

Dear Parents,

As we wind down our first semester, we would like to thank our families for partnering with the school to help keep our students and staff safe and healthy throughout the semester. We could not have been so successful in keeping the school open for in-person learning without the support of our family community.

We know our families are looking forward to the upcoming time off and a chance to take a break and connect with loved ones! We share the excitement for the break. We have also been busy planning and preparing for our return to campus in January 2021.

January is predicted to have higher rates of infection as many will enjoy holiday visits and travel. The possibility exists that an increase in infection rates would necessitate a move to all-virtual learning. **We absolutely do not want this to occur.** During this time, our primary objectives remain the same: stay safe, stay healthy, and stay in session with in-person learning.

## **RETURNING TO CAMPUS IN JANUARY**

To help us to stay open with in-person learning, and to minimize the possibility of a COVID-19 outbreak at the school in January, we are making a heartfelt appeal to families for their return from winter break.

**If you or your immediate family will be interacting with anyone outside of your current group of contacts (your usual, daily “bubble”) during winter break, please consider staying home and utilizing the online learning option for the first 1 – 2 weeks after holiday break.**

We know and understand that this may not be possible for some families. However, if you have been exposed to people outside of your bubble, and you do have the flexibility to have your student online for the first two weeks of the spring semester, please consider doing so. For those families who will be in contact with people outside of their bubbles, while it is not mandatory, we encourage you to take a COVID-19 test 5 - 7 days after contact *and* in time to receive results before returning to campus.

**If you or your student know that you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you must remain in quarantine, and off campus, for 14 days after the exposure. Your student may not return to campus during this time.**

For temporary absence due to illness, extra caution or exposure, online resources will be made available to students within 24 hours, but there will be no change in tuition. Families requesting to switch to online learning permanently may complete a [Mode of Instruction Change Form](#). Forms must be received by the last day of the semester, Friday, December 18, 2021, for changes to go into effect for January 4, 2021.

As always, and especially throughout winter break, please adhere to the DGM Health and Safety Pledge by wearing masks, maintaining social distance, and practicing great hand hygiene.

On our end, we will be using the time during winter break to sanitize the classrooms and prepare for the students' return. We will also be reviewing our procedures and staffing to ensure there is no cross contact within the campus.

### **LOWER ELEMENTARY, UPPER ELEMENTARY & MYHS**

Upon return to campus in January, please ensure your student has masks and/or gaiters for campus use. Over time some masks have been misplaced or damaged. January is a great time to replenish their stock with new masks.

### **IN CASE OF ILLNESS OR EXPOSURE**

If someone in your family has been **ill with COVID-19 or may have been exposed**, please follow the guidelines below.

- Stay home
- Contact your health care provider
- Follow the Illness Policy in the [Parent Handbook](#) located on the Parent Resource Hub
- **Notify the school immediately** via our attendance line (480) 893-6516 or [support@desertgardenmontessori.org](mailto:support@desertgardenmontessori.org).

We are working closely with the Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) and we must, as a school, report all positive cases within our community.

### **CDC RESOURCES**

The holiday season brings a greater number of potential social and travel events to our community. These factors have resulted in increased infection rates since Thanksgiving and will likely continue to do so according to the CDC and the MCDPH. The links below can help families aid in decision making as you both enjoy your break and make travel or stay at home decisions.

[Holiday Travel](#)  
[Celebrating Winter Holidays](#)

### **PHONE NUMBERS & SUPPORT**

- **Main Office / Front Desk (live attendant):** (480) 496-9833
- **Attendance Line (24/7 voicemail):** (480) 893-6516
- **Email:** [support@desertgardenmontessori.org](mailto:support@desertgardenmontessori.org)

We wish you joy, relaxation, and connection in this one-of-a-kind holiday season and look forward to serving you when we return next year!

Happy holidays,



Shetal Walters  
Executive Director