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MISSION

To Inspire a Passion for Life-Long Learning

Our Work and Core Values

Escuela del Sol Montessori is an educational community rooted in the understanding of the interdependence of all life; we encourage students of all ages to discover the role each plays in contributing to the community. A not-for-profit organization, Escuela administers multiple programs including Montessori Early Childhood, Elementary school and Junior High classrooms, as well as The Harwood Art Center, our community outreach program based in arts education and service.

Anti-Bias Anti-Racist · Building Awareness

Escuela del Sol Montessori recognizes that biases are inherent in our world. These can include biases for or against racial/ethnic backgrounds, culture, language, gender expression, sexual orientation, family structure, cognitive or physical ability, economic class, and religion. We recognize that every person—staff, parent, child—experiences privilege and oppression differently.

We take an informed, dynamic approach to education that works to identify and respond to discriminatory policies and practices in education. Our school community is founded upon Dr. Montessori's philosophy that education is the catalyst to peace. It is our role as members of this community to mindfully model and guide children to their roles in creating social justice and equity, providing educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners.

In affecting social change, Escuela del Sol Montessori will work with children in a safe and supportive environment where they can communicate and investigate their individual interests and passions together in their community. It is our duty as educators to prepare our staff and environment to provide an inclusive space for every member of our community. To that end, Escuela is committed to:

- Taking a proactive approach to eliminating biases and/or racism in our environment.
- Providing opportunities for children and families to explore and celebrate each other's differences and similarities.
- Building honor and respect for Humanity's differences, recognize bias, and to begin to learn how and why to speak up for what is right.
- Our staff will engage in investigations of our own identity through anti-bias, anti-racist training and continuous reflection.
- By providing guidance on equity, we hope to encourage socially aware and responsible citizens in their communities: locally, nationally, and globally.

Montessori education, while providing many academic opportunities also specifically teaches how to exist in a rich and varied social group that addresses race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, physical & learning abilities, and economic class; purposefully encouraging and empowering children to take an active, problem-solving approach to explore and create strategies for improving social conditions of their communities. We know that this work is never done and it will continue with each passing school year, but it needs to be done as a community of people lifting one another up in hopes of new intellectual, emotional, and social development. At Escuela del Sol Montessori we are lifelong learners.

VISION

As the school's facilities and landscapes are renovated, rebuilt and improved, the campus is becoming an urban oasis, celebrating its history and its future; an environment specially prepared to give voice to the core values embraced and promoted by our community. There will be areas for study, for exploration, for rest and reflection; areas appropriate in size and scope for young people and the adults who are there to provide guidance and learn alongside the children. The campus has areas for play, for gardening and urban farming; classrooms and studios, areas indoors and out to support the organization's programs.

The Escuela / Harwood campus encompasses almost a whole city block from Mountain Rd. to Granite St. and from Sixth to Seventh streets NW. Property acquisition to complete the campus and meet program needs is a goal.

All families are encouraged to join the wider community in exploring the organization's two web sites in order to remain up to date with the organization and its programs. Please visit www.escueladelosol.org and www.harwoodartcenter.org frequently.

HISTORY

Escuela del Sol Montessori was founded in 1968. Families of the school who volunteered their time and efforts formed a Board of Trustees, which ran the school for its first decade. In 1980 the building in the University area that housed the school was sold. A new home was found near Old Town. The buildings were renovated and a new program was started with Ms. Friedje vanGils as Escuela's first Head of School.

A second campus at 1114 7th Street N.W. was added in 1986 to accommodate a new Toddler program and Elementary School. With community support and careful planning, Escuela was able to purchase the property in January 1997. Realizing a long-term goal, Escuela purchased an adjacent property in 1999 to build a new Primary building and consolidate the school on one campus. August 2001 saw the completion of the new classroom building designed by architect Eileen Devereux.

Escuela's facilities include the historic red brick building known as The Harwood Art Center. In 1991 this art center was added to the repertoire of Escuela's educational programs to further serve the community. Escuela del Sol received the 1995 Bravos! award from the Albuquerque Arts Alliance for the school's support of the arts.

As we celebrate many years of service, while setting goals for a sustainable organization, Escuela del Sol Montessori faces the future with ensured stability, growing recognition for its outstanding programs, and widespread community support.



THE HARWOOD ART CENTER

Committed to its mission of life-long learning and understanding the value of community outreach, service and collaboration, Escuela del Sol created The Harwood Art Center in 1991 to

serve as its community outreach program. The building that houses this work was The Harwood Girls' School, founded in 1925; therefore, the name of our art center.

Harwood (as it's commonly known) is a creative center for community and the arts, created to build a sustainable and vibrant local, statewide and regional community by using the arts as a catalyst for personal empowerment, cultural enrichment and social change.

