

FAMILY HANDBOOK



2023-2024

Child Centered Academic Excellence

29028 Aloma Ave. Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

Phone: 949-495-5162

<http://www.mcdowellschool.org>

FOREWORD

This handbook is designed as a reference for families and students so that they may understand the philosophies, policies, and procedures at McDowell School. It does not replace the information in the enrollment agreement.

Please peruse this handbook carefully. It will provide you with a wealth of information about the school. If you have additional questions, please contact the school for clarification.

McDowell School continually reviews its practices and procedures regarding providing a safe and nurturing environment for our children. We believe that contact and individualized relationships between students and staff are a healthy and beneficial part of the learning and development process for students. At the same time, protection of students' personal welfare is the highest priority at our school.

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C. J. Lincoln Head of School

C. Alves School Director

S. Tirado Office Manager

WELCOME TO MCDOWELL SCHOOL

Thank you for choosing to be part of the McDowell Family. Here at McDowell, we are proud to have created a warm and energetic learning environment, designed to address your child's developing intellectual, social, and emotional needs, while challenging them to reach their full potential. We are fully aware of how precious and important these formative years are for building the character and skills of tomorrow's leaders. Children are our top priority here at McDowell and we believe that good communication is the key to a great partnership which will ensure their success.

GENERAL INFORMATION

McDowell School Mission Statement:

McDowell champions children to grow intellectually, emotionally, socially, and physically, by cultivating a lifetime love of learning.

McDowell School Vision Statement:

McDowell school students emerge as self-reliant, yet collaborative, individuals who possess independent, critical thinking skills. They will build on their strong educational foundation to become caring citizens who will excel.

McDowell School Core Purpose:

McDowell is committed to being a responsible neighbor by embracing the community at large. We partner with our families to ensure peace of mind, inspiring children to flourish and grow in an exceptional, interactive environment that nurtures and promotes children's development and well-being through education, discovery and exploration.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

We comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other applicable regulations pertaining to providing services to individuals with special needs. McDowell School admits qualified students of any race, color, disability, nationality, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, disability, nationality and ethnic origin, creed, religion, or similar factors in administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, or other school administered programs.

Insurance:

We have an extensive safety awareness program along with inspections and regular maintenance of the building's playground and equipment. In spite of the precautions the Company takes to ensure the safety of the children and school, we respect that accidents may happen. Therefore, we are insured providers which include, but are not limited to, General and primary Child Accident Insurance.

Liability Release and Indemnification:

The School maintains an insurance policy in connection with its liability for any injury, loss or damage that may occur to your child, your child's property or your property as a result of fire, theft, storm or other causes. Acting on behalf of yourself and your child, you hereby waive and agree to release any claims that you, your child, or you and your child's legal representatives and heirs may have against the School or any employee, agent, owner or member of the School, or any successor or assign of the School, arising from or related to any injury, loss or damage to the extent, (a) that such injury, loss or damage is not covered by the insurance policy maintained by the School, or (b) that the monetary amount of such injury, loss or damage exceeds any amount payable under such insurance policy. You also agree to be responsible for and to indemnify and hold harmless the School, any employee, agent, owner or member of the School, and any successor and assign of the School from and against, any and all claims, liabilities, damages, judgments and costs (including attorney's fees and court costs) that may be brought against or incurred by the School, any employee, agent, owner or member of the School or any successor or assign of the School, arising from or related to any act or omission on the part of you or your child. The School is also not responsible for personal items lost, stolen or broken while in our care.

Admissions Requirements:

McDowell School requires an entrance assessment for Kindergarten through Sixth grade. It may also be required that each child visits the classroom for a Discovery Day and a possible teacher assessment. We are required to maintain state records for each child; thus, we need copies of Birth Certificate, up-to-date Immunization Record, yearly physical exam/well check and for students in grade school, a signed authorization for records transfer.

Entrance Age:

We offer programs from Infant through Sixth grade. To enroll in Kindergarten, students must be 5 years of age by September 1st, and have a recommendation as “ready for kindergarten” from our staff following an in person Readiness Assessment.

Faculty:

Our faculty must meet academic and professional requirements. Academic qualifications for classroom teachers include a Bachelor’s Degree in Education from a college or university with State certification. All preschool and pre-kindergarten must have 12 Early Childhood Education units (ECE) or a Bachelor’s Degree in Child Development or Childhood Education. All faculty members are required to participate in professional development seminars and to be CPR/1st Aid certified.

