



Established 2006

Parent Handbook

2009 – 2010 School Year

Desert Star Community School
1240 S. Recycler Rd.
Cornville, Arizona 86325

A Waldorf Inspired Charter School
serving Grades K through Grade 7

School Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 3:10 p.m., Mon. – Fri.

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Email: info@desertstarschool.org

**2009 -2010 SCHOOL YEAR
PARENT HANDBOOK
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction	4
Faculty and Staff.....	4
School Hours.....	4
Mission Statement	5
Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures	6
Morning Drop-off.....	6
Late Arrival.....	6
Afternoon Pick-up.....	6
Early Pick-up Procedures.....	6
Half-day Release Procedures.....	6
Carpooling.....	6
Attendance	7
Dress Code	8
Change of Clothes.....	8
Electronic Devices and Personal Property	8
Pets	8
Lost and Found	8
Lunch and Nutrition Guidelines	9
Birthday Celebrations	9
Health and Safety Policies	10
Medication Policy.....	10
Emergency Preparedness and Plans.....	10

Discipline Policy	11
Expected Behaviors.....	11
Consequences of Inappropriate Behavior.....	11
Bullying Policy.....	12
Special Education Students.....	12
Media Policy	13
Chain of Communication for Parent Concerns	13
School Organization & Parent Involvement	14
Parent Volunteers.....	14
Parent Representatives.....	14
The Parent Council.....	14
Board of Directors.....	15
The Administration.....	15
Communication Builds Community	15
Parent/Teacher Conferences & Conversations.....	15
Newsletters and Updates.....	15
Bulletin Board.....	15
Desert Star School Website.....	15
Class Meetings.....	16
Why Fundraising is Essential At Desert Star	16
Parent/Guardian Guidelines	16
Environmental Ethic	17
Student Assessment	18
Standardized Testing	18
FERPA Notification of Rights	19

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to acquaint you with the policies and procedures that support the day-to-day operations of Desert Star Community School. Please take time to review the handbook at the beginning of the school year. If you have questions about any of the information presented please contact the School Administrator, Susan Simon at (928) 282-0171.

DESERT STAR FACULTY AND STAFF

School Administrator: Susan Simon, 282-0171- work 284-3583 - home

Administrative Assistant: Paula Green, 282-0171

Contact regarding school facility: Susan Simon and Tomas Winn, 649-0773

Teachers:

Kindergarten/1st:	Pam Bruehl
2nd:	Deborah Williams
3rd:	Traci Sele
4th:	Peter Wollheim
5th:	Sarah Akerson
6th/7th:	Marc Bruehl

Special Area Teachers:

Environmental Science& Games:	Rhonda Bierman
K-1 Teaching Assistants:	Deanna Robinson Stephanie Schmid
Handwork:	
Handwork Assistant:	
Art:	Zenna MacGregor
Violin:	
Title 1 Reading/Math Teacher:	Catherine Weld

Desert Star Governing Board Members:

President - Pam Israelson	Vice President - Tomas Winn
Treasurer - Yvan Rochon	Member - Catherine Weld
Member - Joey Philo	Member - Petra Breakstone
Member - Susan Simon	Faculty Representative - Marc Bruehl

School Hours:

Monday - Friday 8:30 am- 3:10pm



DESERT STAR COMMUNITY SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT



The mission of Desert Star Community School is to provide an education that considers the needs of the whole child, develops the full diversity of human intelligence within each individual, and instills a life-long love of learning. Our purpose is to inspire and empower students to reach their full academic and creative potential so they may lead fulfilling, purposeful lives and make a positive contribution to the multi-cultural society and world community in which they live.