Through Harwood, the organization serves people of all ages from the diverse communities of New Mexico. Harwood initiates opportunities for people to enrich their lives by experiencing and/or creating visual, performing, and literary arts. The Art Center provides studio, performance, and gallery facilities and offers programs, events, exhibitions, lectures, classes, and workshops for students and artists of all ages and skill levels. Through its Harwood Art Center program, Escuela del Sol fosters community involvement, promotes the arts, encourages advocacy, and provides opportunities for life-long learning.

Members of the Escuela del Sol community, that is, families enrolled in the school, have a family membership to the Harwood Art Center. Members receive newsletters, invitations to special events, and special rates on Harwood classes. Several local businesses also provide discounts on their goods and services for Harwood members. For more information, please call the Community Relations Coordinator at 242-6367.



SCHOOL ADMISSIONS & PROCEDURES

Escuela del Sol Montessori admits students without regard to religion, race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, gender, disability, sexual orientation or gender identification. Please visit the web site www.escueladelisol.org for detailed information, online forms and scheduling opportunities to visit the school.

Applicants are given priority in the following order:

1. Families committed to continuing through Escuela's Elementary and Jr. High programs.
2. Siblings of students continuing at Escuela del Sol Montessori
3. Children of Escuela alumni
4. All other qualified applicants

The school seeks to create classroom communities balanced by gender and age. In general, the school prefers to admit children at age three or younger. Older students will be considered on an individual basis, as space allows, with preference given to students with previous Montessori experience. Please note: if a family withdraws a child before the end of Primary, that decision may affect the admission of younger siblings.

All information obtained in the admission process is confidential and will be used only in the admission process. This information will not be available to the candidate, parents, or anyone outside the school's admission office.

Financial Assistance

All current and prospective Escuela del Sol families are eligible to apply for tuition assistance. The amount of assistance is limited and varies from year to year.

Criteria:

1. Continue support for families currently receiving assistance
2. Provide funds that enable families already enrolled in the school to stay with the school
3. Consider all other requests

Within this context, preference is given in the distribution of financial assistance to students committed to staying through the entire educational program of the school.

Application Process for Tuition Assistance: Please find information and a link to the financial aid application at www.escueladelsol.org

Classroom Placement

At each level, children are clustered in small learning communities for a multi-year period of time. These small communities provide a number of advantages not found in conventional schools. Children work with others who are older and younger than themselves. The older students serve as role models and tutors for the younger students, and in the process, they gain confidence in their own abilities and self-esteem regarding their skill level and expertise. The younger ones watch the older ones, and in the process gain a clear vision of what's expected of them, while having the benefit of working with and learning from their peers as well as the guide. This small community is a direct preparation for life in the family and in the workplace. Communicating and working well with others are important life skills.

The Placement Process: In conventional school settings, a child's placement in a classroom is often determined randomly, or according to school needs. Escuela del Sol is not an adult-centered educational system; it is child-centered. When students are moving from one program into another, their gifts and challenges are recognized; students are placed in a learning community that our faculty determines as best for that individual.

Administration and faculty work hard to make sure that children are placed in an environment where their needs will be met. If parents or guardians have particular concerns about their child's learning style during a time of transition, we invite them to meet with the Program Directors to discuss those concerns.

SCHOOL POLICIES & RECORDS REQUIRED

Immunization Policy

As of January, 2020, all students must have proof of up-to-date immunizations with the following exceptions:

- A) Waivers for new students will be limited to approved medical exemptions from a duly licensed physician. A letter from the medical provider must accompany the exemption form.
 - B) Currently enrolled students holding waivers (religious or medical) will be grandfathered in to continue attending school through the end of May 2020. In order to re-enroll for the 2020 - 2021 school year, parents must submit documents of their intention to a) bring students up to date for all required immunizations or b) present a medical exemption (see exemption requirements).
- From January 2020 on, Escuela del Sol reserves the right to decline admission or re-enrollment to any child who is not fully immunized.
 - Escuela del Sol reserves the right, during outbreaks of illness, to exclude from the school any child who has not been fully immunized. In such cases there will be no refund or adjustment of tuition.

- Enrolled children are required to keep their immunizations up-to-date in order to remain at the school.
- In addition to the above, each student enrolled at Escuela del Sol must be in compliance with the requirements of state law and regulation concerning immunizations.
- For children, “fully immunized” means, at a minimum, that the child has received the immunizations required by state law and regulation for attendance at public schools. In addition, Escuela del Sol may add immunizations required for “full immunization” in consultation with the school’s medical advisers.
- All employees of Escuela del Sol are required to be fully immunized.

Enrollment Contract

These contracts are completed online; after admission, parents or guardians are given a link to the enrollment contract. Please read the enrollment contract carefully as you fill it out.

For the Elementary and Jr. High School Programs: Note that signer(s) of the enrollment contract are obligated to pay the full school year’s tuition, in its entirety, if a student is not withdrawn before July 1 previous to the start of a school year.

