Dear Parents and Caregivers,
Welcome to Santa Fe School for the Arts & Sciences! All of the teachers and staff are looking forward to a wonderful year with you and your children. Please read our handbook carefully and feel free to call if you have any questions.

SFSAS Mission & Vision

Mission
Santa Fe School for the Arts & Sciences achieves academic excellence in an environment of respect, inclusion and diversity, utilizing Expeditionary Learning, global perspectives and a multicultural art and science enriched curriculum.

Vision
Each child's talents are fully developed, leading to a life-long passion for learning and exploration in a caring environment where each child has opportunities for self-expression and growth. The school exemplifies and encourages the values of compassion, leadership, world citizenship and service.

Santa Fe School for the Arts & Sciences is a non-profit, independent Expeditionary Learning school, committed to providing a challenging, engaging education for children ages 3 through 8th grade. Our Unicorn class is a Reggio Emilia inspired Preschool/Pre-Kindergarten classroom. We are committed to providing stimulating and enriching educational opportunities in a nurturing, child centered environment. We welcome children who have learning differences, including gifted and talented. We have inclusive classrooms where children’s individual learning styles and unique strengths are fostered. We celebrate the joy of play and learning that occurs when children are encouraged to explore and question the world around them at their own pace.

Guiding Principles
Our Guiding Principles are based on six character values: Respect, Trust, Courage, Honesty, Compassion and Stewardship.

Non-Discrimination Statement
The Santa Fe School for Arts & Sciences does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, gender, national or ethnic origin, language(s) spoken, sexual orientation, or disability in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, financial aid programs, and other school-administered programs.

Sanctuary School
We consider ourselves to be a Sanctuary School, where all students and families may find compassion, understanding, and a safe haven from discrimination.

Expeditionary Learning
Expeditionary Learning is an approach to learning that combines rigorous academic content and real world projects, called "learning expeditions". Learning expeditions are in-depth,
interdisciplinary learning units, which require students to engage in sophisticated research, and connect to the community in authentic ways. Students document their learning with high quality products and portfolios, which are presented to families and teachers. The energy and sustained creativity of the staff is what helps make an Expeditionary Learning school successful.

Expeditionary Learning schools create a culture of respect and high expectations for staff and students alike. Teachers in Expeditionary Learning schools receive intensive professional development in curriculum and teaching practices and are able to model ongoing learning to their students. At Santa Fe School for the Arts & Sciences, teachers, parents, staff, and students work together to create a school culture of collaboration, respect, and high expectations.

The Reggio Emilia Approach
The Reggio Emilia Approach is a reflective practice created by parents and community members in a small province in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Each Reggio Emilia world-wide program reflects the individual culture of each school that practices this approach. Principles of this approach include:

- deeply valuing that children are competent and capable
- collaboration between parents, teachers and children is essential
- the environment is a crucial part of the learning experience
- the learning process is made visible through documentation
- in-depth studies are based on children’s interests
- teachers engage in ongoing collaborative planning and professional development

Parent Participation
Parent involvement is deeply appreciated, needed and encouraged. Our school is a place where parents feel welcome as partners in the education of their children. We invite fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and caregivers to volunteer time to help out at the school; driving on field trips, sharing your talents with a class, fundraising, construction, etc. All parents and guardians are members of our Parent Association, and are encouraged to participate in Parent Association meetings and activities.

Parent Sharing
We invite any parent to sign up for a talent/work sharing session in the classroom. Sharing about your job, demonstrating a craft or hobby, reading a favorite story, showing slides from a trip, baking a snack, etc are just a few examples of ways parents can share. Please be sure to fill out our parent volunteer form and let us know how you would like to be involved at our school.

School Events
Certain school events are mandatory for parents to attend:

- Back-to-School Night
- Fall Parent-Teacher Conference
- Wintercomes
● Student Drama Production
● Portfolio Conference
● Summercomes (Graduation)

As these events approach, more information will be communicated from your child’s teacher or the administration.

Classroom Observations
Observations can occur just about any time during the school year and can help give you an idea of your child’s day. Please schedule this day a week in advance, as we limit the number of other adults observing each day. We suggest that you observe after October 1st to give all children a chance to acclimate. We do have an open door policy, however, if you wish to just pop in for a moment to check on your child or drop something off. Please be aware that children may sometimes behave differently when they know that a parent is watching.

