



Preschool & Kindergarten  
Parent Handbook  
2011-2012

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**Santa Fe School for the Arts & Sciences**  
**5912 Jaguar Drive**  
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**(505)438-8585 (505)920-9709**

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 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Preschool and elementary classes are multi-age, (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>) and we have separate classes for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade in our Middle School. 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.

**Non-Discrimination Statement**

The Santa Fe School for Arts & Sciences does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national and ethnic origin, disability, religion, sex or sexual orientation in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs and athletic and other school-administered programs.

**Expeditionary Learning**

Expeditionary Learning is an approach to learning that combines rigorous academic content and real world projects, called "learning expeditions" with character development and community service. Teachers at Expeditionary Learning schools receive intensive professional development in curriculum and teaching practices and are able to model ongoing learning to their students. The Gates Foundation recently chose Expeditionary Learning as a model example of education and has funded the opening of over 100 EL schools.

Expeditionary Learning schools create a culture of respect and high expectations for staff and students alike. One of the hallmarks of the Expeditionary Learning model is an emphasis on high-

quality student work that inspires craftsmanship and deeper learning. Building a culture of reflection, critique and revision leads students to create better work. This work is created in conjunction with learning expeditions, which are in-depth, interdisciplinary learning units which require students to engage in sophisticated research, use the community in authentic ways, and represent their knowledge with high quality products which are presented to authentic audiences. The energy and sustained creativity of the staff is what helps make an Expeditionary Learning school successful.

Expeditionary Learning....

- Develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills as essential elements of the deep learning that prepares students for success in college and beyond.
- Expeditionary Learning works on developing the character -- as well as the intellect -- of students.
- Expeditionary Learning affects not only how students learn but also a school's culture. Expeditionary Learning supports our school standards, curriculum, assessment, and school organization and provides professional development for our teachers. At a successful Expeditionary Learning school, teachers, parents, staff, and students work together to create a school culture of collaboration, respect, and high expectations.

Learning expeditions draw together personal experience and intellectual discovery to promote self-discovery and the construction of knowledge. We believe that adults should guide students along this journey with care, compassion, and respect for their diverse learning styles, backgrounds, and needs. Addressing individual differences greatly increases the potential for learning and creativity of each student.

Expeditionary Learning harnesses the natural passion to learn and is a powerful method for developing the curiosity, skills, knowledge and courage needed to imagine a better world and work toward realizing it.

### **Parent Participation**

Parent involvement is deeply appreciated, needed and encouraged. We would like our school to be a place where parents always feel welcome as partners in the education of their children. As a parent, we invite you to volunteer time to help out at the school- for example, driving on field trips, sharing your talents with a class, assisting with recess or lunch duty, joining a committee to help with the grounds, fundraising or construction, etc. We have a mandatory Back to School Night for parents each September during which all parents have the opportunity to meet their child's teachers and fellow parents. We have museum nights, an annual play performance and graduation at which all students and a parent are required to attend.

### **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.

### **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 first arrange to 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 and check on your child or drop something off. Please be aware that children will 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 approx. 30 minutes and are scheduled a couple of weeks in advance (a sign up sheet will give several choices of dates and times that you can sign up for). Please call your child's teacher if you would like to set up an additional time to meet. All teachers are also available at the end of each school day to check in with parents as needed or to make a time to meet. 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 920-9709 (our school cell phone).

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 been upsetting to your child at school or any significant changes in the school environment which might affect your child's sense of well-being at school. 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 any member of the staff at the end of the school day or call a teacher or a board member at home. Unfortunately, we will not be able to have conversations with parents in the classroom when school is in session. Anonymous complaints/suggestions may be mailed to the school or left in the rolltop desk in the middle school lobby.

## **Separation issues**

All children need to feel that their parent is confident that they will have a good time. They need to know you have chosen a safe environment for them where 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 up front 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, but we encourage you to play with all of the children and not just focus on your child- this will allow your child to begin to interact with others as well. Parents are also welcome to come and eat lunch with the children.

