



# Sunset Mesa School

*~ Educating Our Future Since 1948 ~*

## **Preschool Parent Handbook**

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### **Philosophy and Mission**

Sunset Mesa School (SMS) is family-owned, non-sectarian, and independent. Each of these adjectives reflects a significant truth about this school. First, SMS has been a tax-paying, family-owned school since 1948 and has operated under its current ownership for over 40 years. What we do at SMS is not just a job; our work impacts family stewardship, personal reputation and a lengthy heritage. Family-owned also means “hands on.” You will find the decision-makers right here.

Second, the school is non-sectarian. Religious instruction has never been part of the curriculum. No faith requirement has ever been applied to students or faculty. However, SMS has over the years been owned and directed by Christian people. That necessarily informs our actions and values. People are uniquely created by God, are highly valued by Him and are responsible to him. All people in the SMS community should therefore treat one another as valuable, respected individuals with great potential to develop and use their unique characteristics and traits. Those values which Americans customarily call Judeo-Christian should be modeled by adults and taught to the students. These values include honesty, integrity, loyalty, patriotism, diligence, respect, personal responsibility, perseverance, courage, and friendship. Students should be challenged with high expectations and held to high standards for learning, behavior, and values. The same is true for the adults at SMS.

Third, SMS is an “independent school.” This term historically has meant that ownership, governance, and finances are independent of governmental or diocesan control. Of course, independence has its consequences. SMS must persuade families year by year that this education is worth the tuition; no other source of revenue exists for a tax-paying independent school. An independent school has substantial choice in defining its own approach to education. We highly value that prerogative here.

In this context, SMS purposefully provides a strong academic climate which fosters the intellectual and emotional growth of each student. Students can learn responsibility; they can earn self-esteem. We challenge students to become productive, responsible, and caring people by learning sound values, compassion and ethical behavior. We encourage them to learn, develop good study habits, act independently, solve problems, and think critically.

These characteristics do not mean, however, that SMS is isolated in its own insular world. It is accredited by the National Independent Private School Association (an organization of tax-paying schools) and the New Mexico Public Education Department. Accreditation provides you an assurance of quality. It provides SMS with peer review and support, professional development, and a wide spectrum of information.

Thank you for placing your child with SMS for this exciting experience in learning. You, the parent, are a vital part of the process. Thank you for cooperating with the administration and faculty in all of the vital areas of mutual concern for the education of your child.

Whenever you have questions, need information, or want to visit about school or your child, please call or stop by our offices. We want to help.

Alan Mask,  
President

Deborah Mask,  
Executive Director

## **Curriculum Statement**

Younger children enrolling at Sunset Mesa have two program options for their preschool years: Early Childhood or Montessori. The choice is yours; each program has its strengths, and children may experience both during a

campus visit.

Students learn as they enjoy a balance of fun and interesting activities presented individually, in small groups and in whole group activities. Our school and the teachers provide highly structured classroom environments, a carefully outlined yet developmentally appropriate curriculum, and an excellent supply of materials. Students receive the benefit of differentiated instruction allowing the teachers to provide instruction to the students at individualized levels.

In the **Early Childhood** program, teachers design activities which foster healthy emotional and social skills and encourage academic success through developmentally appropriate challenges. In the **Montessori** program, teachers lead children to develop independence, determination and concentration as they interact with materials designed to stimulate the “inner desire” of the child to learn.

In both programs, a key element of the curriculum is to allow the children several opportunities each day to make their own choices of activities to enjoy and learn from as they play.

### **Differentiating Instruction**

At Sunset Mesa, we believe each child has his or her own path to learning. That path is paved with the interests, talents, and needs of each child so our instructors are given the task of differentiating instruction for each child. The curriculum remains the same with the highest of goals set for the students. It is the instruction that is adjusted to meet the student’s needs. Our faculty is trained in, and practices, an array of instructional strategies. Students learn to self-manage themselves in a classroom of learners, while doing activities that are meaningful, interesting, and beneficial to their continuum of academic growth.

### **Positive Discipline**

Sunset Mesa Preschool follows the principles and methods of *Positive Discipline* (Nelsen, 2007) as a philosophy of discipline for our students. All staff members who work directly with children are required to complete the assigned reading and attend the workshop and any follow up workshops.

