

MCDOWELL *Elementary*
& *Children's Choice Preschool*

Parent Handbook



2006-2007

29028 Aloma Ave. Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

949-495-5162

fax: 949-495-6733

<http://www.mcdowellelementary.com>

CHILDREN'S CHOICE PRESCHOOL - MCDOWELL ELEMENTARY

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Administration

Elementary Principal Mrs. Suzanne Lamond- slamond@mcdowellelementary.com
Preschool Director Mrs. Cheryl Cragun- ccragun@mcdowellelementary.com

Office Manager Mrs. Adrienne Steenblock- asteenblock@mcdowellelementary.com
School Administrator Ms. Barbara Herrmann- bherrmann@mcdowellelementary.com

PRE-SCHOOL

Teachers
Three year olds Mrs. Mary Edwards
Four year olds Mrs. Valerie Novack
Four year olds Mrs. Lori Willis
Four year olds Ms. DeAnne Churchill
Early Kindergarten Mrs. Sheree Manriquez
Early Kindergarten Mrs. Courtney Potter
Preschool Teacher's Aide Mrs. Kristin Lundqvist
Preschool Teacher's Aide Mrs. Irma Martinez

ELEMENTARY

Teachers
Kindergarten Mrs. Maria Hasircoglu
Kindergarten Ms. Christine MacKenzie
Grade One Ms. Bobbi Weiner
Grade One Ms. Jennifer Pranke
Grade Two Ms. Sheila Anderson
Grade Three Mrs. Ingrid McKibben
Grade Four Mrs. Lisa Schoenhoefer
Grade Five/Six Mrs. Peggy Fowler
Grade Six Mr. Scott Myers
Computer Teacher Ms. Barbara Herrmann
Spanish Teacher Mrs. Mary Lou Rodriguez
Music Teacher Ms. Cindy Stück
Athletic Director Mr. Scott Myers
Elementary Teacher's Aide
Elementary Teacher's Aide

OUR OBSERVATION HALL

Parents are encouraged to use our observation hall at any time during the school day. The

one-way windows are ideal for observing your preschool or kindergarten child. Do keep in mind that this hall is for **parents and staff only**. Please leave toddlers at home. You are also requested to keep your conversation level low and your voices quiet since the children can hear these sounds from the classrooms.

DRESSING YOUR CHILD

Preschool. 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.

We require that all children be daytime potty trained. They need to wear the appropriate attire to care for their own toilet needs (**no pull-ups, please**). Children in the 3 year old preschool classes should bring a change of clothing, labeled and in a plastic bag, at the beginning of the school year in case of “accidents”. These clothes can stay in your child’s cubby and replenished if ever used.

With the type of activities we offer, both indoors and out, the safest type of shoe is rubber soled (tennis shoes, etc.). Thongs and sandals are not permitted for safety reasons.

Elementary. Please remember that all elementary students, kindergarten through sixth grade, are expected to participate fully in the school uniform policy. Uniforms must be purchased from Dennis Uniforms. <http://www.dennisuniform.com> Our nearest store is at 22825 Savi Ranch Parkway, #G, Yorba Linda, CA 92887 Phone: 714-637-8928. Uniforms must be kept in good, clean condition. Shirts must always be tucked in. All outer wear (jackets, sweaters and sweatshirts) must be McDowell logo wear.

Shoes must be appropriate for playground safety. Closed shoes with socks for both boys and girls are required. Tennis shoes are fine with the exception of tennis shoes with retractable wheels. No slip-ons please.

Friday is free dress day, but dress must be appropriate. For girls: tops with spaghetti straps or bare midriffs would not be acceptable. For boys: baggy pants, cut offs or pants worn very low are not appropriate. Also not acceptable would be shirts with inappropriate lettering. Clothing should be clean, neat and without holes. It is our goal for our students to dress in a style that is appropriate for a school setting.