## **Arrival and Departure**

### **Arrival**

Please drive slowly into and around the circular driveway near the entrance to the school and park carefully in the main parking lot behind 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 8:15-8:30. Please do not come in prior to 8:15 am.**

**Between 8:15-8:30 am-** Upon entering the building please sign your child in, drop off his/her lunch, backpack etc in the cubby and then accompany your child to the playground and check in with the teacher on duty. All children will play in the playground from 8:15-8:45, weather permitting. Class starts at 8:45 am.

**At 8:45**, all children will enter the classroom and any remaining parents will say their goodbyes. (Parents are also welcome to stay in the gazebo or courtyard during the morning.) We ask all parents who would like to socialize and share with each other to please do so outside, or quietly in the hall if it is inclement weather. As the morning is the most important time of your child's day at school we ask all parents to do their best to be on time. If you are running late, please call the school and let us know why you are running late.

### **Departure**

**School ends at 3:00. Children may be picked up between 3:00 and 3:10 pm. School ends at 3:00 pm. 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 a 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 their 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 or on the school cell phone, 920-9709 **prior to 3:00**. Then your child will be admitted to the afterschool program and you will only need to pay the drop in fee for afterschool (\$8/hour). If you do not call to let us know you are running late, then a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 a minute is charged. Please always remember to sign out your child when you pick them up at the end of the day.

At the end of the day, all Unicorn parents must park and come in for their children. Please do not leave your car in the drop off area or in the driveway.

### **Snow Days**

When you are wondering if school is closed or delayed due to snow or icy roads, please listen to the radio or watch the TV for Santa Fe Public School delays and closings, or call 920-9709. If the Santa Fe Public Schools are closed, we are closed (or delayed). 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 the ill students 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, pink 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.

### **Medication** (prescription or homeopathic)

Medication 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 on a form located in your child's file. 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 all admission forms.

### **Rest time**

Our preschool/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 classroom 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 send home a notice 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.

We will either use our school bus, or we will need 4-5 drivers per trip with seatbelts for each student. Drivers are completely responsible for the student's they are driving. Please make sure your car is in good working condition, with plenty of gas, good tires and a spare and functioning seatbelts. All vehicles used for transportation of children must be equipped with a first aid kit. All drivers must have current liability insurance on their automobile policy.

Only children over the legal height limit are allowed in the front seat, and if you have airbags, only children over the age of 12 may sit in the front.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

We will celebrate all birthdays during circle time with a simple ritual. Your child is welcome to bring in a favorite book and/or song for us to share with the class. Family members are welcome to join us. Feel free to send in a healthy snack for 18 children which we will have at snack time, however, this is not required. Please let us know a week in advance if you would like to do this. If your child is having a party outside of school hours, please send all invitations to the children's homes by mail (see the class list) unless you are inviting everyone in the class. If everyone is invited, invitations can be placed in the school mailboxes and/or we can email invitations out to everyone in the class. Children with summer or vacation birthdays are invited to choose another day during the year to celebrate their birth.

### **Toys and Items from Home**

Toys from home are hard to share and it is difficult to keep track of them. Children may bring a 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, 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.

When a student misses school for a vacation it can create a hardship for the teacher and the student, especially if it causes them to miss important events such as class museums and plays. Absences can sometimes cause students to fall behind their peers and they may miss vital curriculum experiences that can not be repeated. This includes field trips, hands on science experiments, guest speakers, the introduction of new math concepts, etc...

Please speak with the principal and your child's teacher 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 such as funerals, or once in a lifetime, positive opportunities and we are not referring to these absences.

### **Tuition Policy**

Please see your individualized tuition agreement contract.

### **Financial Aid**

Scholarships and partial scholarships are awarded according to financial need, and will be kept confidential by the financial director and the board of directors. If you apply for financial aid, you will be required to provide personal financial information. Any scholarship awarded must be reapplied for each year. Receiving a scholarship one year does not guarantee a scholarship for the next year as funds may not always be available.

### **Fundraisers and Workdays**

We will invite all parents to attend our fundraisers and workdays or join our fundraising committee or parent's association and we hope everyone will become involved as much as they can. We welcome any ideas you may have regarding ways you can volunteer!

### **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. Please notify teachers and indicate on all medical forms if your child has any food allergies or special food needs. You may need to send your child with an individual snack each day if there are special food concerns. If your child has a food allergy, or if you prefer that they only eat certain kinds of food (organic) please bring in clearly labeled alternatives (i.e. soy cream cheese or gluten free crackers) for us to keep in the classroom. You can also just send your child in with their own snack everyday.

