

Family Handbook

Desert Spring Children's Center

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Table of Contents:

Mission Statement, Philosophy, Guiding Principles, Goals & Outcomes.....	2-3
Enrollment.....	4
Tuition Payment Procedure.....	4
Activities & Curriculum.....	4-6
Hours of Service.....	6
Transition Plans	6-10
First Day of School.....	10-11
What To Bring.....	11-12
Policies.....	12-14
Parent Involvement.....	14-16
Nutrition and Food Safety.....	16-17
Health Policies.....	17-19
Emergencies.....	19-20
Corporate Information.....	20
Appendix A: Tuition & Fees.....	21
Appendix B: Assessment Plan.....	22-23
Appendix C: Conflict Resolution Procedure.....	24
Appendix D: Green School Policy.....	25
Appendix E: Covid Protocols.....	26-27

Desert Spring Mission Statement:

In partnership with parents and the greater community, Desert Spring Children’s Center will provide an outstanding and comprehensive early childhood program for children and their families.

We will:

- Provide opportunities for children to collaborate in a setting conducive to the development of wholesome social relationships.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful play that is based on the child’s individual needs, interest and abilities and that will build important foundations for future academic pursuits
- Provide experiences for children that are inclusive of all abilities, cultures, ethnicities, genders, and gender identities.
- Document children’s learning in order to reinforce the concept that sharing the stories of children is the responsibility of educators, families, the wider community and the early childhood profession.

Desert Spring Philosophy:

We believe every child:

- Is a capable and competent being.
- Is a unique and complex learner.
- Deserves an environment that supports the optimal development of the whole child.
- Learns through child-directed, child-initiated, teacher-supported play.
- Is a social being who learns through the development of relationships and collaboration with peers and adults.
- Is by nature a creative and curious researcher and learns best through hands on exploration that is relevant to the child’s experiences.
- Deserves trust and respect to facilitate confidence and healthy risk-taking.
- Possesses hundreds of languages with which to describe their beliefs & experiences & express their learning.

Guiding Principles:

- Each child progresses at a unique rate, has an individual learning style and possesses diverse abilities.
- Young children learn through active exploration of their environment when there is a balance between self-discovery and adult initiated projects.
- Children’s learning is based on prior knowledge and experiences guided by nurturing adults.
- Optimal learning occurs in environments where the adults are respectful of the child, the family, the language, the culture, and the community.
- Children’s learning is best understood using ongoing observation, anecdotal record keeping, and collection of children’s work.

- Children develop a sense of empowerment by having many opportunities to make choices within their daily routines.
- Children learn best when their nutritional and health needs are met.
- Families are the primary caregivers and educators of young children.
- Families, educators & children are equal protagonists in children’s learning.
- Young children are competent and capable learners regardless of their backgrounds, experiences, and varying abilities.

Goals for Children, Families, and the Community:

All children will experience growth and learning in all areas of development, including cognitive, physical, and social-emotional.

All families will be supported in their role of the primary caregivers and educators of children.

The community will be aware of the importance of early childhood and the need for high-quality early care and education.

Expected Outcomes:

Based on Tom Drummond’s 15 Capabilities for Children, Desert Spring desires the following outcomes for children and their families.

When children leave our program, they can:

- Participate as a member of an interdependent community
- Care for themselves, others, and the community
- Treat others with love and compassion
- Cooperate with other children to accomplish group goals
- Celebrate group accomplishment
- Laugh and play with a tangible sense of joy
- Express many human emotions in language and art
- Be inquisitive
- Initiate new ideas and invent solutions to problems
- Stick to different tasks or come back to them in order to succeed
- Run, hit, catch, throw, kick, and tumble
- Sing and dance with exuberance
- Paint, draw, sculpt, and construct objects of beauty
- Maintain the community’s spaces in cleanliness and order
- Greet guests with courtesy and charm

When families leave our program, they can:

- Be confident in their ability to advocate for their children
- Understand the importance of being involved in their child’s education
- Experience the joy of parenting
- Find community resources to meet their needs in caring for their child
- Describe important aspects of their child’s development

- Feel respected, welcomed, and nurtured by staff

Enrollment

To enroll your child at Desert Spring, schedule a tour with the director and complete a Registration Form with your \$75 registration fee. You will then be given an enrollment packet which includes: a school calendar, tuition & fees, food guide, first day reminders, supply list, a blue emergency card, a getting to know your child form. The emergency card and getting to know your child form must be completed and returned along with a current copy of your child's immunization records prior to attendance. Immunization records must be up-to-date before your child can begin school.

We highly recommend that you tour the school with your child to talk with the director, observe classrooms, and meet teachers *before enrolling your child*.

Desert Spring does not discriminate and will enroll children who can benefit from the services provided by the school, curriculum, and teachers of our program.

Tuition

Desert Spring is supported by tuition fees, making it extremely important for those fees to be paid on time. Please pay tuition by the 10th of each month or make special arrangements with the director. Desert Spring does not give refunds or discounts for vacations, school closures, or illnesses. The tuition fees are based on our yearly expenses and are divided into monthly payments (See Appendix A, p. 11, for current tuition fees).

Activities and Curriculum

Our program is designed to meet the diverse needs of children 2 thru 5 years old: social interaction with their peers, stimulation for their inquisitive minds, space to explore new body skills, development of their communication skills, and a fostering of independence. We believe children are natural learners. We provide a multi-faceted environment allowing them the freedom to explore and discover their world.

Our curriculum framework is guided by Quality First. We are also inspired and influenced by the Montessori, Waldorf, and Reggio Emilia approaches to early care and education, which has influenced our philosophy, goals, relationships with families and the community, and greatly impacts our value of the child as capable, competent, and deserving of the utmost respect.

The Desert Spring day is a balance of indoor and outdoor activities. Our outdoor activities include riding tricycles, swinging, gardening, large motor activities, water and sand play, socializing, creative playing, and organized games. We strongly urge you to bring your child by 9 a.m. in order to establish a consistent rhythm for your child. This gives them the time to transition from home to school, and relate to their teachers and friends before morning circle time. Circle time is when we gather together as a class community to sing, introduce new materials and concepts, read stories, have conversational sharing time, and do movement

activities, such as yoga or creative movement. Once a week, singer/songwriter Bruce Phillips leads our singing circle. The morning includes circle time, snack, morning centers and outside play.

