



**PARENT/STUDENT  
HANDBOOK  
2020-2021**

***“The education of a very small child does not aim  
at preparing him for school but for life.”***

**Maria Montessori**

**Mission:**

We believe education should address not only the academic needs of the children, but also speak to their spirits. Our mission is to provide individualized instruction that fosters a love of learning and respect for all living things. With the Montessori philosophy at the core, children will be guided through hands on learning in a prepared environment.

**Vision:**

We are committed to empowering our students to be confident learners, during the COVID Pandemic period and beyond. Whether in person, distance learning or a hybrid model of both we are delivering high quality, engaging instruction to all of our students.

**Motto:**

Empower Confident Learners

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**Painted Desert Montessori, LLC. reserves the right to amend this handbook as needed and will provide notice of such to parents. By acknowledging your receipt and review of the handbook, you are also agreeing to abide by any terms and conditions stated in these amendments.**

# Section 1: General Information

## Contact Information

Name of School:	Painted Desert Montessori Academy (PDMA)
Mailing Address:	2400 S. 247th Ave Buckeye, AZ 85326
Physical Address:	2400 S. 247th Ave Buckeye, AZ 85326
Phone Number:	(623) 900-5132
Fax Number:	(623) 208-4182
Website:	<a href="http://www.pdmabuckeye.org">www.pdmabuckeye.org</a>

## School Hours

Preschool (3 & 4-year-old)	7:30 AM – 11:30 AM	Monday – Thursday
Kindergarten - 8th Grade	7:30 AM – 3:15 PM	Monday – Thursday

## Office Hours

7:00 AM - 4:00 PM	Monday-Thursday
7:00 AM – 11:00AM	Friday

## Programs and Fees

### Charter

Kindergarten through Eighth grades are all part of our free, public charter school.

### Preschool

Preschool is a tuition-based program provided to students from 7:30AM -11:30AM 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.

## Our Philosophy

PDMA bases the philosophy and goals on the discoveries made by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870 – 1952). Through her observations of children and working with them, Dr. Montessori discovered their remarkable, almost effortless ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings. Children teach themselves. This simple and profound truth inspired Montessori's lifelong pursuit of educational reform, curriculum development, methodology, psychology, teaching and teacher training. This is based on her dedication to furthering the natural, self-creating process of the child.

Much of the educational equipment found today in the Montessori classroom was developed by Maria Montessori nearly 100 years ago. For 3-6-year-old, this includes hands-on mathematics materials, phonetic reading systems, and a wide variety of materials and experiences to develop the child's sensory perceptions and refine his sense awareness. Many exercises are designed to allow young children to practice skills they would need for daily living and self-help. Materials illustrating principles of geography, zoology, botany, and archaeology nurture the child's avid interest in the real world; these areas are explored with concrete objects, tactile experiments, collection, classification and identification. This is reality based purposeful "work" – creative work designed to develop mental and manual dexterity and equip children with the tools for a lifetime of creative learning.

Our main goal at PDMA is to provide a rich, warm, individualized, developmentally sound environment, promoting appreciation and respect for self and others, independence and optimum scholastic achievement. We wish to also collaborate with you, the parents, in a supportive role in order to facilitate a unified approach to your child's growth and development.

## School Background

Founded in 2016, Painted Desert Montessori, Inc., soon to be an Arizona nonprofit corporation and currently a public charter school, provides instruction for children from K-8<sup>th</sup> grade and private schooling for preschool. The school bases its curriculum development, methodology, and philosophy on the work of Dr. Maria Montessori. This handbook describes the curriculum for the Primary, Jr. Elementary, Sr. Elementary and Middle School as well as a summary of the philosophy of Dr. Montessori. Also described are practical guidelines, rules, and regulations we have established in order to maintain our charter and funding from the state of Arizona.

Parent involvement is indispensable to the success of the school and the education of the child. Thank you for choosing to be a part of the PDMA family. We love your ongoing support! Please help us continue to maintain these standards. We will all be rewarded with healthy, happy, intelligent children and brighter future generations to come.

## Before and After Care Hours and Rates –

**Due to COVID-19 PANDEMIC Painted Desert will not offer BAC until further notice**

For Monday through Thursday, before school care is available from 6:00am-7:15am and after care is available from 3:15pm to 6:00pm for K-8 students. There is no care provided for Fridays nor for Preschool students.

Any child not picked up by 3:30pm will be sent to aftercare, and you will be charged according to our payment schedule. If you have not completed an extended care agreement, PDMA will make every effort to contact your child's emergency contacts and have them picked up from school. If we are unable to contact you or an emergency contact after one hour, PDMA will contact the Buckeye Police Department.

Regardless of whether you have completed an extended care agreement, you will be charged for any time after pickup that PDMA cares for your child. We urge each parent to complete the Extended Care Agreement in case of unexpected tardiness in picking up your child.

Before Care - children who arrive before 7:15am	\$5.00/day
Aftercare when child is picked up before 4:00pm	\$5.00/day
Aftercare when child is picked up after 4:00pm	\$10.00/day

## Inspection Reports

Inspection reports are available onsite.

## Department of Health Services

PDMA is regulated by the Arizona Department of Health Services:  
AZ Department of Health Services  
150 N 18th Ave  
Phoenix, AZ 85007  
602-542-1025



## Transportation

Parents will be responsible for transporting students to and from campus.

Upon first entering our educational complex from 247<sup>th</sup> Avenue, we respectfully ask that you slow down. As a community of more than 400 people, ages 3 years to adult, chances are that someone will always be walking on the grounds.

Please drive in and out of the campus following the pickup/drop off traffic pattern. In the morning, please drop off the children along the sidewalk by the front of the school. In the afternoon, children K-8th grade will be assigned a pick-up number for the school year. For the safety of all our children, please pull up to the sidewalk to pick up/drop off your child. If you need to walk your child into the building, please park in the parking lot.

## Traffic Safety Procedures

- The loading and unloading area are a NO CELL PHONE ZONE. Please do not talk or text on your cell phone while your car is in motion or while your children are being loaded or unloaded from the car; for safety's sake, and in order to properly greet your children. Your full attention is required to maintain the flow of traffic and to ensure the safety of yourself and others.
- When parking your car on campus, only park in marked parking spaces.
- Drop-off and pick-up are curbside only to ensure the safety of your child.
- For safety reasons, please have your child remain seated until your car is stopped in the loading and unloading area.
- Follow all Arizona traffic laws.
- Current law requires children younger than 5 and weighing less than 60 pounds to be restrained in an approved child safety seat in the back seat of the vehicle. Children under the age of 8 or under 4'9" must be in a booster or other safety seat.
- Please put your car in park and preferably turn the engine off whenever you are stopped in the car line.
- Please remember to always put pedestrians and the safety of others first.
- Drivers do not leave your vehicle unattended if waiting in line to drop off or pick up your children. Please always stay in your car, unless you're attending to your child, such as buckling them into a car seat.
- Please remember that the drop-off/pick-up area is NOT the time to have a conversation with your child's teacher or assistant. Please schedule a time.

# Parent/School Partnership

## Observation Policy:

Parents are always welcome to stop by the classroom at any time. However, please bear in mind that PDMA is your child's school. The more adults present in the classroom, the more disruptive it will be to their day. An appointment for observation will control the amount of visitors in the classroom. We encourage at least a one-day notice for observations. Also, please note that observations will not be scheduled until after the Fall Break; this allows the classroom to become established and begin to "normalize".

When in the classroom, please be mindful of adult conversations when children are present. At times, the children may remind you of the classroom rules, e.g., we sit on the floor or on a chair, we speak with a quiet voice, we make sure our floors are clean and dry in the classroom.

