and open communication, respect and honesty, and preserving the integrity and dignity of all involved. To support these values, GMS requires parents to abide by its policies on ethical, safe, and respectful conduct. We expect each adult to speak to and not about an individual or group, and take responsibility for his or her own actions and statements.

Disrespectful conduct such as inappropriate or profane language, disruptive behaviors, threatening behavior, verbal abuse, or physical violence will lead to consequences imposed by the school. In addition, such conduct as breaching the confidentiality or privacy of staff, children, families, or Board members, or compromising the business of the school in any way through actions such as slander, spreading rumors or gossip, or disrespecting established lines of communication and grievance, will also lead to having consequences imposed by the school on the offending parent(s) or adult(s). The consequences for any adult, including parents, who violate these policies can include a verbal warning, a written warning, and being asked to leave the GMS property.

**Extreme Behavior:** In the case of extremely harmful or disruptive behaviors such as but not limited to: physical violence, entering the campus under the influence of drugs or alcohol, jeopardizing the children's safety, and so on; GMS reserves the right to immediately terminate contact with a family.

# Policies for Students and Families- Daily Operations

## Arrival and Departure Procedures

### **Arrival**

It is most helpful if you can arrange your morning routine to give your child plenty of time to get ready for school. A relaxed and predictable preparation time helps children arrive at school happy and eager to learn.

Please sign in your child(ren) each morning using your assigned PIN. Please help your child arrive on time each day. Drop off for school begins at 8:15 a.m., and class begins promptly at 8:30 a.m. ***No children may be left unsupervised, even on the playgrounds.***

Parents arriving after that time must park in the parking lot and bring their child to the office so as to not disturb the classroom. Never drop off a child at the gate when there is no staff person present.

At 8:30 a.m. the classroom doors will be closed. Please enter the school via the main entrance after this time. If, due to an emergency or unforeseen event, your child cannot arrive by 8:45a.m., please call the office to obtain permission from your child's teacher to bring your child into his/her classroom.

It is important for the child's sense of well being and sense of belonging to the group that your child arrives on time. The morning period is a concentrated work period. Late arrival can make your child feel uncomfortable because work has already begun without him or her, and it disrupts the morning work period for the other children. Habitually late arrival has a negative impact on your child's academic and social development. Please be aware that attendance will be part of your child's school records. We are here to support the development of healthy, life-long habits. Both your child's teacher and the school's administrative team are available to consult about ways we can support regular prompt arrival at school.

### **Departure**

***Whether your child's day ends at 1:00 p.m., 3:15 p.m., or 5:15 p.m., please pick up your child on time. Children become anxious when their parent is late.***

Half-day pick up for Toddlers is **1:00 p.m.** and Half-day Primary is **1:15 p.m.** *Any half-day child not picked up will be put in the care of the primary assistant and parents will be charged for after school care.* At 3:30 p.m., any full-day child not picked up will be put in the care of the after-school supervisor and parents will be charged for after school care. If your child has permission to walk home, ride a bike, etc., please complete the permission form, available in the office. On early release days pick up for all students is 1:00 p.m. At the end of each semester the designated pick up time is 12 noon and there is no school lunch on those days.

**When picking up your child,** please sign them out using your assigned Pin number. When picking up your child, please be aware of the flow of other families picking up their children and ensure that the walkways are clear.

**If someone else is to drop off or pick up your child,** make sure he or she understands the procedures, is on the authorized pick up list and has the correct PIN. We ask that you inform the staff when your child will be picked up by any of the people listed so they can make the transition smooth for your child. Remember that

your child will only be released to an individual authorized on the form on file in the office, unless otherwise notified. Please send an email if someone not on your registration form will pick up your child. Identification may be required, so make sure the person comes prepared to **present ID** if the staff does not already recognize him or her. This is, of course, for your child's safety. Following these procedures will avoid awkward or unsafe situations for the child, the staff, and your family and friends.

Phone authorization to release your child is discouraged: however, we realize that it may be necessary in an emergency. Please follow up with an email if possible. If you leave a message on the school answering machine, the staff will call you back at the home or work phone numbers listed on your child's registration form. This is another way we can try to ensure your child's safety.

## **Parking Lot and Driveway Etiquette & Safety**

In order to ensure safe and smooth traffic flow, we ask parents, staff, and visitors to follow the parking procedures outlined here:

- **Remember, at all times, that pedestrians and bicyclers have the right of way.**
- GMS has a circle drive.

**Enter:** from Alabama Street using the northern driveway by our school sign, staying to the right as you continue past the southern end of the brick Annex building.