Confidentiality & Distribution of Student Records:

Information in a student’s record is privileged and confidential. We will not distribute or release information in a student’s record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for a child without the written authorization of the child’s parent except as permitted in certain exceptions including, but not limited to:

- To authorized representatives of, among others, State and local educational authorities, such as a State department of education, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs
- To a representative of a State or local child welfare agency or Tribal organization regarding a child in foster care
- To State and local officials or authorities pursuant to a State statute concerning the juvenile justice system and the system’s ability to effectively serve the student whose records are being disclosed
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school for specified purposes including improving instruction
- To comply with a judicial order or a lawfully issued subpoena
- In connection with a health or safety emergency

Upon written request by the parents, our school will provide the student's records to the parents, or any other person that the parents identify.

Licensing:

McDowell is fully licensed and inspected on a regular basis to ensure it is in compliance with regulations. The Schools' current licenses are on display in the front lobby. The California Child Care regulations are attached to this document and are de facto the policies of the school.

Department of Social Services:

The Department of Social Services performs such duties as are authorized by state regulations. The Department has the authority to interview children or staff and to inspect and audit childcare school records without prior consent. The School shall comply with the Department and we shall make provisions for private interviews with any child (ren) or staff and the examination of all records relating to the operation of the School; furthermore, the Department has the authority to observe the physical conditions of the child (ren), including conditions that could indicate abuse, neglect or inappropriate placement.

Reporting Child Abuse:

In an instance when a McDowell employee has reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, child neglect or child exploitation, the school is **required** under Penal Code Sections 11166 and 11168 to contact Child Protective Services.

Sexual Harassment:

It is McDowell's policy to maintain a learning environment that is free of sexual harassment, a form of sexual discrimination that constitutes differential treatment on the basis of sex. McDowell considers harassment to be a major offense that can result in disciplinary action to the offending employee or student. Each school employee and parents of any student who believes that he/she has been a victim of sexual harassment should bring the complaint to the attention of the administration so that appropriate action may be taken to resolve the complaint. Complaints will be promptly investigated in a way that respects the privacy of those concerned.

Firearms and Weapons on School Property:

The School is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for its students, their families, employees, and visitors by prohibiting the possession of firearms and other weapons on School property.

This Policy applies to all employees, students, student families, vendors, and visitors to the School. Possessing a firearm or weapon (concealed or otherwise) while on School property is strictly prohibited.

This Policy does not apply to (i) law enforcement officers who are required to carry a weapon or firearm as a condition of his or her employment, (ii) external government agency officers required to carry a weapon or firearm while conducting official business at the School or (iii) private security firms or individuals hired by the School while providing security services at the School.

Any person who violates this Policy will be required to leave the School and may be permanently banned from School and/or referred to law enforcement. Any employee who violates this Policy is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Pesticides:

We shall make written pesticide information available to a parent, upon parent's request, at least 48 hours before a pesticide application occurs on the school's grounds. The information will include: The brand, concentration, rate of application, and any use restrictions required by the label of the herbicide or specific pesticide; the date and time of the pesticide application; the pesticide label and the material safety data sheet; and the name and telephone number of the pesticide business licensee and the name of the licensed applicator.

Compliance - School Policies and Provision of Authorizations and Information:

You agree (a) that you and your child will be familiar with and comply with all the policies of the School, and be aware that those policies may be amended from time to time, and (b) that you will deliver promptly to the School all signed authorizations and any and all other documents and information, including without limitation, authorizations and information related to the emergency medical care of your child, as may be required by the School from time to time.

Cell Phones:

We ask all parents to silence cell phones during attendance at all school functions. Students may not use cellular phones at school before or after class. Cell phones must be kept off and out of sight or they will be taken by the teacher and will need to be picked up by a parent.

Social Media:

In order to maintain appropriate and professional relationships, staff members at McDowell are not permitted to contact or accept contact from students on social networking sites. Please feel free to contact staff members through their school email address, by phone or Kaymbu.

Video Surveillance:

Our school utilizes cameras that monitor a variety of locations at the school for safety, quality assurance and training purposes. Due to privacy regulations, footage from these cameras may not be viewed by parents or guardians except in extreme circumstances. Video requests should only be submitted in situations where it is absolutely necessary in order to resolve an issue and must be made within 48 hours of the incident or event. The school makes no guarantee that requested video will be available.

Bell Ringing:

The graduating senior class may participate in a McDowell tradition at the end of each school year. Promoted students will ring the bell for as many years as they have been in attendance at McDowell. All parents are invited to attend.

Visitors:

McDowell School welcomes family members and visitors to our campus to observe a student's classroom or tour the facility, with the following protocol. After an appointment has been made in advance, we require that you first check in at the front office to sign in and receive a badge to wear on campus. All observations must be treated with strict confidentiality.

