



ACORN MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL
CHILDREN FIRST, ALWAYS

Acorn Montessori Charter School Staff Handbook 2023-2024

Acorn Montessori Charter School Staff Handbook

North Campus Preschool-Pre-K: 8085 E Manley Drive. Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 – Phone 928.772.5225

West Campus K – 3rd: 7555 E. Long Look Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 - Phone 928.775.0238; Fax 928.775.2638

Main Campus 4th – 8th: 8556 E. Loos Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 - Phone 928.772.5778; Fax 928.775.8654

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Welcome!

This employee handbook has been prepared to provide you with information that you will need to understand **Acorn Montessori School** and your role within our school. This handbook is our way of communicating the general information and expectations of our school. We ask that you take time to read this to enhance your understanding about the school, expectations, procedures, and rules. There may be additional, important information not included in this handbook and will be sent to you throughout the school year as needed. Both new and current employees should find this handbook useful. It is always the goal of the director and administrative staff to provide consistent and fair treatment of all staff through frequent and clear communication which hopefully minimizes misunderstandings and allows us to focus on our primary task of providing quality care for children in our school. Each staff member is encouraged to ask questions, seek clarifications, and make suggestions. Welcome to **Acorn Montessori School**.

Sincerely,

Cynthia J. Johnson

Brief History

Cynthia Johnson successfully founded Acorn Montessori Schools in the year 2000. She continues to be an active Director/ School Founder at both high performing charter schools, our West Campus which serves Kindergarten – 3rd grade and our Main Campus which serves 4th – 8th grade. Mrs. Cynthia has the experience and knowledge necessary to develop programs that combine state standards with kinesthetic teaching in a small group direct instruction setting. Mrs. Cynthia is Montessori trained and passionate about bringing the Montessori philosophy blended with traditional state standards to communities in need of high-quality alternatives to traditional public education. Acorn Montessori Charter School is a Montessori/Traditional blend school that focuses on the strength of each child and meets them where they are academically. Each classroom meets AZ state standards using rigorous curriculum and materials infused with Montessori ideology including hands on manipulatives, small group instruction, lower teacher to student ratio, differentiated instruction, integrated lessons, and project-based learning. Our warm and loving family environment provides each child with the love and joy of learning and allows and encourages each child to realize their fullest potential in all areas of life. Through Montessori principles and standards-based curriculum, students will develop their independence as well as their academic, social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills.

Mrs. Cynthia has successfully developed and implemented programs such as a physical fitness program, a nutrition program, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition grant program, a competitive sport program, and the implementation of all rigorous state standards, Brain Gym, and Panoramic programs in Geography, Zoology and Botany. Acorn has grown from 47 students upon its foundation in 2000 to over 500 students in 2020. Mrs. Cynthia is a dedicated teacher, director, and school founder. It is Ms. Cynthia's mission to provide quality Montessori Education and Childcare to our community. The school depicts professionalism, sensitivity, and attentiveness towards students, parents, & colleagues.

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Philosophy

The philosophy of **Acorn Montessori School** is based on love and respect for each child and that each child is a gift, a special and unique individual. Our warm and loving educational environment provides each child with the joy of learning and allows and encourages each child to realize their fullest potential in all areas of life.

Mission Statement

Children First, always. Acorn Montessori understands and serves the needs of the “whole child.” Acorn’s approach of linking outstanding educational methods with models for a cooperative respectful way of life is an important element of education. Each classroom represents a structured miniature learning society where the values of harmony, respect, independence, learning, and unity are given the opportunity to blossom and grow. The Montessori Method fosters a deep appreciation for knowledge, learning, and humanity.

Purpose of Handbook

The Director and owner recognize and have provided this handbook for your use as a ready reference and as a summary of our personnel policies and procedures, work rules, and benefits. You will find it to your advantage to read the entire handbook promptly so that you will have a complete understanding of the material covered.

Please understand that this handbook only highlights school policies, practices and benefits for your personal education and cannot therefore be construed as a legal document. In addition, circumstances will obviously require that policies, practices, and benefits described in the handbook change from time to time. Consequently, the school must reserve the right to amend, supplement, or rescind any provisions of the handbook as it deems appropriate in its sole and absolute discretion. As policies and benefits are revised, updated pages will be distributed to you. Please keep this handbook readily available and insert the updated material promptly so that it is current at all times.