Educational Setting

Each classroom is divided into learning centers that create an environment that is enjoyable and motivating for the children. The centers include an Art Center, where children develop creativity, eye hand coordination, fine motor development, expression of emotions through artistic medium, and spatial and design skills. The Math/Fine Motor Centers in each room help children develop classification, problem solving, observation, experimentation, classifying, patterning, one to one correspondence, ordering, and numeration (intellectual skills). The Library Center develops writing, speaking, pre-reading skills, listening, and problem solving. Each room has a Dramatic Play Center that aids children in developing language, social problem solving, cooperation, role playing, creativity as well as intellectual skills. The Block Centers in the classrooms encourage spatial relationships, design abilities, vocabulary development, cooperation, patterning, problem solving, and measurement. The Sensory Tables (rice and water table) in each room develops scientific and math abilities listed above, as well as vocabulary development, social problem solving, and a calming tactile stimulation that often provides comfort to some children. Large motor play is incorporated daily on the playground at outdoor time.

Language/Pre-reading Philosophy

Desert Spring's philosophy of learning emphasizes the theory of whole language, which simply means addressing all the aspects of language such as speaking, reading, listening, and writing. All of these aspects are combined and are included in the curriculum in both direct teaching and child-initiated learning experiences. This approach helps children learn language and reading in a natural way and increases the child's appreciation and usage of the beauty and power of language.

Math Philosophy

At Desert Spring, we believe that young children need experiences in math that are geared to their developmental level and that do not demand abilities they have not yet developed. Children need a hands-on approach for math concepts. They need to be able to see, feel, handle, and manipulate quantities in a game-like manner. Instead of simply having a child count, they should have the opportunity to match concrete objects as they count. They also need many opportunities to group similar objects into categories. We believe that a child will naturally learn these concepts if guided by parents and educators that provide warmth and encouragement.

Play Philosophy

Early childhood educators have long believed that play makes important contributions

to children's development and therefore must have a key role in preschool curriculums. Play is a rich, varied and complex process that requires ample time, materials, and resources (Christie, Wardle, 1992). There is a relationship between children's use of symbols in play and their use of symbols in the academic curriculum. Concepts valued in the school curriculum, such as reading, writing and problem solving, are all based on the expectation that children are capable of a certain level of abstract, symbolic thought (Almy, Monighan, Scales & Van Hoorn, 1984). At Desert Spring, children are given liberal amounts of play time and are encouraged to participate in symbolic play so that they can play through their ideas, think, problem solve, and foster creativity and imagination.

Hours of Service

Desert Spring Children's Center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday- Friday, August thru June (closed for July). **We ask that all children arrive by 9 a.m.** (See "Arrival" under Policies, p. 5). If you will be later than 5:30 p.m. in picking up your child, you must contact the school (through Procure or by phone) to give your estimated time of arrival. If you are later than 5:30 p.m., we will keep your child engaged until you arrive. There is a late fee of \$1.00 per minute, which will be charged to you at the end of the month.

Transition Plans

Entering the Program

- **Timeline for joining school at the beginning of the school year:**

Before school begins, enrollment packets are mailed to families to share information about the beginning of school and to gather information from families before the start of the school year. The week before the start of school, families are invited to attend an open house. At the open house families can spend time playing with their children as everyone becomes familiar with the teachers, classmates, and the room. Families will learn about the program, and the Procure App, the staff, their child's new classroom, the classroom schedule, toileting procedures, where their child will nap, and locate their child's cubby. This is your opportunity to meet other families, ask questions, and share information.
- **Specific activities for joining school at the beginning of the school year:**
 - **Some children may need to bring a lovey** (special stuffed animal) to help ease the transition from home to school. These special items can stay in your child's cubby and come out when your child is sad.
 - **Teachers invite families to bring a family photo** to be displayed in the classroom. These photos are placed at the children's eye level throughout the room. When the children see their photos, they can feel connected to their families during the day.
 - **Establish a predictable good-bye routine.** This will let your child know what will happen next, making it easier to cope with the transition. Some examples of good-bye routines include: waving from the gate, playing with a favorite toy,

sharing a hug, reading a book, or singing a good-bye song.

- **Families are invited to share a few words of their home language** with their child’s teacher. Hearing that “mama or papa will come back” in their home language makes a bridge between home and school, and helps your child feel understood. A word list that contains phrases that your family or your child uses for eating, diapering, sleeping, and family members can help a great deal.
 - **Children are encouraged to talk about their feelings.** It is okay to cry and miss a parent. When your child is missing you, they may be encouraged to write a letter or draw a picture for you.
 - **Read books about going to school and saying good-bye,** such as:
 - o *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
 - o *David Goes to School* by David Shannon
 - o *Will I Have a Friend?* By Miriam Cohen
 - o *First Day of School* by Anne Rockwell
 - o *When I miss You* by Cornelia Maude Spelman
 - o *Take a Kiss to School* by Angela McAllister
 - o *It’s Time for Preschool* by Esme Raj Codell
 - o *A Pocketful of Kisses* by Audrey Penn
-
- **Timeline for joining school after the beginning of the school year:**

When a child joins Desert Spring after school has begun, we make individual plans with families to gently transition them. The family is invited to visit the school before the child’s first day. During the visit, the family will have an opportunity to meet the teacher and the child can explore and play in the environment. For children new to the Rainbow Room or Monsoon Room, we highly recommend several visits before the first day of school. For children who have never been to school before, multiple visits prior to the child’s first day can be arranged as well. This process is tailor made for your child to make a successful transition plan.
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- **Specific activities for joining school after the beginning of the school year:**
 - **Teachers will share information about your child** and his or her interests with the class.
 - **Teachers will ask the children how they can help** your child feel welcome.
 - **Teachers may use the buddy system** to pair the child with a child who tends to be outgoing and helpful.
 - **Teachers play “getting to know you” activities** that focus on names and interests, like singing songs that include children’s names or charting favorite fruits.
 - **Teachers will read books about friendship,** such as:
 - o *Bear Feels Scared* by Karma Wilson
 - o *Can You Be a Friend?* By Nita Everly
 - o *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes

- *Fox Makes Friends* by Adam Relf
- *My Friend Bear* by Jez Alborough
- *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister

Transitioning within the Program

- **Timeline for transitioning to a new classroom within the program:**

In June, teachers prepare the children for the end of the year transition from their current room into their new room. Before school begins in the fall, enrollment packets are mailed to families to share information about the beginning of school and to gather updated information from families before the start of the school year. The week before school starts, families are invited to attend an open house in their child’s new classroom. At the open house families can spend time playing with their children as everyone becomes familiar with the teachers and classmates in their new room. Families will learn about their child’s new classroom, the classroom schedule, toileting procedures, where their child will nap, and locate their child’s cubby. This is your opportunity to visit with families you’ve already come to know as well as meet families new to the program.