Desert Star Community School is a progressive Waldorf methods school based on the philosophy of Rudolph Steiner and Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. We believe that true education involves more than just the intellect; it engages and integrates every aspect of the child: cognitive, physical, emotional, and social as well as the creative-imaginative self. It is the school's intention to cultivate and expand the child's many intelligences through offering an integrated, arts-based curriculum that is far reaching to each student's unique capacities. Students will receive an inspired classical education rich in the humanities, arts, sciences, history and cultures of the world. The school will support the growth of each child into a confident, creative, self-directed person with a sense of social responsibility, compassion, integrity and a respect for all life. Our Educational Program Goals are:

- 1) To create and maintain a dynamic, nurturing, community-based school environment that attends to the needs of the whole child,
- 2) To develop a school culture with high levels of parent participation that values creative as well as academic achievement and enables students to be self-motivated, competent and lifelong learners,
- 3) To meet Arizona State educational standards through engaging, meaningful and creative lessons that integrate the arts into academic learning and provide a variety of multi-cultural experiences and learning opportunities.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP PROCEDURES

In order to protect the safety of the children and be considerate of our residential neighbors, the speed limit at all times on the school property and Recycler Road is 5 miles per hour. Please drive slowly and carefully around the drop off area while watching for children who may be walking to and from cars. Please do not park or stop to have a conversation in the drop off circle during pick-up or drop-off.

Morning drop-off

Grades drop-off begins at 8:15 a.m. and should be complete by 8:25 a.m. so that children are in the designated drop off area and ready to line up for class at 8:25 a.m.

Classes begin promptly at 8:30 a.m. A staff member or parent volunteer will be waiting to greet the children as they exit their vehicles. If you park your car and walk, supervise your children closely in the parking lot and watch for cars.

Note: Children may not be dropped off before 8:15 a.m. If you arrive before 8:15 a.m., you must wait for the person on morning duty to arrive before releasing your children.

Late arrival

If you arrive at school after 8:30 a.m., park your car and **walk with your child** to the office. Students may not go directly to class if they arrive late. This includes kindergartners. In the office, each child will be given a late arrival slip. Recurring late arrival is a serious issue that affects academic achievement, the harmony of the classroom environment, and school funding. If a child consistently arrives late, the parents will be contacted to address this issue.

Afternoon pick-up

Students will be ready to be picked up at the drop-off/pickup area at 3:10 p.m. Please enter the campus and line up at the pick-up area. The students will be waiting with their teachers nearby and will be escorted to the waiting cars in groups. Again, be sure to observe the 5 mph speed limit when leaving the pick-up area.

Early pick-up procedures

If your child has an appointment and must be picked up early, please call ahead to notify the office. When you arrive on campus, please come to the office to sign your child out.

Half-day release procedures

Pick-up on half-days is at 11:30 p.m. Kindergarten children should be picked up at the kindergarten doorway as usual. Students in grades 1 – 7 will be waiting as usual in the drop-off/pick-up area.

Carpooling

Desert Star strongly supports carpooling and will make every effort to assist families in developing carpools. Our commitment is to reduce the number of cars coming onto our campus as much as possible. The benefits of carpooling are an important part of Desert Star's mission: less stress on families, stronger community connections, less pollution and improved relations with our neighbors. We ask that everyone make a concerted effort to carpool with at least one other family whenever possible. Please note that the office does not coordinate carpools but will provide school rosters to assist. Always make arrangements for pick up prior to the school day.

ATTENDANCE

Tardiness

Regular, on time attendance has a positive effect upon student learning and achievement. Desert Star Community School's curriculum is designed such that the first two hours of the day are critical to the academic achievement and overall success of the student.

If a student is late more than three times in a semester, a conference will be scheduled with the administrator. The problem will be discussed and the student's parents and administrator will outline a corrective course of action.

A student arriving on campus after 8:30a.m, is late and must report directly to the office with the adult to sign in. If a student is consistently late a conversation between the school administrator and the parents is warranted. Parents should be aware that chronic lateness can jeopardize a student graduating with his/her class. Parents will receive a "letter of concern" should chronic lateness occur.

Absenteeism

Absences of three days or more require a note from parent/guardian upon return. Similarly, a child with an injury or illness which restricts physical participation in classes should have a signed note stating the problem and its duration.

Students will be dis-enrolled after 10 consecutive days of unexcused absence. An excused absence is illness or a family emergency. Any other extenuating circumstance will be reviewed by the Administrator. If a child is dis-enrolled, Desert Star is required by law to accept children from the waiting list for that class, so there is a possibility there will not be a place in that class when the child returns. Parents will be requested to meet with the administrator after 7 cumulative days of unexcused absences.