Handbook Disclaimer

Nothing contained in the Employee Handbook or in other statements of **Acorn Montessori School** policies, including statements made in the course of the evaluation and wage review program, shall be deemed to constitute either an expressed or implied promise of continuing employment, unless expressly agreed and confirmed in writing by both the Owner and the employee.

Employment At-Will

As is common in many organizations, employment at Acorn Montessori School is employment at-will. Employment at will may be terminated at the will of either the employer or the employee. Employment may be terminated with or without cause at any time by you or by Acorn Montessori School. Terms and conditions of employment with Acorn Montessori School may be modified at the sole discretion of your Director or Owner with or without cause and with or without notice. Other than the Owner no one has the authority to make any agreement for employment other than for employment at will or to make any agreement limiting the Owner, Acorn Montessori School discretion to modify terms and conditions of employment. Only the Owner has the authority to make any such agreement and then only in writing. No implied contract concerning any employment-related decision or term, or condition of employment can be established by any other statement, conduct, policy, or practice. Examples of the types of terms and conditions of employment which are within the sole

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discretion of the Owner/ **Acorn Montessori School** include, but are not limited to, the following: promotion, demotion, transfers, hiring decisions, compensation, benefits, qualifications, discipline, layoff or recall, hours and schedules, work assignments, job duties and responsibilities, production standards, subcontracting, reduction, cessation or expansion of operations, sale, relocation merger or consolidation of operations, determinations concerning the use of equipment, methods or facilities, or any other terms and conditions that the Owner may determine to be necessary for the safe, efficient, and economic operation of its business.

Orientation Period

All new and rehired employees shall serve a probation period of **90 calendar days** commencing with his/her last date of hire. During this period, the school and the employee will have an opportunity to determine whether further employment with the school is appropriate. The employee will not be eligible for nor earn any benefits during the orientation period. The school can extend the duration of the period if, in its sole and absolute discretion, it determines that such an extension is appropriate. Prior to completion of the period, an informal evaluation may be conducted to ascertain the advisability of your continued employment on a regular basis. The employment relationship can be terminated by the employee or the school at any time during or after the orientation period with or without cause and with or without notice.

Equal Opportunity

Acorn Montessori School is an Equal Employment Opportunity employer and it is the policy to make employment decisions on the basis of merit. We want to have the best available persons in every position. Company policy prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, veteran status or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law.

The Company is committed to complying with all applicable laws ensuring equal employment opportunities. This commitment applies to all persons involved in the operations of the Company and prohibits unlawful discrimination by any employee of the Company, including supervisors and co-workers.

To comply with applicable laws ensuring equal employment opportunities to qualified individuals with a disability, the Company will make reasonable accommodations for the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified individual with a disability who is an applicant or an employee unless undue hardship would result. Any applicant or employee who requires an accommodation in order to perform the essential functions of the job should contact a company representative with day-to-day personnel responsibilities and request such an accommodation. The individual with the disability should specify what accommodation he or she needs to perform the job. The Company then will conduct an investigation to identify the barriers that make it difficult for the applicant or employee to have an equal opportunity to perform his or her job. The Company will identify possible accommodations, if any, that will help eliminate the limitation. If the accommodation is reasonable and will not impose an undue hardship, the Company will make the accommodation.

Employee Classification

All employees may be employed **full-time** or **part - time**.

Full-time is working at least 30 hours per week on a regular continuing basis.

Part-time is working less than 30 hours per a week on a regular continuing basis. (Regular full-time employees are eligible for benefits listed in the benefits section of this handbook).

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A Temporary/Substitute employee is someone who has been hired for a specific project or task. This employee is not eligible for any benefits listed in this handbook. An on-call employee is hired on a day-to-day basis as a substitute or to fill in for vacations, illnesses, or when a regular employee is on a leave of absence. On-call employees are not eligible for any benefits listed in this handbook.

Professional Conduct

You will conduct yourself in a manner that will not embarrass or discredit the good reputation of the school. You are expected to give loyal and efficient service and to cooperate in properly doing the work to which you are assigned. Remember, your conduct on and off the job is a direct reflection of the school. You should be aware that you are a role model of appropriate behavior for the children and follow the rules we have set for them.