## School-to-Home Communications:

We hold your child in the highest regard and want to work with you to maintain open lines of communication. In order to establish clear communication between PDMA and parents/guardians, throughout the year we will use the following:

- **Bloomz App:** It is a communication app between parents and teachers for community announcements, messages and photos.
- **Emails** are an important part of our communication. Be sure to check your email regularly and allow 24 hours for a response.
- **Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences:** There are two formal conferences held each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. The Teacher is also available for a conference if given advanced notice.
- **Newsletters:** These are issued periodically by the classroom Teachers or School Office
- **Handouts:** These are usually issued before events and used as reminders of items mentioned in the newsletter. Some handouts require a parental/guardian response whether you will attend. Please respond in a timely manner.
- **Bulletin Boards:** General school postings and local events are listed on the school bulletin boards in the office and Primary classrooms.
- **School Calendar of Events & Special Dates:** Calendars for all-school and classroom-specific events are maintained through the CALENDARS tab on our website: [www.pdmabuckeye.org](http://www.pdmabuckeye.org)

We ask that parents/guardians to read the parent/guardian information handbook, emails, newsletters, bulletin boards, and attend parent/guardian meetings. Parents/Guardians should also be responsible for contacting their child's Teacher regarding any problem concerns or complaints that may arise during the year. All issues will be openly discussed and addressed in order that the problem or concern may be resolved.



## The Child's Rights and Responsibilities

Children are expected to observe the Ground Rules established and discussed with the children early in the year – with reminders as needed. We encourage you to ask your child about these rules and do what you can to reinforce them. Most of the rules are basic to their health and safety and the smooth operation of the classroom, such as walking instead of running or talking quietly rather than shouting. In addition, we adhere to a basic set of rights and responsibilities for the children.

### Child's Rights:

### Child's Responsibilities:

Children are free to work with any material displayed.	Children must use material well without harming it or others. They may not use the materials in a way that disturbs the activities of others.
Children may work on rugs or tables, whichever is suitable to the work chosen.	The child may not work on the shelves, as this may obstruct other children's access to materials.
Children have the freedom to use the room as their need dictates with the above rights.	Children have the responsibility for restoring the room during and after exercises – mopping their own spills, returning rugs and returning work to the appropriate shelf.
Children have the right to work undisturbed by others. They may initiate, complete and repeat an exercise alone without a break in concentration.	Children may not touch the work of another child without an invitation. Children are not allowed to interfere with another child's learning cycle. If one child leaves his/her work temporarily, he/she can continue later, confident that it will be as he/she left it.
Children have the right to choose not to join in group activities. They may continue working on individual exercises or may stand apart to observe the group activities without actually participating.	Children are not allowed to interrupt or disrupt group activity that they have chosen not to join.
Children have the right to work alone.	Children are not forced or even encouraged to share work. Generosity develops from within as a child matures and gains self-security. With adequate materials and group rules, sharing comes naturally.
Children have the right to take a brief break if they desire. They may observe, think quietly or just relax.	Idleness is not allowed to disturb or distract others activities.

## Section 2: Programs

### Special Classes

#### Physical Education

All K-8th grade students participate in Physical Education for 30-minute sessions a week. The physical education classes focus on team sports, individual sports and aerobic activities. The two-fold purpose of these classes is to build gross motor skills and to instill the importance of physical fitness and nutrition. All students are included in all activities. Physical education is mandated unless specified by a doctor's note.

#### Spanish

Learning another language increases student confidence and motivates them to discover the diversity of cultures. The curriculum includes reading, writing, and listening. The class is personalized according to the needs of the groups from beginners to Spanish speakers. When dealing with new vocabulary and grammar or unknown your brain cells will work so that your brain is trained not only to increase your memory, but also to get better results in tests and comprehension. Senior and Middle School students will show their knowledge in Spanish through the International Spanish Annual Festival.

## Primary Program (Preschool & Kindergarten) “The Garden @PDMA”

The journey to self-empowerment begins at the earliest ages, with a thoughtfully designed curriculum for 3- to 6-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.

Children entering the charter Kindergarten program must be five years old by September 1<sup>st</sup>. Exceptions for those with birthdays after September 1st are based on the child’s local district’s evaluation and approval for early admittance. PDMA will respect and honor a local district’s decision to allow early admittance to their program for students enrolling with PDMA. The final decision for the classroom placement is made in the best interest of the child by the Executive Director.

### 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 11:00 am. During the work period, children can eat a snack, visit many study areas, 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 designated area at 11:30 am.

Kindergarten Lunch begins at 11:30 am and continues until 12:00 pm.

In the afternoon, Kindergarten students will have another work period until 3:15pm, when regular school ends. Kindergarten children participate in several weekly resource classes, including Spanish, and Physical Education.

At 3:15 pm, students will be escorted by a teacher or staff member to their pick/up number area until their parent/caregiver arrives.

### 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.

### Lunch

Please refer to “Lunches” in Section 3

### 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 of fruits or vegetables 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, 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 6-year-old child is “to do it myself.” Practical Life teaches children to take care of themselves and their physical environment. PDMA students learn to tie their own shoes, zip their jackets, and clean up after themselves. All 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 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.

## Elementary

In Elementary, children's minds and bodies are more developed, and they begin to build upon past successes to tackle increasingly complex, longer-term projects. Elementary students at PDMA start to take on true ownership over their studies, creating and tracking their own weekly "Work Plans". They flex their creative and intellectual muscles in a classroom brimming with possibilities. They adopt and actively benefit from peer-based mentorship, as the learning environment begins to more closely resemble a self-sustaining social organism.

In these environments, children progress at their own pace, taking on with careful guidance whatever math or reading projects they may be ready for, but obtaining extra assistance with whichever materials may be more of a struggle. Most importantly, they are learning to master their own immediate surroundings and manage their own academic world, rather than simply accumulating knowledge and skills. Leadership development is long a tenet of Montessori philosophy; through our program, students are preparing to become leaders of their own lives, whether they know it or not.

In the Primary, children build a solid foundation of skills that can then be used to extend to the almost limitless horizons of the Elementary class. The elementary-aged child looks at the world in a different way. Their focus of interest shifts from the “what” of the younger child to the “how” and “why” of the wonders of the universe. The basic tool for this exploration is the imagination, assisted by reason. These factors, combined with the literacy and numeracy developed in the Primary, form the springboard for the in-depth research and experimentation which hold such an interest for the Elementary child.

In our Junior Elementary classes (6-9-year old) and our Senior Elementary class (9-12-year-old), introductory lessons are cosmic in scope, and impressionistic in nature. The avenues of geography, history, mathematics, geometry, biology, and language proceed from the “vision of the whole.” Music, art, and drama are integral elements of the environment. The children are encouraged and guided to creative expression.

The children tend to work in groups they establish themselves. Collaborative projects are common, each member contributing within his own capabilities. In addition, the individual continues to build skills in reading, writing, and mathematics with the guidance of the teacher.

## Goals for the Elementary Program

Our goals are that PDMA Elementary students obtain an interdisciplinary mindset and the capacity to draw connections among seemingly disparate topics of inquiry. They will become robust academicians, performing at the peak of their abilities. They will acquire management skills over themselves and groups and identify areas of interest for further inquiry. They should learn conflict resolution skills; being both a peer mentor and a peer learner. Our elementary students will be happy, engaged, productive, and brimming with pride.

## Care of the Environment

The children take care of our classroom as if it were their home. As part of this, they participate in keeping the classroom clean and orderly through sweeping, washing tables, and dusting shelves. In order to keep our floor clean, we do not wear outdoor shoes in the classroom. Please be sure to provide indoor shoes or socks for your child to wear while indoors.

## Classroom Procedures

The children of the Elementary class learn through special lessons or presentations given individually or in small groups by the lead teacher. There is an expected process that the children will go through daily.

1. Students may only take work from a shelf that he/she has had a lesson on after having recorded in the learning journal the name of the work he/she plans on doing and what time he/she is starting that work.
2. The student may practice work that he had a lesson on, as often as he likes, any day that he is in school.
3. The student will carefully and respectfully take his work to a table or rug and will begin.
4. The student must budget his time wisely so as to get the most out of every day. The teachers will help guide students time management as necessary.
5. The student will record the work completed in the appropriate journal. He/She will then put the material back in order and where it belongs on the shelf. He/She will remember to push in his chair or roll up his mat.
6. When the student needs to speak to the teacher or another child who may be busy, he will rest his hand on that person's arm or shoulder and wait patiently for them to call upon him.

## Food

### Breakfast

Breakfast is your child's most important meal. Please see that all children have an adequate morning meal so that they can be at their best throughout their core learning experiences at school. Breakfast is not a meal served at school.