For Early Childhood Programs (Toddler and Primary), signer(s) of the enrollment contract are obligated to pay the full school year tuition, in its entirety, if the student is withdrawn after February 1 of the school year. In addition, one month’s notice, in writing, is required prior to withdrawal.

Records Required

An Enrollment Contract, Student Admission Record, health records (that include immunizations, allergies, and/or illnesses the school should be aware of), emergency contact numbers, permission for emergency care and transportation, as well as the child’s doctor’s name and number are all required by the State of New Mexico. This information must be kept updated. Parents should notify the school of any changes in these records (e.g., address, email and phone changes).

For children whose parents are divorced or in any other situation where custody may be an issue, clear direction regarding matters of custody must be filed with the school office and the classroom guide.

Tuition and Fees

Annual Tuition / Fee schedules are posted on the school’s website: www.escueladelsol.org. Tuition-related questions should be addressed to Escuela’s bookkeeper, Jodie Martinez (jodie@edelsol.org.). All policies related to the payment of tuition and fees are on the fee schedules.

Illness / Injury

If your child has suffered a severe injury or is seriously ill, we will call 911. The emergency system transports all critically injured people and most seriously ill children to UNM Hospital, according to a citywide protocol. We will contact you after we call 911.

If your child is less severely injured, or ill, we will attempt to contact you first. However, we will not delay needed care to do so, and will call your pediatrician and/or emergency contacts if we think this is appropriate.

Consent: Your permission is needed before your child can be treated unless a true emergency exists. Make sure the consent statement found on your child’s Student Admission Record is signed and dated by a parent or legal guardian.

The child's teachers will report any minor injuries and accidents to parents at the end of the day. Please help minimize the spread of illness among our students. If your child has any infectious illness (cold or fever, chicken pox, diarrhea, strep throat, conjunctivitis, etc.) keep him/her home and call us so we can alert our other parents. Children who are sick should not be at school. If a child is not well enough to play outdoors and interact actively with other children, the child is too sick to come to school.

A child who is not feeling well or who has a contagious rash or ailment such as "pink eye" will be sent home. When a child becomes ill at school, parents will be called. If parents cannot be reached, the family's emergency contacts will be called to pick up the child.

If your child is going to be absent or is ill, please call the school before 9 a.m. The following is a list of symptoms to guide you in deciding whether your child should be sent to school. Do not send your child to school on days when any of the following symptoms are present or were present the night before:

Fever (temperature over 98.6F)	Diarrhea
Rash	Impetigo
Persistent cough	Pink eye
Earache	Vomiting
Discharge of discolored or profuse amounts of mucus from the nose	Sore throat
	Live head lice or nits

Medication

Our staff can only administer medication with written permission from a parent or legal guardian. Medication must be given to the child's guide and must be in the original container labeled with the child's name, name of medication, dosage, and time it is to be given. Only prescribed medications such as antibiotics and medications for chronic problems such as asthma will be given. Medical authorization forms are available in the office.

Make sure that the office and the teachers are aware of any health conditions such as special diets, allergies, etc., your child may have.

Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect

Faculty and staff are trained to recognize the indicators of child abuse/neglect. If a staff member suspects child abuse/neglect this will be noted in writing, the Head of School alerted, and the Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) notified, if warranted. If child abuse, in our opinion, may have occurred, it is our legal responsibility to notify CYFD.

Emergency Procedures

Escuela's Emergency Procedures, Safety Policies, and Disaster Preparedness Plan are available in the school office.

NO Nuts, Please! Escuela del Sol is a nut-free campus; this includes not only peanuts but all tree nuts as well (cashews, pistachios, almonds, walnuts, pecans, macadamias, piñon/pine nuts, hazelnuts, etc.) We ask that you do not send snacks OR lunches that contain any form of nut. (Please remember that every granola bar, whether the ingredient list includes nuts or not, most likely contains trace amounts due to shared processing/packaging facilities.) We understand that for some families nuts are a staple and a great source of protein but for others however, exposure to them is, quite frankly, a matter of life or death. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter.

Weapons Policy

Escuela del Sol Montessori, Inc., prohibits anyone from carrying a handgun, firearm, or weapon of any kind onto its property. This ban is consistent with NMSA Section 30-7-2.1, as amended, except that this policy does not allow any exception for firearms carried by persons over the age of 19 on school premises in a private automobile or other private means of conveyance.

This policy applies to all school and art center partners and all persons who are on the premises of Escuela Del Sol or the Harwood Art Center for any reasons, except as noted below. The only exceptions to this policy are police officers and/or security guards who bring weapons on campus to carry out their duties as in the case of emergencies or illegal intrusions.

Prohibited weapons include any form of weapon or explosive restricted under local, state or federal regulation including all firearms, illegal knives or other weapons covered by the law.