Because you represent **Acorn Montessori School**, the parent's impression of you will often be their impression of our entire organization. In your relations with others, whether they are co-workers, parents, or members of the community, you are asked to be courteous, tactful, and fair. **Acorn Montessori employees are not permitted to date parents of any student enrolled at any of our facilities. Doing so, may be cause for termination of employment.** Also, employees must carry out assignments completely, work cooperatively with fellow teachers, and treat all others with respect and kindness. Please remember to report all changes in children's behavior or difficulties to the Principal/Director/Assistant Director.

Standards of Conduct

The progressive discipline system is intended to give employees advance notice, whenever possible, to inform them of a problem with their conduct or performance in order to provide them an opportunity to correct the behavior. Normally, progressive discipline involves verbal counseling, and one or more written warnings, before the employee is terminated. The nature of the offense and the employee's record may determine what disciplinary action is to be taken. **The use of progressive discipline in no way alters the fact that your employment is "at will." (This applies to At-will states).**

Certain types of behavior are unacceptable. The following are examples of types of conduct that are considered impermissible. Although it is impossible to provide a complete list, examples of misconduct include, but are not limited to:

- Negligence in the supervision of the children;
- Any abuse of the child, and or other verbal, psychological, or physical is prohibited;
- Failure to comply with State Licensing regulations that govern the school's program;
- Falsification of information on your employment application or other personnel or company records;
- Theft, embezzlement, or removal of school property and/or merchandise or employee property from the premises or its conversion to personal use;
- Abuse, destruction, waste, or unauthorized use of equipment, facilities or materials;
- Insubordination - refusing to follow the direction of the Director or other disrespectful conduct toward supervisory personnel;
- Abusive or vulgar language at the school;
- Unacceptable job performance;



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- Altercations with other employee(s);
- Excessive absenteeism, unexcused absences, or tardiness;
- Other violations of school safety policies

Violations of any of these rules could result in some form of disciplinary action, ranging from verbal to discharge.

Policy Against Harassment (Based on Arizona Law)

Acorn Montessori School has a strict policy against harassment of any employee or applicant and will not tolerate such conduct on the part of any employee or other individual. This policy prohibits sexual harassment based on pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, race, religious creed, color, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital status, age, sexual orientation or any other basis protected by federal, state or local law or ordinance or regulation. All such harassment is unlawful. The Company's anti-harassment policy applies to all persons involved in the operation of the Company and prohibits unlawful harassment by any employee of the Company, including supervisors and co-workers.

Prohibited unlawful harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following behavior:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, invitations or comments;
- Visual conduct such as derogatory and/or sexually-oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures;
- Physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movement or interfering with work because of sex, race or any other personal basis;
- Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued employment, or to avoid some other loss, and offers of employment benefits in return for sexual favors; and
- Retaliation for having reported or threatening to report harassment.

If you believe that you have been unlawfully harassed, provide a written complaint to your Supervisor, Director, or the Owner as soon as possible after the incident. Your complaint should include details of the incident or incidents, names of the individuals involved and names of any witnesses. Supervisors will refer all harassment complaints to the personnel administrator, investigative officer, and/ or the president of the Company. The Company will immediately undertake an effective, thorough, and objective investigation of the harassment allegations.

If the company determines that unlawful harassment has occurred, effective remedial action will be taken in accordance with the circumstances involved. Any employee determined by the Company to be responsible for unlawful harassment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Whatever action is taken against the harasser will be made known to the complaining employee and the Company will take appropriate action to remedy any loss to you resulting from harassment. The Company will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint and will not tolerate or permit retaliation by management, employees, or co-workers.



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The Company encourages all employees to report any incidents of harassment forbidden by this policy immediately so that complaints can be quickly and fairly resolved. You should also be aware that the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Arizona Department of Fair Employment and Housing investigate and prosecute complaints of prohibited harassment in employment. If you think you have been harassed or that you have been retaliated against for resisting or complaining, you may file a complaint with the appropriate agency. The nearest office is listed in the telephone book.