- **Specific activities for transitioning to a new classroom within the program:**

- **In May and June**, teachers talk about the end of the school year and talk to the children what next year will be like.
- **Teachers will be available for an end-of-year conference** to discuss how the family feels about the upcoming changes.
- **The child’s new teachers visit children in their current classrooms** to introduce themselves.
- **The children’s current teacher will take small groups of children** to visit their new classroom.

Exiting the Program

- **Timeline for transitioning to a different preschool:**

We ask families that plan to leave Desert Spring before their child has reached kindergarten age to notify the administrators and teachers at least 30 days in advance. This will ensure that the teachers have adequate time to support the child as they transition out of our program.

- **Specific activities for transitioning to a different preschool:**

- **Teachers talk with your child about their feelings on leaving Desert Spring** and joining a new program elsewhere.
- **During class conversations**, the teacher may invite your child’s classmates to ask your child questions about their upcoming adventures.
- **Teachers may invite your child to bring** in photographs, postcards, or objects that may symbolize the upcoming changes. These items will be great conversation starters.

- **Teachers will encourage your child to draw pictures and/or write** good-bye messages to their friends.
 - **Teachers will read books about going to school and saying good-bye**, such as:
 - o *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
 - o *David Goes to School* by David Shannon
 - o *Will I Have a Friend?* By Miriam Cohen
 - o *First Day of School* by Anne Rockwell
 - o *When I miss You* by Cornelia Maude Spelman
 - o *Take a Kiss to School* by Angela McAllister
 - o *It's Time for Preschool* by Esme Raj Codell
 - o *A Pocketful of Kisses* by Audrey Penn
 - **Upon request, teachers will provide families with information about their child** to share with future teachers, these may include developmental checklists or informal observations.
 - **Teachers will be available to meet with the family for a final conference** where parents receive the gift of their child's portfolio. Teachers will inquire about how the family feels about the upcoming changes.
 - **Families are encouraged to revisit the events of the past year with their child** by looking through their child's portfolio drawings, paintings, photos, and writing. Celebrate how much your child has learned at Desert Spring.
- **Timeline for transitioning to kindergarten:**

In May, the Sun Room teachers plan a celebration for children who will be moving on to Kindergarten. Parents receive the gift of their child's portfolio, documenting their time at Desert Spring. During the celebration children sing songs and the teachers share memories and kind words about each child. Afterwards, the children, families, and teachers meet for a schoolwide celebration picnic at Catalina Park.
 - **Specific activities for transitioning to kindergarten:**
 - **Teachers talk with children about their feelings about preschool ending.** During class conversations, teachers may make a list of the children's ideas about what kindergarten is like. Teacher will ask the children about differences and similarities between the Desert Spring environment and kindergarten.
 - **Teachers encourage children to draw pictures and/or write** good-bye messages to their friends.
 - **Teachers read books about going to school and saying good-bye**, such as:
 - o *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate
 - o *Seven Little Mice Go to School* by Kazuo Iwamura
 - o *Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes* by Eric Litwin (illustrated by James Dean)
 - o *Mom, It's my First Day of Kindergarten* by Hyewon Yum
 - o *Yoko Learns to Read* by Rosemary Wells
 - o *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* by Nancy Carlson
 - o *Will I Have a Friend?* By Miriam Cohen (illustrated by Ronald Himler)

- *If You Take a Mouse to School* by Laura Numeroff (illustrated by Felicia Bond)
- **Upon request, teachers will provide families with information about their child** to share with future schoolteachers or specialists, these may include development checklists or informal observations.
- **Desert Spring helps families with their transitions to kindergarten** by providing access to resources. Basic information such as dates for school information meetings for school, contact information for area schools, general enrollment procedures, and visiting opportunities is made available on the school bulletin board and/or information desk.
- **Families are encouraged to revisit the events of the past year** with their child by looking through their child's portfolio drawings, paintings, photos, and writing. Celebrate how much your child has learned at Desert Spring.
- **Families are encouraged to visit their child's new school** to meet the kindergarten teacher and see their new classroom, visit the bathroom, and locate their child's cubby.
- **Families are encouraged to talk to their child about kindergarten classroom activities** such as seatwork, free choice time, and lunchtime. Let your child know that they will listen to stories, do counting activities, have group time, and play outside. Talk to your child about how long the school day will be and what the daily routine will be like. If your child will be taking the school bus for the first time, you will need to discuss bus safety rules.

First Day of School

At the beginning of the school year, both parents and teachers want to see the children get off to a good start. Children who are returning for a new year will be transitioning into a new classroom that should go smoothly. However, children who are new to the school are encouraged to attend an Open House the week before school starts and make a phase-in plan with the director that allows the child to attend shorter days for the first week while they are getting used to the new environment.

We recognize that you are the expert on your child and will work with you as best we can to make the transition as easy and comfortable as possible for you and your child. We encourage you to read books about starting school with your child for the weeks before school starts. A day or two before the child begins, talk in general terms about what the child might expect, e.g., making new friends, riding tricycles, swinging, listening to stories, singing, eating lunch, and resting. When you come through the gate, a staff member will greet you and your child. You may walk your child to their class and help them put away their things. Give the child a quick, loving good-bye and leave the child in the care of the teacher. Some children part easily from their parents and others do not. Be assured that this is normal. Exiting campus is most successful when the child can focus on the new environment and activities at hand. Make your good-bye as brief as possible and trust that the teacher will comfort your child. If you are concerned that the leave-taking was too tearful or upsetting for the child, give a call later in the morning. A staff member will be able to give you an update of how your

child is doing.

When asking your child about the day, do not be discouraged if it is difficult for your child to relay specific events. Usually, the child has been involved in many different activities, making it difficult to remember the details. Our program encourages internalizing accomplishments. We are concerned with process rather than product. Please be patient as your child gradually reveals newly acquired skills and knowledge. On Fridays, each classroom will send out a weekly note (email) that will tell you about the week with pictures & stories. Please read this note with your child to inspire a conversation about their friends and activities that they took part in over the week.