We believe that these principles and methods provide a structure for excellent discipline in and out of the classroom. Positive Discipline, through kindness and firmness, encourages self-respect, self-discipline, cooperation, good behavior, and problem-solving skills that we consider an invaluable component of the education we provide our students.

### **Licensing Status**

Sunset Mesa Preschool is licensed through the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD). We are also accredited by the National Independent Private School Association.

### **Preschool Program**

Preschool aged children enrolling at Sunset Mesa have a choice between an Early Childhood program or a Montessori curriculum for their preschool years.

There are a variety of program schedules from which to choose.

Early Childhood 3 Year Old Classes	5 Full Days per week 3 Full Days per week (MWF) 5 Mornings per week 4 Full Days per week (MWF, T-Th Morning)
Early Childhood 4 Year Old Classes	5 Full Days per week 3 Full Days per week (MWF) 5 Mornings per week 4 Full Days per week (MWF, T-Th Morning)
Montessori Age-Combined Classes	5 Full Days per week 3 Full Days per week (MWF) 5 Mornings per week 4 Full Days per week (MWF, T-Th Morning)

**Children attending school must be potty-trained.**

### **Hours of Operation**

Daycare                    7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.  
                                     3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Preschool                    **Morning Classes:**  
                                     8:30 a.m. - 12:15 a.m., after lunch  
**Full Day Classes:**  
                                     8:30 a.m. - 2:50 p.m.

Office Hours                7:50 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (may vary when school is not in session)  
The building is closed at 4:00 p.m. except for Daycare.

### **Daily Class Schedules**

Daily class schedules will vary from class to class. Parents will receive a copy of the schedule when the child joins the class. Schedules are also available through the office.

### **Daycare Program and Procedures**

All children enrolled in a program at Sunset Mesa Schools are eligible to use the extended daycare program. However, when we reach capacity, we must give working families first priority. Daycare is not open to the general public. Daycare will be closed for national holidays as well as some vacation days. Please refer to the School Calendar for specific dates.

**Please note:**

- Daycare is open every school day of the year. Daycare hours of operation are: 7:00 a.m. – 8:15 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. A reservation is required for the after school program and for certain school closings (refer to school calendar). Reserved hours will be billed, unless cancelled beforehand, whether or not a child attends. No “drop-ins” will be accepted on these days. Daycare reservation forms will be sent home before each holiday. After school reservation forms will be sent in early August.
- After school daycare openings are limited. First consideration will be given to families who work past 3:00 p.m.
- If you find during the day that you are going to be late for pick up, please call the preschool office to see if there is available space.
- Children must be signed in and out on each visit. Failure to sign out will result in time being charged until closing at 6 p.m.
- A daycare form must be on file in daycare at the time of your child’s first use of the facility. Charges are listed on the form. A late fee of \$10 for each 5 minutes or portion thereof will be assessed if children are not picked up by 6 p.m.
- It is important to **send a snack**, separately packed and clearly marked “daycare snack,” for your child to eat when going to daycare after school. Daycare does not furnish snacks.

### **After School Activities**

The after school activities packet will be available on-line ([www.sunset-mesa.com](http://www.sunset-mesa.com)) with registration due one week prior to each semester. Most fall activities begin the first Monday of the school year. Packets for the spring semester will also be available on-line.

### **Summer Programs**

A variety of classes are offered each June for four weeks. Families can choose from half day or full day classes that meet each day of the week. Further summer class and tuition information will be provided in the spring.

### **School Closings for Inclement Weather**

Sunset Mesa Schools begins the decision about closings and delays by checking what the Albuquerque Public Schools are doing. The choice will often, but not always, be the same as APS. Please also check local television stations (Channels 4, 7, and 13) and their websites for delays or closing information. You will also receive a school-wide email alert and text alert.

If we **close**, the closure will apply to everything: daycare, classes, offices and after-school activities. If we **delay** opening for two hours, then these are the adjustments that will occur:

- No daycare will be open before school.
- Classes will begin two hours later than the regular schedule.
- Any flag ceremony scheduled for that day will be re-scheduled.
- Preschool half-day classes will be cancelled altogether.
- Catered lunches will not be available.
- All after-school activities and services will remain unchanged.