### Allergies

Please see your child's teacher and the office regarding allergies so we may take appropriate measures to ensure their safety.

### Snack

A quality breakfast should ensure a good morning of class focus and work, however a student may need a mid-morning snack. The student may choose a healthy item from his/her lunch and partake. This will be discrete and will not distract from the daily work of the classroom and lessons. An area of the classroom is provided for students to pause their work and eat their snack.

### Lunch

Please refer to "Lunches" in Section 3

## Holidays

The children plan holiday celebrations with the guidance of the teacher. Discussions and preparations for the celebration often begin two to three weeks before the actual celebration. First, a plan is made with the teacher, and then the teacher helps the children implement the plan. Holiday celebrations may include the following: history of the holiday, art activities, plays, songs, poems, cooking projects, and games. Parents are notified ahead of time if there are any preparations that may need their assistance.

Celebrations may differ among the classrooms. Celebrations may also differ from year to year within a particular class. All children are invited to participate in their classroom celebration. Not all children may choose to be involved in the preparations and/or celebration because their cultural backgrounds, family experiences, interests, developmental needs, and skills differ.

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher about any of their family's traditional holiday celebrations, such as Boys and Girls Day (Japan), Persian New Year, Kwanzaa (Africa), Saint Lucia (Sweden), Chinese New Year, Cinco de Mayo (Mexico), and Chanukah.

## Programs of Study

Montessori endeavors to start with "big picture" lessons, then work toward the parts, in order to help children, understand how people, places, events and cultures are interconnected, even while seemingly discrete. This approach ensures that children see their focus of study in any given moment as part of a larger story, which infuses that study with meaning and stimulates genuine curiosity. As meaning-makers, children naturally want to see how the story unfolds, and, in turn, how any new line of inquiry contributes to the greater story.

The areas of study remain consistent from the Primary classroom, while topics and assignments naturally grow in complexity, such that the educational model "spirals" upward, allowing the student to revisit past lessons in novel and increasingly profound ways. This "spiraling" helps the child to recognize his or her own intellectual growth, and the premise that there are always diverse and deeper perspectives to mine on any given topic.

# Junior Elementary Program (1st, 2nd, & 3rd Grades)

## Classroom Procedures

### Schedule of the Day

- Arrival (7:15am - 7:30am)
- 3 Hour Work Cycle (7:30am - 10:30am)
- Community Circle (10:30am - 11:00am)
- Recess (11:00am - 11:30am)
- Lunch (11:30am - 12:00pm)
- Work Cycle/Specials/Explorations (12:00pm - 3:00pm)
  - Specials: Classes attend PE and Spanish twice a week each in half hour sessions.
- Dismissal (3:15pm)

### Birthdays

Children like to share this special day with their classmates. His/her birthday celebration allows each child the joy of sharing some of life's more exciting and meaningful moments. Montessori provides the opportunity for a Celebration of Life, a poem, song, or the sharing of a timeline of your 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 healthy snack (such as fruits, veggies, or muffins) to share with their classmates, please drop it off with him/her in the morning. Check with your child's Teacher and Assistant for specific information regarding birthday protocol in the classroom.

## Curriculum

### Cultural Studies

Dr. Montessori was a scientist and she believed in introducing children to science early. In Montessori, Cultural Study encompasses the traditional disciplines of social studies and science. In the Junior Elementary Program, children begin this cultural work by taking a macrocosmic look at the universe, starting at the beginning of time. Using a timeline to organize their study, they examine the Big Bang theory, the formation of the earth, and the beginning of life, which they look at first on the atomic and cellular levels. As their study of the "Timeline of Life" proceeds, they are introduced to increasingly complex plants and animals, and



end with the study of mammals and flowering plants. Along the way, they learn about the history of life forms, and the emergence and development of species. All learning is linked to allow students to attain a broad comprehension of how the sciences of botany, history, zoology, physics, chemistry, and geography all fit together, and have developed in an interdependent manner.

## Language Studies

The Junior Elementary Language curriculum provides students with an understanding and appreciation of reading literature, writing, grammar, punctuation, spelling, homophones, antonyms, root words, alphabetizing skills, and research.

Montessori education uses a holistic approach to reading. The 6 to 9-year-old classroom is a language rich environment in which reading and writing skills are developed through phonemic awareness, grammar, word study, mechanics, spelling, reading comprehension, cultural studies, reading groups, and the research process. Reading instruction takes place in small groups or on an independent basis. Strategies for comprehension are emphasized and imparted across the curriculum. Writing development includes direct attention to the writing process as practiced through journaling, research writing, and creative writing in all its forms.

## Math Studies

Mathematics in the Junior Elementary Program is presented in a scope and sequence prepared to match the developing abilities of the six to nine-year-old. Montessori hands-on math materials provide a concrete foundation in the four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. This knowledge allows students to develop problem-solving skills and place math in a real-life context. Students are also introduced to the study of time, measurement, estimation and logic. Additionally students will study fractions, geometry, basic measurement and other concepts such as rounding off, clock and monetary denominations, are also explored. Through practice, the student develops the ability to transition from concrete materials to understanding the concept abstractly. In addition, mathematical learning at this level begins with the acquisition of facts and the facilitation of numbers, but more importantly, it serves as the preparation for reasoning and calculation at the Senior Elementary level.

## Practical Life

Practical Life takes on a more social focus in the elementary years. Continuing the leadership development lessons initiated in the Primary Classroom, Elementary students take on active roles in leading groups and handling conflicts. Additionally, students rotate through a series of jobs that enable them,

as a group, to take care of their classroom. These jobs can range from caring for class pets, to setting up for, and cleaning up after, and cleaning up the play area outside the classroom.

## Senior Elementary Program (4th, 5th, & 6th Grades)

### Schedule of the Day

- Arrival (7:15am - 7:30am)
- 3 Hour Work Cycle (7:30am - 10:30am)
- Current Events (10:30am - 11:00am)
- Recess (11:00am - 11:30am)
- Lunch (11:30am - 12:00pm)
- Work Cycle/Specials/Enrichments (12:00pm - 3:00pm)
  - Specials: Classes attend PE and Spanish twice a week each in half hour sessions.
- Dismissal (3:15pm)

### Birthdays

Children like to share this special day with their classmates. His/her birthday celebration allows each child the joy of sharing some of life's more exciting and meaningful moments. Please consult with your child's teacher regarding the scheduling and the details of this special event. You may bring a special snack for the birthday celebration. Portions should be small. Please check with your child's teacher to find out the number of portions needed or if there are any ingredient restrictions due to allergies. All birthday celebrations will be held later in the afternoon, right before pick-up.

## Curriculum

### Cultural Studies

Cultural Studies are at the heart of the Senior Elementary program and are presented in weekly group lessons. Both history and science are taught in 3-year cycles.

History lessons are a mix of discussion, hands-on activities, and interactive exploration. We aim to understand the times and places different from our own and gain a big picture understanding of human history. In the first year of the 3-year cycle, we study early humans, early civilizations, Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, Greece, and Rome. In the second year of the cycle, we cover world history from the Middle Ages, through the

Renaissance, and all the way into the 20th century. In the third year of the cycle, we cover American history from prehistory through the present, including California history.

Science lessons actively engage the student in discovery via demonstrations, note-taking, drawing and hands-on group activities. The goal is to gain an understanding of the connectedness of living phenomena and natural laws. The 3-year cycle includes physical science (the periodic table, Newton's Laws, simple machines, different forms of energy), earth science (earth's structure, plate tectonics, weather, geology), and biology (cells, animal classification, the plant kingdom, natural selection). Students continue working on a given week's theme throughout the week; work may include hands-on labs, layouts and charts, model making, and research.

We have a beautiful array of Montessori geography maps and materials that students work their way through over the course of their three years in Senior Elementary. Students will periodically complete monthly projects to further engage with cultural studies through research, hands-on activities and oral presentations.

## Language Studies

The Language Program expands the study of grammar and creative writing, including poetry, fiction, expository writing, research, playwriting, songwriting, as well as memoirs. We feature an in-depth literature sequence that introduces students to reading novels and discussing them in literature seminars. Students will be given a book and then meet to discuss the story. Each group member has a responsibility to contribute to the discussion and has a role in completing the group assignment. At the end of the literature monthly cycle, students will write a book report or essay for homework.