Desert Star receives funds based on daily student attendance. If a child must take a vacation when school is in session, please consider donating \$25 per day to help make up the funding the school loses for an absence, however a monetary donation does not make up for a child's class time. You may contact your child's teacher to see if it is possible to make up any missed work.

Please make an effort to schedule routine medical and dental appointments after school hours and schedule vacations during school breaks.

Important: If your child is late, ill or will be absent for any reason, please inform the office no later than 8:00 a.m. that day. Be sure to include your name, your child's name and the reason for the tardy/absence. Please call the office each day your child is absent even if the absence is on consecutive days.

The state requires that the school have parents give a description of the illness symptoms, ie: fever, cough, respiratory, flu, nausea.

DRESS CODE

Desert Star Community School recognizes that all students are valued based on who they are and not on what they wear. We are aware that some clothing choices can distract students and undermine the school environment. The following dress code has been adopted to help create a positive environment for all where the focus is on learning.

1) All clothes must be neat and clean and cannot be torn, un-hemmed, tattered, or suggestive. Clothes must appropriately cover the body. No halter tops, spaghetti straps, micro-mini skirts, short shorts, overly baggy pants or tops that expose the midriff or show cleavage.

2) Clothes may not feature inappropriate or distracting logos, symbols, or pictures referring to media characters, drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. Personal items such as purses, bags, back packs, lunch boxes, and shoes should be free of media characters and brand names if possible.

3) Hair should be clean, neat, and out of the face. Hair is a natural color. Jewelry is to be kept to a minimum with piercing allowed on the ears only. For safety reasons, dangling earrings may not be worn. Make-up, nail polish and tattoos are not allowed. Middle school students (6th-7th) may apply light make-up at home. Make-up may not be brought to school.

4) It is important that children wear shoes that allow them to move freely and safely and protect the feet. We highly recommend shoes that cover and support the heel. Flip flops, thongs, and footwear without back straps are not allowed inside or outside. Please, no high-heels or shoes with rollers or lights. Laces must be tied and shoes with zippers must stay zipped.

5) Clothing should be suitable for both classroom and outdoor play, including games, environmental science and gardening. Clothing should be suitable for the weather. During the winter a jacket is required. Hats are recommended outside during the hottest and coldest months and are encouraged at all times, although not allowed in classrooms.

6) Students are expected to dress up for assemblies, festivals and other public gatherings. Students performing in chorus or violin recitals are required to wear black pants/skirts and white shirts/blouses.

If a student comes to school and is not in dress code he/she will be sent to the office to call home for the parent to bring a change of clothing. *Students will not be allowed to participate in recess, games, or hikes without proper footwear.*

Change of clothes

Kindergartners and first graders should bring the following items to have on hand if needed: extra shirt; pants (or shorts); socks and underwear.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES & PERSONAL PROPERTY

The use of cell phones and electronic devices by students is not permitted during school hours unless approved by a school employee. Students in grades 5-7 will be asked to sign an electronic device guideline form at the beginning of the school year. Toys and games should not be brought to school unless authorized by the teacher.

PETS

No dogs or other pets are legally permitted on the school campus, *on or off leash*, for health, safety and liability reasons.

LOST AND FOUND

A lost-and-found box will be kept on campus. Please check it regularly. Unclaimed items left for longer than one month may be donated to charity.

LUNCH AND NUTRITION GUIDELINES

Students in grades 2 – 7 need to bring a snack and lunch every day except on half days when children will only need a snack.

Please follow these guidelines when packing your child's lunch:

1) Include a re-usable wide-mouthed water bottle. Although drinking water is readily available at school, it is necessary to have a water bottle easily accessible during outdoor activities.

2) We ask that parents supervise the packing of lunches and make sure the lunch is fully prepared. Teachers do not have the facilities for heating or cooking. Warm soups can be sent in a thermos.

3) Send perishable food in an insulated lunch box with an ice pack.