"School property" covered by this policy includes, without limitation, all buildings and grounds owned or leased by Escuela del Sol Montessori, Inc.

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION for ALL SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Orientation

At the beginning of the year, Escuela will provide orientation for all parents. Additionally, Toddler Community faculty will arrange a home visit to first respectfully meet these youngest members of our community within their comfort zones, before they arrive at school. Orientation, whether on campus or personal visit, is essential for helping your child get off to a good start. Orientation will cover both practical information and the Montessori approach; everything from drop-off to lunches, from developmental considerations to academic preparation will be covered. If you have any questions that are not answered, please do not hesitate to contact the school office for more information.

Arrival and Pick-up of Children

Escuela del Sol is open Monday thru Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Elementary School classes start promptly at 8:15 a.m., Junior High, Primary and Toddler at 8:30 a.m. Children should arrive no later than 5-10 minutes before the start of class, and no earlier unless signed up for extended care. All children should be picked up within 10 minutes of the end of their session. Anyone picking up his/her child more than 10 minutes late will be charged for childcare at the rate of \$10.00 per hour, for a minimum of one hour. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of being on time and of making sure your child's guides know your plans. Whenever there is a change in the student's transportation plans or pick-up time, please let guides know.

Children will be released only to persons known to the staff and to those for whom we have written permission. Unless Escuela is notified in advance or the child has a note requesting otherwise, the child will not be released. Please be sure a staff member is aware of your child's arrival and departure from school.

Sign-in and Out

There are iPads outside of each classroom to notate when your child arrives and departs. This must be done daily as your child arrives and leaves the school. We ask for your cooperation with this important procedure. It is done for your child's safety and is a State requirement. If you have any questions about the sign-in/out procedure, please ask your child's teacher. These are legal documents; please do not allow children to sign themselves in.

Parking

Toddler families: Park in our paved south parking lot (entering from Granite Street, exiting onto 7th Street) and walk your child into school. NEVER park in the fire lane. Please use extreme caution in the parking lot.

Primary & Elementary families: We hope you will take advantage of our curb-side drop off system in our south parking lot. From 8–8:15 a.m., Elementary faculty is available to assist your student(s) in disembarking from the vehicle and walking to class. Drop off is available to Primary families from 8:10–8:30. Senior Elementary School families: Students can enter and exit from the front of the Harwood Art Center (on 7th Street).

Lunch

Lunches can be purchased from The Harwood Cafe. For questions regarding price and menu, please visit the lunch page on the school website: <http://www.escueladelosol.org/hot-lunch-program/>

If your child brings lunch from home: Please be aware that we have very limited refrigerator space and time to microwave. Please use ice packs when necessary, send hot foods in thermoses, and do NOT pack frozen dinners. Mark lunches with the child's name. It is not necessary to provide a drink; the school will provide drinks for the children. Please do NOT pack sodas in your child's lunch.

Delays and Closures

Escuela follows APS decisions regarding delays and closures. If APS is closed or on an abbreviated schedule due to severe weather or poor driving conditions, Escuela will follow suit. If APS is on a 2-hour delay all classes (Toddler, Primary, Elementary School, Junior High will begin at 10:30 a.m. (There will be no early morning childcare.) Do not arrive to the school before 10:00 a.m., there will be no teachers on campus before then.

In the event of a snowstorm during the day it may be necessary to close early. Please listen to KOB television or radio (local channel 4, 93.3 FM/770 AM) for announcements of schedule changes or early closures.

Extended Care

If you need to leave your child at Escuela for extended hours, please notify the office at least one day in advance. The charge for drop-in extended care is noted in the applicable Tuition and Fee Schedule, with a minimum charge of one hour. Please note: there is no extended care available for students in grades 7, 8 or 9 at this time.

Changes in Home Routine

Please keep the staff informed of changes in a child's normal routine. Occurrences such as parents being away, separations, divorces, deaths or illness in the family, etc., can sometimes be the source of changes in your child's behavior. When the guides are aware and understand the child's behavior, they can be more helpful to the child.

Dress

Children of all ages should come to school in clothing that is comfortable yet neat and clean. Do not expect your children's clothing to get soiled from playing and participating in activities such as cooking, painting, etc. Children in our Toddler and Primary are asked to bring extra changes of clothing (please see supply lists). Students' apparel should reflect respect for oneself and for others. Do not allow your child to wear clothing that is torn, overly baggy or improperly tight and/or revealing. We ask that clothing not display wording or graphics that are disrespectful and/or rude.

In-Service/Staff Work Days

Escuela faculty and staff will take up to three in-service days during the school year. These days are a necessary part of the school year because they provide professional development and work time (for making classroom materials, meetings, etc.) for the staff. Staff work-days contribute to the excellent quality of care your children receive at Escuela. The school will be closed these days; no childcare will be available.