The Grammar program in Sr. Elementary is taught in a sequence over the three years of the program. Each lesson introduces a new concept with the use of examples, hands on materials, and dialogue between teacher and students.

- Level I grammar is an in-depth study of the nine parts of speech (article, adjective, noun, verb, adverb, preposition, pronoun, conjunction and interjection). Students learn the basic definitions and the types of the parts of speech.
- Level II moves into sentence analysis. Students are introduced to subject, predicate, direct and indirect objects, adverbial modifiers, and more.
- Level III is an advanced study that includes types of sentences (simple, compound, complex) and verbal (infinitive, gerund, participles)

## Math Studies

Montessori math and geometry materials support the students' move into higher-level thinking in this area of study. Math instruction is highly tailored to each learner and Senior children are always working on concepts and exercises that stretch their unique capacities. Once the four operations are mastered, students move on to study fractions, decimals and percent, problem solving, algebra, logic, graphing, probability, the metric

system, and different base systems. Geometry materials, meanwhile, give them a strong foundation in the study of plane figures, area and volume and formulas for computing each; students are also introduced to the concepts of congruence, similarity, and equivalence.

The Geometry program in Senior Elementary is taught in conceptual sequence over the three years of the program. Students meet in small groups with the teacher for lessons. Each lesson introduces a new concept with the use of Montessori materials as well as more traditional materials. Students explore concepts, manipulate materials, and engage in in-depth dialogues.

- Level I geometry reintroduces some of the basic concepts (point, line, surface, solid) and they learn to use a protractor and compass. Students also engage in an extensive exploration of plane figures, angles and triangles.
- Level II moves into the study of congruence, similarity and equivalence. Students are introduced to the theorem of Pythagoras.
- Level III students continue with the Pythagorean Theorem. They explore why formulas work (area, volume, surface area of solids), and study all aspects of circles.

After three years, the aim is that students leave Sr. with a solid foundation in whole numbers, fractions, decimals and percent, as well as experience with integers, probability, graphing, measurement, and equations with variables. The system is built with the understanding that some students will exceed these goals, while others may need more practice in some areas. We aim to meet the child where they are and foster growth and a love of learning.

### Practical Life

Practical Life focuses on leadership skills. Students lead classroom meetings and organize classroom and classroom clean-up with regular rotation of responsibilities for the care of the environment. This portion of the curriculum encourages independence at every turn and will often be incorporated into student's at home assignments, as well as throughout their days in the classroom.

## Middle School Program (7th & 8th Grades)

Where sensorial objects once populated the younger classrooms, middle school is a more abstract endeavor. Imagine three large, round tables, with some students collaborating on long-term group projects related to literature or the principles of Supply & Demand; others intensely studying Algebra to pre-Calculus; and still more students meeting with the teacher for peer review of recent papers submitted, peppering one another with exacting grammatical standards and pushing the envelope on how to better present an argument.

Middle School is structured to provide a place where early adolescents can develop personal power as well as present opportunities to use this empowerment with and for the benefit of others. There are structures in place for enhancing personal growth and self-knowledge, developing communication and organization skills and self-expression, creating a responsive community, learning how to learn, and engaging in meaningful and challenging work.

Holistic education, an important aspect of the Montessori philosophy, has two meanings within the Montessori community. First, that the focus of education should be on the whole child for optimal health and growth. Thus, the learning environment should not focus on developing only the cognitive potential, but the physical, psychosocial, and moral aspects of the person, as well. Secondly, the academic coursework needs to be interrelated so that the child understands the interconnectedness of life. Further support for the holistic approach is having the parents aware of the child's classroom progress. A dynamic student-parent-teacher partnership is an integral part of an optimal learning environment.

## Vision for the Middle School Program

Our vision for the Middle School at PDMA is a safe emotional space where adolescents can take social, academic, and personal risks, without fear and where they can build a deep reserve of self-knowledge and inner strength while developing intellectual muscle that will support their further learning in a high school setting and beyond. The middle school environment will provide opportunities for adolescents to be self-confident, to belong to a community, to learn to be adaptable, to be academically competent and challenged, and to create a vision for their personal future.

## Goals for the Middle School Program

Our goals are that our middle school students become highly competent writers, capable of articulating ideas and arguments in a coherent, logically consistent, and detailed manner, and capable of comprehending both nonfiction and fiction sources; strong mathematicians, capable of tackling high school coursework; culturally aware of the nature around them, of the different cultures around the world and of themselves; independent thinkers and leaders, respectful to others and themselves, able to define their own goals, highly organized individuals, able to be confident in their education, and follow through on the details to accomplish tangible objectives; and emotionally balanced beings who have experienced how a healthy community can simultaneously challenge and support them, such that this model of interaction becomes a touchstone for the rest of their lives.

## Middle School Community Environment

The Adolescent is:

- an active, self-directed learner
- a vital member of the class, school, city and global community
- a vital member of the teacher-student-parent team
- responsible for keeping commitments, being honest, and respectful

The Parent is:

- an active supporter of student learning
- a vital member of the teacher-student-parent team
- role models
- communicators with student, teachers, and community
- volunteer with community events

The Teachers are:

- facilitators for learning
- consultants for the students
- creators of a positive climate for learning
- communicators with parents and community
- role models

The School Structure offers:

- a learner-centered environment
- a developmentally responsive curriculum and teaching team of Montessori teachers with additional adults as resources
- parents-teachers-student partnerships
- multi-aged groupings of 12-15-year old
- peer and cross-age teaching

## Schedule of the Day

7:30 - Community Meeting  
 8:00 - Math  
 9:00 - World Time  
 10:00 - Explorations  
 10:45 - World Time  
 11:30 – Lunch  
 12:30 - World Time  
 1:30 - Math  
 2:15 - Individual Time  
 3:00 - Clean Up  
 3:15 - Dismissal

## Food

### Breakfast

Breakfast is your child's most important meal. Please see that all children have an adequate morning meal so that they can be at their best throughout their core learning experiences at school. Breakfast is not a meal served at school.

### Allergies

Please see your child's teacher and the office regarding allergies so we may take appropriate measures to ensure their safety.

### Snack

A quality breakfast should ensure a good morning of class focus and work, however a student may need a mid-morning snack. The student may choose a healthy item from his/her lunch and partake. This will be discrete and will not distract from the daily work of the classroom and lessons. An area of the classroom is provided for students to pause their work and eat their snack.

### Lunch

Please refer to "Lunches" in Section 3

## Holidays

The children plan holiday celebrations with the guidance of the teacher. Discussions and preparations for the celebration often begin two to three weeks before the actual celebration. First, a plan is made with the teacher, and then the teacher helps the children implement the plan. Holiday celebrations may include the following: history of the holiday, art activities, plays, songs, poems, cooking projects, and games. Parents are notified ahead of time if there are any preparations that may need their assistance.

Celebrations may differ among the classrooms. Celebrations may also differ from year to year within a particular class. All children are invited to participate in their classroom celebration. Not all children may choose to be involved in the preparations and/or celebration because their cultural backgrounds, family experiences, interests, developmental needs, and skills differ.

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher about any of their family's traditional holiday celebrations, such as Boy's and Girl's Day (Japan), Persian New Year, Kwanzaa (Africa), Saint Lucia (Sweden), Chinese New Year, Cinco de Mayo (Mexico), and Chanukah.

## Classroom Procedures

In an academic year, there are seven cycles of work. In addition, we offer ongoing leadership development and service-learning opportunities. Each work cycle is six weeks in length and the topics and concepts covered in each cycle are grouped under cycle themes. In the fifth week, there is an assessment of the thematic project work. Students will also complete a self-assessment to reflect on their contribution to the past cycle. The sixth week of the cycle is referred to as Immersion week and consists of solidification of concepts within the cycle's theme, followed by transitioning into the next cycle. The cycle format is designed to help students learn organizational, decision-making, and time-management skills. In addition to the work cycles, each school year begins with a Prologue and ends with an Epilogue.