**Exit:** along the southernmost roadway, keeping to the right or south as you approach Alabama Street.

- **Morning drop off has a drive through option and a parking option.**

**Drive through option** - stay to the far right when you enter the parking lot and stay in the one-way traffic lane. When you reach the front of the school please remain in your vehicle and a tablet will be brought to your car for sign in. For this option your child/ren will need the skills to get out of the vehicle and walk independently into the classroom.

**Parking option** - If you need more time to get your child/ren out of the car please park in the allocated parking spaces and walk your child to the school and sign in.

- **Afternoon pickup** - Please park your vehicle and walk to the entrance of the school to pick up your child. **To avoid congestion there will be no drive through option available.**
- If you need any accommodations or extra help with drop off or pick up please contact the school and let us know.
- When parking, please note the diagonal positioning of two telephone poles indicating two rows of parking, facing west. Please do your best to park in designated parking spaces.
- **Please maintain a speed of 10 mph or less while driving anywhere on the school campus or surrounding property.**
- **Please do not leave your child/ren unattended in the parking lot at any time during drop off and pick up.**
- **GMS requires ALL students to be restrained by an age/size appropriate car seat or seat belt upon arrival to and departure from the school campus.**

## **Attendance and Absence**

### **Attendance**

Children have a great need for consistency and order in their daily lives. Consistency in attendance helps children feel safe about their school, positive toward their work, and secure in their relationships and sense of classroom community. In order to benefit fully from all the Montessori environment has to offer, it is important that your child come to school every day. Attendance records will be part of your child's school records.

## **Absences**

Please notify the school if your child will be absent. If your child misses a significant number of school days, exposure to important knowledge and skills may be obstructed and advancement to the next level may be delayed. If excessive absence is impacting your child's education and experience at GMS, the school will notify you to set up a meeting so that we can work with you to come up with a plan to support your child's success at school. If the plan is not adhered to, and excessive absences continue, your child may lose their placement in the program.

**ECECD families** - If your child misses **5** or more consecutive school days without communication from you, we are required to report this to NM ECECD, and you may lose your ECECD assistance.

**PreK families**- The expectation of the NM PreK program is that children will be present 90% of the time so that they may receive the full benefits of participation. If your child is going to be absent, you must contact the main office and let the school know. Excused absences include illness of the child or parent, transportation problems, or traveling. After three consecutive, unexcused absences, school staff will contact you by phone or email to determine the cause of the absence, and set up a meeting, if necessary, to create an action plan that will support the child's return to and participation in the program. After the seventh unexcused absence, a letter will be sent to the family, and a deadline will be set within which time the family must respond and set up a meeting to create an attendance action plan, or their spot in the PreK program will be forfeit.

## **The School Year**

GMS makes every effort to align its yearly school calendar on that of other area schools for the ease and convenience of GMS families who may have children in other schools. This way most of our vacation and in-service days coincide with those of the public and charter schools. However, please observe closely the GMS calendar, and other updates from the school in order to stay completely informed of our operating schedule. Notices are also posted on the bulletin board at the drop-off/pick-up area.

## **After-School Care Programs**

### **After School Care**

GMS provides after school care for enrolled children whose parents work beyond 3:30 p.m. This program is managed by our After School Care Guide, with the help of an assistant.

In After School Care, the Montessori environment is extended for consistency, but relaxed, to allow for rest after a busy day in the classroom. Children may choose between planned activities and a variety of individual materials regularly available on the shelves, such as blocks, books, clay, drawing, and more. In addition, children will have time to play outdoors. The Montessori philosophy of respect and space for

individual growth and development will be integral to all activities in the program. An afternoon snack will be provided each day.

Remember that After School ends at 5:15 p.m., and all children must be picked up before then. Families will be charged \$1.00 per minute after 5:15 p.m. for late pick up. If the child is not picked up by 5:30 p.m., staff will make a reasonable attempt to contact the family. If contact cannot be made, the staff will contact the proper authorities.

## **School Closures**

School closure because of snow or other weather conditions may occur during the year. Delays or cancellations will be announced to families via email and on the KOAT school closures page. Messages on the school's Facebook page ([facebook.com/GuadalupeMontessoriSchool/](https://facebook.com/GuadalupeMontessoriSchool/)) and the school website – [www.guadalupemontessori.org](http://www.guadalupemontessori.org) will also announce closure information.