Discipline & Confidentiality

Discipline will include positive guidance, redirection, and the setting of clear limits that foster the child's own ability to become self-disciplined. Disciplinary practices are designed to encourage the child to be fair, to respect persons and property, and to assume personal responsibility and responsibility for others.

Student records, family situations, medical history, children's school performance, behavior, etc., are held private and confidential. Teachers will never discuss a child with anyone other than that child's own parent(s)/guardian(s) unless written consent to do so has been given by those parents(s)/guardian(s); or when consulting with another staff member or administrator.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

(ages 18 mos. – 6 yrs.)



The child's school journey begins here at Escuela del Sol. The Early Childhood programs encompass the toddler (18 months – 3 yrs.) and Primary (Preschool, ages 3 yrs. – 6 yrs.) classrooms. Classrooms are carefully designed spaces where specially trained and experienced Montessori teachers guide each individual child's personal growth.

The **Toddler Community** is a young child's introduction to the larger world. Toddler Guides nurture the development of social skills, sensory exploration, independence and self-expression in an unhurried atmosphere of love and respect.

In the **Primary classrooms**, children from three to six years old are in a period of amazing brain development and physical growth. They long for challenging, meaningful, authentic experiences with real materials and concrete concepts. These classrooms are perfectly designed for the early childhood years to meet the unique needs of this stage of life, fostering movement, intellectual development, and social awareness. Everything is child-sized, from the custom-made tables and chairs to the shelves, vases, plates and utensils, even (and especially) the toilets.

Dedicated and trained teachers lead activities that develop motor skills, build hand strength and refine movement. Running, carrying, climbing, grasping knobs, doing puzzles, handling paint brushes and crayons, pushing carts, taking walks – all of these build skills and confidence. We also focus on building social skills – an area of challenge and growth. Children celebrate classmates' birthdays and other special occasions, learn each other's names and families, care for classroom pets and plants, and develop important skills of empathy and being part of a group.

Snacks · Birthdays

Morning snacks are provided by parents for Toddler and Primary classrooms. Snacks should be wholesome and sugar-free (even birthday snacks!). Your children's teachers will provide ideas and guidelines for you as they welcome your family to the school community.

Progress Reports and Conferences

Teachers will generate two written progress reports during each year. These reports, provided via email at the end of each semester, will reflect your child's / children's social, emotional, physical, creative and academic work.

In the fall and spring of each year, parents must attend parent-teacher conferences to discuss their child's/children's development and experiences at school. The school strongly encourages parents to contact their classroom guide(s) if questions or concerns arise. Our faculty is happy to arrange after-school meetings to stay in touch with parents, working together as a team on behalf of our students.

Outside Assessment and Guidance

The Montessori classroom can accommodate the needs of a wide range of children; some are able to receive special attention within that context. However, there are others who are not well served within a Montessori environment.

The school and its staff are committed to open and ongoing dialogue with parents regarding special concerns about every child's progress. The classroom guide, in conjunction with the Program Coordinators and the Head of School, may, at times, request outside assessment and guidance for working with individual students.

Transitions/Classroom Placements

Continuity is the hallmark of the Montessori experience, as children stay in the same classroom for at least two or three years, sometimes more. This stability provides for both security and growth, as the child's role within the group changes over time from being one of the youngest in the class to one of the oldest. The psychologist Alfred Adler identified birth order in the family as one of the most important determinants of personality. In a Montessori classroom, every child has the opportunity to be first a youngest child, then a middle child, and finally an oldest child within his or her classroom family. This contributes to the child's personal growth in ways that traditional, single-age groupings cannot. Even so, children do make at least four transitions as they move through the entirety of the school's programs.

For some children, entrance into a Primary classroom is their first school experience. Others move to Primary from the Toddler Community. Independent care of self is one sign of readiness for the Primary; this may include toileting and dressing. We also look to a child's sense of order and independence. The sense of order can be seen in careful handling of classroom materials and in following a daily routine. Independence is shown by the child's successful separation from the parents, in the ability to choose his or her own work in the classroom and in his or her ability to verbally express his or herself. Some children benefit from spending more than three years in the Primary program before transitioning to the Elementary School.



ELEMENTARY

(grades 1 - 6)

The transition from Primary into Elementary marks the end of the first plane of development and the onset of the second plane. The minimum age for beginning the Elementary Program is six years by the start of school. In determining a child's readiness for moving to the Elementary, faculty first considers social and emotional maturity. We also look closely at the child's academic skills; she/he needs to be reading and writing with some fluency to prosper at the Elementary level. The student also needs to have a strong sense of self-direction and independence, and the ability to work with concentration - alone or in cooperation with a group.