What to Bring

Snacks: Please send a morning and afternoon snack with your child. The snack should be labeled with your child's name, date, and a.m. or p.m. There must be 2 components provided for each snack. Snack suggestions are provided in the Nutrition Guide.

Lunch: Please provide a nutritious lunch each day. Please refrain from sending sugar and highly processed and preserved, empty calorie foods in your child's lunch. Read the labels on beverages as many "juice" drinks contain only a small percentage of juice and a high amount of sugar. For the love of the environment packaging suggestions include reusable plastic containers, eating utensils (when needed), thermos or reusable sealable cup—all packed together in a compactly-sized lunch box. Lunch boxes are kept in the refrigerator and must be labeled with your child's first and last name and the date. We have no facilities to reheat lunches. A moist washcloth makes a great face and hand wipe! Thanks for your cooperation in not sending "sweet treats" or glass containers.

Lunch time is a busy time of day. If you pick-up at 12:15p.m., please arrive promptly as the rest of the children begin to prepare for nap after eating.

Water bottle: Please send clean, reusable, and full (with water!) water bottles every day. During warmer months, the teachers prompt frequent "water breaks" while outside. The children have access to their water at all times of the day, including meals.

Clothing: We recommend that you keep two extra set of clothes, including underwear and socks, in your child's cubby. Water-play and accidents are frequent causes of changing clothes.

Hats are also worn while outside regardless of temperature. Please send weather appropriate hats to school each day.

Blanket: This is a napping school! Due to the length and activities of our day, all children are encouraged to nap (sleep). Please keep a blanket at school. All clothing and blankets should be labeled with the child's first and last name.

Diapers: If your child is in the two-year-old class, please bring diapers and wipes. It is your responsibility to make sure your child is always supplied with these essential items. Teachers will let you know when it's time to replenish.

Toys: Generally toys are left at home or kept in the child's cubby. We encourage the sharing of interesting treasures or finds like leaves, rocks, shells, et al. Any type of weapon (guns, swords, knives)—imaginary or otherwise—are not allowed at Desert Spring. Books from home are welcomed every day.

Sunscreen & Bug Spray: You are encouraged to send sunscreen and bug spray which will be applied by a teacher throughout the day. See more about sunscreen & bug spray in the Health Policies section.

Policies

Arrival: It's important that all children arrive by 9 a.m. as this is when classes begin their daily community building routine, such as circle time. Late arrivals disrupt the flow and consistency of the morning activities for all children. Our cut-off time for drop off is 10am. Children will not be allowed to come to school after 10am unless there is a written or verbal agreement made with teachers and the director beforehand.

Handwashing: Children and staff must wash their hands upon arrival at the center. Children will be assisted by a teacher at the outside sink or inside. They will follow the handwashing posters and sing handwashing songs. Children wash their hands many times throughout the day including, after outside play and before eating.

Sign-in and Sign-Out: Parents will sign in and out using the **Procare app**. State regulations require parents to sign in and out daily using first initial and last name. It is important for your child's security and our attendance record. If you forget to sign in or out, a staff member can only do so if you have signed a permission form and will only be done on special circumstances. Teachers will sign each child in/out upon arrival and departure on their class rosters and keep a running tab of how many children are present at various times in the day.

Procare: In 2020, Desert Spring began using an application called Procare. This is an app that allows parents and teachers to communicate in a secure space. Sometimes teachers will share pictures and details of a child's day. Parents can also use this to let teachers know if a child will be absent or picked up earlier or later than normal. Procare is intended for brief, necessary information exchange. Longer communications will be done by email, phone, or in-person.

Authorization to Pick-Up Child: Your child may only be picked up by the individuals authorized on the blue Emergency, Information, and Immunization form. In the case of an unforeseen circumstance, if someone who is not listed on the form is going to pick up, please let us know in writing (Procare or email) the name of the person and what time they will be picking up. The

person will need to show a photo ID to the child's teacher and/or the director before the child is released.

Security: Although we maintain an open door policy for families, non-family visitors must be accompanied by a staff member at all times. All visitors must have an appointment with the Director to visit the school.

Provisions for Special Needs Children: All children will be evaluated individually to determine child's specific need and how Desert Spring can adequately assist in his/her development and growth. Teachers automatically individualize daily activities for the children in their care by tailoring lesson plans to the unique learning needs of the children in their class. In addition, any child with an identified special need will have access to an Individualized Learning Plan if desired by the parents. This plan will be created with the parents, teachers, and any other professionals or therapists.

Field Trips: All field trips are within walking distance of the school. Children are not transported with private vehicles. Permission slips for walking trips will be provided in advance. No child will be able to leave the school without a permission slip. Any child unable to participate may remain at school with another class. Teachers and other supervising adults will ensure the safety and well-being of the children on field trips. A communication device and First Aid kit will be taken on field trips in case of emergencies.

Supervision of children: Desert Spring teaching staff supervise toddlers by sight and sound at all times. For preschoolers, teaching staff supervise children primarily by sight but may allow children to be out of sight but within sound for short intervals of time, as long as teachers check frequently on the child. Great teacher to child ratios are maintained throughout the day.

Discipline: The staff at Desert Spring provides a warm and loving atmosphere that encourages each child to develop emotionally and socially. We teach cooperation, caring, respect, and communication skills. Children are encouraged to take responsibility, and to understand and accept consequences for their actions. Positive behaviors and respectful problem-solving strategies are noticed and encouraged. Every attempt is made to redirect inappropriate behaviors. When necessary, a child may be encouraged/helped to take time away from the group with a supportive teacher, until the child is ready to reengage with the group.

Disenrollment: Desert Spring Children's Center strives to provide an enriched environment featuring self-directed learning activities for children ages 2-5. There are four classrooms in which children are enrolled by age. Each class include independent, hands-on educational experiences for the age group. On occasion, the teaching staff may determine that a specific child is not functioning adequately in the classroom environment. If this determination is made, the following procedures will occur:

1. Parent Conference: A parent conference will be scheduled within one month of

enrollment. At the conference, parents will be provided with a written report outlining the areas of concern.

