



Sunset Mesa School

~ *Educating Our Future Since 1948* ~

Elementary School Parent Handbook Kindergarten – 5th

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Philosophy and Mission

Sunset Mesa School 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.

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

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Hours of Operation

The office is open from 7:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. when school is in session. Hours may be different during breaks and the summer. Daycare opens at 7:00 a.m. and closes at 6:00 p.m.

Arrival and departure times for students are planned to provide a safe and efficient pattern for dropping off and picking up students. These times allow adequate flexibility to control access to the campus for many vehicles daily. Please familiarize yourself with your child's arrival and departure times.

Entering and Leaving the School

Children are dropped off and picked up at the times indicated in the charts that follow. If children are dropped off before their scheduled arrival time, they will need to go to daycare. They will not be assessed a fee when arriving at their older sibling's arrival time.

School personnel will assist children as needed. Teachers will assist children to cars or to waiting parents in the parking lot. For safety purposes, parents should wait across the crosswalk for children to be brought to them. All individuals should use the crossing area in the parking lot during arrival and dismissal times.

Children will be taken to daycare if they have not been picked up by the designated dismissal time.

Students are not allowed in classrooms or on the campus unsupervised. If students arrive before, or must stay later than, their designated times, they will be taken to daycare.

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 place all names of those picking up your child with the office.**

If you arrive before the designated time for drop-off or pickup, please park.

	Arrival	Classes Begin
Grades 1 through 5	8:00-8:15 a.m.	8:20 a.m.
Prefirst and Kindergarten	8:15-8:25 a.m.	8:30 a.m.

	Dismissal
Prefirst and Kindergarten	2:45-2:55 p.m.
Grades 1 and 2	3:00-3:10 p.m.
Grades 3 through 5	3:15-3:30 p.m.

School Closings for Inclement Weather

Sunset Mesa School 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 the school website at www.sunset-mesa.com as well as 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.
- No hot lunch will be available.
- All after-school activities and services will happen as usual.

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.
- If your child does not come or comes late because of the weather, then we will take that into account on make-up work.
- We do not customarily plan any “make-up days.” If we lose one or two days, then we will just 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 alert you by text and email.

Visiting the Campus

Sunset Mesa School welcomes visitors. As a place of professional activity, certain considerations must be kept in mind when visiting.

Although you may visit without one, an appointment will insure that you do not find a particular classroom empty, with children on the playground or away at an enrichment.

To maintain the integrity of the classroom environment, visits are limited to one person at a time for 20 to 25 minutes. Please do not attempt to have a conference with the teacher.

Visitors must check in at the office. For security purposes, no one is allowed on campus without checking in. Expect to be asked for identification if you are not a regular visitor.

Health and Health Related Topics

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 - If there have been any immunization record changes within the past year (i.e. booster shots), please secure a copy of the 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.***

Please send children to school only when they are well. **A child who has had a fever, vomiting or diarrhea within 24 hours should not attend school.** You will be called to come for your child if any of these symptoms are evident. If your child becomes ill or is injured beyond the band-aid level at school, you will be called.

Physical education and outdoor recreation activities are regular parts of the program. Children who are not well enough to participate in physical education or to go out for recess should be kept at home. Exceptions are a healing injury or a disability that limits participation in physical activities. A physician's note may be required.

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 1/2 tablets would require the tablets be cut at home. A form must be completed and signed when you deliver the medication to the office.
- Short term, nonprescription medicine **must be delivered to the office.** A 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 an appropriate form with instructions and guidance must be signed.

Parents must provide the teacher and office with a written procedure to follow in the event of an emergency for students who have epipens or inhalers and for students with potentially life threatening medical needs. These must be available to the teacher and office by the first day of school. Please notify the classroom teacher and an administrator about food allergies, asthma diagnoses, and other special medical considerations.

Lost and Found

Please mark jackets, coats, backpacks, or 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 at the end of each month. Please search the lost and found basket in the daycare for mysteriously missing items.