**As to a few other matters that may concern you:**

- Weather conditions vary across this area. It is possible that we choose to open, but that you do not bring your child because of safety concerns in your home area. If that happens, we will not question your decision.
- We do not customarily plan any “make-up days.” If we lose one or two days, then we will absorb those. Should we have more than that, we will consider make-up days.
- If “ordinary” bad weather begins during the day, we will continue school. We understand that you may pick up your child early. Should an extraordinary winter weather storm arrive during school, we might cancel school and call you.

### **Entering and Leaving the Preschool**

When arriving or leaving campus, children are to be escorted by an adult at all times. Please park when dropping off or picking up your child.

As you become familiar with drop off and pickup times, the system will become relatively simple. If you have relatives or friends coming for your children who are not familiar with the routine, please tell them to follow the patterns they see others using. It is your responsibility to furnish the school office with all names of those authorized to pick up your child. Students will not be released to anyone who is not listed as a designated contact. ID is required the first time. Children arriving late or leaving early must be signed in/out in the front office.

Children attending the morning daycare program will be escorted to class by school personnel at the appropriate time.

### **Parking Lot Patterns and Etiquette**

**When entering** the preschool campus parking lot, enter from the south driveway off Morris following the directional arrows. **When leaving** the preschool parking lot, you can exit onto Morris from the north driveway or take the back drive north of the campus which exits onto Candelaria.

### **Arrival and Dismissal times can cause parking lot congestion and safety concerns. We ask you to:**

- **Drive 5 mph** or slower at all times
- **Watch carefully** for parents/children crossing the parking lot
- **Be courteous** to other drivers at all times
- **Follow** the traffic flow patterns
- **Park** in designated parking spaces
- Please do not allow children to play in front of the school.

### **Snacks**

Parents of preschool children must provide a healthy morning and afternoon snack for their child. The snacks must be clearly labeled with your child’s name and “AM” or “PM”.

### **After School Daycare Snacks**

Please send a snack, separately packed and clearly marked “daycare snack” for your child to eat when going to daycare after school. Daycare does not furnish snacks.

## **Lunches**

Children have a choice of bringing a lunch from home (non-microwavable because staff cannot reheat meals for children) or purchasing a lunch through a licensed caterer. The school will provide menus to families.

## **Milk**

Milk may be purchased for your child’s lunch. We encourage you to pay on a yearly basis. If your child would like to purchase milk on an occasional basis, they may purchase it through their classroom teacher for 50 cents. You may send your own drinks, but do not send carbonated beverages or drinks in glass bottles.

## **Dress**

Please have your child dress appropriately for preschool. Children should wear comfortable, practical clothing that they can enjoy playing in. We recommend good fitting socks and closed toe shoes. Please prepare your child for the current weather conditions. Additionally, please send a complete change of clothing, labeled with your child’s name.

The following items *may not* be worn:

- T-shirts and clothing bearing logos for rock groups, offensive characters, liquor, cigarettes, words deemed rude or disrespectful, or information deemed questionable for minors may not be worn by any student
- Colored hair gel/hairsprays, eccentric hair color, except on special days at the request of a teacher/grade level. Authentic mohawks and shaved designs in hair are not permitted.
- Items deemed inappropriate by the administration.

## **Communication with the School**

Key to the success of a quality preschool experience is the communication between family and school. It is critical that you provide phone numbers where we can reach you immediately in case of an illness or emergency and to keep your contact information current with the office staff. Teachers are available before and during the school day, when their schedules allow, for returning messages. For notifications, email and Teams are the primary forms of communication with the school.

## **Reporting Student Progress**

- Anecdotal and grade reports three times per year.
- Parent-Teacher Conferences in November and March.

## **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Parent-Teacher conferences are held twice each year and are scheduled for each family. There are no classes for students during this two-day period. In the event you are unable to attend the conference during the designated day and time, your child’s report card will be placed in the mail following the conference days. Childcare for the twenty-minute conference is available at no charge. **Please note that conferences will not be made up at a later**



## **time.**

### **Additional Conferences**

Conferences in addition to those regularly scheduled may be requested by parents or faculty. Parents who would like a conference should arrange it through the office. When making a request, we ask that you indicate the reason for the request and any other information you think is important. These conferences are held in the administrative offices with the instructor and an administrator.