Volunteers:

Volunteers are welcome on the McDowell campus, with the following protocols and expectations.

- Before being able to volunteer in a classroom or act as a chaperone on a field trip, the school must have clearance from Live Scan. The school specific fingerprint form is available from the front office.

- To be in extended contact with students we will need proof of MMR and TDap vaccinations.

Volunteers are expected to respect the leadership and authority of the classroom teachers, especially when handling sensitive or personal issues. As a volunteer on campus, or on a field study, discretion and confidentiality are imperative. It is not appropriate to discuss staff or students with other parents or teachers. This includes posting and commenting on Social Media sites. If a volunteer has concerns, they should bring them to the administration. This is to ensure the privacy and rights of all individuals in our school community.

Traffic:

Be aware that before and after school traffic in our parking lot is busy. Note the speed limit is 5 mph. Do not leave your car unattended except in designated parking slots. Do not leave your child/children or pets in the car unattended. Please pull into a parking space and accompany your child onto campus. For obvious safety reasons, students must not be permitted to cross the parking lot by themselves. We request that parents refrain from parking on the north side of Aloma Avenue and from crossing the street with children at both drop-off and pick-up times.

Parking:

Please enter the parking lot via the second entrance (entrance closest to the school) and exit through the first entrance (closest to Golden Lantern). The church parking lot is available for our use when our lot is full, please be courteous to our neighbors and refrain from parking directly in front of the church reading room building or in front of the trash bin area.

Lost and Found:

All items susceptible to being lost (including all uniform clothing) should be permanently labeled. Periodically, lost items will be put on display in the front office. All clothing and items left unclaimed will be donated to charity.

Pets

The only time pets (small animals only) are allowed on campus is for a pre-arranged share. This must first be approved by the teacher, and the Director or Head of School, after all allergies have been taken into consideration, and ALWAYS on a leash or in a cage. Dogs and cats are not permitted to walk on campus during drop off or pick up, even if on a leash.

SCHOOL HOURS

Scheduled Hours:

Office Hours 8:00am to 5:00pm

Academic School Day 8:30am to 3:00pm

Minimum Day 8:30am to noon

Infant through TK extended hours 7:30am to 5:00pm

K – 6 Extended Care Hours 7:30am to 8:15am and 3:15pm to 5:00pm

Scheduled Dates:

For specifics, please refer to Planning Calendar

The School Year begins the day after Labor Day and concludes in the second week of June.

Summer School starts the last week of June through to the third week in August.

Drop Off and Pick Up Protocol:

Students in Infants through TK classes must be signed in and signed out at the front desk in the front office though Care Works. Parents should then walk their children to class and ensure the teacher is aware of their presence, and then place all backpacks/lunches and snacks in the designated place. For Pick up parents should sign their children out first then head to the classroom to pick up their child. Students may be picked up by authorized adults only. Please encourage your child 18 months and older to walk on his or her own to the classroom and carry his or her own backpack.

(Authorized adults are those listed on the official emergency card or persons indicated in writing, beforehand, by the family. All individuals should be prepared to show ID.)

Students in Grade school must be signed in to extended care if they are on campus before 8:15am and must be signed out from extended care after 3:15pm and before 5:00pm

Grade school students do not need to be signed in if they attend between regular hours, thus between 8:30am and 3:00pm on regular school days. Students leaving early need to be signed out by an authorized adult.

Signing in and Signing out

California State law requires Preschool parents to sign their children in and out each day. When you arrive in the morning, please sign your child in Care Works. When you arrive in the afternoon to pick up your child, please sign your child out on Care Works. In the event of technology failure, you may be required to sign in or out using a manual process. Additionally, if you fail to sign your child in or out, you give McDowell staff express permission to do so on your behalf.

Tardiness:

McDowell School expects that students arrive on time for class. Students who are tardy must be accompanied into the school office and signed in by an authorized adult. The student will be issued a pass to proceed to the classroom.

Tardies are recorded on Grade School report cards, and excessive tardies will incur consequences.

Unplanned Closures:

From time to time, our school may be required to close due to circumstances beyond our control, including, but not limited to, severe weather (as more fully discussed below), governmental mandate, loss of essential service(s) such as power, heat or water, emergency health crisis, and/or acts of God. In the event the school is required to close due to circumstances beyond its control, tuition will not be refunded.

Incident Weather Policy:

If it is determined that driving conditions for our families and staff are hazardous, or if opening the school is deemed unsafe, the school will be closed. Closure will be determined at the discretion of the school administration. There will be no refund or tuition credit for any such closing.

In the event of an early closing due to severe weather or other emergency, we will notify you at the earliest possible time through the usual communication channels. You agree to make arrangements to pick up your child promptly when notified by the school. Students will not be released until an authorized person has been identified.