Usually, GMS will align with the Silver Consolidated Schools' and Aldo Leopold Charter School's decisions as to delays and closures, as well as decisions to make up days lost to inclement weather. Check for updates from GMS because the changes will not automatically be the same as those of the public schools. For instance, GMS opens at 10:15 am when on a two-hour delay.

Please understand that delays and closures are for the children and staff members' safety, and the school regrets any inconvenience for working parents this may cause.

## **Enrollment Policies and Procedures**

### **Enrollment Policy**

Enrollment is on a space-available basis and is non-discriminatory. GMS strives to keep a balance of ages and gender in a given classroom, and space priority may be made for a particular age within a classroom. All efforts are made to accommodate families' enrollment needs during the year, but the school reserves the right to set starting dates at times that will be beneficial to the classroom community.

Information about GMS programs, including free PreK programs, will be shared in the spring with families who are already enrolled, as well as with the general community. Children are eligible for Early PreK or PreK if they are 3 or 4 by September 1<sup>st</sup> of that year. Programs will be advertised in local media (print and radio) and through our website and social media accounts. Additional recruitment will occur by posting flyers in public spaces, and providing materials at local outreach events. Application deadlines will be communicated in advertising and outreach materials.

**Priorities for Enrollment:** Once the initial pool of applicants is collected, priorities for enrollment are (1) continuity of care, (2) siblings of currently enrolled students, (3) children of GMS faculty or staff, and (4) balance of ages and genders in our mixed-age classrooms. During the initial enrollment process, once these factors are considered, and if there are still spaces available, the remaining spaces will be filled using a lottery of eligible applicants.

The application process includes:

- School visit- Tour, classroom observation, and meeting with school staff (*Strongly recommended*)
- Request for admission form
- Registration/enrollment packet (during open registration periods)
- Confirmation of space/classroom placement

- Home visit and/or orientation with teacher
- Parent Orientation

### **Trial Period**

First Year Enrollment: Once registered, a child is considered enrolled for the year. However, the first 90-calendar-days of enrollment for the first year is considered a trial period for families that are paying tuition.

Education at GMS takes a *whole child* approach, addressing not only academic learning, but the development of social, emotional, physical, and moral aptitudes as well. It is the quality of inner discipline in particular that allows children to be attentive, to follow directions, and to show courtesy towards others and the environment. Overall classroom unity and success are also heavily influenced by the children's ability to develop inner discipline.

In most cases both teacher and child demonstrate the capacity to work toward whole child development. However, if after consistent attendance for the 90-day trial period, should the parents and/or the teacher find that the child or family is unable to make a satisfactory adjustment to the school, the child may be withdrawn. In this case the tuition contract will be canceled. Within the initial 90 - day trial period, parents are liable for all school days attended through the withdrawal date as well as any other fees incurred during their attendance including, but not limited to registration deposit, lunches, Before School Care and After School Care charges. If the child is withdrawn within the first 30 days, parents are responsible for the entire first 30 days regardless of days actually attended. The Registration Deposit is non-refundable.

### **Withdrawal from School**

If for any reason a child is to be withdrawn from the school during the year (other than during the trial period) the parent must give the school a **30-calendar-day written notice**. The parents are responsible for the exact amount of tuition for the days the child has attended the school, calculated at the per diem amount, as well as the 30-calendar-days from the date written notice is received, as well as any other fees incurred during their attendance including, but not limited to the registration deposit, lunches, After School Care charges. The \$60 Registration Deposit is non-refundable. If a child is withdrawn without a 30-day written notice, the withdrawal date will be considered to be 30 days from the date the child actually leaves the school.

### **Financial Policies**

**Our philosophy is to work with every family and meet each family's dynamic needs.**

1. Tuition is the total amount due for the classroom program for the school year. Other charges (lunch, after school care, etc.) and fees are in addition to the tuition amount.
2. Tuition Payment options: (a) Full payment made within ten days of the child's first day of school or (b) Monthly payments for ten months with due dates beginning August 1 and ending May 1, ten equal payments. (c) If you need to request a different payment plan, you must meet with the Business Office during the first two weeks of school and receive approval in writing from the School Director for the proposed plan. **Anytime your financial situation changes, alert the Business Office and work out a new payment plan as soon as possible.**
3. A billing statement will go out to each family on the 10th of the month. This will include tuition owing for the upcoming month, plus the previous month's after school care charges, lunch or other charges accrued during that time. It will reflect any payments made and balance due. One final statement will be

sent out at the end of May, or beginning of June, for final charges accrued that school year, including May lunches, May ASC charges.