4) Pack a well-balanced lunch focusing on whole and healthful foods. Include proteins, healthy carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables so that your child has good energy for the afternoon. We highly recommend avoiding lunchables and pre-packaged lunches. Some children are sensitive to the artificial ingredients, preservatives and food coloring used in processed foods. Please eliminate or limit these items as much as possible.

5) Please only send foods low in sugar. No candy or sugary treats/drinks please. Gum is not allowed.

6) Please make an effort to reduce the environmental impact of packaging waste and use reusable containers when possible.

The school does not provide lunch nor snacks. Students who arrive at school without a lunch or not enough in their lunch will call home for food to be brought to school. Students should not share their lunches with other students due to allergy issues and lack of permission by parent to do so.

If your child has special nutritional needs or if you have questions about any of these guidelines, please let your child's teacher know. Food allergies must be listed on the emergency medical form and be made known to the teacher at the beginning of the school year.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Each class has their own birthday protocol to honor students. The school strongly recommends that you check with the teacher about this. If bringing a snack, we recommend sugar-free snacks such as popcorn, vegetables, homemade goods.

Do not send Invitations to school or pick up children at school for a party unless all the students in the class are invited or all the girls or boys. We are trying to protect the children who are not invited from hurt feelings. This can be a devastating experience for those left behind.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

Keeping your child at home when ill:

Children should be kept at home under the following circumstances:

- 1) The child is not well enough to play outdoors.
- 2) The child has any of the following symptoms: fever; sore throat; yellow/green discharge from the nose; congested cough; discharge from the eyes; rash; or vomiting.
- 3) The child has a communicable illness, such as chicken pox, strep throat, lice, rash, etc. In this case, please notify the school immediately so that we may inform others as necessary.

If your child becomes ill or injured during the school day, he or she will be sent to the office for care and you will be called. In the event that we are unable to reach you we will call the emergency contacts you have provided. Please be sure you keep the office up-to-date with any changes in contact information. Students who are ill must be picked up within 45 minutes, as we do not have a dedicated nurse's office.

Absences of three days or more require a note from parent/guardian upon return. Similarly, a child with an injury or illness which restricts physical participation in classes should have a signed note stating the problem and its duration.

Note: If your child is ill or will be absent for any reason, please inform the office no later than 8:00 a.m. that day. The state requires that the school have parents give a description of the illness symptoms, ie: fever, cough, respiratory, flu, nausea.

Medication Policy

It is our preference that children not attend school while taking medication that needs to be administered during school hours. However, we realize this isn't always possible. If it is necessary for your child to take medication during the school day you must complete a medication permission form available in the office. This form was included in your enrollment packet. In addition, these guidelines must be followed:

- 1) We cannot administer any medication that has been transferred from one container to another. Medication (prescription or non-prescription) must be in the original, labeled package or bottle, with the child's name clearly marked on the container.
- 2) Medication cannot be brought in by a child; it must be brought to the office by the parent or guardian.
- 3) It is your responsibility as parent or guardian to pick-up any unused medication. Items must be claimed no later than two weeks after the last day of school or the last day of the dosage period. Unclaimed items will be disposed of.

Emergency Preparedness Drills and Plans

Emergency preparedness drills are conducted monthly, in compliance with state statutes. Class specific emergency procedures and routes are posted at the door of each classroom. Exits are posted. Fire extinguishers are located in all buildings. The Master Emergency Evacuation Plan is revised annually or as needed, and is available in the school office.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Guidelines For Student Behavior at Desert Star Community School

We believe that children have a right to a quality education in a safe and caring environment. We hope to accomplish this by fostering respect for self and others and by promoting pro-social behavior among our students. We believe that discipline is striving towards a goal, not a tool for punishment. We consider discipline to be an aspect of moral guidance and part of this process is allowing students to take responsibility for their actions. Students will be held to the highest standards of conduct in order to maintain a healthy learning atmosphere for everyone. Any student who chooses to interfere with others' learning will be held accountable. In order for this discipline program to be consistent and effective, it is important that parents and school staff work together to support each other.