TUITION AND FEES

Tuition Schedule and Policies:

Tuition is to be paid promptly on the 1st of each month. The tuition fees are based on an annual ten-month school year (September through June) and are divided into ten equal installments, for your convenience. Any payments received after the fifth of the month will include a **\$35.00 late fee**.

McDowell School reserves the right to exclude your child/children from school if all fees are not paid by the 5th calendar day of each month.

PLEASE NOTE: There will be a \$35.00 service charge for checks not honored by your bank for any reason. Additionally, parents may be required to pay by cashier's check for the remainder of the school year.

Information regarding tuition payments, late charges, return check charge, discounts and dismissal is stated in the Tuition Agreement.

Adjustments in Tuition:

Tuition is an annual cost. Adjustments will **not** be made for closures, or absences due to travel or vacations. If illness requires hospitalization or a period of home recuperation extending three weeks or more, two-thirds of the tuition will be charged to hold a spot in the class.

Early Withdrawal:

If you need to withdraw your child from school before the end of the academic year, **written notice is required 30 calendar days in advance of the withdrawal date**. You will be obligated to pay for those 30 days. The deposit is not refundable.

Holiday and Other Planned Closings:

All closings are indicated in advance on the McDowell School Planning Calendar. The annual School Planning Calendar is given to each family as part of the registration packet and is available in the school office. Detailed activity calendars are sent home monthly.

Extended Day for Elementary:

Full-time extended care is available to all enrolled families beginning at 7:30am and after school until 5:00pm weekdays. For grade school students, advance payment is required for this service and is

payable at the beginning of each month with tuition for full time care. We also offer a daily “drop in” rate of \$25.00 for those families that need occasional extended care. This will be billed at the end of each month.

Late Fee

Please remember that we arrange staff supervision based on your child’s pre-arranged schedule. All children must be picked up by 3:00pm (Elementary) or 5:00pm (Preschool and Extended Day) otherwise, parents will be charged **US\$5.00** per minute until picked up. There are no exceptions to this policy.

*If the lateness becomes regular or habitual, additional applicable charges will be applied. If you are unavoidably late, please contact the office as soon as possible so we can prepare the child and arrange staffing.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Communication:

McDowell School recognizes that effective communication between parents, teachers and staff is essential. The main manner of communication with parents is email and our website located at www.mcdowellschool.org. It contains the school calendars and other vital information. Upcoming events are sent weekly and/or monthly with a detailed calendar. A weekly news magazine is emailed to all families highlighting the events of the past week. Class teachers send weekly communications specific to the class.

Parents with children in preschool will be able to communicate with their teachers through Kaymbu.

We know that there are times when a parent needs more clarification on a situation, to draw attention to a special need of the student or voice a concern that needs to be addressed. We are here to render the best service and provide an outstanding education for your child. Do not hesitate to contact us. Please follow the format below to best communicate your needs:

First, please communicate with the classroom or the specialist teacher involved for concerns regarding your child and day-to-day issues in behavior or curriculum.

If satisfactory results are not obtained, feel free to communicate with the appropriate Director or Head of School.

Parents, or their agents (Psychologists, speech therapists, etc.) are welcome to observe in the classroom at any time throughout the year. Please make arrangements with the administration so that a convenient time can be chosen. On the day of the observation, please check in at the front desk. While in the classroom, please be aware that the teacher will be busy with his/her lesson and, in most cases will not be available to talk with you at that time. Please remember our policies with respect to discretion and confidentiality.

Conferences:

Individual parent-teacher conferences are welcome throughout the year and parents should feel free to request these. Conferences concerning academic and/or discipline problems should be scheduled. Please avoid discussing confidential issues at any informal meetings, such as drop-off or pick-up.

If you need to communicate with your child's teacher, you may phone the office to arrange for an appointment, send a note or email the teacher.

Formal parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled for both Infant through TK and K - 6th students. The other preschool conference is held in the spring. K-6th conferences are scheduled in October and March. Specific dates can be found on our school calendar, newsletters and on parent bulletin boards.

Reporting:

Grades K – 6th send a formal report card home at the conclusion of each Trimester.

ACADEMIC POLICY

McDowell School provides a balance of educational experiences, which actively involves each child in the learning process in traditionally structured and self-contained classrooms. Literacy-based weekly and monthly units form the framework for learning throughout subject areas, along with specialty classes, (Music, Art, PE, Spanish, Science Lab, Library) activities and field trips. Math and Language are taught approximately one year above grade level and meet or exceed all State Standards.