4. Tuition and other charges are due the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month.
5. If the account becomes more than 90 days overdue, the family may be asked to withdraw the child until the account is paid in full.
6. For accounts that remain overdue following the conclusion of the school year, GMS will send notices for six months and may be forced to send overdue accounts to collections.
7. A child will not be enrolled until the previous year's account is settled. This includes any outstanding tuition, lunch, before or after school care, summer charges, or other fees.
8. For those families receiving ECECD funds to cover tuition costs: it will be the family's responsibility to cover all fees not covered by the state.
9. For those families receiving GMS Financial Aid: Aid will be given each month as a tuition reduction. If the family's payment is more than 30 days late, the Financial Aid may be withdrawn until the balance is paid.
10. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for children picked up after 5:15 p.m.
11. Returned Check Fee – A fee of \$25 will be charged to your account for any returned checks.
12. A 30-calendar-day written notice is required for withdrawal of a student. Tuition will be charged for the 30 days regardless of actual attendance. See Enrollment Policies.

### **Illness and Medication**

Children who show signs of illness should not be in school. This is for your child's health as well as that of the other children and families in our school community. A child should not come to school if he or she has one or more of the following symptoms:

- Fever over 100.4 degrees. Your child should be free of fever (without medication) for at least 24 hours before returning to school.
- Diarrhea (three or more watery stools in 24 hours)
- Vomiting (one or more times in 24 hours)
- Nausea
- Sore throat, with fever or swollen glands
- Severe cough
- Severe cold symptoms (excess mucous, green or yellow mucous, sneezing, coughing, runny eyes, etc.)
- Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Eye infection – thick mucus or pus draining from the eye.
- Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping, or pus-filled
- Has untreated headlice
- Stiff neck or headache with one or more symptoms listed above
- Difficulty breathing or wheezing
- Complaints of severe pain
- Fatigue, discomfort, or just clearly not feeling well and unable to function normally at school

Some of the above symptoms may indicate a serious illness that requires immediate medical attention. Call your pediatrician if you are unsure whether your child should come to school, given his or her symptoms.

If your child contracts a contagious condition such as chicken pox, measles, strep throat, pin worms, lice, impetigo, pink eye, etc., report it to the school immediately so that other families may be alerted to possible exposure. No mention will be made of the child's or family's name in any notification.

If a child becomes ill at school, the parents will be contacted immediately. Your child should have the security of knowing where she/he is to go in case of illness when you are not at home. If the parent cannot be reached, the child will remain at school until the parent is contacted. A child who is not well enough to go outside should not come to school.

State regulations require that school staff will only administer prescribed or over-the-counter medications with **written authorization**. Permission forms are in the foyer on the bulletin board.

**DO NOT SEND THE MEDICATION WITH YOUR CHILD.** Bring it to the office staff yourself when you fill out the permission form. We will keep the medication in a special place until it is time to administer it. The pharmacist can issue the medication in separate bottles, labeled for your child, so that it may stay at the school if your child is taking medication for more than one day. Over-the-counter medications should also be in their original containers, labeled clearly with the child's name, date and dosage.

### **Health and Developmental Screenings**

Health screenings (such as dental, physical, and vision) will be scheduled at the school each fall, as available. Parents will be notified of the screenings, and be given the opportunity to decline participation if they choose. Collaborative developmental and social/emotional screening tools (the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE) will be used in the Toddler and Primary classes, as part of the FOCUS and PreK programs. Results will be discussed at Parent/Teacher conferences, or sooner if areas of concern arise. When areas of concern are identified by parent feedback, teacher observation, or screening results, the lead guide will engage in a collaborative process with families to identify and refer to community resources (such as Child Find) and to create a plan for program modifications that support the child's development.

### **Accidents and Emergencies**

The safety of children is of our highest priority. Should an accident occur, it is the responsibility of the staff to address that child's immediate need(s). The school is equipped with first-aid materials, and all teachers are first-aid and CPR certified. Should an emergency occur, and immediate help is needed, we will call 911, and notify the parents as soon as possible. If the parents are not able to be reached, we will call the emergency contacts on file for the child. All details of the situation will be logged in an incident report.

### **Incident Reports**

Incident reports are filled out for moderate or major accidents or injuries to ensure effective and collaborative communication and record keeping. Injuries that resolve quickly will be considered minor and will not have an incident report. Staff will complete an incident report and it will be sent via Transparent Classroom to families. Families will be notified if the incident is of a serious nature. Incidents that involve more than one child will result in an incident report for each party, however, the identities of the other child will not be released due to confidentiality issues. If there is concern about your child's interaction with another student, please communicate with your child's teacher or school administration, who can follow up with the other family for consent, and support the resolution of the issue.

