



# Khalsa Montessori School Organization Handbook

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## Mission Statement:

The mission of Khalsa Montessori School (KMS) is to:

- Integrate a challenging Montessori education and a caring, responsible community to provide for the academic, social, physical and emotional growth of students in central Phoenix;
- Offer children a holistic education in which teachers see the children as unique individuals, understand their multiple intelligences, respect their ideas, and encourage their enthusiasm for learning.
- Create an environment that offers young people opportunities to reach their highest potentials:
  - **Academically**, through appropriately high expectation, and a rich, self-paced learning environment that provides the cognitive tools to achieve mastery and build confidence;
  - **Creatively**, through the integration of a variety of avenues for creative expression such as visual arts, creative writing, drama, music and public speaking.
  - **Physically**, through the integration of fine and gross motor movement within the curriculum, and through activities to encourage physical fitness, cooperation, nutritional awareness, mind/body discipline, and yoga;
  - **Socially**, through an environment where children may develop independence, personal meaning, and responsibility for themselves, others, and our world;
- Build a partnership of students, families, teachers, and administrators who create an environment that lays the foundation for those habits and mind that support happiness and success both in school and in life.

## Goals

The goals of Khalsa Montessori School are to:

- Establish in each child a mastery of fundamental skills utilizing concrete Montessori materials that help students gain a complete understanding of basic concepts.
- Increase the ability of each child to think critically with reasoning and creative problem solving tasks given throughout the curriculum.
- Develop the ability of each child to learn quickly and easily and to effectively apply that knowledge in other situations.
- Allow a wide variety of avenues for creative expression for each child within the classroom and special activity classes in all areas of the arts.
- Encourage physical development of each child through a wide variety of activities in class and on the playground, physical education classes, and team training.
- Encourage every child to develop independence and a sense of personal meaning and responsibility for themselves, others and our world.
- Develop in each child a deep love of learning and enthusiastic self-motivation.
- Build in each child a foundation of self-confidence and inspire students to realize their highest potential.

## **School History**

Khalsa Montessori School was founded in 1971 by the American Sikh community. The school began as a subunit of 3HO Arizona, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)3 educational corporation that was founded in 1969, and dedicated to the development of the individual through the techniques of yoga, meditation, healthy diet and service. In 49 years, the school has grown from a small Sikh community pre-school to a non-denominational Montessori school.

In 1973, the Khalsa School moved into its present Primary school building on Coronado Road. Several cozy toddler schools in renovated homes were created in the 1980s and 1990s and, for a period of time, were utilized as small toddler daycare group homes. In 1996, the school was granted a school charter by the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools and the Khalsa Montessori Elementary School (KMES) opened at 2536 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street as a public charter school. With a carefully designed growth plan, the school on 3<sup>rd</sup> street has gradually grown to its current size. The Khalsa preschool at 346 East Coronado Road, incorporated in 2008 as the Khalsa Montessori Primary School (KMPS) continues to offer private Primary and Charter Kindergarten Montessori education. In 2018, the Palms Lane Campus was purchased for the expansion into Middle School and an extended Toddler program.

Parent involvement and education have been important factors in the strong sense of community that has developed at Khalsa Montessori School. The school has grown as a partnership between parents, teachers, and administrators. The holistic philosophy extends to all aspects of school life and is reflected in our administrative style, parent and staff relations, and classrooms.

From its early years, Khalsa Montessori School has maintained a reputation for academic excellence in a challenging and caring environment; a dedicated and experienced teaching staff; providing children a holistic educational environment with many opportunities for creative, social, and physical growth; and serving a community from a variety of religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

Khalsa Montessori School (Charter K-6) is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation that is under contract with the State of Arizona, and run by the KMS administration in partnership with staff and parents. The Board of Directors includes parents, teachers, community representatives, and the schools' administrator. The site council, consisting of the school administrative and teaching staff, meets weekly and may be joined by a parent association representative whenever necessary.