McDowell does not ascribe to the Common Core or NGSS, preferring more rigorous curricular standards, with a strong emphasis on skills first, and the application of higher-level thinking skills when appropriate.

Curriculum details are provided by classroom teachers at Back-to-School Night in September.

Computers

Computers are available for students in classrooms and the computer lab. Students in grades 4 and up also need to bring their own Chromebook or laptop. Use of the school's devices and WiFi network is subject to appropriate use guidelines.

Character Education / Flag Ceremony:

Manners, etiquette, and character development are an integral part of our school. All teachers stress manners throughout the day in their classrooms beginning with "please" and "thank you" and holding doors in preschool and continuing with daily greeting by name, and character education lessons. We focus on one character trait per month throughout the year and honor those elementary students that stand out each month at our Flag Ceremonies. Parents are encouraged to attend these monthly ceremonies where character standouts are presented as well as "caught doing good" Super Sea Lion awards.

2-5 Standardized Tests:

Students are tested each spring to assess their level of academic achievement utilizing the ERB's CTP V. All students are expected to be in school every day during testing. Parental cooperation is necessary to ensure each student is on time and well rested for each test day. Tests are administered Monday through Friday between 8:30am and 10:30am. Results are received and forwarded to families as soon as possible.

Books and Supplies:

The school will supply each student with curricular items at the beginning of the school year. A class supply list for incidentals and personal materials is provided in the welcome packet.

Hard-covered textbooks and workbooks are the property of the school. Students are expected to take

proper care of textbooks and return them in good condition at the end of the school year. If texts and library books are lost or excessively damaged, a charge will be assessed.

Field Studies:

Field studies are an integral component of our academic program. Local trips may utilize parent drivers. Longer trips will be by school bus with appropriate safety restraints and trips out of Orange County will be on luxury motor coaches with appropriate safety restraints, air conditioning and bathroom facilities.

On the rare occasion that we utilize parent drivers, each driver must complete the required background and health check as well as providing proof of insurance and driver's license. All students must have the required school field trip permission form signed by a parent, allowing them to participate in the trip or they will not be allowed to attend.

Please note that State law requires that all children and adults must be in seat belts when riding in a car. Children under six years of age or weighing less than sixty pounds must use car seats. No children are allowed to ride in the front seat.

Children whose Emergency Forms are not filed in our office will be excluded from leaving the school on field trips or sporting events. Due to insurance limitations and our desire to maintain a safe environment for those enrolled here, siblings, **without exception**, must be excluded from all field trips even if a parent is driving.

Parents, when chaperones, must have a satisfactory background check, and understand their primary role is to help the teacher monitor student behavior. Please be aware that some venues limit the number of chaperones the school can utilize.

Students attending field trips are to leave with their class and return with their class to the school at the conclusion of the trip. Arrangements may not be made to meet their class at the field trip location, nor may students be dismissed from the field trip prior to their return to the school.

If you choose to not have your child participate in a field trip, it is necessary to notify the teacher and to keep your child home on the day of the field trip.

Homework:

When homework is assigned by a teacher, parents are asked to share in the responsibility for the success of the homework by:

1. Providing your child with a quiet place and adequate time to do homework.
2. Encouraging the child to do his own work.
3. Aiding your child with homework and projects when needed.
4. Communicating with the teacher when your child needed significant help or did not understand the concept/assignment.
5. Encouraging good study habits and completion of assignments.

Homework is assigned Monday through Thursday in grades K-6th. This does not include class work that a student did not complete and needs to take home that evening. APPROXIMATE time spent on homework per night is listed below.

Kindergarten: 20 minutes

First: 30 minutes

Second: 30-45 minutes

Third: 45 minutes

Fourth: 45-60 minutes

Fifth: 60-90 minutes

Sixth: 90 minutes

Required Reading:

We additionally require all students to read as much and as often as possible. A good guideline is 20 minutes nightly.

Absences:

Homework and daily work for K - 6th grade students can be requested for the day(s) absent if the request is called in **before** 9:30am. It is the responsibility of the individual student and parent to request missed lessons and assignments. For an absence due to illness, every day the child has missed, he/she will receive one day to make up any missed work.

Pre-Planned or Extended Absence:

K – 6th families are strongly discouraged from taking children out of school for family vacations or trips. The McDowell School calendar is published well in advance so that parents and students can make plans that do not interfere with school time. It is our experience that removing a child from class for an extended period of time has an adverse effect on academic progress.

In the event of a pre-planned extended absence, arrangements must be made **at least one week** in advance with the teacher. It is the student's responsibility to complete all assignments in a timely manner.