### **Immunizations**

New Mexico State Law requires that all pre-school and school-aged children be vaccinated. Please see your child's doctor or the school's Office Manager for specific details of the required immunizations, as the laws change. The school conducts an annual review of the students' immunization records. If your child is not in

compliance with state law, he or she may be excluded from school until the needed immunizations have been administered.

If your child is not immunized, you must complete a “Vaccination Exemption” form, available from the Health Department or the school office. This form must be approved by the Health Department to be valid, and needs to be updated annually.

## **Food Policies, Snack and Lunches**

It is very important to general health and to the ability of children to concentrate at school that they be properly nourished. Because children have different sensitivities to ingredients in food, we endeavor to provide and serve food to the children at GMS that is free from chemical additives, sugar, sugar substitutes, and chemical food colors. We serve food which is as unprocessed, and uses as many certified organic ingredients as possible. We ask parents sending a food from home to provide options that are healthful and that adhere to our food policy.

### **GMS Food Policy**

In order to set our students up for success, our policy limits the amount of sugar, food additives and food colors that the children consume at school, even if the food is sent from home.

Specifically, this means NO:

Cupcakes or cake	Sugar-coated cereal
Candy	Soda pop
Frosted pastry	Fast foods
Processed cheese	Synthetically colored foods (food color and dye)

If your child brings food from home which is not consistent with our food policy, the staff will ask him or her to put it away to be eaten outside of school time. More healthful food may be substituted if necessary so your child does not go hungry. Please understand that this policy is for the well being of your child, for the other students, and for an effective learning atmosphere in the classroom.

### **Snacks**

GMS participates in the USDA Breakfast program, which allows us to provide a highly nutritious breakfast/snack for each child every day, free of charge to parents. Snack will also be provided in After School Care for all those attending.

### **Lunch**

Nutritious hot lunches will be served at school Monday through Friday. The lunch menu provides a variety of well-balanced meals made from fresh ingredients that are locally and organically grown when possible. This includes many fresh foods grown on-site in the GMS Garden. A menu for the month will go home, and you may choose which days your child will be eating hot lunch. GMS participates in the USDA National School Lunch Program, and all food preparers receive specific training. We ask all families to please fill out the application form, which can be found in the office, to see if your child qualifies for free or reduced lunch prices. This provides the school with important data when qualifying for Grants and other State funds. ***PreK children are exempt from lunch charges, regardless of eligibility for free or reduced lunch.***

Seeing other children eating something new or different sometimes encourages a young child to try new foods, another good reason why all foods eaten at school should be nutritional. If you wish to put something special in your child’s lunch, a nice note or picture can be enjoyed as much as a sweet.

The children do not throw food away from their lunches. All uneaten food will be repackaged and put back in the lunch box to indicate to parents what the child has eaten.

**If parents would like to eat lunch with their child in the class, they may arrange to do so ahead of time with the guide or front office. A fee of \$5.00 per plate will be added to your invoice.**

## **Policies for Students and Families- In the Classroom**

### **Student Behavioral Expectations**

One of the most important goals at GMS is to help each child develop inner discipline. Inner discipline is the desire and ability to regulate one's own behavior according to a respect for others, for the authority of a supervising adult, and for one's environment. Within any group of students there are varying degrees of inner discipline; the goal is to strive toward a higher level of self-control and care for others.

At GMS we recognize the important role that physical and emotional safety plays in a child's learning. Positive behaviors of consideration, cooperation, friendship, honesty, and integrity are both encouraged and expected. In life as well as in the classroom, children need to be competent in group situations as well as individual ones. This requires children to be attentive, to follow directions and to show courtesy towards others and the environment.

The unity of the classroom is dependent on the children's ability to develop inner discipline. Freedom and responsibility are closely bound aspects of classroom life. Children are responsible for their actions and students with a higher degree of inner discipline will often self-correct and not need adult guidance. On the other hand, inappropriate behavior in students still developing self-control may need an adult's intervention. Behaviors that may cause physical or emotional harm to oneself, to others or to property will result in intervention from an adult.

### **Discipline Procedures**

We implement supportive discipline procedures, such as Positive Discipline, Love and Logic, and Conscious Discipline. The Montessori philosophy is gentle with mistakes, as they are seen as learning opportunities. In instances where adult intervention is necessary, we use the following guidelines.

#### **Minor Misbehavior**

**Definition:** Behavior that shows disrespect for persons or property, or disrupts the positive activity of the group or individuals in the group.