We discourage snacks containing sugar. Snack is served during the morning after circle time between 9:30 and 11:00. This is only for the preschool/ kindergarten class as the elementary students each bring their own individual snacks. Please come in and prepare the juice or bring it ready made. Please bring the snack already prepared and ready to serve (i.e grapes cut in half, apples sliced, cream cheese on celery already). If you do not have portable serving plates/bowls etc, just bring it in baggies and we can serve it up for you. Any dishes you bring to us will be washed and returned to you (please clearly label any cookwear).

If you miss a snack day, we ask that you bring in a replacement snack on a different day--something that will keep, like string cheeses or crackers, as soon as you are able to. That way we always have something here at the school.

If you realize that you need to change your snack day, please call other parents and trade days with them

Some families bring in birthday treats for their child on their birthday. However, if you don't want your child to have sugar, please bring an alternate treat so that they feel included. We are happy to keep the alternate food choice at school so that you don't have to keep track of the birthday schedule.

A typical class snack may include; 1 large jar of peanut butter, a tray with 30 pieces of celery, 1 box of graham crackers and 1 large jug of apple juice. By state regulations, we must serve two food groups per snack.

Some snack suggestions; Fresh fruit cut in quarters; celery with peanut butter or cream cheese and raisins on top (ants on a log); small carrots and ranch dressing; trail mix or granola with no nuts; yogurt with fruit or raisins; hard boiled eggs; mini pizza bagels; cheese sticks; crackers; cucumbers with creme cheese; veggies and dip; peanut butter on tortillas; pretzels; nori rolls with cucumber or avocado; chips and salsa; mini bagels with butter or cream cheese; animal crackers; mini rice cakes; muffins; fruit juice popsicles; yogurt popsicles; applesauce; corn on the cob.  
Juices- apple, orange, white grape, mixed fruit, etc. All juices must be 100% real fruit juice.

### **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 problem solve. Conflict resolution is a very important part of our school. We encourage children to voice their concerns, mediate conflicts, work toward compromise and help 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 teachers 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;

1. 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.
2. 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. A child may need redirecting to a one-on-one interaction 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?"
3. 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.
4. Focusing play- entering into play directly with the child and helping them refocus on ways to use the materials constructively.
5. Using positive statements- Instead of saying, "Don't throw the clay on the floor," we would say, "Please keep the clay on the table." When the children are using materials appropriately, we would consistently say, "Look how well you all are working with the clay and keeping it on the table!"

Behavior which is unacceptable is the result of the child's developmental immaturity. The staff work 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.

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 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;**

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, recorded, dated and initialed by the staff member(s) involved.
2. Staff will meet with parents to discuss the behavior and develop a program plan to meet the individual needs of the child in question.
3. After one week, the teachers will again observe and record the behaviors. They will discuss with the parents the noted changes in the child's behavior, and the teachers will advise the parents if there has not been enough improvement. If substantial improvement has not occurred, the teachers and the board may then ask the parents to disenroll the child. In the event that disenrollment occurs, the teachers will do their best to help the family find alternative programs or services.
3. Any action taken regarding consultation of outside professionals will occur only with the written approval of the parents.

**The Santa Fe School for the Arts & Sciences policy for suspension or disenrollment**

If, in the opinion of the school's teaching team and board, a child endangers the safety or well being of another child, or if a child is unreasonably disruptive of the functioning of any class, the teaching team may take immediate action to remedy the situation. Such action is within the sole discretion of the team and board and may include suspension or disenrollment of any child whose presence is a danger to the safety or well being of another child or is unreasonably disruptive. Readmission will also be at the sole discretion of the team and board and may be contingent upon conditions the team deems need to be fulfilled before readmission. Failure to comply with condition set by the team and/or above policies will be grounds for disenrollment.

**Confidentiality policy**

It is our intention to respect the privacy of children and their parents and caregivers, while ensuring that they access high quality pre-school 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 pre-school 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 pre-school, 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 throughout the year. 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.

### **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. 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 to take on and off are also preferable. Be sure to have an extra set of clothes in the classroom as well.

If you can imagine it, you can create it.  
If you can dream it, you can become it.  
-William Arthur Ward