Support Plans:

Our school aims to support the social and emotional well-being of our students. When disruptive behaviors become prevalent resulting in disruptions to the classroom and safety concerns for others, we are required to follow the Cadence Education® Child Support Plan. This procedure seeks to identify causal factors, develop an individualized support plan, and work with a family to assist the child in learning more positive adaptive behaviors to succeed in the classroom and at home. If we have been working with a family, the child and staff on addressing the needs of the child to mitigate specific behaviors, we expect full cooperation by the student's family both inside and outside of school to help ensure the success of the Child Support Plan.

FOOD POLICY

The health and safety of every child in our care is a priority. We understand that what may be healthy and nutritious for one child may make another child ill. To provide all parents with peace of mind, we operate a school that is "Peanut and Tree Nut Restricted".

We kindly ask that any food items you may send to school with your child be Peanut and Tree Nut Free. In addition, if your child has any food allergies that we should consider please partner with our School Administration and a plan can be implemented to reduce any risk of exposure to those items in your child's classroom.

Please read and double check labels of food that you send in your child's lunch and we kindly ask that any food items you may send to school with your child be Peanut and Tree Nut Free.

If you need suggestions of what to send in your child's lunch or need clarification on this policy, please

reach out to us.

Lunches:

McDowell does not provide any lunch program, so students are required to bring a packed lunch and snacks from home. We are not able to heat up lunches for students.

For Parents of fulltime students who provide sack lunches and beverages for their child/children, California State code requires that lunches provided by parents should include the following:

- A dairy product (Please take appropriate measures to keep dairy products cool)
- A protein food, such as lean meat, fish, poultry, egg, cheese, etc.
- Bread
- Fruit or Vegetables

Students are expected to show good table manners and to clean up the area where they ate. Any student that does not display appropriate behavior at the lunch tables will lose the opportunity to eat with their class.

Choking Hazardous for Preschoolers under 4 years old

Children under the age of 4 are at a high risk of choking while eating. Young children are still learning how to chew food properly. To help reduce children's risk of choking please cut food into small pieces and cook hazardous foods like carrots, until it is soft enough to pierce with a fork.

Please don't send to school the following food: popcorn, dried fruit, gummy fruit snacks, pretzels, marshmallows, hotdog, sausages, raw carrots whole round or tube-shaped foods such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, cherries.

Nutrition:

Students should bring their own nutritious snacks (bearing in mind our nut free policy), which may be consumed at times designated by the teacher, typically at the am/and pm recess break/snack time. If your student is in an extended care program, please provide an additional snack for a 3:30 pm snack time. Please do not send candy or soda to school.

All students should have their own water bottle. Filtered water is available from the fountain on the corner of the preschool building.

Birthdays:

McDowell school recognizes that birthdays are important to children. They may be celebrated with their class, by prior arrangement with the teacher. We recommend selecting a few pictures of your child from birth to the present day to share. Please, no sweets, no gifts, balloons, or birthday cakes with candles.

Party Invitations:

Please remember that children are sensitive to social issues, and that strong social cohesiveness is a vital part of the school. When organizing birthday parties or other special events and planning to invite many students in the class, we suggest that you invite the entire class. When a child is excluded from his or her peer group, the impact can be severe.

UNIFORM POLICY**Infants - TK**

We agree with the philosophy that recognizes that “children’s work is their play”. Children learn through play and at times this entails getting a little messy. Therefore, we request that you send your child to school in play clothes. All outer clothing (sweaters, jackets, etc.) should be labeled with both first and last names.

Elementary:

Appropriate attire can be conducive to creating the best possible learning environment. All of the students at our campus are expected to abide by the McDowell Uniform Policy.

Our approved provider is Dennis Uniforms. Their website is at <http://www.dennisuniform.com>. They are located at 23322 Madero, Unit B. Mission Viejo, CA 92691 (949) 458-0014 and are fully conversant with all approved uniform options for McDowell School.

Uniforms must be kept in good, clean condition. Shirts must always be tucked in. All outer wear (jackets and sweaters) must be McDowell logo wear purchased from Dennis and should be labeled. From grade 2 and up, boys and girls are to wear belts with uniform pants and shorts that have belt loops.

Turtlenecks and other long sleeve shirts in school colors may be worn under school uniform blouses or shirts. Girls may wear white or black leggings or stretch pants under their uniform. The girls may wear bicycle shorts under their skirts and jumpers. Long sleeve shirts and pants, for both boys and girls, are available for the cooler months.

Shoes must be appropriate for playground safety. Shoes are to have Velcro, tie, buckle, or zipper. They must have a soft sole and be closed toed. Tennis/Athletic shoes are highly recommended. All students are to wear socks as part of their uniform. Boots may be worn, with socks, on colder days but cannot be worn for PE class. Slip-ons, and shoes with retractable wheels are not allowed.