Personal Appearance

Employees should dress appropriately in business attire, and in good taste, remembering they are role models for the children. Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of all employees and affect the business image of the company which presents to students, residents, vendors, visitors, prospective residents, and co-workers. An employee's dress or appearance may not be so unusual, provocative, inappropriate, or lacking in cleanliness, that it clearly disrupts the learning or working environment. Employees who appear for work inappropriately dressed will be sent home and directed to return to work in proper attire. Under such circumstances, employees will not be compensated for the time away from work. The following attire or appearance, although not all-inclusive, are considered as general guidelines.

Hair

- Hair is to be neat, clean, and natural colors only.

Hats

- No hats, caps, or beanies can be worn in the classroom or hallways. (except on special spirit days)

Tops:

- Modest sleeveless shirts are acceptable as long as straps are 3 fingers wide.
- Low necklines, tops that reveal bra straps, bare midriffs are considered inappropriate.
 - Necklines should be no more than 3 inches below collar bone.
- Tops may not be see-through.
- Undergarments worn but not exposed.
- Acorn shirts worn on Fridays and field trips.
- Collared shirts or professional blouses should be worn daily with the exception of school spirit days.

Pants:

- Pants must be pulled up, with no undergarments exposed.
- May not have holes, rips, or fraying.
- Jeans are acceptable to wear on school spirit days as long as they are free of holes, rips, and tears.
- Sweatpants, exercise pants, leggings, and any spandex or other form-fitting pants such as people wear for exercise are inappropriate.
- Leggings may be worn under dresses and tunics.

Shorts:

- Must be fitted at the waist and conceal all undergarments.
- Must be at a reasonable and modest length with a maximum of 3 inches above knee.

Skirts, Dresses, Jumpers, Shirts, Sports Wear:

- Must be at a reasonable and modest length with a maximum of 3 inches above knee.
- No strapless dresses.
- All undergarments worn and concealed.

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Shoes:

- Shoes should be worn with safety in mind.
- No flip flops.
- Professional sandals are allowed as long as they have straps to secure feet.
- Shoes should be clean.

Miscellaneous:

- Clothing or accessories that have statements, pictures or symbols that represent prejudice, obscenity, violence, vulgarity, sex, drugs, alcohol, or tobacco will not be tolerated.
- Torn or radically altered clothing is not permitted.
- Piercings should be unobtrusive and not distract from the educational environment.
- Tattoos must be appropriate and in keeping with a professional image. Visible tattoos cannot be disruptive to the educational environment – size must be taken into consideration.

Break Periods

All employees will be allowed a thirty (30) minute unpaid duty-free meal period. You will not be allowed to work for a period of more than five (5) hours without taking a meal period. If you are unable to be relieved of all duties during your meal period, you will be paid for your meal period. This must have prior approval. If you are scheduled for a field trip, the employee shall be paid for all hours worked plus your meal break. Lunch on field trip days must be eaten with the children to accommodate the school's supervisory requirement of the children. Your meal and rest breaks will be scheduled by the school to ensure proper child/teacher ratios.

Time Clock

All hourly and salaried employees are required to accurately record the hours of work, meal breaks, and holiday (H), sick (S) and vacation (V) time. The employee must use the time clock when clocking in and out. If you do not use the time clock there is no way of Acorn knowing if you worked or not. It is your responsibility to use it correctly and appropriately. Time punches are considered a legal document. If you find a mistake on your paycheck or timeclock, take it to your supervisor, who will explain the proper way to correct it. After this is done, you must initial the correction.

Attendance

Attendance and punctuality are required and must be maintained. Recognition and incentives are given for excellent attendance. If you must be late or absent from work with a good reason, a previous arrangement with the Director is required preferably the night before. If this is not possible, you must call the principal/director on his/her cell phone **at least one hour before your work day.**

Kendal Healey: 928-460-0614

Kristin Holliday: 928-713- 3623

An absence for personal reasons requires at least five (5) days notice and it must be approved by the Principal/Director, except in emergencies, in which case the Principal/Director may choose to waive this policy. (Check staff calendar) You are required to call the school before 4 p.m. each day of your absence regarding the next day's attendance.



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Always state the reason for your late arrival or absence and your expected date of return or when you should be expected to arrive at work. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness will not be tolerated and will lead to disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

Staff members may not miss more than 2% of work time (1 day per month) without seriously jeopardizing their present position. If a staff member's absences exceed the number of days allowed without prior consent of the Principal/Director, serious disciplinary action will be taken and possible termination. If you are sick and unable to work, a doctor's excuse may be required.