Expected Behaviors

- 1) Students are expected to be in class on time and to make proper use of the instructional setting by assuming the responsibility of being on task and completing all assignments.
- 2) Students are expected to honor all safety guidelines, respecting the need for an environment where students are physically and emotionally safe.
- 3) Students are expected to treat others with respect and consideration, using polite language with no profanity, teasing or put-downs.
- 4) Students are expected to treat the school property and environment with respect and use it responsibly. This includes desks, bathrooms, equipment, books, and materials.
- 5) Students are to treat others as they would like to be treated. As such, students are expected to choose positive alternatives to physical or verbally abusive confrontations. Such alternatives may include seeking teacher assistance for help in conflict management.
- 6) Students will stay within school boundaries and within sight of adult supervision. When instructed to do so students will line up quietly and promptly.
- 7) Students are expected to follow Desert Star School's Dress Code.

Consequences of Inappropriate Behavior

When a student chooses to not follow the rules and guidelines, the teacher or responsible adult will work with the student to help him/her respect the rules and regain self-control. The teacher may take any of the following actions:

- informal talk
- discipline conference with student and teacher
- send student to the office for a meeting with the administrator
- time out
- restriction of privileges
- notification of parent conference

If a student's behavior is so out of control that it threatens his or her safety or the safety of others, a parent or guardian will be called immediately to pick up the child. Additionally, for serious offenses including violations of the law, school officials may notify appropriate law enforcement personnel. If the student has purposefully damaged school property, his or her parents may be liable for the damage done, under Arizona law.

Bullying Policy

Public Schools are required by law to have a bullying policy in place. Desert Star School has a policy in place with procedures that prohibit harassment, bullying and intimidation of pupils on school property or during school sponsored events. We have a confidential procedure in place for students and parents to report incidents concerning harassment, intimidation or bullying. A bullying reporting form is available, to students and parents, in the office and in classrooms.

Students may present a complaint or grievance regarding one or more of the following:

- Violation of the student's constitutional rights.
- Denial of an equal opportunity to participate in any activity for which the student qualifies not related to the student's individual capabilities.
- Discriminatory treatment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or disability.
- Harassment of the student by another person.
- Intimidation by another student.
- Bullying by another student.
- Concern for the student's personal safety.

The guidelines to be followed are:

- The accusation must be made within thirty (30) calendar days of the time the student knew or should have known that there were grounds for the complaint/ grievance.
- The complaint/grievance shall be made only to a school administrator or professional staff member.
- The person receiving the complaint will gather information for the complaint form.
- All allegations shall be reported on forms with the necessary particulars as determined by the Principal. Forms are available in the school office.
- The person receiving the complaint shall preserve the confidentiality of the subject, disclosing it only to the appropriate school administrator or next higher administrative supervisor or as otherwise required by law.

Any question concerning whether the complaint/grievance falls within this policy shall be determined by the Principal/Board. Contact the office for more information on the bullying policy and procedures.

Special Education Students

When a special education student engages in misconduct that could result in suspension or expulsion, Desert Star shall follow the State Board of Education rules governing suspension and expulsion of special education students. Pursuant to the rules, if the misconduct is not a manifestation of the student's disability, standard school discipline procedures shall apply.

MEDIA POLICY

In our society, the media in all its forms (T.V., movies, video games, computers, computer games, portable CD players, etc.) is an ever-growing presence in our lives. We as educators and parents face the difficult choice of deciding how much to let the various media into our lives and how to use them wisely.

With growing children this question becomes even more urgent. Current research increasingly points to a direct adverse effect on brain development from excessive exposure to media. In schools as well as the home, we are confronted by many forms of attention deficit disorders and other learning disabilities. We also see a fading of the powers of imagination and wonder. Young children are by nature “doers”. The media expose children to an artificial world that allows no engagement of their own will and imagination. This evokes unnatural responses in a child’s being and stunts the seeds of human development. Not only is the nature of the media foreign and directly harmful to the child’s developing brain and inner being, the content of most television programs, video games and movies is glaring in its disregard for what childhood really is meant to be. Because of this, exposure to the media works at cross purposes with what Waldorf education aims to bring.