Dangling earrings or other jewelry that would be a safety hazard may not be worn. Makeup and nail polish (except clear) are not allowed. Hair styles that are considered extreme are out of place in our environment. Hair must be clean and give a tidy, well groomed appearance at all times. Hair must be worn in a style that does not cover the eyes and must never create a distraction such as head swinging or constant brushing back. Hair styles must be conservative, clean, and groomed. Styles that combine buzzed or short cropped lengths with long hair are not acceptable. Hair may not be shaved to the skin. **Boys hair must be shorter than the top of shirt collars, and may not hang over the ears.** Pony tails on boys are not acceptable. Unnatural hair colors are not acceptable on boys or girls. **Only natural**

colors of hair are allowed. All hair styling, with the exception of combing should be done at home. Mousse, gel or hairspray is not allowed at school. Parents are expected to correct unacceptable hair styles. 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 then returned to school. If the infraction is repeated the parent will be requested to bring proper attire for the student to change and/or a due date for the hair style to change.

School Spirit Day is the last Friday of the month. Students are asked to wear their school spirit shirts that can be purchased from PSG for \$12.00.

Please remember to label all shirts and jackets with your child's name.

HEALTH AND IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

Preschool. 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 4 doses
POLIO	(OPV or IPV) - minimum 3 doses
MMR	1 dose given 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.
VARIVAX	(Chickenpox) 1 dose. If 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 and 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.

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 an emergency.

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

DPT	(Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis) - minimum 4 doses (5 doses if last dose was given before age two)
POLIO	(OPV or IPV) - minimum 3 doses (4 if last dose was given before age 2)
MMR	2 doses given after first birthday (both given after first birthday)
HEPb	(Hepatitis B) - 3 doses

VARIVAX (Chicken Pox) Required for Kindergarten entry

TB Test administered before entering first grade

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

Another requirement is that your child has a health check-up some time in the eighteen months prior to entering first grade. This is a Child Health and Disability Prevention requirement (CHDP). This also includes a mandated T.B. Test for **all entering first graders**.

1. All students enrolled in school must have an 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.

ILLNESS, ABSENCE AND MEDICATION

In order to provide a healthy atmosphere for your children, we ask that you arrange to keep your child at home if he or she is ill. If a child is sent to school ill or develops symptoms of illness while at school, such as a fever, we will phone the parents to pick him/her up from school.

Please do not send any medication to school with your child since it may get into the hands of another child. All medication needs to be dispensed through the school office. This includes cough drops and sore throat lozenges. Consent forms must be completed by a parent if medication is to be given to their child.

If your child develops a communicable disease (chicken pox, strep throat, conjunctivitis, etc.) and attended classes at a time when others may have been exposed, please telephone our office and inform us so we can alert other parents.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Preschool

Classes for preschool begin at 8:30 a.m. The teachers use the time before class to prepare materials for the maximum benefit of the learning program. If you are a full-time working parent and need to bring your child earlier, our extended day service is available at 7:00 a.m. (see Child Care section).

Please make every effort to get your child to school on time. Our learning program is structured so that every minute spent here offers some kind of learning experience.

All preschoolers must be brought directly to their classroom and signed in on the sign-in sheets posted on the outside bulletin boards. Please do not ever drop your child off in the

parking lot for obvious safety reasons.

Dismissal time for preschoolers not enrolled in Extended Day is 11:30 a.m. Please arrange to pick your child up from the classroom promptly at the end of the session. Parents who are more than five minutes late may find their children with the Extended Day Supervisor and may pay for this service accordingly. The hourly rate is \$8.00 per hour, ½ hour minimum. Students will not be released to anyone other than parents unless we are authorized to do so in writing and with advance notice to the front desk.

Elementary

1. Students are permitted in the classroom no earlier than 8:20 a.m. for Preschool - sixth. Please pull into a parking space and accompany your child into school. You may drop your child off and permit them to walk in on their own if you are parked in a very front parking place. Students must not be permitted to cross the parking lot by themselves.