## **Organizational Structure**

The private preschool of Khalsa Montessori School (Toddler & Primary) is a non-profit 501(c)3 educational corporation. Historically, KMPS was part of the 3HO (Healthy, Happy,

Holy Organization) founded in 1969 and dedicated to the development of the individual through the techniques of yoga, medication, healthy diet, and service. In 2008, Khalsa Montessori Primary School, which always operated independently of its former parent organization, became an independent corporation. The KMS Primary/Toddler Team consists of the School Director, Assistant Director, Site Coordinators, and Teaching Staff.

KMS is a community of families, teachers, and administrators working together to create a positive and nurturing environment that supports academic excellence and personal growth. Each of the three bodies of KMS has areas of **responsibility, input, and support**.

The **KMS Parent-Teacher Organization** has taken responsibility for school fundraising. The PTO bring parental input regarding the overall running of the school to the school administration. It brings input regarding school programs to the staff. The PTO supports educational programs of the staff through its fundraising dollars and its involvement in classroom projects and events.

The **KMS teachers** are responsible for the development and operation of the educational programs. Each lead teacher is responsible for all developmental aspects of the children within their program. The KMS staff has direct input into the overall running of the school through regular communication with the school administration. The staff has input into the fundraising projects planned by the Parent-Teacher Organization and contributes student art pieces for auction items. The staff supports the Parent-Teacher Organization's efforts through their own involvement with them.

The **KMS administration** is responsible for the policies and operational decisions including, staffing, admissions, finances, property, and special program development. The director is responsible for fulfilling all state and federal requirements for the schools' Charter and reporting monthly to the KMS Board of Directors. The administration has input into the teachers' curriculum development and Parent-Teacher Organization fundraising activities. The administration supports the teachers and classroom development through its' role as a facilitator. The administration supports the Parent-Teacher Organization fundraising through participation. The administration includes a Director, Assistant Director, On-Site Coordinator, and Administrative Assistant.

The **KMS Board of Directors** meets monthly. Meeting announcements, agendas, and minutes are posted on the website & front white board. The board was designed to approve major decisions such as contractors, budgets, bank accounts, policy decisions, and staff. It is not involved in day-to-day management.

The board may also provide a final review of issues that parents feel are not being resolved by the school administration. To put an item on the board agenda, discuss your item with a board member at least 72 hours before the next board meeting.

**Advisory Boards** may be established at any time by the Board or the school administration.

## **KMS Parent-Teacher Organization Mission Statement:**

The Parent-Teacher Organization is comprised of parents of enrolled students and teachers who are committed to making a difference in their children's education. As one entity, in a three-way partnership with the administration and staff, it exists for the following purposes:

- To act as a sounding board and support group for the administration by overseeing development of the school and facilitating the achievement of its short and long term goals.
- To support the teachers' delivery of excellence in education through receptiveness to classroom and professional concerns, needs, and desires.
- To plan and execute fundraisers; to allocate funds in a manner most beneficial to the enhancement of KMS and its students, such as grounds and building improvements, professional development of staff, classroom materials and equipment, and other such purposes viewed as worthwhile by the Organization.
- To cultivate participation in the Organization through verbal and written contact with parents.
- To discuss parental suggestions and concerns, bringing them to the attention of the director when appropriate.

Every member is keenly aware of the crucial role of parental involvement in the quality and success of teaching a child. In this era of educational awakening, it is our privilege to serve the individuality of our children who are developing a love of learning, self-direction and respect for the world around them.

## **KMS Development Fund & Activity Fund:**

Parent gifts have played an important role in the development of Khalsa Montessori School. Families have donated their labor, in-kind donations as well as tax-deductible donations through KMES. These gifts are appreciated for specific areas (program development, facility development, etc.) or for our general fund. These gifts allow us to do the extra things that are so important to the development of our environments.

You have a wonderful ongoing opportunity to donate to the development of KMS and leave a lasting memory of your child at the school. Donations to the KMES Activity Fund result in a dollar-for-dollar state tax credit up to \$400 per Arizona family while supporting KMES within-curricular special programs and activities. In the past, donations to the Activity Fund have improved the playground, built an art room, and supported many exciting field trips and extra activities like gardening, Spanish, and yoga/health programs. In the past years the Activity Fund donations helped us pay for the school field trip van and expand our on-site performances throughout the year.