Our recommended guidelines regarding media use are as follows:

1. For grades K – 5: No television, video games or movies during the school week; minimal parent-directed media use on weekends and during vacations.
2. For grades 6 – 7: No television or video games in the morning before school; minimal parent-directed media use during the school week; parental involvement in determining appropriate media and computer-use choices at all other times.

CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION FOR PARENT CONCERNS

Addressing parent concerns is a high priority at Desert Star and all concerns will receive prompt and thoughtful attention. The health and harmony of our school community depends on all parties taking a responsible and constructive approach to raising and resolving concerns. When raising a concern, it is essential to speak directly to the person(s) involved. Speaking directly may be difficult but it is the most effective way to resolve a concern. When you go directly to the person involved and let them know of your concern you can work together to find a solution. It is not appropriate to discuss your concerns with others in the community before you speak directly with those involved.

Before raising a concern, parents are encouraged to do the following:

- Take some time to reflect on the true nature of the concern. Is it a personal issue which may be better resolved outside school or is it an issue that requires action within the school?
- If the concern raises strong emotions, take time to allow these emotions to subside so that it is possible to engage in a constructive discussion.
- If the concern involves existing school policies, take the time to understand these policies and their purpose.
- Come up with a proposed solution for the concern and consider how this solution may affect all parties involved.

The chain of communication for concerns regarding classroom issues is:

- 1) Speak directly to your child’s teacher and try to find resolution at this level. If you are unable to find resolution after speaking to the teacher, the next step is:
- 2) Speak to the School Administrator.
- 3) All approaches to resolving concerns and conflicts including mediation, will be considered, if needed.

For concerns regarding school operations and policies it is best to contact the School Administrator directly.

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION & PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents of students at Desert Star Community School are given the opportunity to grow with their children in a unique educational environment. Parent participation is an essential and integral part of a child's educational experience and serves to unify families and create a strong sense of community. Many of the activities and programs at Desert Star rely on the skill and generosity of parents. For this reason, it is vital to the success of the school that families actively participate in various school events and activities. The following are the main bodies of the school, their responsibilities and how you can become involved.

Parent Volunteers

It is requested that all families contribute a minimum of 50 hours per year in service to the school, that's about one hour per week of school. To volunteer in the classroom, please contact your child's teacher or the school administrator. Volunteers must sign in and out at the office. Please keep track of your volunteer hours. If you are unable to volunteer, you may choose to make a financial contribution in support of the school. Some ways to help are:

- Seasonal Saturdays will be held three times per year. This is a work day designated to beautify the campus.
- Field Trips
- Plays
- Festivals

Please note that parent volunteers who are directly supervised and within eyesight of a teacher will not need a fingerprint card. Those who are alone with students in a classroom, the playground, or driving on a field trip will be required to have fingerprint clearance on file. Also parents who attend school sponsored overnight field trips are required to have fingerprint clearance. If you are planning on volunteering regularly or driving for field trips, please come to the school office for fingerprinting instructions and forms. This precaution is for the safety of your child and all the children in the school.

Parent Representatives

Each grade's class has 1-2 parents who support the teacher and keep in touch regarding the needs of the class. This may include setting up a phone tree, arranging field trip drivers, organizing class events, helping with class plays, gathering supplies and other classroom needs. The representatives from all the grades come together for monthly Parent Council meetings. If you are interested in being a parent representative please contact your teacher.

The Parent Council

The Parent Council includes all parents and guardians of children who attend Desert Star Community School. Parent Council meetings provide a means for parents to be informed on school issues, to offer their input and ideas as well as to raise concerns and parent initiatives. The Parent Council steering committee consists of 1-2 parent representatives from each grade who help to organize meetings and oversee the work of the parent council.

The Parent Council also helps to organize various committees to serve the school in areas such as assistance with fundraising campaigns, volunteer coordination, facility development/maintenance, festivals, teacher and office support, and any other area of need. The Parent Council supports and organizes families in fulfilling their volunteer time commitments.