Daycare Program and Procedures

All children enrolled at Sunset Mesa School are eligible to use daycare. They are enrolled in the daycare program as of the date that they are enrolled in school. Daycare is not open to the general public.

Daycare for the North Campus at 3020 Morris St NE is open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. most work days of the year if there is sufficient demand. A reservation is required for all school holidays in order to staff adequately. Reserved hours will be billed whether or not a child attends and no “drop-ins” will be accepted on these days. Reserved times cannot be flexible. Daycare reservation forms will be sent to parents before each holiday.

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. All charges are rounded up to the nearest quarter hour interval (5 to 15 minutes = 1/4 hour, 20 to 30 minutes = 1/2 hour, etc.). **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 not necessary to call the office if you are going to be late to pick your child up after class. They will be automatically taken to daycare by their teacher. You will be charged from the first minute they are signed in by daycare personnel. Snacks should be provided by each child’s parents. We do have a refrigerator for storing drinks, but no facilities for heating food.

Car Pools

Car pools are arranged by parents and not by Sunset Mesa. A list of school families in a particular zip code is available for your own planning. We do not provide names of those families who do not give us permission to do so.

After School Activities

The after school activities packet will be available on-line approximately a month ahead of each semester with registration due before school begins. Most activities begin the first week of the semester.

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 buildings. 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 South Campus (2900 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.

Confidentiality Policy

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

Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Procedure

In the event that a school employee suspects that a child may be suffering abuse or neglect, that employee will first meet with an administrator of the school to report what has been observed or heard. The administrator will then determine if the school will call the Children, Youth and Families Department to make a report.

Guidance Policy

Recommendations and referrals for professional evaluations (physical, emotional, cognitive) will be made in conferences among the parents, teacher and administrators.

COMMUNICATION AND REPORTING

Reporting Student Progress

Each student in grades 1 through 5 will receive a student planner in which all assignments are recorded daily. As students progress through the grades, this responsibility falls increasingly to the student. Please check your child's planner regularly so that you will be aware of the scope of the work they are doing and any particular due dates of major projects.

You may expect reports as follows:

Kindergarten through Third grades:

- Students receive written reports three times each year.
- Parent-Teacher conferences will be held at the end of the first and second reporting periods.
- Interim reports will be sent as needed to call attention to particular concerns.

Fourth and Fifth Grades:

- Students receive written reports three times each year.
- Parent-Teacher conferences will be held at the end of the first and second reporting periods.
- Interim reports will be sent during each of the three reporting periods.

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 scheduled time. Childcare for the twenty minute conference is available at no charge. If 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. **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' requests should be made through the office. When making a request, we ask that you indicate the reason for the request and any other information you feel is important. These conferences are held in the administrative offices with the faculty member and an administrator.

Standardized Achievement Tests

Standardized tests are given to first through fifth grade students. These tests are one indicator of a child's achievement in the context of a national school population. They are useful in tracking the progress of a student over a long period of time. They are also useful for evaluation purposes and making sure that our curriculum is in alignment with our goals and objectives. The results of the tests are mailed to parents shortly after their receipt by Sunset Mesa School, provided that tuition and fees are current. Results of the tests will be discussed with you at your request. Test dates are listed on the school calendar. **No portion of this test will be made up; therefore, please make every effort to have your child present on these days.**

CLASSROOM GUIDELINES

Attendance Policy

Please make every effort to have your child at school on time. Teachers establish routines in their classrooms for beginning the school day. Tardiness causes the child to start the day trying to "catch up." Habitual tardiness will be handled on an individual basis.

In the event of illness, please call the school office.

In the event of an absence the parent and teacher will coordinate the make-up work and test timetable.

Homework

Homework is assigned to students from first through fifth grade. Typically, homework can be assigned Monday through Thursday based on the grade level curriculum. Your child's teacher will communicate the plan to you at the beginning of the year. Some grades will also have long term assignments that will need to be planned in increments.