Dangling earrings or other jewelry that would be a safety hazard may not be worn. Makeup is not allowed.

Hair styles that are considered extreme are out of place in our environment. Hair must be clean and have a tidy, well groomed, conservative appearance at all times. **Boys' hair must be shorter than the top of shirt collars.** Unnatural hair colors are not acceptable on boys or girls. **Only natural colors of hair are allowed.** All hair styling should be done at home. Mousse, gel or hairspray is not allowed at school. Parents are expected to immediately correct unacceptable hair styles.

Students are to wear tennis/athletic shoes on physical education days. Girls who wear jumpers or skirts on physical education days must wear shorts underneath their clothes.

All students are asked to maintain these standards without prompting by the school. The first infraction of the dress or hair code will result in a note home that will require a signature by the parents and is then returned to school. If the infraction is repeated, the parent will be requested to bring proper attire for the student to change into and/or given a due date for the hair style to change.

Non-Uniforms Days:

Special days are designated throughout the school year to give the students a break from their school uniforms. In most cases, non-uniform days are in recognition of a special day or holiday. Students are expected to wear neat, attractive play clothes without holes. Tops with spaghetti straps or bare midriffs, "short" shorts are not acceptable. Baggy pants, cut-offs or pants worn very low are not appropriate.

Also, not acceptable are shirts with inappropriate lettering/logos. It is our goal for our students to dress in a style that is appropriate for a school setting.

Fridays are recognized as School Spirit Days. Students are asked to wear their school spirit shirts that can be purchased from PSG. Free bottoms are allowed as well, as long as they meet the above-mentioned dress code.

Theme Days, such as those during the Red Ribbon/Spirit Week and Read Across America Week, are where we encourage the students to get creative and dress up following the agreed upon themes. Students who do not wish to participate should wear regular uniform.

SICKNESS POLICY

The school has a responsibility to all parents and students to maintain strict standards regarding attendance at school if a student is ill. Should a student become ill at school, the student's parents or guardian will be notified and asked to arrange to pick up the student within **(1)** hour. In the event you cannot be reached, the emergency contacts on your emergency card will be notified. We will make your child as comfortable as possible until someone arrives to pick him/her up.

In addition, your child must be free of all of these specified symptoms for at least **24** hours before they can be admitted back into McDowell School. These symptoms are as follows:

- A fever of 100 degrees or more
- Vomiting within the previous 24-hour period
- Diarrhea within the previous 24-hour period
- Nasal discharge indicative of infection
- A constant cough or sore throat
- Fussy, cranky and generally not himself/herself
- A skin rash
- Head lice (or nits)
- Symptoms of a communicative disease

Following an illness, a child may return to school once he/she has either been seen by a doctor or it has been determined that the illness is not contagious. A doctor's clearance may be requested, as

necessary.

NOTIFY THE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY IF YOUR CHILD HAS A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SUCH AS MUMPS, CHICKEN POX, LICE, CONJUNCTIVITIS, STREP THROAT, ANY RASH, ETC.

Medication:

State laws require that before any medicine can be dispensed to a student a release form must be completed. These release forms are located in the front office. Each time the prescription is renewed, or the dosage is changed, a new form must be completed.

- Give medications directly to the front Office Manager
- Prescription drugs must be sent in the original container with the prescription intact.
- Do not send any medicine (including vitamins and cough drops) in the student's lunch box or back-pack
- Whenever possible the student's medication dosage should be administered during non-school hours.
- Non-prescription drugs must be in their original container and will be administered according to the instructions on the completed release form, along with a Doctor's note, with dosage, frequency, and reason.

Accident / Incident Report:

Students may occasionally receive bumps, bruises, scrapes, or have an encounter of which parents need to be informed. In these instances, an Ouch Report will be sent home with the student.

Health and Immunization Requirements:

Infant - TK

In accordance with the requirements of the State Department of Health Services, all health forms must be in our school files. The Physician's Report must be filled out completely, including the child's immunization history, and returned before the first day of school attendance. Immunization requirements are as follows:

DPT (Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis) minimum 5 doses
(4 doses OK if one given on or after 4th birthday)

POLIO (OPV or IPV) - minimum 4 doses
(3 doses OK if one given on or after 4th birthday)

MMR 2 doses both given on or after first birthday

HEPb (Hepatitis B) - 3 doses

HIB 1 dose must be on or after the first birthday regardless of any doses received earlier.

VARICELLA (Chickenpox) 1 dose. If a child has had the chickenpox disease, the doctor must note it on the immunization card.

