



*The
Garden*
at PDMA

**PARENT HANDBOOK
2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR**

Welcome to The Garden Preschool at Painted Desert Montessori Academy and licensed by the Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS).

We are so excited that you and your child have joined us this year! This handbook is intended to inform you of the philosophy, curriculum, and policies and procedures of our preschool program. Please read and retain this handbook for future reference. The parent handbook is subject to change and parents will receive written notice concerning any changes.

ABOUT US

“There is in the child a special kind of sensitivity which leads him to absorb everything about him, and it is this work of observing and absorbing that alone enables him to adapt himself to life. He does it in virtue of an unconscious power that exists in childhood...”

- Maria Montessori

Preschool is a tuition-based program provided to students from 7:30-11:30 Monday through Thursday. Preschool students are expected to abide by the policies set forth in this handbook. Additional policies can be found in the Preschool Payment Agreement.

Primary Program

The journey to self-empowerment begins at the earliest ages, with a thoughtfully designed curriculum for 3- to 5-year-olds that prepares children to navigate their bodies in space, the social environment, and their physical surroundings. During this time, our students gain a critical sense of mastery that lays neural pathways for future classroom experiences, and they gain comfort and confidence with Montessori practices. Our Early Childhood Program is not daycare. We educate the senses of our young learners as a precursor to the more complex learning that will come later. We provide them a vibrant culture, precision materials, and a caring, committed community where these innate drives can thrive.

Age Requirements and Classroom Placement

Children entering preschool must be three years old by the time of enrollment and must be toilet trained. Preschool children are able to start school at any time during the school year provided they are three and toilet trained, and there is space available.

Goals for the Early Childhood Program

Our goals are that children refine their gross motor skills, obtain a sense of competence over their own bodies, become comfortable and confident in maneuvering a Montessori classroom, develop a deep-seated sense of self-confidence and competence, and obtain a solid cognitive foundation for beginning reading and math concepts. They also learn to become part of a community, including learning from and providing guidance to others, making enduring friendships, and constructively grappling with inevitable moments of conflict.

Classroom Procedures

Schedule of the Day

Children arriving for the regular school day can be dropped off to their classroom between 7:15 am-7:30 am.

Students begin a work period in the classroom at 7:30 am and this continues until 11:30 pm. During the work period, children can eat a snack, visit many study areas, and work individually, in pairs or in groups doing different activities. Classrooms have a half-hour outside time either first thing in the morning or at the end of the morning work cycle. Preschoolers will be picked up by a parent/caregiver in the office at 11:30 am.

Snack

Part of our Practical Life area is Food Preparation. Preparing and serving snacks is a natural way for children to learn cooperation, experience community, and provide practice for developing skills. Children love being able to prepare the snack for their class, by cutting fruit and vegetables and presenting crackers. Children eat snacks at a designated snack table within the classroom when they are hungry. There is not a designated snack time during the 3-hour work cycles.

If children have specific allergies or snack needs, they are permitted to bring their own snacks. We just ask that the snacks are low sugar healthy options to help our children's brains get the nourishment they need for a day of learning.

*Due to COVID-19 protocols, until further notice, Preschool students must bring their own snack. Food preparation in the classroom will not be allowed at this time.

Allergies/Special Diet

With such a wide variety of food allergies our ability to meet the required health needs of all children for snack is very complex. We ask that children with specific food allergies or special needs provide an optional snack option to be kept in their classroom.

Birthdays

On, or near, a child's birthday (or half-birthday in the case of summer birthdays), we love to celebrate. Montessori provides a special way to celebrate which includes the birthday walk (showing how many times a child has gone around the sun), a poem, song and the showing of a timeline of the child's life. Parents are invited to join us for this celebration, as are siblings. You will receive a note a week or so before your child's birthday to set a day and time for the celebration. We will go through the various steps of the celebration and parents will be invited to share a few stories about their child. If your child would like to bring a snack to share with their classmates at lunch, please drop it off with him/her in the morning. Check with your child's Teacher/Guide for specific information regarding birthday protocol in the classroom.

Curriculum

Studies by Maria Montessori and contemporary researchers support the notion that the first several years of a child's life are crucial in shaping his or her personality and ability to learn. Children learn more during this period of time than at any other, and set important patterns for the future. Skills learned become the foundation that helps them grow in independence.

Each of our primary classrooms is divided into five distinct areas of exploration: Practical Life, Sensorial Studies, Language Studies, Math Studies, and Cultural Studies.

Practical Life

Practical Life activities are designed to allow children autonomy. Developmental psychologists indicate one of the primary drives of the 3 to 5 year old child is “to do it myself.” Practical Life teaches children to take care of themselves and their physical environment. The Garden @ PDMA students learn to tie their own shoes, zip their jackets, and clean up after themselves. All of these activities take place in an environment that nurtures the whole child and supports their natural curiosity and love of learning.

Sensorial Studies

Sensorial materials – the blocks, beads, rods, spindles; really all of the beautiful materials Montessori created -- are carefully calibrated to heighten, develop, and refine the senses of the child. Maria Montessori believed that sensorial experiences began at birth and what comes into the mind of a child comes through his or her senses. Recent findings in neuroscience support this. It is through the five senses – tactile, visual, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory – the child studies and learns about the environment.

One crucial aspect of sensorial learning is that materials further develop a child's sense of discrimination because the work asks the child to pay careful attention to the size, shape, and weight of an object, among other qualities. Therefore these works create the foundation for critical thinking. Children find the sensorial materials beautiful and inviting and what can look like merely play to the untrained eye, is a child's full engagement in exploring discrete and sequenced information, developing a heightened sense of classification. Additionally, the sensorial materials are self-correcting and with the child able to self-check for correctness, independence is also promoted.