Parent-Teacher Conferences
Conferences are scheduled up to three times a year, as noted on our school calendar. Conferences typically run approximately 30 minutes and are scheduled in advance. Teachers are available most days at the end of each school day to check in with parents as needed. Additionally, please call your child’s teacher if you would like to set up a time to meet throughout the school year. This ensures a more focused time to discuss your child. Please don’t ever hesitate to arrange a meeting with your child’s teacher!

Ongoing Communication
Any time you need to speak with a teacher during the school day (for example, you will be late picking up your child, there is a family emergency, you need to give your permission for a different person to pick up your child at the end of the day, etc.) please call our school office phone: 438-8585. This phone will almost always be answered during the school day. If you are unable to reach us, or you need to contact the principal after school hours, please call our Principal’s cell phone: 670-1556.

Open and honest communication is essential to a positive school experience for your child. Please let us know as soon as possible if there are any major changes in your child’s life, so we can be supportive at school. All information is confidential. We, in turn, will keep you informed of any events, which may have impacted your child’s school day, or any significant changes in the school environment. We value your feedback and concerns and will do our best to facilitate daily communication so that we all can flourish in an atmosphere of honesty, integrity and kindness.

If you have a concern or suggestion, please speak to an appropriate member of the staff at the end of the school day. Unfortunately, we will not be able to have conversations with parents in the classroom when school is in session. If you have a concern or question about your child’s school experience, please speak first with your child’s teacher. If you feel that the issue needs further attention after speaking with your child’s teacher, please speak with the Principal.
Separation issues
Children thrive at school when they know their parent(s) is confident in their school experience. Children need to know you have chosen a safe environment in which they will play and learn. If children feel you are unsure, they will not feel safe about your leaving. Oftentimes, children just love their parents so much and naturally feel sad when separated from them, especially in a new situation. Please always be honest with your child when leaving and let them know when you are leaving. Be clear that you will return after the afternoon rest and playtime. It is OK to stay with your child for some time before school starts if needed. Parents are also welcome to come and eat lunch with the children.

Arrival
Please drive slowly into and around the circular driveway near the entrance to the school and park carefully in the main parking lot next to the Unicorn playground. You may enter through the Unicorn playground back gate. Please always hold your child’s hand when walking in the parking lot. Arrival time is 8:10-8:30. Please do not come in prior to 8:10 am.

Between 8:10-8:30 am- Upon entering the building please sign in your child, drop off his/her lunch, backpack, etc. in his/her cubby, then accompany your child to the playground and check in with the teacher on duty. All children will play in the playground from 8:10-8:45, weather permitting. Class starts at 8:45 am. This is an important time for your child to build relationships with their peers at school, which helps ease their transition into the classroom.

At 8:45 am - we ask all parents to say goodbye to your child, unless you have made arrangements with your teacher to stay for a bit. We ask all parents who would like to continue to socialize, to please not do so in the Unigazer playground, classrooms or hallways. Parents are welcome to socialize in the main plaza or next to Underhill Hall, or quietly in the Unigazer shoe room.

We respectfully ask all parents to be on time to ensure a smooth transition for all the children in the classroom. If you are running late, please call the school to let us know.

Departure
School ends at 3:00. Children may be picked up between 3:00 and 3:10 pm. No child may leave school with anyone other than a parent unless designated in writing by the parent. We will ask for photo identification if we do not recognize the person. No child may ever be picked up by a sibling or driver younger than 16 years of age. No child will be allowed to leave the premises without staff being informed. Please take a moment to check that your child has her/his daily take home items and that you pick up any notices from your mailbox or your child’s cubby. If an emergency prevents pick-up on time, please inform us of that fact by calling us in the office at 438-8585 prior to 3:00. Your child will then be admitted to the aftercare program and you will need to pay the drop in fee for aftercare. If you do not call to let us know you are running late, an additional fee may be charged. Please always remember to sign out your child when you pick her/him up at the end of the day.
All Unicorn parents must park in the parking lot and come in for their children. Please do not leave your car in the drop off area next to Willow Hall or in the driveway.