2. Behavior Contract: During the parent conference, Desert Spring staff will outline a proposed behavior contract with the parents. The contract will include goals and timelines. This contract will be signed by parents and staff after review.
3. Follow-up Conference: A follow-up conference will be scheduled within one month of the original conference. At this parent conference, Desert Spring staff will outline results from the behavior contract to date. Desert Spring staff will recommend one of the following options: Continuation of the behavior contract; or Determination of Disenrollment (in writing). Timely parental participation is required.

Daily Transitions: The well-being and comfort of the children at Desert Spring are our utmost concern. For that reason, children are enrolled in a classroom with the same teachers and friends for an entire program year.

Children typically “graduate” from one class to another usually in Summer or Fall Semesters, depending on a variety of factors. You have the opportunity to discuss this transition with your child’s teacher and the director so that together we can decide whether your child should change classrooms in Summer or Fall (depending on enrollment availability). We will also provide you with information about helping your child transition from our school to kindergarten if you are interested.

Babysitting: On occasion, our staff is available for babysitting outside of school hours. Every year, teachers who are interested in babysitting give their name and preferred method of contact to the director. This information will be shared with parents only after: a) an email request is sent to the director and b) parents have signed a waiver releasing the school of any liability when your child is in the care of a staff member outside of work hours. Teachers may not babysit children who are currently in their class; however, the director will support parents in finding another educator who would be a great fit for the family and child. Parents are expected to communicate and organize plans for babysitting outside of the teacher’s work hours (i.e. not during pick up or drop off.)

Parent Involvement

We encourage your active participation in your child's experience at Desert Spring. As partners we are sharing the important task of educating and nurturing your child.

Visitation: Desert Spring maintains an open door policy for families in attendance. Families may visit any area of the school* at any time during our regular hours of operation, as long as staff are available to monitor visits (for safety reasons). We also expect that when visiting or volunteering at the school, positive discipline methods are used and that appropriate behavior is modeled by all adults in our school.

Communication: We strive to maintain frequent and consistent communication about your child's activities, developmental milestones, and other information that affects the well-being and development of your child. For preschool age children, the teachers will communicate via Procure, verbally or by email with you about your child as needed. For toddlers, we will communicate with you daily, either in writing (Procure or email) or verbally. We appreciate your feedback and respect your suggestions and concerns. Keep us informed of changes in your child's life/home that may require sensitive handling by her/his teacher. We hope you will be open to our observations as well.

Since it is difficult for us to get involved in lengthy conversations when the children need our attention, please feel free to schedule an appointment with us when you have questions, concerns, or great ideas. We also request your cooperation in reading the materials we send home, and following the policies we have established for the smooth operation of the school. If you have any serious concerns about your child, the staff, or the program, please contact the director immediately to set up a conference. As partners in your child's growth and development, we want to be able to help you find the community resources available to ensure your child receives the support he/she needs. All Desert Spring Staff receive training in community resources and can provide referrals to services.

We acknowledge that communication is vital for the home/school partnership. For this reason, we will provide communication to families in the language that is best understood by the parents to the best of our ability. Please let the director know if you wish to receive communication in a language other than English, and we will provide a translator when possible.

Parent Conferences: Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled for all parents in the fall. During these conferences, we will share our observations of your child in writing, as well as any results from our Intake Screenings and Ongoing Assessments. We will also give you the opportunity to discuss what your child is learning and how it is measured. Also, arrangements can be made for a conference with the teacher as the need arises. Please, always feel free to bring your concerns about your child or the program to the director or teachers.

Laundry: Families are responsible for laundering their child's nap sheet and belongings each week.

Donations: A list of needed classroom supplies will be provided in enrollment packets at the beginning of each year. It is helpful if parents are able to support our school in this way.

Volunteers: We often need help with projects such as playground improvement, maintenance of equipment, or repair of furniture. Please let any of the staff know if you would like to volunteer. There are typically two parent work-days scheduled each school year.

You are also welcome and encouraged to bring or share a classroom activity that will help the children learn more about your family culture. Please speak with your child's teacher to schedule

a time that is convenient for you and the classroom schedule.

Parent Committee: Desert Spring has a Parent Committee in which parents can be part of planning activities, and teacher appreciation events. Please let the director know if you are interested in serving on the Committee.

Governance: Desert Spring is governed by a Board of Directors which meets at least quarterly. The Board is made up of First Christian Church members and parents of Desert Spring children to ensure a good working relationship between the school and church. We prefer to have representation on the Board of families with children who attend Desert Spring. If you are interested in taking a leadership role in the school, we highly encourage you to do so. Please let the director know if you would like to serve on our Board of Directors.

Program Evaluation: Our school is dedicated to ongoing improvement to ensure that we provide the very best care and education for your child. Desert Spring is part of the Quality First Assessment Program and our staff is mentored on a monthly basis by our Quality First coach. Quality First is a state-wide assessment program that assesses preschools to inspire them to be of the highest quality. In our last assessment, Desert Spring received a five-star rating, which is the highest rating a school can receive.

Confidentiality: Our program emphasizes a trusting partnership between families and staff. For this reason, we have added a Confidentiality Policy to our Staff Handbook, and staff sign a confidentiality statement. We keep all information about families and children confidential unless you give us permission to disclose to others. Personal information about individual children is kept in locked Child Files, and only Desert Spring staff have access to this information (except Department of Health Services Child Care Licensing personnel who must check files to determine our compliance with licensing regulations).

Community Resources: Desert Spring maintains a current list of child and family support services available in our community. We are happy to share the list with you and will assist you in locating, contacting, and using community resources. In addition, our program collaborates with other programs in the community through Director's Networking Groups, educational interest forums, and committees and advocacy groups to guide collaborative work and to achieve mutually desired outcomes for children.

Nutrition and Food Safety

We believe that a simple, wholesome diet results in healthier, happier children.

Snacks: Snacks should consist of at least 2 components - whole grain cereals, or breads and crackers (salt free or low in sodium), or nut and seed butters, or fresh fruit and/or vegetables, and dairy products. Snacks are served mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

Lunches: Lunches should consist of at least four food groups (refer to the Nutrition

Guide). All lunches, food containers, and water bottles must be marked with your child's first and last name and the date. Masking tape may be used to mark the date.

Special Dietary Needs: Allergies and other special dietary needs must be indicated on the blue registration form. Children's food restrictions are posted for staff's information so please keep us informed of any changes (we will ask for your permission to post your child's food restrictions in the eating areas). If your child has special dietary or feeding needs or has food allergies, you will be asked to participate in creating a Feeding Plan which will ensure that our staff are able to meet your child's needs. This plan will be confidential and will be kept in your child's file.