2. Classes start promptly at 8:30 a.m. and it is important that no parents remain in the classroom after 8:25a.m. If you need to communicate with the teacher please do so by note or message at the front desk. Parents must park and come in to pick students up. Students will not be permitted to leave the school unaccompanied.

3. If you arrive late and/or pick up early for any reason, it is important that you sign your child in/out at the front office.

4. It is very important that parents picking up their children do not visit with one another in the front office area. It is difficult to conduct school business and answer phones with the added noise level. We encourage you to visit in the areas adjacent to the school, but ask that children are carefully supervised and not permitted in the parking lot unattended. We love having our parents socialize but value having a professional atmosphere in the front office.

5. We also ask that the multi-purpose room/library and the playground area not be used for playtime after school, even if parents are there to supervise. These areas are scheduled into our extended day program and need to be used for that purpose only.

6. Preschool children must be signed in and out at the door of their classroom. State licensing requires a full, legible signature. Preschool and elementary children who are in extended day must be signed in and out at the office. Each child who is in extended day has a sign-in card in the office. Once they are signed out at the end of the day, the parent will be issued a 'claim ticket' to pick up their child.

Please arrange to pick up your child promptly at the end of the session. Parents who are more than five minutes late will find their children with the Extended Day Supervisor and may pay for this service accordingly. Students will not be released to anyone other than parents unless we are authorized to do so in writing and with advance notice. **Dismissal time for elementary students is 3:00 p.m.**

PARKING

The church parking lot adjacent to ours is available for our use when our lot is full. It should be entered via the entrance to our school's parking lot. Please refrain from parking directly in front of the church building or in front of the trash bin area. Please park in marked

parking stalls only and observe the law by keeping the marked blue handicap spot for the disabled.

ENROLLMENT FEE

The enrollment fee is due when your child is registered and is **non-refundable**. This fee covers the cost of bookkeeping, record keeping and insurance. It also reserves your child's spot in our program.

STUDENT ROSTERS

For your convenience in arranging car pools, birthday parties, etc., we provide a student roster after school begins which will include each child's name, address and phone number. If, for any reason, you prefer to be excluded from this list, please inform the office at the beginning of the school year or as indicated on your student application. These lists are not to be used for the purpose of sales or advertising promotions since this can create problems with other families.

TUITION SCHEDULE AND POLICIES

The tuition fees are based on an annual ten month school year (September through June) and are divided into ten equal installments, due on the first of every month for your convenience. Tuition payments are due the first day of each month.

A grace period of six days will be allowed for each month's tuition. Any payments received after the seventh of the month must include a **10% late fee**. Because services at **Children's Choice/McDowell Elementary** cannot be rendered free of charge, children of those parents failing to remit tuition by the fifteenth of the month will no longer be allowed to attend classes.

PLEASE NOTE: There will be a \$30.00 service charge for checks not honored by your bank for any reason. Additionally, parents will be required to pay either by cash or cashier's check for the remainder of the school year.

ADJUSTMENTS IN TUITION

Adjustments will **not** be allowed for 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

In the event of early withdrawal from school, **written notice is required sixty (60) school days in advance** of the withdrawal date. No refunds of this tuition will be made after **March 1st** of the current school year.

CHILDREN'S CHOICE DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT

All children will be given our developmental assessment approximately two weeks after school opens. This assessment will be administered by the child's teacher who will contact you for a conference time when the screening is completed. This assessment will not be offered to children who are enrolled after January 31st. Reassessments are given in the late spring.

ELEMENTARY COMPETENCY TESTS

Standardized testing is done in the spring. Placement and competency tests are administered at the teacher's discretion on an individual basis.

TOYS AND GOODIES FROM HOME

Preschool students will be assigned a "Share Day" when they can bring acceptable toys, such as dolls, teddy bears, books, etc., to school. Please leave toy weapons and toys with sharp edges at home.

The only time pets are allowed in campus is for share day. It must first be approved by the teacher after all allergies have been taken into consideration, and ALWAYS on a leash.