Dressing for Play!
Please dress your child for play! Plan on your child getting messy, muddy, painted, etc. We will not rinse or wash clothes. Smocks will be worn when children paint, and we will encourage children to change if needed. Please be sure your child has shoes that are suitable for running around outside. Shoes that are easy for your child to put on and off are also preferable. Be sure to have an extra set of weather appropriate clothes in the classroom as well.

Inclement Weather Policy
We follow the Santa Fe Public Schools for snow delays and closures. Please listen to the radio, check online at www.sfps.info, or watch the TV news for Santa Fe Public School delays and closures. We will also send an email and text message to the school community in the event of a delay or closure. When there is a 2 hour delay, school will start at 10:30 am.

Health and Wellness
We have learned that the best way to keep our students healthy is by keeping students who are ill at home. Please do not send your child to school if any of the following symptoms are present: fever, diarrhea, severe rash, persistent cough, yellow or green mucus, vomiting, sore throat, pin eye, pinworms, lice, chicken pox, or other contagious illnesses. If your child comes to school with any of the above symptoms, we will call you to come immediately and take your child home. If your child becomes ill with a communicable disease, please let us know right away so we can alert others. If your child is not well enough to play outdoors, your child should not come to school as outdoor time is an important part of each day.

For cases of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea, your child must be symptom-free without medication, for 24 hours, before returning to school.

Medication
Medication (prescription, over-the-counter, or homeopathic) is administered only with the written consent of the parent. We will give the medication at the requested time and will note the amount, time, date, and person giving the dosage. Do not put medication in your child’s backpack or lunch box. Please always hand it directly to your child’s teacher. Please note any allergies to medication on enrollment forms.

Rest time
Our Preschool/Pre-Kindergarten is state licensed by the NM State Department of Children, Youth and Families. New Mexico State Licensing regulations require that all children under 6 have some time each day for rest and relaxation. Sleep is not mandatory, however, rest is. Quiet activities will be provided for children who do not fall asleep after 20 minutes.

Field Trips
We will take small group and class field trips occasionally to supplement and enhance our
classroom curriculum. Children earn the opportunity to participate in field trips by demonstrating safe, appropriate and responsible behavior in the class and on the playground. Prior to a field trip, we will notify parents with all the pertinent information. We have a field trip fee, which covers the cost of our field trip program. While all student files will contain a Field Trip Authorization form giving overall consent for field trips, we will still inform all parents when a field trip is planned. When parents decide not to give a student permission to participate on a field trip, the student must not come to school that day (or during the time of the trip) since all staff will be supervising the students on the trip.

**Driving on Field Trips**
To transport students on field trips, we will either use our school bus, driven by our teachers, and/or we will need parent drivers to drive students in their vehicles. In order to be authorized as a parent driver, parents must provide a copy of a valid driver's license, social security number, and proof of current and adequate insurance. Parent drivers must have a vehicle in good working condition with seatbelts for each student, plenty of gas, good tires, and a spare. Parent drivers are completely responsible for the students they are driving. All vehicles used for transportation of children must be equipped with a first aid kit. Parents will need to leave their child’s car seat/booster at school on field trip days. Preschool/Pre-Kindergarten age students must ride in the back seat.

**Birthday Celebrations**
We will celebrate all birthdays during circle time with a birthday circle, where we honor your child’s birth and every year of their life up to their new age. You are welcome to bring in a picture of your child when they were born, and every age up to their new age. Your child is welcome to bring in a favorite book from home. One, or all family members are welcome to join us. If your child is having a party outside of school hours, please send all invitations to the children’s homes by mail or email (see the class list) unless you are inviting everyone in the class. If everyone is invited, invitations can be placed in the school mailboxes. If your child’s birthday is during the summer, we will schedule a half birthday celebration for them. Please let the teachers know then this date comes up.

**Toys and Items from Home**
Toys from home are hard to share and it is difficult to keep track of them. Children may bring one cuddly toy or a special comforting item, but please be sure your child does not bring anything breakable. For Show and Tell we encourage children to bring homemade items, things from nature, stuffed animals, photos, books, musical instruments, something that starts with the Letter of the Week, etc, but please keep home any store bought toys or toys from TV or movies. Toy guns and water pistols are also not allowed. If your child would like to bring a toy from home to share with the class and you are unsure about it, please just ask a teacher before bringing it in.