Board of Directors

Desert Star School has a Board of Directors that is responsible for deciding legal, financial, personnel, and policy issues of the school. The Board consists of parents, faculty, staff and other community members, who serve 2-year, staggered terms. The bylaws of the Board are available in the school office. Board meetings are held monthly, or more often if necessary, and agendas are posted on the school bulletin board at least 24 hours before a Board meeting. If you would like a Board meeting agenda emailed to you before each meeting please contact a Board member. Board meetings are public meetings and all are welcome to attend. The entire school community votes to fill open Board seats every Spring. Those interested in running for open Board seats are welcome and invited to contact the Board. There is a procedure in place for the petitioning for the removal of a Board member where there is just cause.

The Administration

The School Administrator is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the School, supervises the teachers, works to ensure compliance with State requirements, and is available to assist parents with questions or concerns. The Administrative Assistant works at the front desk and supports the work of the Administrator. The Administrator and Faculty Chair meet regularly to plan weekly faculty meetings.

COMMUNICATION BUILDS COMMUNITY

Desert Star Community School uses the following methods to communicate with and to strengthen our community.

Parent/teacher Conferences and Conversations

We have regularly scheduled dates throughout the school year for parent/teacher conferences. There may be other times that teacher or parent would like to share observations with respect to a child's participation in our program. At such times, a parent/teacher conversation may be arranged by appointment. All teachers are available for parent conferences during the school week, contact individual class teachers for an appointment. Please do not engage your class teacher in a lengthy conversation when children are present or directly before school begins. It is important for teachers to keep their focus on the students before and during the school day.

Newsletters and Updates

Notices about upcoming events, classroom activities, and committee/faculty/Board information are sent home in newsletters and email updates on a regular basis to keep parents up-to-date and involved.

Bulletin Board

The school now has a bulletin board outside the office. Here you will find posted a school year calendar and monthly/weekly events. You will also see photos and press releases of recent school and students activities. Important announcements like the Board meeting agendas will also be posted here.

Desertstarschool.org Website

Our website is another way to stay up-to-date with what is going on in our school community. We are working to update our website regularly with important information for parents. Please check it as often as you can.

Class Meetings

Each class teacher will schedule a minimum of three class meetings throughout the year. It is extremely important for each family to be represented at these meetings. Content may include:

- Outline of the year
- Daily schedule
- Characterization of the child at this age
- Discussion of the current block
- Social issues
- Questions and concern from parents

These meetings help to cultivate the culture of your child's class with teacher and parents working together.

WHY FUNDRAISING IS ESSENTIAL AT DESERT STAR

Desert Star relies heavily on our parent's support to continue to serve our community. As an Arizona State Charter School, Desert Star is not eligible to receive State funds to acquire, build, maintain or remodel our facility. The school you see today is the product of the hard work and commitment of many dedicated volunteers from our community. Charter schools are also at a disadvantage in comparison to district schools because they are not able to participate in general school district bond issues or to access override funds. There is a lack of government funding available to charter schools for special education, business/financial services, administrative and custodial services, all of which are available to district schools. Charter schools all depend on their parent community for continued financial support to survive.

The good news is that despite the financial hurdles charter schools must endure, Desert Star can to bring a highly valued Waldorf education to all, at no charge. As you may know, obtaining a Waldorf education in a private Waldorf school in this country costs at least \$10,000 per year. To have access to this type of education for free is a rare opportunity that we are blessed to have here in Arizona. We count on your continued support to via annual State Tax Credit donations, cash donations, in-kind donations and your valuable time and expertise to keep this educational option alive for children for now and in the future. The school is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 corporation, so all donations are tax-deductible.

