

2023-24 School Year

Guadalupe Montessori School Wellness Policy



Guadalupe Montessori School (GMS) is an independent non-profit school serving ages 18 months to 12 years. We are devoted to an authentic delivery of the teaching methods established by Maria Montessori. This method includes an emphasis on the education of the whole child, so physical, emotional, and social development are emphasized as much as academic development. Thus, health and hygiene, as well as Montessori concepts such as “grace and courtesy” and “peace education,” all integrate into our overall wellness program. GMS also has an active school garden, which allows us to integrate physical activity and nutrition activities into our curriculum.

Nutrition standards for our lunch program are consistent with the National School Lunch meal pattern. We include predominantly locally grown, organic, and high-quality ingredients in every meal.

Recess is a time for movement and physical activity, and our Elementary class has an organized physical education class every day. Classes participate in outdoor activities throughout the year. Camping, hiking, soccer, basketball and field trips are all learning activities that the teachers, students and children participate in regularly. Walking to events at Western New Mexico University occur regularly.

After school programs include activities that are stimulating to the mind and body. Gardening, cooking, arts and crafts, yoga and music are all integrated into our after school enrichment program.

Community involvement includes participation in parades, bicycle races, culinary events and other activities presented throughout the year. The school opens its doors to the public for educational presentations on the Montessori technique and principle.

Wellness Policy

Family, School & Community Involvement

GMS culture encourages a high level of family, school & community involvement. Parents and staff work together to establish relationships that fully support the whole child and create a total school environment that sets a foundation for student health, well-being, and academic achievement.

GMS staff administers an annual new-parent orientation and regular parent education nights throughout the year. These events welcome new parents into the larger school community and then foster continuing education for all parents on topics including but not limited to: child social, emotional, and intellectual development; parenting; Montessori philosophy; health issues; conflict resolution and peace education and more. Regular developmental screenings are offered to all families in our Early Childhood classes.

GMS maintains a School Health Advisory Council which includes a parent, SFA personnel, board member, school administrator, school staff member, and one or more

students. These people are all community members at GMS.

GMS staff and students participate frequently in community events like Earth Day, the Gila River Festival, NDI and more. The school also emphasizes community service and the children “go out” to work on local farms, visit nursing homes and food pantries, clean up common areas like parks or San Vicente Creek trail, walk dogs at the animal shelter, and more.

GMS parents are requested to complete 40 volunteer hours in service to a variety of school needs every school year. This helps the school save money on maintenance costs for repairs, laundry, cleaning, and more, and builds a sense of community and commitment between parents and staff.

Physical Activity & Education

GMS provides a variety of opportunities for physical activity during and after school. First of all, throughout all morning work periods in every classroom, the children are allowed to move freely about the room as long as their movement is calm and purposeful. For younger children, this movement may include walking on a line, walking on a balance beam, carrying buckets of water or trays of materials back and forth across the room as part of a “practical life” lesson, watering plants, or any number of other active developmental and educational activities. For older children this may mean building a cob oven, conducting a science experiment, painting a mural, or more.

All class rooms are also provided outdoor time, with one flexible 30 - 45 min recess a day, in addition to regular time in our school garden digging beds, planting seeds, or attending to a myriad of other physical chores that need to be done. Often classes engage in nature walks/hikes on and around the property. Elementary students walk on field trips and outings on at least a bi-weekly basis. Further, GMS offers various after school enrichment classes, many of which include physical activity such as dance and movement, soccer, capoeira, African drumming, archery and hiking.

We forbid withholding recess as a form punishment. We encourage families to bike or walk to school. We welcome families and community members to use our playground facilities outside regular school hours.

Nutrition

GMS recognizes the essential role that nutrition plays in supporting and promoting the development of the whole child.

All meals are prepared in the school kitchen daily and are made from scratch, including plenty of whole foods, fruits, and vegetables. Baked goods for snacks are

made in the kitchen weekly, with whole grain products, and are low in sugar. Students are served and encouraged to try a wide variety of foods while learning what constitutes a balanced diet. All meals follow the required National School Lunch Program meal patterns and go above and beyond the nutritional standards. Nutrition information is posted throughout the school. Additionally, we participate in the National School Breakfast Program, providing a breakfast snack to all students in all classes each school day.