### **Supplies**

Books, art materials, and special instructional supplies are included in the cost of tuition. Students are expected to provide their own school supplies such as pencils, pens, crayons, folders, tissues, etc. A supply list for each grade will be available on the Sunset Mesa website in June. Please purchase the items listed and send them with your child during orientation.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

Children enjoy sharing in the excitement of their birthdays. You may bring in a birthday treat or a small gift for each student to share on their special day. You should arrange with the classroom teacher for the day for your child's birthday to be recognized.

Invitations to parties outside of school may not be delivered in class unless an invitation is given to every child in the class. Otherwise, they should be mailed by you directly to those being invited. An address list is available from the office.

### **Personal Items at School**

Please do not allow your child to bring personal items such as toys and sports equipment to school other than for **sharing time**. Discuss with the teacher exceptions of comfort items, such as a small blanket or stuffed animal.

### **Lost and Found**

Please mark jackets, coats, backpacks, and anything else that can be misplaced with **your child's name** so that items can be returned directly to your child. Sunset Mesa gives unclaimed items to charity several times each year. Please search the lost and found basket in the front office for missing items.

### **Parent Volunteering and Involvement**

Sunset Mesa parents are as welcomed and valued as the students. Our office staff is always available to answer any questions you might have about the school and your child's program. Parents may also schedule a time to observe their child in class.

We encourage parents to volunteer for special activities, events and parties. However, we do not use parent volunteers during academic teaching time. Instruction is the teachers' responsibility, and we also want to insure the confidentiality of each student's academic progress.

There are many other ways that parents can be involved and informed at Sunset Mesa: orientation days at the beginning of the academic year, parent/teacher conferences, volunteering as guest speakers, and joining the Sunset Mesa Parent Association, to mention a few.

### **Enrollment/Dis-enrollment Procedures**

Sunset Mesa Schools is an independent coeducational day school for students age three through fifth grade. Students from all religions and ethnic backgrounds are welcome. A visit to Sunset Mesa is a “must” for prospective families and students. Time spent at the school provides you the opportunity to see the campus first hand. Interested parents may schedule a visit with the Director of Admissions, by calling (505)298-7626.

The Sunset Mesa Schools Elementary Program is accredited with New Mexico Public Education Department, North Central Association and the National Independent Private School Association. Sunset Mesa Schools has served Albuquerque’s children since 1948.

Registration for the upcoming fall semester for returning students takes place at the end of January. New student registration begins the first week in February. Students may enroll any time during the current year depending on availability.

Preschool students who must dis-enroll after the registration process has been completed may do so at any time. Tuition obligations will be governed by the Enrollment Agreement. Before student records can be released, all current charges must be paid in full.

### **Fee Payment Procedures**

Tuition may be paid in one, two or ten installments through the FACTS Tuition Management program. Daycare charges will be billed separately and are due monthly.

Sibling Discount: The oldest child in a family pays full tuition. Additional children deduct the following amounts from their total annual tuition.

- Preschool (3 and 4 year old programs) \$400
- Kindergarten, Prefirst Grades \$400
- 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grades \$500

Application Fee is \$100. This fee is required with all applications and is NONREFUNDABLE.

Tuition Deposit for the upcoming academic year is required at the time of enrollment for new students or by March for returning students. The deposit amount is included with the registration materials. ALL DEPOSITS ARE NONREFUNDABLE.

Daycare Program is \$7.00 per hour (includes gross receipts tax). Daycare charges are rounded up to nearest ¼ hour interval (5 to 10 minutes = ¼ hr., 15 to 30 minutes = ½ hr., etc.)

Late Payment Fee after the 10<sup>th</sup> is \$20.

Returned Check Fee is \$20

### Tuition Credit Policy

Credits will not be given for vacations or extended absences.

### **Field Trips**

Sunset Mesa's policy is that field trips will begin in kindergarten. Our experience is that young children respond beautifully to the curriculum and activities we provide in our secure building and playground. We further believe that our students are blessed to have families that provide enriched experiences for their children.