## Curriculum

Our middle school program is designed for students who are 12 through 15 years of age who are in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. The curriculum is divided into two years, year A and year B. This design is purposed so students complete the curriculum over their time in Middle School. Students are given opportunities to work individually and with groups. Individual work gives students the opportunity to complete activities and assessments on their own, with minimal support. It is designed to give students time to explore their interests, hone their skills, and discover their abilities. Assessments are given individually; they may be written or oral. Group work is done in selected groups, which remain in place for an entire work cycle. These groups work together on academic tasks in the thematic units, which integrate all subject areas. Groups will complete presentations and self-assessments of the group process to assess the thematic unit.

Key components of the Montessori School program may include:

- Learner-centered environment
- Mastery of introspective abilities and strategic thinking
- A developmentally responsive curriculum
- School and community service projects and internships

## Language Arts

Language arts include the study of vocabulary, literature, grammar and mechanics, and writing. Vocabulary is presented across the curriculum and is formally approached by learning the word elements. Students will complete a daily language page. Literature includes the study of literary elements and the reading of all genres of literature. Each cycle, students read an anthology, a novel focused on a theme, and a personal novel. Literature discussions follow the format of a Socratic seminar. During each cycle, students attend writing workshops and write in the areas of personal choice, science, and social studies. Students will write one research paper during the year. With the use of a writing rubric, peers and teachers will evaluate each published piece of writing.



## Math

Students will learn and master concepts in algebra, geometry, and statistics & probabilities, integrating these topics in the classroom through lessons and problem sets. The students will utilize real life experiences to provide critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students must take quizzes for feedback and master comprehensive tests. There are lessons to strike the imagination and provide context for the relevancy of mathematical concepts. The math course aligns with Arizona-state standards, with an emphasis on using algebra to solve geometric problems.

## Social World

This course includes geography and history. The history curriculum focuses on the progress of people and the following topics: Structures (Governments and US Government), Forces (Revolutions), Power (Human Rights Movement), Changes (Industrial Revolution), and Balance (Peace Education and Future Vision). Students do personal and group work in these themes. The focus is on asking big-picture questions and looking for patterns in history and integrating this information into all disciplines. Students develop creative projects and make presentations. The geography curriculum includes the study of the themes of location, place, migration, regions, and interaction of people and their environment.

## Natural World

The Natural World curriculum includes the (physical science) study of Structures (Nature of Science and the Structure of Matter), Forces (Motion and Four Fundamental Forces), Power (Power, Energy, and Waves), Changes (Work and Machines), and Balance (Chemistry and Future Technology). In the spring of odd numbered years, students become experts in one area of science and present their research through classroom presentations to the community. Outdoor education experiences and the use of machinery are also a part of this study. The life science curriculum includes the study of Connections (Cells and Living Things), Exploration (Prokaryote & Eukaryote; Virus & Bacteria), Identity (Genetics), Systems (Animal Systems), and Interdependence (Ecosystems and Future Visions). Botany is part of the curriculum through group projects/experiments. Students do personal work and group work in these themes. The focus is on asking large questions and looking for patterns in science and integrating this information into all disciplines. Students develop long-term creative projects and make presentations. In the spring of odd numbered years, students become experts in one area of science and present their research at the science fair. Outdoor education experiences and the use of tools and machinery are also part of this study. Students do personal work and group work in these themes. The focus is on asking large questions and looking for patterns in science and integrating this information into all disciplines. Students develop long-term creative projects and make presentations.

## Personal World

The personal world curriculum focuses on individual and group work, the two-fold purpose of this class is to teach skills and to instill the importance of adolescents early needs and transitions issues, focusing on The Heroic Journey and The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens; Sixteen Habits of Mind. This program has several purposes. One is to provide information about the transition from childhood to adolescence and the

journey to adulthood. Another is to provide links between generations to help young people make the journey safely. A third is to create challenging and meaningful experiences, similar to those in the initiation or rites of passage ceremonies. Students explore topics such as belonging, friendships, adolescent development, stress management, self-esteem, peer pressure, social and personal awareness, nutrition, and balanced living. There is time each day in which students spend in personal reflection for development of their intrapersonal skills.

journey to adulthood. Another is to provide links between generations to help young people make the journey safely. A third is to create challenging and meaningful experiences, like those in the initiation or rites of passage ceremonies. Students explore topics such as belonging, friendships, adolescent development, stress management, self-esteem, peer pressure, social and personal awareness, nutrition, and balanced living. There is time each day in which students spend in personal reflection for development of their intrapersonal skills.

## Mastery Learning

Mastery learning is a form of personalized learning that gives students the necessary time to master skills before progressing to the next level of work. The student takes on the responsibility of learning new information versus merely accepting a low grade and moving on to the next subject. The teacher's task is to break down the learning steps, offering suggestions for internalizing the knowledge, and providing the time necessary to learn the information. According to research, the advantage of mastery learning is that it offers clear expectations, fosters mastery of a unit of study, is not competitive, and encourages student responsibility.

Mastery Requirements:

- 85% for all assignments
- 3 out of 4 on rubrics

## Homework

Students are given ample time in class to complete all their assignments, and time-management skills will be taught and emphasized. This means that if a student chooses not to spend their class time responsibly, then that student will have homework. In addition, should a student find class time inadequate for completing their work, then that student should meet with their teacher to discuss options. All work is due on the due date, regardless of how the student chooses to manage their time. Exceptions include

absences, refer to the below section.

## Absences Policy

Students are responsible for completing all work, regardless of absences. Students who miss a due date or assessment due to absence will have the number of days absent to complete their work after the original due date. For example, if a student is absent for two days, then the student will be given a two-day extension on any and all work due during the student's absence.



## Section 3: School Policies

### Staffing

Each child is an individual, with his/her own distinct personality, inner developmental timetable, and potential. PDMA respects the uniqueness of every child. All members of our highly qualified, trained staff are dedicated to the Montessori approach to education and to life. The school is happy to make available for inspection the resume information for all employees who provide instruction to pupils. Please contact the Executive Director to request this information.

### Liability

Pursuant to the Arizona Department of Health Services Rule R9-5-308, PDMA maintains general liability insurance. Documentation of general liability insurance may be viewed upon request from the Executive Director.

### Non-Discrimination Policy

PDMA maintains a strict non-discrimination policy regarding students, teachers and other employees. PDMA does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, national, ethnic or religious origin in admissions or administration of any policies or programs.

### Pesticide Application Policy

Parents are notified at least 48 hours before a pesticide is applied on the facility's premises by any of the following including but not limited to: posting the notice on the main door to the office, posting the notice on the classroom doors, in-person communication, via email, over the phone, etc. PDMA endeavors to use environmentally and allergen friendly pesticides whenever possible.

### Health of the Child

Health forms, along with other forms required by the State of Arizona, are provided to all parents upon enrollment. These records must be completed, and immunizations must be up to date by the child's *first day of school*, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Please report any contagious diseases in your family so that all parents may be alerted. We will never identify the name of a child or family when informing parents of a contagious illness risk. When a child has a fever, diarrhea or vomiting, please keep him/her home until free of these symptoms for 24 hours. Please call the school to report any prolonged absence or unusual illness that might spread through a class.

## Health Services

Due to COVID-19 PANDEMIC – Painted Desert’s Covid Mitigation Plan is included to this handbook as an addendum. (see attached)

If your student is feels ill, or is injured at school, the student is to obtain a pass from the teacher to go to the Health Office. The Health Office is open daily and provides:

- First Aid to injured and/or sick students
- Documentation and parent contact will be made when medication and/or first aid is administered.
- Over the counter medication can be administered between 11:00 am and 2:30 pm. Permission form must be signed by parents.
- Annual vision/ hearing screening
- Immunization review and notification
- Safeguards to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among children
- Do not bring your child to school when they have been vomiting or running a fever. You will be called to pick your child up immediately if he/she becomes ill at school (vomiting or fever). Parents whose children have never been in school before should expect that their children may be ill more than usual during the first two or three months. A child must be fever-free (below 100 degrees F) for 24 hours before returning to school. PDMA will dispense prescription medicines according to the following guidelines:

Prior to administration of any medication the following procedures must be followed:

- A written statement/prescription must be provided to the health clerk containing student's name, DOB, medication to be given, exact dosage to be given, time to be given, route to be given, and the duration to administer the medicine. Medication Forms are in the front office.
- All medications/refills must be in the original package with student’s name, current date and dosage. Your pharmacy will provide this label on the medication bottle or package.
- All medications must be picked up by the last day of school. Medications that are not picked up will be disposed of properly.