At about age 9, students transition to the Sr. Elementary classroom. Each student's transition is considered by a joint committee of Junior and Senior Elementary faculty, in conjunction with the Head of School, and in consultation with parents. To make this transition successfully, the student must demonstrate increased independence, in terms of both academic skills and personal responsibility. Academically, he or she needs to be ready for complex research and mathematical problem-solving. The student needs a high degree of self-

direction to be able to consistently choose challenging work. Additionally, he or she must be a respectful and cooperative member of the classroom community.

One of the best descriptors of the Senior Elementary classroom was written by Mr. Sam Freed, an alumnus of the school; we share his story here:

There are many things about a Montessori classroom that stand out as different from that of a typical elementary school. Taking even a cursory glance around, someone who was expecting a more standard classroom set-up would certainly take note of the free-flowing nature of the class, the organized chaos, the clusters of students sitting criss-cross on the carpet, some drawing maps of Asia and others building models of water molecules. More still, on the far side of the room, practicing their weaving on miniature looms, and in the corner it would be hard not to notice the 3 1/2 foot long Argentine Black and White Tegu lizard having its midday frozen mouse dropped into its tank by two squealing fourth graders.

*I can see myself in there, sometime mid-2008, although it might take you a while to spot me. I'm not by the back window, taking advantage of the extensive and expensive science equipment, nor am I taking in the brief lesson on basic trigonometry happening on the floor. I'm sitting alone in a small, rectangular space hidden between three shelving units, huddled over a copy of *Animal Farm*. We called this "The Silent Reading Corner," and no, it was not considered a form of punishment.*

*The Senior Elementary classroom at Escuela del Sol had everything that an elementary school classroom should have in it, and also what most of them lack. I loved the Mac computers, the live plants and animals, the beautiful Montessori materials, the Spanish classes and music lessons. I loved the books most of all though. They were real books, used books, not carefully selected for their pedagogical value or political correctness, but accrued over many rounds of donations, and they just sat there, on two black wooden shelves in the corner. Nobody ever forced me to read one, and nobody ever told me not to. It was an open invitation to the world of literature, and I ran through almost all of them in my two years there. I read the childhood classics of my grandparents generation, from *The Count of Monte Cristo* to *The Swiss Family Robinson*, I read the what my parents considered classics, from *The Outsiders* to *The Phantom Tollbooth*, I read what I will certainly tell my kids are classics, starting with all seven Harry Potter books.*

*Near the end of my fifth grade year the reality of assimilating into the greater educational system began to set in and it came time for Escuela to expose us to the most banal of assessment instruments, the standardized test. While I remember a certain amount of controversy and anxiety surrounding this event, I felt none of it myself, and was in fact totally uninterested in the round of practice testing as I was deep in a run of Shakespeare plays at the time that was more or less dominating my time at school and my mental energy. Each day that week I would race through whatever section of test we were working on as fast as I possibly could, then pick-up the class copy of *Hamlet* and devote my undivided attention to that until lunch and recess. I do not know what my scores on those tests were, but I did get into the private school of my choosing, and when it was time to go to college and take the ACT, I got a perfect 36/36 score on the reading section. I credit the silent reading corner.*

Student Assessment

Our primary task is to help children flourish in an increasingly technical and competitive world. Graduates of Escuela del Sol leave with at least two critically important assets that we hope will sustain them throughout their lifetime: the ability to adapt and a love of learning.

The school provides a qualitative evaluation of student performance that takes into consideration the whole child, including strengths, challenges, and social, physical, academic and creative achievements; the education your child receives at Escuela del Sol extends far beyond basic skills in math and language. Traditional grades provide a quantitative evaluation of a child's work. Grading creates an environment of winners and losers, undermining the spirit of cooperation and community. Research indicates that grading actually reduces creativity, as students aim for work that will be safe and acceptable to the adult. Therein lies a third powerful reason not to use traditional grades: the children begin to work to please the adult rather than themselves, to work for the extrinsic rather than the intrinsic reward. For these reasons, Escuela del Sol does not "grade" children.

Progress Reports and Conferences

Student Growth is discussed and/or written at least four times each school year. Twice a year, teachers will generate progress reports; and twice each year the school closes to enable parent-teacher conferences. Parents are encouraged to communicate and meet more often; these days are a minimum set aside in the school calendar.

In the fall and spring of each year, parents must attend parent-teacher conferences to discuss their child's/children's development and experiences at school. The school strongly encourages parents to contact their classroom guide(s) if questions or concerns arise. Our faculty is happy to arrange after-school meetings to stay in touch with parents, working together as a team on behalf of our students.

Outside Assessment and Guidance

The Montessori classroom can accommodate the needs of a wide range of children; some are able to receive special attention within that context. However, there are others who are not well served within a Montessori environment.

The school and its staff are committed to open and ongoing dialogue with parents regarding special concerns about every child's progress. The classroom guide, in conjunction with the Program Coordinators and the Head of School, may, at times, request outside assessment and guidance for working with individual students.