### **Health Forms**

#### New Students

We must have a copy of your child's current immunization record. ***These records are required by the New Mexico Public Education Department and, by law, your child cannot be permitted to attend school without them.***

#### Returning Students

***As immunizations are updated, you are required to provide us with a current record. These records are required and your child cannot be permitted to attend school without them.***

### **Student Illness Guidelines**

- Please send children to school only when they are well.
- A child who has had a fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, vomiting or diarrhea within 24 hours cannot attend school. You will be called to come for your child if any of these symptoms are evident.
- Children must be fever free for 24 hours before they may safely return to school.
- Children who are sick might not run a fever. School personnel will err on the side of caution and children who appear ill will be sent home.
- If your child becomes ill or is injured beyond the band-aid level, you will be called.
- If your child is ill, please notify the office of your child's absence. **If you had pre-ordered a lunch, you will need to contact Rhubarb and Elliot before 8:45 a.m. to cancel the lunch order.**
- Physical education and outdoor recreation activities are regular parts of the program. Children who are not well enough to participate in recess should be kept at home. We make exceptions for a healing injury or a disability that limits participation in physical activities.

### **Medication at School**

Medication will be administered at school under the following conditions:

- Prescription medication **must be delivered to the office** in the original container with doses prepared. For example, a dose of 1 and ½ tablets would require the tablets be cut at home. A state-mandated form must be completed and signed when you deliver the medication to the office. Any medications administered will be noted on the form and you will be required to initial the form. Your teacher will have the form for you to sign at dismissal.
- Short term, nonprescription medicine **must be delivered to the office** in the original container. The

state-mandated form must be completed and signed. Please send only the amount needed to be taken at school.

- If your child has medication or an EpiPen for food allergies or other emergencies, this also must be delivered to the office and the appropriate form signed.

### **Emergency/Disaster Plan Procedures**

All emergencies and disasters will fall into one of two categories: those that require being secure on the campus and those that require evacuating the campus. If a situation requires being secure on campus, then the campus will be closed with all doors locked. If the campus is locked down, classrooms will be secured and no one will be allowed into the building. Parents will not be allowed to pick up their children until the situation is resolved. If public safety personnel are at the school, then their guidance will be followed.

Evacuating the campus will generally only be done at the direction of public safety personnel. If students can be fully protected by **relocating** them to some campus location, then that is the preferable choice. If public safety personnel should order the evacuation of students from the campus, school personnel will follow their directions and cooperate fully. The first choice for an evacuation destination will be the Sunset Mesa North Campus (3020 Morris NE). If that destination is not available, the second choice will be Eastern Hills Baptist Academy (3100 Morris NE); the third choice will be Southwest Secondary Learning Center (3101 Morris NE).

In any emergency situation, staff shall confirm the identity of students in their care, maintain calm and orderly behavior, and secure the notebook with student contact information and school administration contact information. Safeguarding the safety of students is the first priority. Communicating with school administrators is the second priority. Contacting parents and caregivers will be handled by school administrators.

Students will be **released and signed out** to an authorized person on the pickup list at any time that this may be safely accomplished. However, the orders of any public safety officials will be followed in doing so.

Any child with a special need will be assigned to a specific care giver who will carry appropriate medications, etc. and remain with the child until released to his/her caregiver.

### **General Safety Policies**

- Children remain in the immediate view of staff members at all times
- Student/teacher ratios are maintained at all times
- The building remains locked other than during arrival and dismissal times
- Students are released only to parents and authorized caregivers.
- Basic first aid items and a refreshed oxygen tank are located in the office
- Medications will not be administered without written authorization of a caregiver
- Faculty, assistants, and daycare staff members maintain First Aid/CPR certifications
- Fire drills are conducted monthly; fire safety inspection is conducted annually
- Inside and outside grounds receive bi-monthly safety inspections

### **Confidentiality Policy**

Teachers, assistants, and all staff are required and expected to hold all personal information about students and their families highly confidential. All student records information is confidential and will not be released without the consent of the family.

### **Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Procedure**

In the event that a classroom teacher, assistant, or daycare staff member suspects that a child may be suffering abuse or neglect, that staff member will first meet with the Director of the school to report concerns. The Director will then determine if the school will call CYFD to report the concern.

### **Guidance/Expulsion Policy**

Recommendations and referrals for professional evaluations (physical, emotional, cognitive) will be made in conferences held with the parents, teacher and preschool director. Expulsion of a student occurs only in the most extraordinary set of circumstances and only after every effort has been made to accommodate the needs of the child and/or family. Communication and documentation will be maintained between school and family.