It is the parent's responsibility to make certain that their child's immunizations are up to date **before** entering public or private schools. Information regarding free clinics is available through the Orange County Health Care Agency. There are additional forms required to be completed prior to your child's first day of school.

K-6:

California law requires that all children enrolled in public or private schools be immunized against the vaccine-preventable diseases shown below.

DPT (Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis) – 5 doses at any age, but 4 meets requirements if at least one was given after 4th birthday

POLIO (OPV or IPV) – 4 doses, but 3 meets requirements if at least one was given after 2nd birthday

MMR 2 doses given after first birthday (both given after first birthday)

HEPb (Hepatitis B) - 3 doses

VARICELLA (Chicken Pox) 1 dose required for Kindergarten entry (2 doses required over 13years old)

TB Test administered before entering Kindergarten

A record of age-appropriate immunizations must be submitted prior to your child's admittance. If a family or child has a religious, medical or other exemption, the appropriate exemption documentation must be on file with the child's school.

In the event that these requirements are not met, your child may be excluded from school in accordance with state law.

A further requirement is that your child has a health check-up sometime in the eighteen months prior to entering first grade. This is a Child Health and Disability Prevention requirement (CHDP).

All students enrolled in school must have Identification and Emergency Form and a Medical Authorization on file on the first day of attendance. It is extremely important that all this information be

kept updated. If, at any time during the school year, there should be a change of information on the forms, please notify the school immediately. Failure to keep the school informed could mean a loss of precious minutes at the time of emergency.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our Approach to Discipline:

One of our primary goals is to foster a warm and caring environment for our students. We find that our positive approach toward problem-solving based on trust and respect builds values essential to healthy human interaction.

All discipline will be a combination of both understanding/awareness and consequence.

Since our curriculum is full of enriching and new activities which are continually presented to stimulate the interest of eager young minds, we seldom see unacceptable behavior. We use praise, verbally recognizing and appreciating behavior that is acceptable. Other children will model their behavior after a child receiving recognition so they, too, may gain recognition.

Teachers sometimes use stickers or stamps as tokens or rewards for acceptable behavior. When the behavior of an entire class needs improvement, the teacher will set up a system whereby the class may earn points for a reward.

If a child's behavior infringes on the rights or health and safety of another child, this is explained, and the child is shown an appropriate alternative. If a child continues to display unacceptable behavior, he/she is taken away from the activity in which the class is engaged and is required to sit in the classroom away from the group for a short period of time.

Consequences:

Infant – TK:

Teachers will give warnings and reminders to children having behavior problems. We will work with them to correct their behavior. At times it is necessary for a child to be removed from the situation. The teacher will talk to the child about his/her behavior and how to make better choices next time. If there is any physically aggressive behavior, the child will be brought to the front office. Parents will be

contacted to discuss the issue, and the child may be required to stay at home. In extreme instances, or persistent transgressions, the school may counsel the family to obtain outside professional help.

K – 6:

Teachers will handle discipline within their own individual classrooms. The emphasis is on positive behavior interventions, so they will work with students to correct their behavior and make better choices. Repeated or egregious behavior will be handled by administration and parents will be informed by phone or email communications.

Suspension:

If, in the judgment of the Administration, your child's behavior interferes with the school staff providing a safe and nurturing program, the school will contact you to remove your child for the remainder of the school day. McDowell will require that the child be picked up within 1 hour of being notified.

Re-admission of your child to the program will be discussed at the time of the suspension.

We reserve the right in our sole discretion to terminate enrollment immediately for any reason, including based on the safety of the staff and children in our care and/or if a parent, guardian or other family member's behavior is deemed, in our sole discretion, unacceptable, disrespectful, disruptive, or is perceived as threatening or harassing toward school staff, students or other families, or is disruptive to the learning environment.

PARENT SUPPORT GROUP (PSG)

WHO is the PSG?

Parents are as important as support teams. We consider parent support a natural extension of our school's functions. The purpose of our Parent Support Group (PSG) is to provide fun, social and educational activities and events for the benefit of the students and teachers working at McDowell School. They achieve this through various fundraising opportunities.

WHY should you consider joining PSG?

You can help plan events for our children, their families, and teachers. All parents are invited to participate but it is not mandatory. Whether you can help a little or help a bunch, your time and talents will always be appreciated.

WHEN does the PSG meet?

The PSG will meet on the Flag Ceremony Friday of each month at 9:00am. Meetings last approximately one hour.

WHERE does the PSG meet?

PSG meetings are conducted in the school multi-purpose room.

HOW does PSG achieve its goals?

PSG contributes to the school by organizing fundraising events using a committee of volunteers.