Birthdays and Special Events: If you wish to honor your child's birthday at Desert Spring, we recommend that you bring a story or a craft to share with the class. Since we must follow strict guidelines regarding the food that is served at the school, we must ask that if you choose to send food, it must be a **fruit that can be peeled by the children or a commercially prepared food in the original unopened container.** Please send healthy low-sugar foods.

Alternatively, the birthday child may bring stickers or a small trinket to give to the other children. In this way, your child feels special as each "gift" is given, and sharing and celebration with others is emphasized.

Special events occur in many different cultures, and we would like to incorporate families' cultures whenever possible. If you would like to share an event or holiday from your culture, please let us know.

Health Policies

Happy, healthy children are the primary concern of Desert Spring. We are required by law to keep updated records of each child's immunizations and to notify parents when immunizations are due.

Sick Child Policy:

Desert Spring believes that a healthy environment creates positive learning experiences. Please safeguard your child and others by keeping him/her home if signs of illness are present. To guide you in deciding whether to keep your child home, we have outlined the symptoms of a sick child. The staff at Desert Spring will also follow the same guidelines in deciding whether to send a child home from school.

If your child is ill and will not be attending school, the school must be notified. Please call and inform the school of the type of illness or symptoms that your child is exhibiting.

Please keep your child home:

- If your child has a fever of 100.4 degrees or above (orally) or has had a fever during the previous 24 hour period
- If your child has a cold that includes one or more of these symptoms: less than 2 days old,

has a heavy nasal discharge, has a congested cough, or child complains of ear pain or throat pain with or without a fever

- If your child has diarrhea or vomiting
- If your child has skin sore or mouth sore discharging fluid or puss
- If your child is unusually drowsy or tired
- If your child exhibits symptoms of a communicable disease:
 - Red and/or runny eyes
 - Rash
 - Sore throat
 - mites/lice
 - Covid-19 (see Appendix E – Covid Protocols for more info)

If any of the above symptoms are present in your child while at school, a parent will be notified and asked to take the child home. If the parent(s) can not be reached, the emergency contacts will be notified.

Your child may return to school:

- After a fever is not present for 24 hours **without** fever reducing medication
- The cold is over but a minor nasal drip is still present
- Free of diarrhea and vomiting for 24 hours
- Rash is completely gone or a note from a physician states that rash is not contagious

Contagious Diseases: These must be reported immediately so that notification of exposure can be relayed to parents of the child's classmates.

Children showing symptoms of the following infectious diseases will also be excluded for the time required by the State Health Department.

1. Chicken Pox: Excluded for 7-10 days or until all pox are scabbed over
2. Strep Throat: Excluded until child has been on medication (antibiotic) for 24 hours
3. Pink Eye: Excluded until child has been on medication for 24 hours
4. Diarrhea: Excluded until 12 hours after last symptoms have appeared

Medication: In general the administering of medications should be done as much as possible at home. However, when a doctor or other health practitioner prescribes a medication that must be given during school hours, parents must fill out a detailed medicine form and the medicine must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name. A qualified staff member will be assigned to administer medication when the director is not present. Non-prescription medications will only be administered when accompanied by a note from a physician stating that the medication is necessary. All medications must be kept in a locked storage container.

Sun Protection: The strength of the Arizona sun is intense! We encourage you to apply sunscreen in the morning and to have your child bring a sunhat to protect her/his eyes and face. Teachers will apply sunscreen after nap. Please bring your child's favorite kind of sunscreen. Parents must fill out

an authorization form regarding sunscreen application at school.

Bug Spray (Insect Repellent): Even though Desert Spring is serviced by EcoPest with non-toxic herbal repellent every couple of weeks, there can still be mosquitos. If your child is prone to mosquito/insect bites, please bring a bottle of spray to be used at school. Herbal bug sprays are highly effective, but repellent with up to 30% deet is allowable (not more than 30%). All bug spray will be applied outside. Parents must fill out an authorization form regarding bug spray application at school.

Absences: If your child will be absent because of illness, or any other reason, please inform us by email or using the Procure app.

Immunizations: The Pima County Health Department requires that the school have an up-to-date photocopy of the immunization record on file for all children in the program. For those who do not immunize their children for religious or medical reasons, immunization waiver forms are available. If there is an outbreak of a communicable disease, such as measles, mumps, etc., **non-immunized children need to be kept at home for six weeks after the last reported case.** This is a Pima County Health rule.

Head Lice: Due to our experience over the years, we have had to devise a more stringent policy regarding head lice than that which is suggested by the Pima County Health Department. Head lice have become resistant to current shampoos on the market. One treatment and sometimes two treatments no longer guarantee that the lice have been stopped; therefore, a no-nits policy seems a prudent course of action at this time. In order to support this policy, the faculty will work to evaluate each individual case to see when the child can return to school. In our experience, this may require as long as a week. We understand that this can present difficulty to families whose children need to be kept out of school for a longer period of time. Besides exposing many children and families to this challenge, the entire school must be stripped of all fabric materials, leaving a bare classroom. It becomes a financial burden to families and the school to rectify a lice problem. We appreciate your cooperation in this regard. If any problem does occur with an individual, the school must be notified at once.

Inspection Reports: Desert Spring Children's Center is inspected by the Department of Health Services annually. Our license number is 1687. These inspection reports are available to the parents upon request. The Department of Health Services (DHS) is located at 400 W. Congress, Suite #100, Tucson, Arizona, 85701. The phone number for DHS is 628-6540.

Emergencies

Accidents: Desert Spring Children's Center carries liability insurance. In case of an accident that involves your child, you will be notified. Appropriate first aid will be administered. In the event that you cannot be reached, your child's physician will be notified of the emergency and consulted as to its management. Please make sure that your emergency information is current on your child's blue card.

Procedures in Case of Emergency: In the event of a medical emergency, you will be called. If we cannot reach you, we will call one of the other names on the blue registration form. Most Desert Spring staff are trained in Pediatric First Aid and CPR. We practice monthly fire drills and maintain smoke detectors and alarms. In addition, the school maintains written policies and procedures to ensure our preparedness for an emergency.