Supervision of student's homework by parents is expected, but homework should be done by the student. You can help your child by establishing a time and place to study and also by being cognizant of the amount of time your child spends on the work. A student spending too much time on assignments may need specific guidance to manage the homework better. A note of concern in the student's planner or notebook to the teacher will help.

Supplies

Textbooks, 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, paper, folders and tissues, etc. Please bring the supplies with your child on Meet Your Teacher Day. These items should be replenished as needed.

Classroom Snacks

Students are encouraged to bring snacks for a morning and/or afternoon break or for after school in daycare. Do not send carbonated beverages, drinks in glass bottles or candy.

Milk

Milk may be purchased for your child's lunch. We encourage you to pay on a yearly basis. You may send your own drinks, but do not send carbonated beverages or drinks in glass bottles.

Birthday Celebrations

Children in the lower grades want to share in the excitement of their birthdays. Please arrange with your child's teacher if you want to provide lunch/snacks for the class. You will need to furnish paper goods for these events. Clowns, magicians, balloon and flower deliveries, or other such entertainment should not be arranged for the classroom.

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 sent by you directly to those being invited. A birthday address list is available from the office.

Field Trips

All grade levels K-5 will have several field trips each year as part of the curriculum. Costs for field trips are paid by Sunset Mesa School. Parents may be asked to chaperone, but the number of parents sometimes must be limited. Please be flexible on this issue.

Parents who elect to not have their child go on a particular trip must notify Sunset Mesa of their decision and provide for the care of their child during that time.

CONDUCT

Behavior Policy

We make every effort to create a positive learning environment in which students are respectful of authority, considerate of their peers, and responsible for their actions. We have few explicit rules, and these are for the physical and emotional welfare of the school community.

- Don't throw rocks or any other objects.
- Inappropriate, vulgar, or profane language will not be tolerated.
- Fighting will not be tolerated.
- Maintain a standard of respect, kindness, morality and honesty.

Consequences for inappropriate behavior will be handled on an individual basis with appropriate measures that may include some or all of these steps:

- Interactive counseling with the student, teacher, and/or administrator.
- Parent/guardian conference.
- In-school suspension: A student will remain in a designated area, away from the classroom, to complete class work.
- Suspension: A student may not be present on campus for the designated time and must complete all assigned work, but will receive only 50% credit.
- Probation: Takes place after a suspension. If a problem re-occurs or if the student remains in defiance of the school behavior policy, he/she will be placed on probation on terms defined by the administration. **Probation will be in conjunction with appropriate discipline as outlined in steps one through four. Violation of the terms of probation will result in expulsion.**
- The administration reserves the right to immediately suspend or expel a student for extraordinary misconduct.

Dress Policy

We require that students be neatly dressed and well groomed. Restrictions on clothing items pertain primarily to 3rd through 5th grade students. We understand that most kindergarten through 2nd grade students are still happy with selections made by their parents!

The following items may not be worn:

- midriff, tank, or spaghetti strap tops
- oversize athletic shirts, particularly tank shirts
- oversize shirts, saggy/baggy shorts, or saggy/baggy pants
- T-shirts and clothing bearing logos for rock groups, offensive characters, liquor, cigarettes, words deemed rude or disrespectful, or information deemed questionable for minors
- hats inside buildings, except during special event days
- platform shoes (these create safety issues during high level activity at recess and PE times)
- tattoos, body piercing, earrings on boys (Earrings are acceptable for girls)
- colored hair gel/hairsprays, eccentric hair color, except on special days at the request of a teacher/grade level, and items deemed inappropriate by the administration
- Authentic mohawks and shaved designs in hair are not permitted.

A child who is in violation of the dress policy will be sent to the office and remain until a parent/guardian brings suitable clothing. Work not completed in class during this time will be completed at home.

Personal Items at School

Please do not allow your child to bring personal items such as toys to school other than for *sharing time* in the kindergarten. Sunset Mesa cannot assume responsibility for these items. **Students may not bring handheld electronic games or devices of any kind at any time to school. Children may not bring smart watches, cell phones or similar devices to school.** These items will be taken to the office where a parent/guardian will need to pick it up.