**Vacations**
We encourage families to take their vacations and trips during school holidays and breaks and not during regular school days. Please speak with your child’s teachers and the Principal before you make your plans, if you are planning to take a vacation during regular school
days. We would like to let you know in advance regarding events and learning your child will be missing.

**Excused Absences**
We understand that there will be times that everyone has to miss school due to illness or family events, or once-in-a-lifetime positive experiences, and we are not referring to these absences. If you must miss school for those reasons, please give your child's teacher plenty of advance notice.

**Tuition Policy**
Please see your individualized tuition agreement contract.

**Financial Aid**
Financial aid is awarded according to financial need, and will be kept confidential by the Executive Director and the Board of Directors. If you apply for financial aid, you will be required to provide personal financial information. You must reapply for financial aid each year. Receiving financial aid one year does not guarantee financial aid for the next year as funds may not always be available.

**Nutritional Policy and Snack times**
We will send home a calendar each month advising parents(s) which days are your days to bring the healthy class snack, which will coincide with your child's Show and Tell day. Please notify teachers and indicate on all medical forms if your child has any food allergies or special food needs. At the beginning of the school year, we will provide a class list of snack ideas that address any food allergies students may have so that every student can eat the group snack brought in by families. You may need to send your child with an individual snack each day if there are special food concerns. Snack is served during the morning after circle time between 9:30 and 10:00. The snack does not need to be completely prepared as we will enlist the help of the students in making the snack. If you prefer to have it all ready, that is also fine. By state regulations, we must serve two food groups per snack.

**Toileting**
In order to be developmentally ready for the Unicorn program, all students must be able to use the toilet independently and be able to change their own clothes with minimal assistance from a teacher when they have toileting accidents. We do not have sufficient staff to change diapers or pull-ups.

**Discipline Philosophy**
Consistent, respectful role modeling by adults along with respectful listening and observing goes a long way toward creating a successful school environment. Staff actions and interactions, body language and voice level, help to set the tone for a respectful classroom. The major focus for the adults is to encourage positive pro-social behaviors; respecting yourself and others, respecting the materials, respecting the world around us.
We create an environment, which is developmentally appropriate to the child's needs and is designed to support a child's positive interaction with others and the materials in a
responsible way. A well-designed and well-equipped classroom helps to prevent frustration and hazards. In addition, our daily schedule provides enough time for play, rest, creativity, a sense of home and security, little waiting and few transitions. We use positive reinforcement to encourage positive behaviors. We give children choices and help them develop tools to solve problems. Conflict resolution is a very important part of our school. We encourage children to voice their concerns, mediate conflicts, work toward compromise and develop internal control. Young children learn by experimenting, testing limits and experiencing the consequences of their behavior. Discipline is the external tool to help children develop internal control. We will maintain a consistent discipline approach throughout the year.

The teacher’s job is to set clear limits that make sense to the age and developmental stage of the child with whom we are interacting. When a child needs direct guidance we use:

- **Problem solving** - What can we do here? How can we make this better? I wonder what to do here? We use and ask questions to encourage problem solving. Teachers help children identify their needs, feelings, causes, alternatives, and choices.

- **Redirection** - Suggest an alternative behavior/activity to the child. Change the focus from the current negative to a desired positive behavior. For a child who may be throwing blocks because of anger, using redirection might involve encouraging the child to throw the bean bags into a tub, or to pound clay instead. Children are encouraged to share their feelings to discover what they need. A child may need redirecting to a one-on-one interaction, a “time in” with a teacher, quiet sitting together and rocking or reading. Sometimes children need to be encouraged to try and work together, “I wonder if the two of you can build a bridge together?”

- **Natural and logical consequences** - When possible, we allow children to experience the consequences of their actions directly related to the behavior; for example, if a child does not come to sit in circle when puppets are being handed out, they miss the chance to immediately hold a puppet.

- **Focusing play** - Entering into play directly with the child and helping them refocus on ways to use the materials constructively.

- **Using positive statements** - Instead of saying, “Don’t throw the clay on the floor,” we say, “Please keep the clay on the table.” When the children are using materials appropriately, we consistently observe, “Look how well you all are working with the clay and keeping it on the table!”