## Over the Counter Medication Policy

Parents must provide over the counter medication to be used for their child. (Acemetacin, Ibuprofen, etc.). PDMA reserves the right to require a doctor's note if a child requires repetitive doses of over the counter medication for the same issue.

- Medication must be in a prescription bottle with label detailing dosage and frequency.
- Parents are to hand deliver the prescription medicine to the office.
- Parents are required to fill out a medication form and sign it.
- A measuring spoon or syringe for medicine must be included with the prescription.
- Medicine can be retrieved at the end of the day from the office.

## Sunscreen Policy

For special events where students will be outside, parents can send their child with a container of sunscreen with the child's name on it. Please send your child with sunscreen already applied, and their teacher will instruct your child and/or your child will be able to reapply as needed.

## Arrival and Departure

Please be aware that your child's class begins at 7:30am. It is important that your child arrives prior to 7:25am so they are in class on time to have the full benefit of the Montessori environment. Promptly at 7:30am each day, our teachers begin the day. Teachers facilitate a community circle. This is an integral part of each student's learning. Our teachers will make announcements, present new works, and check in with their students during this time. It is vital that this community circle has minimal interruptions.

- Preschool parents must sign their child in and out in the designated area each day when bringing a child to school and removing a child from the school. This procedure allows PDMA to meet our licensing requirements. A full signature must be used (no initials).
- Children arriving late must be signed in by a parent/guardian in the office.
- Any child not collected by the conclusion of pickup line will be sent to aftercare, and you will be charged according to our payment schedule. If you have not completed an extended care agreement, PDMA will make every effort to contact your child's emergency contacts and have them picked up from school. If we are unable to contact you or an emergency contact after one hour, PDMA will contact the Buckeye Police Department.
- Please follow staff directions during pickup. Detailed instructions can be found at [www.pdmabuckeye.org](http://www.pdmabuckeye.org)
- Students must be dropped off and picked up by a parent or authorized individual.
- Because we take seriously our responsibility to supervise and protect our children, PDMA is a closed campus. That means that students are not permitted to leave the campus for any reason during school hours or during school sponsored after-school activities, unless accompanied by the adult supervisor of that activity.



- When it is necessary for a student to leave campus before the close of school, a parent or authorized individual must come to the office and sign the child out, at which time the child will be called to the office by office staff.
- The school closes promptly at closing time. If you find that you are going to be late, please call the school. It saves your child the anxiety of wondering why he/she has not been picked up. Pick up is not the best time to discuss concerns regarding your child. We encourage you to email your child's teacher to set up a convenient time to chat about your student.
- We will not release a child to anyone whose name does not appear on the Emergency Release Form. Please contact the school office with special instructions if information on the release of your child changes or your child is to be picked up on a single occasion by another person.
- Visitors to the school must come directly to the school office, sign-in, and get a visitor pass to wear visibly on their outer clothing before proceeding on campus.

## Charter School Attendance Policy

Timely school attendance is truly vital to students' education. Most Montessori learning *must* be done in the classroom and is not available as homework or make-up work. Regular attendance is essential if children are to receive the full benefit of their Montessori education. If your child is sick, please call the Office before 7:30 a.m. so that the teacher can be notified.

Please provide the following information:

- Child's name
- Teacher
- Date of absence
- Reason for absence

Note: If your child is diagnosed with an infectious disease, it is essential that you notify the Office immediately

According to Arizona State law, students are required to attend school during hours when classes are in session unless otherwise excused. The only absence considered excused by Arizona State law are illnesses. Per Arizona State law, any illness lasting longer than two school days requires a physician's note to excuse the absences.

As a public charter school, we are obligated by law to report truancy. Truancy becomes an issue when a student has missed 10% or more of the school year, regardless of the excused/unexcused status of the absences (for PDMA, this is 15 school days). Arizona

State law includes tardiness or early checkout resulting in less than four hours of instruction as part of this calculation.

When a student misses five days of school, parents/guardians will receive a letter. This letter is automatically generated and serves only to help parents/guardians keep track of how many absences their child has accumulated during the school year and remind them of the attendance policy of PDMA. Letters will also be sent out when a child has missed 10 days. Students who have missed 15 days will be subject to review by the governing board of the school and may be reported to the Buckeye Police Department for truancy.

Any time a student has 10 consecutive, unexcused absences, PDMA will withdraw that child from the school. The PDMA governing board may not guarantee that child's enrollment space will be protected after that withdrawal.

If your child is truly sick, he/she should stay home. Missing school for any other reason can become a bad habit. You can show your child how important you think good attendance is by schedule doctor and dentist appointments, after school hours, on Fridays, or during school vacations.

### Vacations during School Time

We strongly discourage parents from scheduling vacations when school is in session. It is especially important that children attend both the first and last weeks of school because these are times for orientation and closure. For young children, extended or frequent absences are confusing, and re-entry can be upsetting. Children miss out on valuable lessons and must reorient themselves to the classroom. If you must leave for any reason, it is very important that you send in a written note to both teacher and front office. This allows the teacher to assist the child in completing any work in progress before leaving.

## General Discipline Policy

We constantly strive toward the goal of creating a self-disciplined child and believe that self-discipline is an aspect of growth and maturity and not the result of punishment. We make every effort to provide the child with an environment conducive to learning, and work with positive correction of faults and acknowledgment of desirable conduct. We require firm, consistent, kind and respectful treatment of all children from our staff. There is no use of corporal punishment or inappropriate language directed towards the child. His or her individual right to dignified treatment is constantly respected. Similarly, we require respectful treatment by all our students towards classmates, staff members and volunteers so that all members of our school community feel safe and are protected from any physical or emotional abuse on our campus along the following guidelines:

- Peace education and character development will be a vital and regular part of the curriculum.
- Conflict resolution skills will be demonstrated and used.
- Causes of misbehavior will be analyzed to facilitate prevention of behavior problems.
- Logical and natural consequences for behavior will be applied.
- Self-discipline and responsibility will be taught and encouraged at all times.
- Communication among students, staff, and parents will be facilitated.

When a student's conduct is serious or repetitive, disrupts the educational process, threatens safety or interferes with the rights and well-being of others, the following procedures may be employed:

- Parents will be called to set up a planning conference with staff regarding the student's behavior.
- Temporary in-house suspensions, such as loss of playtime or special events, may be utilized.
- Community service within the school may be required.
- The child may be suspended from school for one or more days.
- Parents will be called at the time of a serious event to come immediately to pick up the student.
- Counseling for the student and/or the family may be suggested or required.

The following behavior will not be tolerated:

- Physical abuse or violence of any kind, including hitting, kicking, pushing, tripping, destruction of property or other physically violent behavior.
- Verbal or emotional abuse of any kind, including name calling, threatening, taunting, foul language or other abusive speech.
- The possession of any dangerous or illegal items or substances on the school grounds.

Any of the above disrespectful behavior will result in the calling of parents, suspension from school, and enforcement of logical consequences at school and at home. The school's governing board will make the final decision on serious misbehavior.

The staff is committed to working with every child and every family to facilitate positive behavior at the school.

### Suspension/Expulsion Procedure

The following guidelines and procedures have been developed pursuant to ARS 15-840, -841, -842, -843, and -844, and approved by the State Board for Charter Schools.

- **Suspension:**

The Executive Director may suspend any student for up to 10 school days for serious cause, including but not limited to the following: defiance of authority of PDMA staff, disregard or disobedience of school rules and regulations as outlined in the PDMA Handbook, verbal abuse of adults or students, disruptive or disorderly behavior, violent or threatening behavior, fighting, intoxication, possession of tobacco or controlled substances including illegal and prescription drugs, destruction of school property or personal property, truancy, persistent absenteeism that is not due to certifiable medical illness or disability, and persistent tardiness.