## Help us promote the KMS Activity Fund!

Primary/Toddler parents and Khalsa friends can donate up to \$400 and get a direct \$400 tax credit on their state taxes. Elementary parents can add a donation to their activity fee to add up to \$400 to maximize the tax credit benefit. Gifts are also a tax deduction on federal taxes. Tell your friends about this opportunity to make a difference in the lives of Khalsa Montessori students while getting their entire donation back.

## Montessori Method:

### The Prepared Environment

The **Montessori Method** is both a philosophy of child growth and rationale for guiding such growth. The children experience a prepared environment of hands-on learning materials and exercises, which develop their intellectual, physical and psychological abilities. This environment is designed to be responsive to the sensitive periods of the child, such as language, order, movement, and culture. Classrooms encourage the absorption of the rich environment by being peaceful and relaxed, being filled with attractive and activity-oriented materials, and by allowing children the freedom to choose from the varied and carefully presented Montessori materials. Cross-curricular activities and materials are developed in accordance with integrated thematic units.

A **multi-sensory sequence of manipulative materials** in all areas of the classroom give children concrete experiences that form a firm basis for their conceptual knowledge. Self-correcting materials provide the immediate feedback required for self-discovery, and teacher demonstrations allow for learning through observation. Montessori programs are **individually paced**. Materials presentations are one-on-one or in small groups to ensure that the child is neither held back nor overwhelmed by the pace or level of other children. Using the **Positive Discipline Approach**, the school facilitates the development of age-appropriate communication skills and creative conflict resolution, the building of empathy and respect for others, and the ability to balance individual needs with the needs of others.

**Multi-age classrooms** allow for peer learning. Children learn especially well from the observation of slightly older child, while older children are able to demonstrate their mastery of materials by teaching younger students. Multi-age classes provide: the stability of three years in the same environment; a three-year student/teacher relationship which provides a deep understanding of a child's learning style; opportunities for chronologically older children to become leaders and examples for newer students; opportunities for children of similar skill levels, but different chronological age levels, to work together; and environment conducive to the **Montessori spiral curriculum**, in which similar concepts and tasks are presented at varying levels of complexity at several times during the three year curriculum cycles.

## **The Role of the Teacher & Emergent Curriculum**

An individually paced curriculum is provided for each student as our teachers observe performance, record areas of progress and areas of difficulty. Teachers design presentations and assignments according to the needs and capacity of each child. The indirect method neither imposes upon the child nor abandons the child to grapple alone. The teacher observes each child to determine specific needs and to gain the knowledge needed to prepare an environment conducive to the child's growth.

KMS teachers allow children to develop their own specific activities within the framework of general educational objectives. Teachers planning may include a variety of possible outcomes for a lesson, thereby allowing for students to suggest specific directions as the unit progresses. Lessons may also spontaneously develop through the interaction of the students, teachers, and outside events. When teachers are responsive to the needs and ideas of students in the learning process, the children become active agents in their own learning process and experience knowledge as emerging from the self and through social interaction.

## **Arts & Physical Education**

KMS believes that both physical and arts education are critical to the healthy development of every child and are important ways in which a child develops new skills and patterns. Research in the area of neural pathway development has shown the importance of providing physical and creative experiences for optimum brain development.

The Montessori classroom and its materials are uniquely designed for the development of fine motor skills, creative expression, and eye-hand coordination. Outdoor activities and programs provide the children with safe, challenging and non-competitive opportunities to expand their large muscle development and explore their physical capabilities. Yoga teaches children balance and gross motor development.

## **Community Integrated Learning**

KMS extends its classrooms to include the surrounding community. Community resources are regularly evaluated and used for unit development. Parents are encouraged to search for and present available resources to the children. Parents are encouraged to share their holidays and special traditions with our students to enable KMS children to experience the cultural diversity of our community. On-site field trips are a vital way in which the classroom is extended to allow the children to experience their connection to the world. This is one of many aspects of a *cosmic education* that places the child within the scope of the universe.