BOOKS AND SUPPLIES

The school will supply each student with basic items at the beginning of the school year. Please send a water bottle with your child's name written on it for your child to keep in the cubbies. These should be replaced weekly.

Hard-covered textbooks are the property of the school. At the end of the school year, any workbooks that are not completed will remain on campus to be used by students during the summer school and the following school year.

EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Respecting the Rights and Property of Others.

Help keep the classroom and school campus neat and clean

Practicing Respectful and Appropriate Language

No talking while in lines

No running inside

Use quiet voices at all times

Engaging in Proper Use of Playground and Bathroom Facilities

Keep school restrooms clean

Use playground equipment properly

Exhibiting a Respectful Attitude Towards Adults & Peers

Be polite to teachers, staff, parents and fellow students

Greet individuals that you see

Obey Directions of All Staff

Stay within the school premises during school and recess times

Follow all classroom and playground rules

Exhibit Proper Lunch Etiquette

Display good table manners

Expected to clean up area where you have lunch

Please report any violation of rules to teachers, aides or office staff.

OUR APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE

One of our significant 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.

Because 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 a 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 at the end of the week.

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

Preschool. Teachers, Aides and Extended Day Supervisors 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/supervisor 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. A consequence at home will be required. In extreme instances, outside professional help may be required.

Elementary. Thermometers are sent home to parents to alert them of behavior problems. Pink slips are used when a behavior has not been corrected and warnings, time-outs and thermometers have not corrected the problem. Some behaviors, such as any physical aggression, foul language and disrespect toward a supervisor result in an immediate pink slip. When a pink slip is sent home, a letter accompanies it. The parent will be asked to come in for a conference with the teacher and possibly the director. Depending on the severity of the behavior, the parent may be asked to arrange for professional counseling. If a third pink slip is issued, the letter will advise the parent that a fourth pink slip for the same type of behavior will result in a suspension for a day. The school also reserves the right to request that the parents find another school placement for their child.

COMMUNICATION

The main manner of communication with parents is our website located at www.mcdowellelementary.com. It contains the school calendar, web pages from each elementary teacher and other vital information. Also our newsletter is sent home with each child. It contains a wide variety of information regarding events of the current month, important dates to remember, events that will be forthcoming, etc.

Another important form of communication is you. Please let us know of any issues, concerns or positive input you may have. We are open to your comments.

If you need to communicate with your child's teacher, you may phone the office to arrange for an appointment or send a note to school with your child. Unless pre-arranged, we have found that before and after class are not suitable times for parents and teachers to discuss problems in the presence of others or your child. It is important to set a mutually convenient time for conferencing. Do keep in mind that we are open to informal conferencing at any time. Either the teacher or the parent might initiate an informal conference, keeping in mind the guidelines set forth above.

Formal parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled for both preschool and elementary students. Preschool conferences are scheduled after the teacher has completed your child's developmental assessment so she can share the results with you. Elementary conferences are scheduled periodically throughout the year. Further information will be found in our school calendar, newsletters and on parent bulletin boards, so be sure to refer to all of these means of communication often.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are planned by our staff as an enriching part of our program. Therefore, we ask

for your participation in helping to drive and supervise a small group of students. All parent drivers must complete a motor vehicle report and be cleared by our insurance company in order to transport a child. Sign-up sheets for parent drivers are posted on the Parent Bulletin Board in each classroom. All children will also require a signed form by the parents allowing them to drive with a parent volunteer driver or they will not be allowed on the trip. 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 and 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. 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.

If you choose to not have your child participate in a field trip it is necessary to notify the teacher before the return due date of the permission slip. This will allow the teacher to notify the parents in the case of a cost difference. It is also necessary to keep your child home that school day if they will not be attending the field trip.

NUTRITION

Kindergarten through sixth grade students should bring their own ***nutritious*** snack, which may be consumed at a time designated by the teacher, typically at the a.m. recess break. Please refrain from sending snacks that are loaded with sugar. Snacks for preschoolers are supplied by the school.

BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

Special treats such may be brought in for the class when celebrating a child's birthday. Please notify the child's teacher in advance so she can accommodate special events in her daily schedule. Balloons, goodie bags, etc. may not be brought to school. Birthday invitations **must** be mailed to the children. They may not be passed out at school or left in cubbies.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Parent volunteers may work in the classroom to assist the teacher at the teacher's discretion.

Kindergarten may have up to two parent volunteers per day for 1 hour during center time. Grades 1-6 may have 1 parent volunteer for 45 minutes per day during class time.

Playground and lunch time is for students to build social skills. Parents are welcome to occasionally sign out their child and treat them to lunch. Parents are not allowed to have lunch on campus with their child.

PARENT SUPPORT GROUP (PSG)

Parents are so 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 strengthen and enhance your child's educational experiences. Fill out a volunteer form and watch in our newsletter for additional ways you can participate as a supporting parent.

LOST AND FOUND

For obvious reasons, we discourage children from bringing expensive or highly valued items to school. We have a Lost and Found cupboard in the lunch court hallway where we deposit unclaimed items. A sure method of keeping the contents of this cupboard to a minimum would be to label clothing, lunch boxes, etc., with full names of your child. Throughout the year, all unclaimed items will be donated to a charitable organization.

EXTENDED DAY

The hours of our extended day program are from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Advance payment is required for this service and is payable at the beginning of each month with tuition. The hourly rate is \$8.00/hour per child.

Each child using this service is required to abide by the same standards of acceptable student behavior as required in our learning program (see School-Wide Discipline Plan). Parents will be informed of major difficulties during extended day. If a child's behavior fails to improve, the child will be excluded from use of this service.

When checking into our morning extended day program, please come through the office. You will be directed to the room where the group will be. Children remaining after the 11:30 a.m. learning program (preschool) need to bring a lunch (preferably with healthy, nutritious food), unless purchased through the hot lunch program. When you pick your child up from childcare, **it is imperative that you sign out in the office.** For your child's safety, we want to make sure that he or she is leaving with an authorized person. "Claim Tickets" will be issued and must be given to the Supervisors. Children will not be released without one.

Extended Day services close at 6:00 p.m. **Parents who pick up their child after 6:00 p.m. will be charged \$1.00 a minute. Repeated late pick ups (after five times) will be charged \$5.00 a minute.** Our staff has responsibilities at their homes, too!

HOLIDAY THEMES

We teach our preschool students about the traditions and values for various cultures. Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Chinese New Year, Ramadan, etc. Traditions and values surrounding these special cultural events are discussed from a non-sectarian and bias-free standpoint. As with other social studies themes, we learn about cultural traditions through pictures, books, poems, songs and crafts. Cultural differences are respected, common cross-cultural values are stressed. These learning experiences are not religiously oriented in any way. If, however, you feel, as a parent, that these learning experiences interfere with your personal or religious beliefs, you may choose to keep your child at home. Check the teacher's lesson plans for specific learning activities.

ADDITIONAL PROTECTION FOR YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY

It is required by law that all preschool children be signed in and out of school by the adult accompanying him or her. Preschool children can be signed in and out in their classrooms during school hours. The classroom teacher will have a sheet available for this purpose. Extended day care children are to be signed in and out in the office. This precaution is designed for the safety and welfare of your child.

CHILD ABUSE

Any school employee who reasonably suspects child abuse has occurred, or is occurring, is required by law to file a child abuse report. These reports are filed with the appropriate child protective services agency who will investigate. Complaints filed against a school employee of an alleged act of child abuse will also be investigated by that agency and, if substantiated, the agency will inform the Children's Choice/McDowell's administration.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

It is Children's Choice/McDowell's policy to maintain a learning environment that is free of sexual harassment, a form of sex discrimination that constitutes differential treatment on the basis of sex. Children's Choice/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 s(he) 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.