Unacceptable behavior is often the result of the child’s developmental immaturity. The staff works together to reinforce limits and teach alternatives. Acceptable behavior takes time to learn. Opportunities to problem solve are a part of the curriculum, both individually and together as a group.

- **Parents may be asked to take their child home for the remainder of a school day if their child is physically aggressive or intentionally mean to another child.**

We do not believe in the use of any kind of physical punishment or a time out room. If a child needs to be separated from the group, s/he will be supervised by one of the teachers. Children are not denied food, rest or the bathroom as punishment. Toileting habits, or lack
of, will never be a cause for punishment in any form. Children are not deprived of full participation in any significant portion of the program, although a parent may be asked to accompany a child on field trips. Children will not be subjected to any form of emotional abuse, including name calling, ostracism, shaming, teasing, or using language that threatens, humiliates or frightens the child.

**When a child is not adjusting**

We take a team approach to support the growth of every child. When the teachers feel that the usual methods of discipline are not effective or the child’s peers feel unsafe or other children’s parents express valid concern to the teachers, the following procedure will be followed:

1. The child’s behavior will be observed and recorded by the staff member(s) involved, including classroom teachers, Principal, and school counselor.
2. Staff will meet with parents to discuss the behavior and collaborate together on developing a plan to meet the individual needs of the child.
3. Any consultation of outside professionals will occur only with the written approval of the parents, i.e., a psycho-educational evaluator brought in by the parents and teachers and/or an inclusion specialist provided by Children Youth and Families Department, who may address the safety of other children as well as working with the staff and teachers to support the development and behavior of the child of concern.
4. Teachers will again observe and record behaviors. They will discuss with the parents the noted changes in the child’s behavior, and meet again if the child needs additional support.

**Policy for suspension and disenrollment**

If actions to support and address a child’s behavioral issues are not adequate, and/or in the opinion of the teachers and the Principal, a child endangers the safety or well being of another child, or if a child is unreasonably disruptive to the functioning of any class, immediate action may be taken to remedy the situation. A child may not be permitted to return to school until the school has determined that the behavior has been adequately addressed and remedied. Failure to comply with conditions set by the Principal and Executive Director and/or above policies will be grounds for disenrollment. Such action is within the sole discretion of the Principal and the Executive Director.

**Confidentiality policy**

It is our intention to respect the privacy of children and their parents and caregivers, while ensuring that they access high quality early childhood care and education. We aim to ensure that all parents and caregivers can share their information in the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children.

To ensure that all those using and working in the Unicorn program can do so with confidence, we respect confidentiality in the following ways:

- Parents have ready access to the files and records of their own children but do not have access to information about any other child.
- Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except where it affects planning for the child’s needs.
- Staff training includes an awareness of the importance of confidentiality.
Any concerns/evidence relating to a child’s personal safety are kept in a secure, confidential file and are shared with as few people as possible on a “need-to-know” basis.

Personal information about children, families and staff is kept securely in a lockable file whilst remaining as accessible as possible.

Issues to do with the employment of staff, whether paid or unpaid, remain confidential to the people directly involved with making personnel decisions.

All the undertakings above are subject to the paramount commitment of the Unicorn program, which is to the safety and well-being of the child.

Solicitations
Please do not use the school phone/address/email list or the children’s cubbies to solicit business. We have spaces in our newsletter, on our website and on our community board for parents to share about their work and network with other parents. Please do not bring chain letters or advertisements to school as well.

Fire Drills and Emergency Evacuation
Fire drills are held monthly. The drills are held at different times of the day and the children are alerted that there will be a loud noise. Emergency evacuation plans are practiced so children know they will have to leave the building quickly, sometimes without shoes or coats. In an emergency, one staff person calls 911 while other staff supervises the children outside the building. In both cases, roll is called to determine that all children are present.

Emergency plans are clearly posted in each classroom and each classroom has emergency supplies for both sheltering in place and evacuating the campus.

Please feel free to contact us and thank you!
We strongly believe in open, clear, and kind communication for the benefit of children, families, and staff. Please feel free to contact your child’s teachers or the administration if you have any questions about the handbook or child’s school experience.

We look forward to our shared work and experiences, and we thank you for sharing your children’s learning with us!