**Examples:** Interrupting work, annoying others, excessive noisiness, lack of motivation to work, disruption of class, careless treatment of materials resulting in minor damage.

**Procedure:**

- a) Staff person redirects child towards appropriate behavior and/or work.
- b) Teacher discusses the problem with parent by phone or in person, as necessary.
- c) Teacher records incidents as they occur, as documentation for possible further disciplinary action should it become necessary.

Possible adult actions may include:

- a) Verbal redirection.
- b) Giving the child an assigned seat for a short period of time.
- c) Requiring the child to repair minor damage to the environment.
- d) Encouraging the child in constructive directions first thing in the morning.
- e) Sending work home to complete (extended day and elementary children).
- f) Restriction of certain freedoms, or loss of privilege, as appropriate.

### **Serious Misbehavior:**

Definition: Recurring behavior that results in willful defiance, property destruction, unsafe behavior or hurting others.

Examples:

Ongoing refusal to do work that impacts the child's progress, willful or continuous disruption of class activity without improvement, biting, hitting or kicking, temper tantrums, throwing objects, willful damage to materials or property, insolence, refusal to listen to and/or obey supervising adult, leaving the school grounds without permission.

Procedure:

- a) Immediate intervention by the supervising adult.
- b) Informing the Director and discussing the course of action to be taken.
- c) Documentation of the incident.
- d) In the event of extreme or recurring serious misbehavior, a conference will be scheduled with the administrator, teacher, and parents to develop a comprehensive approach to address and improve the behavior, leading to a greater level of self control.

Possible consequences may include:

- a) The student may be assigned a place in the classroom for an extended time.
- b) The student may be removed from the classroom.
- c) The student may lose privileges or freedoms.
- d) The family may be asked to replace damaged material.
- e) The parent(s) may be immediately involved in the situation.
- f) The student may be sent home for the day.

### **Expulsion Policy**

Working with the family to develop and implement a plan is always our first recourse for addressing behavioral issues. If needed, the school will work with the family to identify and involve appropriate and necessary interventions to support the child's capacity to succeed in their classroom environment. Once all options have been explored, and appropriate resources have been utilized, it may be determined that a different educational setting can better meet a child's needs. These instances include (but are not limited to); when a child's behavior endangers other students, when continuation in a Montessori classroom is not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological or social services expert, or when unreasonable burden is put on the school's resources for the child's accommodations for success.

GMS reserves the right to immediately disenroll a child, bypassing the sequence of steps listed above, in the case of extreme behavior that may include but is not necessarily limited to: intentional physical violence that injures another child, ongoing refusal to respect limits set by the teacher, repeatedly damaging materials, jeopardizing the safety of other children and/or irreparably disrupting classroom learning and function.

## **Inclusion at GMS**

As GMS values a diverse community, we strive to accommodate students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations will be made to support the student's learning at GMS. *Reasonable accommodations* do not fundamentally alter our program, jeopardize the safety of the classroom environment, or cause GMS to incur unreasonable costs. Families will be notified when and if the accommodation approaches the threshold of what is reasonable, and a plan and timeline will be created to evaluate the placement of the child at GMS. We use consultants (School Psychologists, counselors, etc) as one resource for children with disabilities and we welcome collaboration with other resources families may suggest.

GMS will utilize a combination of observations and screening tools to help identify when a child might be referred for additional evaluation. Families will be notified of local opportunities to access additional resources and support, such as the school district's Child Find. Should a suspected disability arise during the course of a child's education, parents and teachers are expected to work together to develop a learning plan that meets the child's and the community's best interests, including an individualized education plan, if indicated. All available resources will be utilized to support the child's education. When using other resources, parents may incur additional costs.

## **Clothing**

In general, the clothing your child wears to school should be simple, functional, and allow for free movement. Children will be sitting on the floor, working with paints and other art material and spending time outside. Clothes should be casual enough for these normal school activities. Expect that your child's clothing may get wet or soiled in the course of the day's work and play.

Please choose clothing that will not be distracting to your child or his classmates. Clothing with characters and inappropriate messages can be very disruptive to your child's work day and to the others in the class. We appreciate parents' efforts to choose clothing and other articles ***without*** media, figures or strong graphic messages.

We have a special shoe policy and ask that children have a second pair of shoes or slippers that they will only wear indoors. These will be kept at school and changed into upon entering the classrooms. This not only provides a graceful transition between indoors and outdoors, it also minimizes sand, grit and other materials that might be tracked into the classroom and damage the softwood floors.