PARENT/GUARDIAN GUIDELINES

Any person on the school campus is expected to uphold the behavior expectations outlined in the Discipline Policy. In addition parents must follow these guidelines when interacting with students on campus or during any school sponsored activity, (on or off campus):

1. We are a drug and smoke free campus. Drugs, alcohol and tobacco may not be consumed on campus or in the presence of students, including on field trips.
2. It is expected that everyone interacting with students use appropriate language at all times. Profanity is not permitted.
3. Any person chaperoning a field trip or school activity is under the direct supervision of the class teacher. Make sure you have a clear understanding of this policy and the teacher's expectation of you in this role. If you are not functioning in an official chaperone or supervision capacity, do not take it upon yourself to discipline any student.
4. Be aware of the conversations you are engaged in around the children. For example, it is not appropriate to discuss a concern about a teacher or other staff member in the presence of students. This also includes negative "parking lot" talk.
5. Teachers are on campus to teach our students. Please respect their work. Parents are encouraged to visit and participate in classroom activities, however these visits must be pre-

scheduled with the teacher and/or the office. All parents must check in at the office and get a name tag. Parent guidelines for visiting classrooms will be given.

6. We ask that you follow the guidelines set forth in the Nutrition Guidelines section of this handbook when contributing food or drinks to a school activity, including class trips. The class teacher should approve any food or drink that you plan to bring.

DESERT STAR'S ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC

One aspect of the overall vision of Desert Star Community School is to create a school that respects the environment and promotes sustainable living philosophies. Our goal is to develop an environmental education program for the students and our long-term vision includes a "green campus" where environmental architecture and sustainable living practices are incorporated.

Desert Star values establishing practices such as:

1. Composting in our school garden
2. Recycling and waste reduction
3. Carpooling to reduce emissions and gas consumption
4. The use of non-toxins. There will be an effort to choose non-toxic cleaning supplies, building materials and environmentally safe materials.
5. Going organic. We practice organic gardening and refrain from using pesticides, herbicides or chemical fertilizers when possible.
6. Once a month, teacher and students participate in the "Clean, Green Scene" program in which we tidy, tend and take care of our campus.
7. Our Environmental Science Program teaches conservation and preservation ethics.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Desert Star Community School uses many assessment tools to monitor the growth and development of students. These include:

Teacher observation (daily interaction that allows teachers to see where students excel, where they are challenged, what works, what does not, not only academically, but also socially and artistically)

Portfolio assessment (analysis of a collection a student's work over time which shows the level of progress being made)

Informal tools (quizzes, activities, etc. that teachers make or find to help determine how well students are grasping material being presented in class or how they are progressing with basic language and mathematical skills)

State and federally mandated Standardized tests.

These assessments help teachers continually adjust to meet the individual needs of students and also allow Desert Star to monitor how well we as a school are meeting our goal of providing an exceptional learning environment. Throughout the year, parents are informed of student growth in the following ways:

1. Informal conversation (your child's teacher will let you know how and when to contact him or her to touch base as to how your child is doing)
2. Parent evenings
3. Twice a year parent/teacher conferences
4. Mid-year written progress report
5. End-of-the-year narrative report

STANDARDIZED TESTING

As a charter school, Desert Star is required to administer standardized tests annually. Currently, students in grades 2 through 7 are being tested in the spring per Arizona Department of Education guidelines. In addition to meeting state requirements, these tests can be a valuable tool to the school, when viewed in light of a multi-faceted approach to assessment. Our expectation is that the students will approach their experience of standardized testing in the same joyful, confident way that they approach any other aspect of their school life.

NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

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. These rights are:

(1) 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 School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

(2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate.

Parents or eligible students may ask the School to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate. They should write the School principal [or appropriate school official], clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate. 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.

(3) 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, which 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.

[Optional] 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 parent or student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request.]

(4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School District to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-590

Child Find

All Public agencies must have in place an effective method to locate and identify children birth through 21 years of age who may have delays or disabilities and may require an evaluation in order to receive needed early intervention supports or special education services. For complete information on regulations of Child Find, you may review the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which is located in the Desert Star Community School office.



The mission of Desert Star Community School is to provide an education that considers the needs of the whole child, develops the full diversity of human intelligence within each individual, and instills a life-long love of learning. Our purpose is to inspire and empower students to reach their full academic and creative potential so they may lead fulfilling, purposeful lives and make a positive contribution to the multi-cultural society and world community in which they live.