- In cases of suspension out of school, the Executive Director shall present the student with the reasons and evidence for suspension and provide the student with an informal opportunity to respond to the charges prior to the suspension. The school officials involved shall make reasonable efforts to verify facts and statements prior to recommending a discipline. Depending on the severity of the offense and the student's past behavior, the Executive Director may choose to impose a lesser discipline, including parental conference, and/or work detail.
- In cases of inappropriate behavior observed by the teacher, the teacher has the discretion to initiate a parental conference, or to recommend suspension orally or in writing to the Executive Director.
- There will be no corporal punishment of students at PDMA, though staff may use reasonable, necessary force to restrain a violent, disruptive, or disobedient student whose actions pose a danger to his/her self-others, or property.
- The parent/legal guardian will be notified of the behavior problem and the discipline applied, by phone or in writing, and, in the case of suspension, will be required to attend a conference with the student and the school prior to re-admission. If the school is unable to contact the parent/legal guardian, the suspended student will be held in school until the end of the day. The parent/legal guardian shall be held liable for all damages caused by a student.

- **Expulsion:**

The teacher may recommend to the Executive Director, and the Executive Director may recommend to the governing board, expulsion of a student for serious cause, including, but not limited to the following: defiance of authority of PDMA staff, repeated disregard or disobedience of school rules and regulations as outlined in the PDMA Handbook, verbal abuse of adults or students, disruptive or disorderly behavior, violent or threatening behavior, fighting, destruction of school property, truancy, persistent absenteeism that is not due to certifiable medical illness or disability, persistent tardiness, possession of firearms or other dangerous weapons, possession of controlled substances, including illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and prescription drugs. In cases where the student has committed a crime or violation of local, state or federal law, law enforcement authorities will be notified.

- The parent/legal guardian will be notified of the intent to expel, and a hearing shall be held, after at least five working days' notice, and must include the student, the Executive Director or other staff, and the parent/legal guardian. All rights and responsibilities of the school, the governing board, the parent/legal guardian and the student, pursuant to ARS 15-840, -841, -842, -843, and -844 shall adhere in cases of expulsion, including the right of parents to request an open meeting or an executive session for the expulsion hearing, the right to reapply for admission after one year of expulsion, and the right of the governing board to deny admission of a student expelled from another school, and to deny, upon review of a request, re-admission of a student previously expelled from PDMA.

## Communication

Communication between home and school is vital to your child's success at school. Twice a year, in the fall and spring, parent/teacher conferences are held so that we may discuss your child's progress and development. These conferences are the most informative and helpful way for parents and teachers to work together for the benefit of the child, so we sincerely urge both parents to attend. Written progress reports are sent home at the end of each Quarter.

Important information regarding school activities will primarily be communicated through the BLOOMZ App, however information may be sent as well by flyers, newsletters, PDMA Facebook page, PDMA webpage, and/or via e-mail. Open houses and other special events are opportunities for you to share in your child's world at school. Messages for individual parents will be sent home with your child, or communicated via BLOOMZ or email. If you have a question or concern, please do not wait for a conference time. A conference with your child's teacher and/or Administration can be arranged by contacting the office.

We encourage parents to observe their child's class. The office will coordinate a time for the observation based upon the teacher's suggestion on a good time for observation. The teachers welcome and encourage any special talent or hobby that the parents might be willing to share with the class or the school. The teachers may notify parents when special assistance is required for a field trip or other event.

## Technology

Please refer to the Technology Agreement

## Field Trips

During the academic year, field trips are held both for academic enrichment as well as an occasional recreational outing. In order for your child to participate in these events, a Field Trip Permission Form must be filled out including Consent for Medical Treatment Form in case of a medical emergency while away from the premises. In cases where admission charges or bus fees are involved, a field trip fee may be collected in advance. If parental assistance is required, a note will be included on the field trip permission form. All parents must have a fingerprint clearance card.

## Dress Code

Children should come to school dressed to enjoy all types of activities: floor work, exploration of art media, water activities, gross motor skill activities and outdoor play. Our primary focus is for your child to enjoy him/herself while learning in the environment. At times, trying to keep clothes clean gets in the way of the activity. Parents are encouraged to bring a change of clothes when going somewhere directly from school where nice clothes are necessary. Please note, we cannot be held responsible for stained or damaged clothing.

### *Early Childhood/Kindergarten*

Please make sure that young preschoolers wear comfortable, loose-fitting and non-restrictive clothing without belts and buckles. This allows them quick and easy access to the toilet. Clothing managed without adult assistance is best for teaching independence.

## Clothing – Preschool and Kindergarten

Please dress your child in comfortable 'play clothes' that he/she can manage alone in the bathrooms. Sometimes messy art materials are used so please do not send your child in his/her best clothes. Please do not let your child wear flip-flops or sandals; tennis shoes are safer for climbing and running. Close-toed sneakers/tennis shoes are mandatory for PE and playground. Since we remove our shoes in the classroom to keep our floors clean, your child needs to have non-skid, slip-on indoor shoes to keep in his/her cubby. The

Montessori class teaches the child how to care for himself/herself and his/her own needs. We discourage clothing items which are frustrating to a child learning self-help (no matter how cute these seem) including high heel shoes, overalls or coveralls for very young ones who can't handle the fasteners, jumpsuits or outfits which must be unfastened in the back or untied at the shoulders. Each child under the age of six must bring a change of clothing in a labeled clear plastic box. Please include underwear, shirt, pants or shorts and socks. Younger preschool children may need two changes of clothing at school. If an accident occurs (even potty-trained children have accidents with milk, water or art materials), the soiled clothes will be sent home with your child. Please send a fresh supply the next morning because we do not have a large supply of 'school clothes' and do not borrow from other children. Jewelry and makeup of any kind should not be brought to school.

## Clothing – Elementary and Middle School Students

The dress codes reflect an emphasis on practicality, respect and a minimization of distractions from the learning process, as well as varying needs at different ages. Elementary & Middle School students are required to wear or bring comfortable, sturdy shoes that are suitable for the daily physical activity of the playground and/or PE class.

Students in both Junior and Senior Elementary remove their outside shoes in the classroom. Therefore, they need to have non-skid, slip-on indoor shoes that are left in the classroom.

Middle School students are frequently changing classes and are not doing the floor work like our Elementary students are, therefore they keep their outside shoes on while in their classrooms.

Slacks, jeans and modest length shorts are acceptable for all students, as well as modest length skirts and dresses for girls. Spaghetti straps or strapless tops are not acceptable. Clothing

Middle school students participating in certain electives will receive specific requirements from the teacher. Gym shoes are required for physical education for all students, along with appropriate clothing for outdoor activities. Specific field trips and special days may require "dressing up." We will always provide advance notice for such occasions.

## Outdoor Time

Outdoor playtime is an important part of our program. The outdoor play area is considered an outdoor classroom and an extension of the learning environment. Children spend time outdoors daily unless it is extremely hot or raining. We follow Arizona's Heat Index advisory and our discretion. We cannot staff for some children to be outside and others to remain inside. Therefore, a child who comes to school must be healthy enough to go outside. Children need to come to school in appropriate seasonal outdoor clothing. Please clearly label all outdoor clothing. We cannot be responsible for lost clothing.

## Lost and Found

Please label all removable clothing, as well as tote bags, with your child's name. Lunch box, Tupperware, thermos and water bottles need to be labelled as well. It is surprising how many coats, sweaters, shirts and even socks turn up unclaimed. A laundry-proof ink pen easily adds your child's last name to a clothing label. A Lost and Found box is located in the Gym. Unclaimed items will be donated to charity on a regular basis.

## Toys, Electronics, and Pets

Experience has shown that toys are better left at home. Toys tend to generate unnecessary social disturbances or become lost or broken. Please help your child to comply with this rule. For a "share day" activity, instead of sharing a toy, encourage your child to bring a book, objects from nature of educational merit, a photograph or special piece of artwork. Your child's teacher will communicate to the class which day is 'share day'.

- Absolutely no electronics should be brought to school. This includes cell phones, ipads, mp3 players, handheld games, etc.
- With the advance approval of the teacher, a 'pet' for the day or during sharing (in a suitable container) may be welcome.

## School Photographs

School pictures are taken each fall and possibly again in the spring. The professional photographic service will provide information and fees in advance.