Procedures in Case of Emergency Evacuation: Parents will be called to pick up children if evacuation is deemed necessary. Children will be relocated in First Christian Church. In the case that evacuation from the immediate area is necessary, children will be relocated at First United Methodist Church (915 E. 4th St.) or Trinity Presbyterian Church (400 E. University).

Corporate Information

Desert Spring Children's Center is a nonprofit corporation under section 501(C) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Our E.I.N. is 86-058-5831. We are also recognized by the Arizona Corporation Commission as a Domestic Corporation organized under the laws of the State of Arizona.

Desert Spring Children's Center always maintains current liability insurance. Our agent is Wilcox and Associates, Child Care Insurance Specialists, and the policy is with Capitol Indemnity Corporation.

Desert Spring is inspected annually by the Department of Health Services (DHS). The inspection reports are available to the parents upon request, or through DHS at 400 W. Congress Suite #100, Tucson, AZ, 85701, phone: 628-6540. The director of Desert Spring Children's Center is Sara Van Slyke. The designated directors (to act on behalf of the director when not present at the facility) are Dedra Altuna and Kiana Solis.

Appendix A

Tuition and Fees

Beginning August 2022

Tuition & Fees

Two Year Olds:

Full Day	7:30am – 3:30pm	Monday – Friday	\$900/month
Extended Day	3:30pm – 5:00pm	Monday – Friday	additional \$ 75/month
Half Day	8:30am – 12:15pm	4 or 5 Days (same price)	\$700/month

Preschool (ages three and older):

Full Day	7:30am – 5:00pm	Monday – Friday	\$850/month
Full Day	7:30am – 5:00pm	Four Days, Specify: _____	\$750/month
Half Day	8:30am – 12:15pm	4 or 5 Days (same price)	\$650/month

Fees & Discounts

Registration Fee	\$75
Yearly Materials Fee	\$50
Second Child Discount	\$100 off tuition
Late Fee	\$1.00/minute (5:31pm is considered late!)

Payments

- Payments are due by the 10th of each month.
- Cash, check, Chase Bill Pay and Zelle payments are accepted.
- Payments may be mailed or hand delivered during drop off or pick up.
- Please make checks payable to: Desert Spring Children’s Center
- Please mail payments to: Desert Spring Children’s Center 740 E. Speedway Blvd. Tucson, AZ 85719

All prices subject to change. Revised 04/2023

Tuition is non-refundable.

Appendix B: Assessment Plan

Timeline:

- July (or upon enrollment): Teachers conduct Screening using Brooks Ages & Stages Questionnaire, in collaboration with families.
- August: Teachers begin Assessment process: collect written observations, photos, children’s work, and other evidence to document growth over the course of the year.
- September: Teachers complete ASQ ages and stages questionnaire. This is reviewed by the Director.
- October: Parent Teacher Conferences are held, teachers discuss assessment outcomes and share celebrations and goals for the child.
- February: Teachers complete 2nd formal assessment tools if indicated on child’s follow up plan.
- May: Optional Parent Teacher Conferences, to share ongoing assessments and discuss transition plans.

Assessment Policies:

SCREENING AND IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS

Rationale: Early intervention is critical to ensuring that all children with special needs are able to reach their full potential. We recognize that many children who are eligible for services may not receive them because of lack of screening and identification.

Policy: All children at Desert Spring will be screened for the purpose of identifying special needs in order to ensure that all children and families receive necessary services.

Procedure:

1. All families will be required to provide the school with a copy of the “Health Assessment Form” completed by a physician. The form includes vision, hearing and developmental screening.
2. All incoming paperwork and forms are to be reviewed by the director. The director will identify whether there is a “health concern” as noted by the health care provider, and will notify parents of the possible delay or disability.
3. If indicated on the form, children who need follow up after screening (concern identified) will receive a “case review”. During the Case Review, the family, teachers, and director will meet to discuss next steps in the referral process. The family will be referred to necessary services by school staff, or, in the case that the health care provider has already done so, staff will ensure that the family has made contact with the necessary agencies. Agencies may include a physician, school district special education team, AZEIP, early childhood mental health agencies, family counselors, or other agencies that may provide needed services.
4. For children with identified needs, an Individualized Education Plan will be written in conjunction with the teachers, director, parents, and other related specialists. The IEP will be reviewed quarterly (see IEP form). For children with special health or nutritional needs, a Special Health Care Plan will be completed.
5. All modifications to environment and/or “special plans” will be documented in the Child’s File (see Program Modifications Form).

ASSESSMENT IN SUPPORT OF LEARNING

Rationale: The purpose of assessment of children’s development and learning is to inform planning of day-to-day curriculum and to ensure that the program is addressing each child’s individual needs. We have selected the Creative Curriculum and Work Sampling tools for assessment because they fit with our program’s philosophy that children learn best in ways that are relevant to their own lives, and that often a learning experience will cover several learning domains at once. In addition, our belief that the best early education for children includes opportunities across all areas of development is consistent both with our selected assessment tools and curriculum. Our philosophy emphasizes the fact that while there are expected ranges for children to develop particular skills, not all children acquire skills at exactly the same age. These assessment tools fit with our philosophy and curriculum goals of individualizing the curriculum for

children. Finally, the assessment tools are culturally sensitive and therefore fit with our philosophy that our staff and families must maintain a respectful and collaborative relationship.

Policy: All children will receive “learning assessments” at least two times per year and will include a variety of assessment methods. All families must receive written results of assessments.

Procedure:

1. Toddlers will be formally assessed using the Creative Curriculum Individualizing Goals and Objectives for Children Form. Preschool children are to be formally assessed using the Work Sampling Preschool Checklist. The checklists will be completed by the child’s teaching team and the results are to be shared with parents during parent teacher conferences. The Checklists will be completed at least Fall and Spring semesters. The results will be shared with parents at Parent Conferences in Fall and Spring semesters.
2. In addition, children will be informally assessed. The child’s portfolio is one informal assessment tool used and will include samples of the child’s classroom work. Other informal assessment tools are photos, written observations by teachers, and other documentation of children’s learning.
3. All assessment tools, formal and informal, have been reviewed for cultural sensitivity. It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that Parent Teacher Conferences are conducted in a culturally sensitive manner. Desert Spring will make efforts to provide an interpreter for families upon request.
4. Teachers are responsible for completing all checklists, maintaining portfolios, and collecting at least one written observation per child per week. In addition, teachers are responsible for scheduling Parent Teacher Conferences on day designated by the director and as communicated to families on the school calendar.
5. Teachers will utilize information gained from the Assessments to create weekly curriculum goals in order to individualize planning.
6. The director is responsible for ensuring that teachers fulfill their assessment responsibilities. Assessment of child progress is a fundamental aspect of our program and is an explicit responsibility of a teacher’s duties.