For Primary-age children, clothing should be comfortable, easily managed by the child, and appropriate for school activities. For the very young child, elastic waist pants are the best for ease in using the bathroom.

Toddlers have the most extensive list of clothing and toileting supply needs: Parents, please refer to the Toddler column in the Supply List provided at the beginning of the school year for guidance.

Your child will be visiting and working in the GMS garden as part of the school's curriculum. You will be informed of the class's garden schedule, so you can anticipate when your child will be visiting the garden and help ensure they are properly dressed for outdoor work.

## **Cubbies and Personal Belongings**

Each child will be assigned a cubby to provide a space for lunches, shoes and other personal items. Please let your child be responsible for putting away his or her own things. Each year we provide a list of items that are required for your child's school experience. It is critical that **all items that come from home are marked with your child's name, including all items of clothing, lunch boxes, jackets, hats, etc. We cannot be responsible for missing clothing that is unmarked.**

### **Items from Home: What to Bring and What NOT to Bring**

#### **Sharing or “Show and Tell”**

Children occasionally like to bring interesting items to share with the class. One of the main purposes of sharing is to help children express themselves verbally. You can help your child prepare to tell the class about what he/she has brought. Let him/her take the lead: Ask him/her what they want to say. Help him/her figure out a simple, logical way to say it. Don't give more information that he/she can absorb.

Please help your child make a good choice **before** he/she arrives at school with the item to be shared to avoid possible embarrassment or disappointment.

Handmade items, something from nature, items from another culture, or a meaningful memento from a trip are examples of appropriate items to bring. *Toys, trading cards, valuable jewelry, money, or candy are not good choices.* Distracting, dangerous, or irreplaceable items may be stored in a safe place for the day.

### **Student Cell Phone Policy**

Children who are mature enough to use cell phones responsibly are allowed to have a cell phone in their possession. Because we serve children through the age of 12, some of our older students may fall in to this category. Please communicate and keep an open dialogue with GMS administration or your child's teacher if your child has a phone. Because electronic devices are generally not allowed at school, phones should only be used for communication. Responsible use is characterized by:

- The cell phone being off during school hours.
- Only using the phone after school, for communication with parents or the adults who are responsible for them. (No games, texting friends, etc)
- Keeping the phone in a bag or backpack when not in use.
- Managing phone use so that it is not a distraction to other children.

### **Prohibited Substances**

Tobacco, alcohol, recreational drugs or controlled substances, guns, firearms, and weapons are not permitted at school in the possession of either adults or students. If any such items are brought to school by a child, the parent will be called and the child sent home immediately. Toy guns, including water guns and other war toys are not allowed at school.

## Field Trips

The primary, extended day and elementary children may take occasional small trips to nearby locations, like to the library or Virginia Street park. A general permission slip will be sent to cover these types of trips. The elementary children will also be taking some longer trips, including backpacking and camping trips, which will be part of the curriculum. Information and permission slips will be sent out about these events as they are planned.

Because all going-out trips are an extension of the classroom, the same expectations apply as for any classroom activity. These expectations include: that the child have genuine interest in the activity, that the activity is appropriate for age and skill level of the child, that the goals and needs of the activity are met prior to the trip, and that the child's behavior meets the expectations of the classroom at each particular level. We want children to have a high potential of success with each activity they do. A child may choose not to participate or the teacher may not allow a child to participate. Depending on the circumstances of activity and time constraints, parents will be notified as soon as possible as to why a child may not be participating. The child, the teacher, and the parents will then have an opportunity to discuss what will help the child go on the next activity and have a high potential of success. If you have questions about your child's progress in any of the above areas, please talk with the teacher as soon as possible.

If an accident or injury should occur while students are on a field trip, staff's priority will be attending to the safety of the children (see policies on **Accidents and Emergencies** and **Incident Reports**). First Aid kits are brought along on every outing, so staff can administer first aid on site, and incident reports will be filled out per school policy and put in the parent folder when the group returns to the school. In the case of a serious event, the staff who are chaperoning the trip will communicate with school administration as soon as possible (based on cell phone reception and the safety of the scene). GMS administration will provide support and back up as needed, and also serve as the point of contact for communication with parents about any issues that arise.

## Birthdays

Birthdays can give a child a strong sense of his/her own personal history. We have a special way of celebrating birthdays at school, which helps orient the child to this concept of a life's history. A special snack may be sent, but please make the snack healthful (please refer to the **Food Policies** section). Suggested birthday snacks include: popcorn, raisins, fruit kabobs, muffins, banana bread, and the like. **Please be mindful of any food allergies or dietary restrictions present in your child's classroom, and speak with your child's guide or GMS office staff to obtain current information about existing food allergies and restrictions.** Your child's teacher can work with you to determine when the birthday will be celebrated. A child with a summer birthday might choose a fall or spring date.