## Lunches

Parents are responsible for ensuring that children have a lunch provided for them each day if they will be present after 11:30am. Lunch is a special time for children at PDMA and should consist of nutritional, healthy food choices. We strongly suggest that no sugary foods, beverages, candy, or soda be included in school lunches. Please refrain from sending "fast foods" as well. Instead, we urge all families to pack healthy lunch options for their children. High sugar foods will be returned uneaten in your child's lunchbox. Please provide an ice pack for your child's lunch box if anything needs to be kept cold. We do not have the ability to heat up student lunches, so please make sure to send something that does not require heating.

We encourage children to eat all of their lunch and provide a quiet environment for them. For our younger children, a little note in the lunch box is a great way to greet your child mid-day. Children love to share these notes with their friends and staff. Because we are teaching your children to recycle, please reflect on the packaging that you choose. All uneaten food, plastic wrap, napkin, thermos and utensils will be repacked in the lunch box to be returned home. This way you can see what your child has eaten for lunch. Thank



you for your cooperation and contribution to this important aspect of our program.

## Catering

A hot lunch program is available for our full-day students. We have partnered with Milestone Charter Schools who provides students with a hot lunch. There is one hot lunch option per day at the cost of \$3.25 a meal. Parents order and pay for the meals online by Wednesday at midnight of the week prior. Lunches are individually packaged and sent to the school for the child to enjoy. A monthly hot lunch menu is put out for families to plan and select days they wish to participate. Students will pick up his/her meal at our serving kitchen in the Gym at 11:30 and bring their meal back to class to eat with their community.

Website to Order: <https://milestones.school lunch choice.com/newsite/index.php>

Contact at Milestone Charter Schools:

Loretta Lane

llane.milestonescharter@gmail.com

Phone: 602-404-1009 Cell: 602-920-4223

## Tobacco Policy

PDMA Schools is a NO SMOKING campus. We do not allow smoking anywhere on campus (this includes the parking lot).

## Special Needs

If teachers have a concern about possible obstacles to a child's learning, they will discuss their concerns with the child's parent. If parents have a concern, they should discuss it first with the teacher. The child is then referred to a Child Study Team, composed of the child's lead teacher, the Special Education teacher and the administrator. The Child Study Team may determine that further testing is necessary to identify or eliminate a possible learning disability. Parents' permission is required for such testing. After the test results are available, an official meeting notice will be sent to the parents. The psychologist or other education specialist who administered the test(s), the child's teacher, the administrator, and the parents will then meet. *See Procedures for Locating Children with Disabilities in Section 6.*

## Fundraising

Our fundraising events here at PDMA include but are not limited to: the annual cookie dough sale, Fall Festival, semi-annual book fairs, and our very own Incredible Dash. These events are great opportunities to not only raise money for our school but also to come together as a community. The money we raise plays a vital role in supporting our teachers, equipping our classrooms, improving our campus, and enriching our

extracurricular programming. We sincerely appreciate any support we receive through purchases, donations, the time of our amazing volunteers, and the participation of our community.

## Donations

For art projects, collages and all sorts of classroom applications, we may be able to use odds and ends that you might want to discard. Please talk to your child's teacher before bringing them in. Particularly useful are old *National Geographic* or *Wildlife* magazines, buttons, fabric scraps, yarn, small wood scraps, rolls of paper or stickers, nature objects with educational merit, etc.

Tax Credit donations can be given to support extracurricular programs. A Tax Credit Donation is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the tax you owe to the State of Arizona. Your tax liability can be reduced by up to \$400 for married couples or \$200 for single or head of household. If you have no tax liability, your tax refund will be increased by the amount you donate. Painted Desert Montessori Academy will use the funds for extracurricular programming, such as Field Trips, Martial Arts, Ballet, clubs, etc. Please contact the office to make a tax credit donation.

## Accident and Emergency Procedures

In the event of an accident or emergency, parents will be contacted immediately and informed of the situation. An incident report will be filed with the office.

## Section 4: Notification of Rights Under The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”) for Elementary Institutions

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age (“eligible students”) certain rights with respect to the student’s education records. They are:

- The right to inspect and review the student’s education records within 45 days of the day the school receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the school principal (or appropriate school official) a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
- The right to request the amendment of the student’s education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate or misleading. Parents or eligible student may ask PDMA to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
- The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student’s education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception that permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the school has contracted to perform a special task such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist)/ or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. (NOTE: FERPA requires a school district to make a reasonable attempt to notify the student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request.)
- The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
600 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20202-4605

(Note: In addition, a school may want to include its directory information public notice, as required by § 99.37 of the regulations, with its annual notification of rights under FERPA).

## Section 5: Notification of Rights Under The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”) for the Arizona Early Intervention Program (“AzEIP”)

- The Arizona Early Intervention Program is the statewide system of supports and services for families of infants and toddlers, birth to three years of age, with disabilities or delays. The purpose of early intervention is to help families help children develop to their full potential. The Arizona Department of Economic Security, Arizona Early Intervention Program (DES/AzEIP) is the lead agency. Des/AzEIP works together with DES, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and other DES programs, the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (ASDB), the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) and other community resources to implement the Arizona Early Intervention Program.
- If your child is referred to AzEIP, an Interim Service Coordinator (ISC) will contact your family. If you are interested, the ISC will make an appointment to visit with your family in your home or another location of your choosing. During this visit, you may talk with the ISC about your concerns and your questions about your child’s development. You will be asked to share information about your child’s health and medical history. Together with the ISC, you may decide that a more detailed evaluation of your child’s development is needed. The ISC will help you identify other community programs or resources that might be helpful to you.
- If your child is eligible for the early intervention program, a permanent service coordinator will be assigned. Your family, your service coordinator, individuals who have been involved in assessments for your child, and other people who you decide to include, will develop an Individualized Family Service Plan that identifies your child’s routines and natural environments, the outcomes that you want for your child and your family, and the services and supports necessary to help meet those outcomes. Services are planned to meet the unique needs of each child and family and might include: audiology, home visits, nutrition services, occupational or physical therapy, family counseling, vision services and others.
- Your family may stay enrolled in AzIEP until your child turns three years of age or your child no longer needs early intervention. As your child nears two and a half years of age, your service coordinator and other IFSP members will be talking with you about this transition. Options for transition or next steps may include a preschool program for children with special needs offered by your local school district, Head Start Program, or a local childcare center. If you know any who might benefit from these services, please contact the school.

## Section 6: Procedures for Locating Children with Disabilities

All children with disabilities who are in need of special education services have a right to a free, appropriate public education. To accomplish this, PDMA School has established the following procedures for locating and referring children with disabilities.

PDMA Schools will maintain documentation of the public awareness efforts to inform the public and parents within the jurisdiction of the school of the availability of special education services.

- Screening and follow-up activities:

Screening activities will be implemented for all newly enrolled students and those transferring in without sufficient records. The screening will be completed within 45 calendar days of school entry. This screening will include consideration of academic or cognitive skills, vision, hearing, motor skills, communication, emotional, and adaptive development.

Review, referral, and follow up of the screening will be documented in the child's cumulative file, with backup data a part of the school's child find screening process. PDMA Schools will maintain documentation and annually report the number of children with disabilities within each disability category that have identified, located and evaluated.

- Referral for special education services:

PDMA Schools will refer children aged birth through two years suspected of having a developmental delay to the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AZEIP) to determine eligibility for early services, using the online referral form.

The school will refer children three through five years old suspected of having a disability to the school district of the parent's residence. The school will also refer those children whose ages do not fall within the age group authorized by the charter to the school district.

Parents of Children birth to 3 are referred to:

Arizona Early Intervention Program

Maricopa county: (602) 532-9960

Website: <https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-infant>

Referral Form: <https://extranet.azdes.gov/azeip/AzeipREF/Forms/Categories.aspx>

Parents of Youth 3 to 21 are referred to:

Special Education Services

Painted Desert Montessori Academy

## Section 7: Signature Page

Thank you for taking the time to read the 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 PDMA School Parent Handbook.

Students Name (PRINTED): \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature (Senior & Middle): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_









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Maricopa county: (602) 532-9960

Website: <https://des.az.gov/services/disabilities/developmental-infant>

Referral Form: <https://extranet.azdes.gov/azeip/AzeipREF/Forms/Categories.aspx>

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Special Education Services

Painted Desert Montessori Academy

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Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature (Senior & Middle): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_