Appendix C

Conflict Resolution Procedures

We recognize that conflict provides opportunities for problem solving and growth, when handled in a respectful, proactive, and positive manner.

We have adopted the conflict resolution procedures as outlined in *The Visionary Director* (Carter & Curtis, 1998):

Procedure:

“It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at a high level throughout conflict resolution. This process incorporates a method to document the evolution of a conflict and the attempts made at resolution. Follow up communication is an integral part of the procedure to ensure that the issue is being satisfactorily resolved and that all parties’ needs are being met.

Conflict Resolution Model:

1. Listen actively to each person. Paraphrase what was said and clarify your understanding. Acknowledge the person’s feelings.
2. Ask each person in turn what his or her needs are in the situation.
3. Jointly brainstorm many possible solutions to meet the needs. Accept all suggestions as possibilities. Do not evaluate at this point.
4. Evaluate possible solutions and select one.
5. Make an action plan together. Distribute copies of the action plan to those involved.
6. Implement the action plan.
7. Check back. Phone the conflicting parties in one week to see how they are doing. Phone back a week after that. Modify the action plan and/or call additional meetings as necessary.”

From: *The Visionary Director* (Carter & Curtis, 1998)

Appendix D

Green School Policy – Pesticide Use

Every effort is made to keep the children safe.

Desert Spring Children’s Center uses every effort to keep the school as ‘green’ as possible, using non-toxic cleaning supplies where are free of harmful substances. We use integrated pest management (EcoPest) – using soaps and non-toxic products if pests are discovered.

If by any chance insects become a problem we would notify you by e-mail and postings 48 hours in advance with the following information:

- 1) The brand, concentration, rate of application, and any use restriction required by the label of the herbicide or specific pesticide;
- 2) The date and time of the pesticide application;
- 3) The pesticide label and the material safety data sheet; and
- 4) The name and telephone number of the pesticide business licensee and the name of the licensed applicator.

Appendix E

Covid Protocols

With the help of our Medical Advisory Committee, the Pima County Health Department, and the CDC, we were able to successfully reopen the school for the 2020-2021 school year and keep Desert Spring a healthy community. We have learned a lot over the past few years about covid and best practices are always changing. Given the fluidity of the public health situation, this will be a living document that will be updated based the most current information.

We appreciate your part in helping us adhere to these new standards.

Travel Recommendations

Desert Spring is requiring families who are traveling internationally to follow one of these options before returning to school:

- 1) Refer to CDC guidance for returning to school or work after international travel.
- 2) Inform the director of international travel plans and work together to establish a timeline for returning to school.

Cloth Face Masks

Staff – Masking is currently optional. This will be re-evaluated as COVID numbers change in the community. Disposable masks are available to all staff, every day.

Children – We suggest that children three and older bring a clean cloth face mask in a clean bag or container every day. Masking is currently optional and will be re-evaluated as COVID numbers change in the community. Below is the masking policy for children when masks are required:

Preschool aged children will wear masks inside, but not outside and toddlers will not wear masks at all.

Hand Hygiene

Handwashing with soap and water will be our primary method of sanitizing hands.

- Children and staff will wash hands upon arrival to Desert Spring, after using the bathroom, before and after eating, and after coming in from outdoor when feasible.
- Children and staff will wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - Staff will dispense soap and turn faucets on and off for children to limit contact with high touch surfaces when feasible
 - Staff will monitor children to ensure that they lather for at least 20 seconds during handwashing when feasible
- Developmentally appropriate posters describing handwashing steps will be placed near sinks
- When soap and water are not available, staff may use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Children will not use hand sanitizer

Cleaning and Disinfection

Desert Spring understands the need to minimize exposure of children to cleaning and disinfecting products. The following cleaning equipment and sanitization procedures will be implemented:

Cleaning Schedule: High touch surfaces including toilets, sinks, and door handles will be scheduled for increased, routine cleaning multiple times throughout the day

Ventilation

Air conditioner systems have been serviced to ensure that they operate properly. Quiet, low energy Blueair Blue Pure 211+ Air Purifiers will run throughout the day to capture 99% of airborne pollutants like viruses, pollen, dust, mold, bacteria, and more. Outdoor air will be circulated as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors when it is safe to do so.

Outside time will be increased when possible. Misters have been installed to cool porches.

Keep in touch about Covid contact

We ask our families to immediately report known exposure to covid-19 (in particular familial contact) and/or positive covid test results to the director: hypatia@desertspringschool.org or 520-620-1575, immediately so that the Medical Advisory Committee can establish a plan for a safe return to school.

- If your child has a known **isolated** exposure (e.g. attending a party with someone who then tested positive):
 - They can return to school if they are asymptomatic.
 - They will need to mask indoors at all times for 10 days after exposure
 - Per CDC guidelines, please test on the 5th day post exposure to ensure they are still negative.
 - Per CDC guidelines, please test again on day 10 post exposure. If negative, your child can return to the current school masking policy.

- If your child has an **ongoing** exposure (e.g. parent or sibling with symptomatic COVID at home):
 - Your child can return to school if asymptomatic.
 - Consider keeping your child at home if you are able.
 - They will need to mask indoors at all times for 10 days after **initial** exposure.
 - We may ask that your child attends school on a modified schedule. We will work with your family on a case by case basis to determine the best approach for your household and the DS community.
 - Per CDC guidelines, please test on the 5th day post exposure to ensure they are still negative.
 - Per CDC guidelines, please test again on day 10 post **initial** exposure. If negative, your child can return to the current school masking policy.

- If your child tests **positive** with or without symptoms:
 - Remain at home following the CDC isolation directions for at least 5 days.
 - Your student may return to school on day 6 if their symptoms have lessened, they have had no fever for at least 24-hours without the use of medication that reduces fevers and are able to wear a well-fitting mask for the next 5 days at school.
 - If your child is unable, or is unwilling, to wear a mask for 5 days after isolation, we will require your student to stay home for 10 days.
 - If your child's symptoms have lessened in severity, has tested negative, has a medical provider's note to return to school, and is without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of medications that reduce fever, your student may return.