## Transitions

### **Beginning the Program- New Families**

New families are transitioned in to the program through a series of events and orientations, including the initial intake interview, home visits (for PreK children), meetings and orientations with classroom teachers, annual Parent Orientation, and classroom visits (older Primary and Elementary children).

## **First day of School – Toddler and Primary Children**

For newly enrolled families with toddlers and/or primary children, your child's teacher(s) will call and make an appointment to meet you and your child shortly before he or she is to begin school. This meeting is designed to acquaint your child with the teacher and the classroom, and to build a relationship of trust between you, your child, and the teacher from the beginning. Your child may feel independent enough to explore the classroom with the teacher while you watch from afar, or your child may feel more comfortable staying right by your side. Both responses are normal, and the visit will only last 15 to 20 minutes on average. If you have questions or concerns, you may discuss them briefly with the teacher then, or arrange for a phone call later if the concerns are lengthy or sensitive in nature.

On your child's first few days, you may walk him or her to the classroom. Please say a brief, cheerful goodbye at the door, and the staff person there will help your child find where to put his or her things. It is normal for a young child to feel some anxiety and upset around separating from you, especially if this is his or her first school experience. Prolonging your good-bye will only prolong the upset. From years of experience, we have found that a child's initial anxiety fades quickly once inside the classroom surrounded by interesting activities and caring classmates.

If your child remains unduly upset during the day, the staff will call you. This is rare, in our experience. Please trust that the school's staff is trained and experienced in helping young children make the transition to a new setting. We know that it can be difficult for you to leave your child, but please do not expect to stay in the classroom or promise your child you will come in, for this only prolongs the period of adjustment and disrupts the routine of the class. You may call the school during the day if you wish to have updates about how your child is settling in, and you may call the teacher for a report of the day. Nearly all children make this transition remarkably easily, and soon are very happy with their new school.

### **Transition from Toddler to Primary**

When a child in the classroom begins to show signs of readiness for more advanced work (longer periods of focus, increased verbal communication and vocabulary, demonstrated ability to complete work with multiple steps) during the school year, the child will have the opportunity to visit the Primary classroom. The visits will begin as a tour of the classroom with their familiar Toddler guide. When the child shows interest, they will be given a lesson with work in the Primary classroom. Eventually, the child will have the opportunity to stay and work in the Primary classroom for a longer period of time, and may return to the Toddler classroom when they are ready. When they are showing proficiency, and when space is available, the Toddler child will complete his or her transition in to the Primary classroom. Parents will be informed at the beginning of this process to ensure their approval.

### **Transition to the Extended Day**

Children will exhibit certain developmental signs when ready to transition from half-day or napping to participating in the extended day, which is somewhat similar to kindergarten. Generally, children are ready when they near or reach their fifth birthday, can concentrate for long periods of time, are able to work on projects cooperatively, and want to hold over work from one day to the next. Readiness for extended day should be discussed with the teacher and then arranged with the School Director. The transition may take place at any time during the school year.

### **Transition to the Elementary**

Similarly, when children are ready for the Elementary, some changes will take place. The child at this age becomes intensely social, needing to work, think and act in groups. The child's intellect builds and focus on the work is stronger. The concept of time as a continuum becomes more understandable, and the child can project imagination into the future as well as the past. This hallmark of abstract thinking typically begins after a child's sixth birthday, but of course the timing is very individual. Therefore, communication with your child's teacher is important when these appear. Transition from the Primary to the Elementary is possible during the year, but typically happens in the fall, and should be discussed with all parties before a decision is made.

### **Transition to other programs or schools**

Families are encouraged to communicate with their child's teachers, at Parent/Teacher conferences or any other time, about their goals and plans for their child's education. If a family is considering moving their child to another program or school, the classroom guide and school administration can assist with an individualized transition plan to best support the child. The guide will also ensure that all personal and portfolio materials are returned to the family, and provide the opportunity to have an exit interview.



Helping Your Child Reach for the Stars



# Guadalupe Montessori School

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



## **PARENT HANDBOOK AGREEMENT 2025-26**

I have read, understand, and agree to adhere to Guadalupe Montessori School's policies and procedures in the Parent Handbook.

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Parent/Guardian #1 Printed Name

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Parent/Guardian #2 Printed Name

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Signature

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Date

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Signature

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Date

Revised 2024