During the first year of the Covid-19 Pandemic, GMS provided emergency food to all students and the surrounding community. Locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables were featured in the grab and go served by GMS because it was the only produce that was reliably available, due to the disruptions in the supply chain. A wide variety of New Mexico grown food was sourced, including pinto beans, cornmeal, dried chili, fresh strawberries, melon, cucumbers and tomatoes amongst others. The grab and go meals reached many families who were surprised at the variety and freshness of the local grown food available. New Mexico Grown produce is served regularly and identified to students as an ongoing part of student education in sustainable food sourcing and food justice.

GMS continues to prioritize sourcing New Mexico grown and raised produce where ever possible, and we are privileged to be able to harvest and use food from our own school garden. The garden also provides a great opportunity for nutrition education, as students are part of the process of producing food, from soil prep to planting seeds, to tending plants, to harvesting and delivering the produce to the kitchen. This direct experience dramatically increases students' vegetable consumption and appreciation. In turn this has also influenced each child's family's approach to nutrition, promoting healthy eating among both parents and children. Students are often involved in menu planning. Kale chips are very popular at the moment! The Food Policy in our Parent Handbook articulates that foods containing sugar, chemical dyes, and processed ingredients are forbidden. Parents are encouraged to find healthy alternatives for snacks, birthday treats, and sack lunches. Food guidelines are also set for fundraisers like bake sales and cake walks.

Fresh drinking water is available for everyone throughout the day and is also served to all students during breakfast and lunch.

Health Education

We start educating our students about health and well-being from the time they start school, as early as 18 months. In the toddler class, we emphasize proper handwashing techniques with the children. We show the children how to care for their bodies, like brushing their hair, wiping their noses properly and how to use the toilet. Care for the environment is included in our health education, like how to wipe up a spill and keep belongings neat and orderly.

As the children grow older and more independent, with greater language acquisition, we move into a more detailed health curriculum. We introduce our primary classes to more detailed names of parts of the body, including internal systems like the skeleton, the nervous system, respiratory system, and endocrine system, and we also talk about a healthy diet, how to prevent the spread of illness (like sneezing into your sleeve rather than into your hand), and once again a continued emphasis on hand-washing.

In the elementary class we go over proper dental hygiene and its importance on whole body health. We also engage in a holistic approach to health, including social and emotional health, intellectual health, and physical health. With our 5th and 6th graders we begin to include the reproductive system with an education about all the human body systems.

Healthy & Safe Prepared Environment

The physical & emotional safety of the students is of utmost importance to the GMS. A high social standard is set in each class room to ensure a classroom culture that promotes self directed learning, respect, and open communication.

All classrooms & exterior play areas are regularly inspected, to ensure high safety standards are maintained.

Please see the GMS's emergency drill documentation and emergency and disaster plan.

The school is a tobacco, alcohol & drug free zone, and no weapons are permitted on premises. This is posted clearly at our school.

Social & Emotional Well being.

The Montessori philosophy requires that all GMS classrooms have a clear focus on social and emotional wellbeing. Students are taught to express their needs and communicate with each other, requesting assistance when needed. We use the restorative justice practices of the “peace rose” and “circle” to resolve conflict and build community relations. We use only positive discipline and intrinsic motivation, avoiding external rewards and punishments as research shows these do not have any lasting long-term benefits for developing personal responsibility or healthy self-esteem.

The GMS keeps community resources posted in the front foyer as well as providing a binder full of family community resources provided by the local health council.

Health Services

Documentation of student vaccination records or exemptions are required upon enrollment, as well as updated Primary Care Physician information. This information is updated annually. Information about allergies and medical conditions are communicated and tracked as necessary. Each year, at the beginning of the school year, we offer vision, hearing and dental screenings in partnership with local organizations, and provide families with resources about local health care providers, including counseling and mental health services. *Due to Covid-19 these screenings have been suspended.*

The prevention and control of communicable disease and other health problems is taken seriously by all the staff. Student health is monitored closely and all guidelines are followed. For example, known contagious children are removed from the class and can only return to school after being symptom free for 24 hrs.

Any special medical and educational needs are communicated with all necessary staff and caregivers.

All sensitive & confidential information is kept under lock and key.

Staff Wellness

GMS recognizes the importance of a healthy staff with a positive morale. Staff is given adequate time off, both for personal and health reasons. The administration of GMS works to support the staff in every way possible, and providing tools for healthy stress management is a priority for us. Staff is offered the same nutritious lunch as the students for a reasonable cost. If a staff member is sick, they are required to stay home, and substitute teachers are placed in the classrooms. The treatment of health issues for employees is addressed more thoroughly in our Employee Handbook.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

USDA NON DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT POLICY

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's

TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax:
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email:
program.intake@usda.gov

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