Homework

Traditionally speaking, homework refers to academic work. However, we Montessori educators like to broaden the term: all work that is done at home is homework. Thus, the work we do for ourselves, to improve ourselves, to pursue our own interests and dreams is also homework. This work could be an extension of work done on the job or at school, or it could be an unrelated activity or hobby that is meaningful to us individually. The line between work and play can become blurred here, just as work the children do at school is often fun.

When Escuela children return home at the end of the school day, we hope they will have time to relax, and we hope they will do some "homework" as well. Our homework expectations for the Elementary children are outlined in the Parents at Escuela section.

Snack

Elementary Students bring their own morning snack. Please encourage your student(s) to bring a healthy, sugar-free snack (an apple, for example). Snack is also available for purchase from the Harwood Café.

Behavioral Expectations

If a student frequently behaves in an unacceptable manner, guides will consult with the Head of School and with the child's parents. If necessary, the school will suspend a student for up to three days at a time. More extreme measures (disenrollment) may be taken if the student and his/her parents are unable to work with the school to resolve behavioral issues successfully.

Behavior may reflect a need for counseling or educational/psychological screening. Parents are expected to work with faculty for the child's best interest. This may include hiring an outside consultant to work with the family and school.



JR. HIGH
(grades 7 - 9)

The program for adolescents, beginning in grade 7, ushers in a new stage of development. Students' needs and potential are supported by increasingly sophisticated work, choices, and responsibilities. The curriculum weaves academic research and skills with experiences that connect these emerging adults to the real work of adulthood. Guided by a nuanced understanding of the gifts and challenges of adolescence, lessons are often given in the context of class projects. The Jr. High environment challenges and inspires students to acquire new information, master new skills, and make deep connections with people and ideas to promote critical thinking and problem solving.

The five central themes underlying the Jr. High curriculum are Humanities, Occupations (Applied Sciences), Self-Expression, Connection to Nature and Community Engagement. The core curriculum is project and place based experiential learning that includes mathematics and geometry, literature, biology, chemistry, technology, Spanish, history, architecture & design and research methods. It substantially exceeds state standards and has proven to prepare graduates for competitive high school programs.

Jr. High students begin each school year with an extended (approx. 10 days) wilderness experience. Backpacking together in the mountains and forests of New Mexico. Together with the trained and Wilderness First Responder certified guides of The Cottonwood Gulch, this experience is a great community bonding and team building exercise for students and their teachers.

All families in the Jr. High program receive a detailed orientation and information on all the various experiences, both outdoors, off campus and on the Jr. High urban farm, their students will participate in. Good communication between home and school is critical to the success of Jr. High students.

PARENTS & GUARDIANS at ESCUELA

As a parent at Escuela del Sol, you will have the opportunity to be actively involved in your child's education away from home. At Escuela, we strongly believe that the process of education cannot be separated from the home and family life. Being a part of your child's schooling will be a rewarding as well as an educational experience. Parent nights, newsletters, and a standing invitation to visit, participate, or observe in our school give parents the opportunity to continue their understanding of the Montessori philosophy and their children's activities.

Observation

After a settling-in period of two to four weeks, parents are welcome to observe. This is your school and you are always welcome. We do ask that you make an appointment through the office. Out of respect for the children, we limit the number of adults in a classroom and encourage parents to observe in a classroom other than the one their child attends (as this can be very confusing, distressing, and distracting for your child).

Suggestions/Complaints

If you become dissatisfied with the school in any way, please seek to resolve the matter with the person or persons involved rather than spread criticism. Please know that the administration and faculty of Escuela del Sol value the well-being and happiness of children and know that if parents are unhappy, children soon will be. Talk to us as soon as you have any questions or feel any dissatisfaction. We will work together to resolve any situation that may arise. If you have any problems with your child's guide or class, please discuss this

with the guide and/or the Head of School (Ms. Friedje vanGils). Any administrative problems can be discussed with a member of our management team or with President of the Board of Trustees, Maria Garcia Geer.

Communication

The organization has two websites; one for the school (www.escueladelSol.org) and one for its outreach program, The Harwood Art Center (www.harwoodartcenter.org). These two sites provide a wealth of information; you are strongly encouraged to visit both sites regularly. One of the most important features of the school's website may be its calendar. Here you will find information about the entire organization's events, holidays and school closures. The blue banner running through the middle of each page of the website also provides brief reminders of upcoming events and/or notices such as unexpected closures (snow, etc.).

A weekly e-newsletter called "In The Loop" is emailed to all currently enrolled families. This will keep you up to date as well. Please be sure the school's email is not placed in your server's spam folder so you do not miss out on information, news headlines, and reminders.