Sensorial materials exercise and heighten the child's senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. As children order and organize the materials, they are also developing neural pathways in the developing brain. Research shows that both math and geometry rely on the exploration of the Sensorial materials, as children are exposed to shape, sequence, size, and general relationships.

Language Studies

When a child arrives in the early childhood (pre-K) classroom, he or she is ready to explore written language and build upon oral skills. Language materials facilitate an array of hands-on learning experiences. The materials are kinesthetic, auditory and visual, appealing to the multi-sensory modes that children use to acquire information. Teachers deliberately both listen as much as they talk, in order to engender autonomy and ownership in young learners. Developing articulate thinkers happens as we support young children in the act of articulation.

Starting with sandpaper letters, children explore phonics, letter formation and writing mechanics. We recognize that some children are ready to jump into reading well before Kindergarten, whereas other children will take more time. We appreciate and support each child's pace.

Math Studies

Montessori Math materials are world-renowned. They include concrete manipulatives that give each child a sensorial experience of mathematics, which allows them to later move into abstraction with a real foundation and understanding of math and its underlying concepts. Young PDMA mathematicians work with numbers beyond 1000. They delight in materials made from golden beads that help them to experience place value. While employing their hands to explore and experience what numbers really mean, children begin to learn addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and fractions as well as problem solving.

Cultural Studies

In the Early Childhood program, our Cultural Studies materials cover geography, anatomy, botany, zoology and simple physics. Children study the parts and types of animals and plants and the rich history of different cultures. Materials include maps, puzzles and pictures from different nations. Teachers actively incorporate songs, music, and food from around the world to support our Cultural Studies. The children are often exposed to the music of famous composers and the artwork of renowned artists.

AUTHORIZED RELEASE

Children will not be released to anyone who is not listed on the enrolled child's Emergency Information Card. Individuals designated to remove children from our program must be at least 18 years of age. Parents/Guardian must provide written notification to the teacher when authorizing someone not on their child's Emergency Information Card to pick up their child. Parents may authorize the Staff to release their child to an individual not on their child's Emergency Information Card by telephone. The Staff will verify the telephone authorization by using the password that was agreed upon between the teacher and the parent at the time the Emergency Card was completed. The teacher will ask for picture ID from any individual who is not recognized as the regular pickup person.

COMING TO SCHOOL

Many children feel anxious and uneasy on the first day or two of preschool. They may have a difficult time separating from you. We understand that this is a very emotional time for parents and children. We suggest that you calmly reassure your child that you will return. After you give your child a hug and kiss, we suggest that you say goodbye and leave the classroom. A lengthy goodbye commonly creates a more difficult situation. We will comfort your child and assure them that you will return. Please establish and practice a goodbye routine with your child prior to the first day of the session.

DROP OFF-PICK UP*

Children must be picked up on time. A late fee of \$10 for the first 15 minutes of tardiness and \$1 per minute thereafter will be charged to parents/guardians. Your designated Emergency Contact will be called in the event that you are more than 15 minutes late and cannot be reached by phone. If you nor your Emergency Contact cannot be reached after 30 minutes, law enforcement may be called. We reserve the right to terminate your child's enrollment after the third late pickup.

*Due to COVID-19 protocols, until further notice, **Preschool** students will be dropped off and picked up at designated stations at the rear of our campus. Please pull up to your students designated station where a staff member will conduct a temperature check and have you sign in on the attendance sheet.

SICKNESS

We request that sick children be kept at home. Children this age can easily become sick with common colds and the flu. Keeping a sick child home will help us prevent contagious illnesses from spreading throughout the classroom. In the event you do need to keep your child at home, please report your child's absence by calling the school office, at 623-900-5132.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

In the event your child is injured, first aid such as Band-Aids may be used when appropriate. In the unlikely event of a serious injury, the school office will make every effort to contact the child's parent/guardian. If necessary, the director/teacher will call 9-1-1. Until arrival of a parent, ambulance or the paramedics, the director will make all decisions concerning the care of the child. Please inform the teacher of any changes to your child's information so we have current information for the medical team in the event of an emergency.

MEDICATION

We do not administer medications of any kind with the exception of prescription emergency medication such as EPI pen. The Garden Preschool Staff is CPR and First Aid certified. We DO NOT have a registered nurse on staff.

CLASSROOM/BUILDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Each day, our goal is to provide your child with an excellent Montessori experience that meets their individual needs. Because no one knows your child better than you, we feel that communication between teachers and parents is of the utmost importance. If you feel the need to discuss your child's progress at any time throughout the program session, we are happy to schedule a meeting time that is best for everyone.

BATHROOM

Children must be independently potty-trained to attend as our Staff is not able to assist your child. Independently potty-trained is defined as a mastery of all skills associated with the bathroom, including operating all fastenings on clothing, toilet paper usage, flushing, and hand washing. Bathrooms are inspected for safety and cleanliness before each usage.

FIREDRILLS

Once a month, each class will experience a practice fire drill. Children will be instructed on how to safely exit the classroom.

LICENSING AND REGULATIONS

The Garden at PDMA is regulated by the Arizona Department of Health Services:

Arizona Department of Health Services

150 N. 18th Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
Phone: 602-542-1025



Section 7: Signature Page

Thank you for taking the time to read The Garden at PDMA Parent Handbook. If you have any questions or comments about this Handbook, please contact the school office. Please sign and return this Signature Page to the front office.

We have read, understand, and agree to abide by the guidelines and procedures outlined in The Garden at PDMA Parent Handbook.

Students Name (PRINTED):

Teacher: _____

Grade: Preschool

Parent/ Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/ Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____