Parent/Faculty Work Days

Parent/faculty work days are scheduled for various events and/or needs. If you cannot attend these work days, a tax-deductible donation will be appreciated. These donations in lieu of work go toward tools, paint, etc., for the projects to be done. There is always plenty of work to do in the way of repairs (building and classroom materials), gardening and improvements. Please let your student(s)' classroom guides know how and when you can help.

Fundraising and Events

The tuition you pay covers the school's basic operating costs. Tuition is not sufficient to provide financial aid to students (which keeps diversity alive at Escuela) or funds for special projects.

While basic operating expenses are covered through earned income, the school does engage in fundraising, as does virtually every independent school. Money raised through the Annual Fund and other fundraising efforts support:

- Student financial assistance
- Professional development and Montessori training for faculty and staff
- Physical and programmatic enhancements and enrichment

Annual Appeal Fund Campaign: Donations to the Annual Fund support every activity listed above. Annual Fund contributions are tax-deductible and payments can be made until July of the giving year. Gifts may also be eligible for matching funds from employers. Reaching 100% parent participation in the Annual Fund is as important as reaching our financial goal: it is vital to the school's continued success in obtaining gifts and grants from corporations and foundations. Each family is strongly encouraged to give to its ability and to fulfill pledged commitments. November and December are designated as Annual Appeal season. Contact Assistant Head of School Elizabeth Marcilla or Head of School Friedje vanGils for more information.

Other Ways of Giving:

- Escuela del Sol endeavors to enlist the support of all parents, grandparents, faculty, staff, and other community friends in securing funds from the rebate program Amazon Smile. Beneficiary organizations receive a biannual payout reflecting a percentage of the purchases made by participants. The more people who participate, the more money the school is able to raise. Amazon Smile can be accessed through our website. Please help us make the most of these by participating.
- Escuela del Sol offers for sale Escuela gear and gear. Show your Escuela pride by purchasing wearing it in your community.

- You can also contribute through planned giving, vehicles, stock, insurance policies, and by inclusion in your will. If you are interested in this method of ensuring your continued support, please contact Head of School Friedje vanGils at (505) 242-3033.
- It is very important for each family to support Escuela's fundraising efforts!

Sol Mates

Escuela's parent group is the Sol Mates. Sol Mates is an inclusive parent and caregiver volunteer organization designed to support teachers, classrooms, and families at Escuela del Sol. One of their efforts is to help connect **Mentor Families to New Families**: How does drop off work? Where is Extended Care? Am I supposed to bring my child to parent/teacher conferences? What's the difference between a parent workshop and "Bring Your Parents to School Night"?

A few years ago, a small group of Escuela parents were chatting and agreed that it can be bewildering (sometimes downright overwhelming!) for a new family entering the school community. They decided to create a mentoring program and put plans in place to welcome new families and help ease their transition.

Please look for information from and about the Sol Mates in our weekly e-news.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

Escuela del Sol Montessori is incorporated as a non-profit corporation, and managed by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees. The Board is governed by the school's Articles of Incorporation and by its By-Laws. The Board is comprised of members selected from the community at large who are chosen for expertise in their respective fields, their commitment and ability to work on behalf of the whole organization (Escuela del Sol and its Harwood Art Center). Candidates for board service are evaluated by the Board's Development Committee. The Board of Trustees serves as custodian of the integrity of the school, holding in trust the school's future as well as its present. Their collective judgment respects the interests of constituents and of the larger society that all independent schools serve. The Board as a whole represents continuity and permanent responsibility. It is responsible for effective strategic planning and for the school's fiscal well-being.

The Board selects, hires and evaluates the Executive Director who, at this time, is also the Head of School. The Board delegates responsibility for implementation of policies to the Head. The Executive Director works with the bookkeeper to prepare the Annual Budget and set Tuition and Fees for approval by the Board. She also has the duty to report to the Board on organizational matters, and is accountable to the Board for effective, businesslike management of the organization. The Head of School serves as the professional educational leader of the institution. She has complete responsibility for faculty, staff, and student selection, evaluation, and dismissal. The Head of School articulates the mission of the school to its constituencies and is responsible for the professional quality and behavior of the faculty and staff.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Escuela del Sol Office	242-3033
Friedje vanGils, Head of School/Executive Director, Escuela/Harwood	friedje@edelsol.org
Elizabeth Marcilla, Assistant Head of School	elizabethm@edelsol.org
Jodie Martinez, Bookkeeper	jodie@edelsol.org
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Escuela Fax	1-800-317-4752
Harwood Art Center	242-6367
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EMAIL: Escuela: office@edelsol.org Harwood: info@harwoodartcenter.org

WEBSITES: Escuela, www.escueladelsol.org Harwood, www.harwoodartcenter.org

EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

 Joseph Marcilla, Facilities Manager505-315-0033
 Friedje vanGils, Exec. Dir. cell: 505-688-3844

See the Escuela and Harwood web pages for updates, monthly lunch menus, announcements, and more!

STAY IN TOUCH!