If you fail to call in or show up for **2** consecutive days, you will be considered to have voluntarily quit at the close of business on the **2nd** day, unless the reason for your absence has been accepted by your supervisor.

Tardiness

It is imperative that staff are on time daily to ensure the safety of all students in our care and to perform their duties adequately. As stated, if an employee continuously arrives late for their scheduled shift, consequences will occur.

****** Should a staff member arrive late to work more than three times within a pay period, a sick/personal day will be used, unless previously arranged and approved by principal/director due to extenuating circumstances.

Please note: It is important that all staff members' attendance be consistent to maintain the continuity of the program and develop the safety and trust of the children and parents.

Pay Days & Pay Periods

Employees will be paid in full twice per month. **The pay period will be on the 1st day of the month and the 16th day of the month.** The Administration on site will distribute the paychecks.

During weeks in which the regular pay day falls on a holiday or weekend, all pay checks will be issued to employees on the last regular workday.

You should notify the HR/Finance office if you have a question regarding the calculations of your paycheck; any corrections will be noted and will appear on the following week's check. If you wish to have someone else pick up your paycheck, you must give a written authorization to the Principal/Director.

Required Deductions from Pay

Deductions that are required by State and Federal Law to be withheld from your gross wages are:

1. Federal Income Tax
2. Federal Social Security Tax
3. Arizona State Income Tax
4. Arizona State Disability Insurance (FICA and Medicare)
5. Court Ordered Garnishment

Salary/Wage Advances

It is the policy of **Acorn Montessori School** not to grant any wage/salary advance to any employee.



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Salary Increases

Employees may be eligible to receive salary increases contingent upon their performance, qualifications, continuing education, and the financial situation of the school.

Sick/Personal Days & Maternity Leave

Acorn Montessori School provides paid sick/personal benefits to eligible employees to give a period of rest and relaxation away from work. Employees must work the day before and the day following all scheduled days off. If the day before or the day following scheduled days off is not worked, that day not worked will not be paid. Refer to your contract to see how many days you were offered. **As an employee benefit, Acorn Montessori School will pay out up to 5 unused personal/sick days to employees on June 16th, the final pay period.

Maternity Leave will be granted to eligible regular full-time employees of Acorn Montessori Schools. Employees who have completed one year of service will receive three weeks paid Maternity Leave. For eligible regular full-time employees who have completed two+ years of continuous service with Acorn Montessori School you will be eligible for six weeks paid Maternity Leave.

Vacation Usage

Paid vacation must be utilized when the school is closed for its winter, spring, or summer breaks. See the school calendar dates for these closures. No unpaid time will be granted unless the paid vacation has been utilized first.

Sick or Personal Days at time of termination

Employees who resign or are terminated by **Acorn Montessori School**, for any reason, during their employment, will not receive accrued sick or personal benefits. If an employee leaves **Acorn Montessori School**, and has taken vacation in advance of it being earned, the unearned vacation time will be deducted from the employee's final paycheck, provided the employee has previously authorized the deduction, in writing.

Holidays

Eligible regular full-time hourly employees will be paid for three* of the holidays recognized by **Acorn Montessori School**, provided they have fulfilled all the following conditions.

Thanksgiving Day*

Christmas Day*

New Year's Day*

Be a regular full-time employee who has been on the payroll of the school for a period of 90 continuous days and;

When **Acorn Montessori School** is closed for the 3* holidays, eligible regular full-time hourly employees shall be paid for such recognized holiday based on the employee's regular scheduled shift, at the eligible employee's regular straight-time hourly rate of pay.

Conferences, Workshops, Seminars

Employees wishing to attend any conferences, seminar, and/or workshops are required to obtain **prior approval** as well as the time off at least 30 days in advance. All conferences attended during the work week must have **prior approval**.

If the conference is on the weekend and attendance is not mandatory and you have voluntarily

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requested to attend, it will be on your own time. It will be at the discretion of the Director what the school will pay.

Bereavement or Funeral Leave

In the event of death in an employee's immediate family, regular employees (both full-time and part-time) who have completed **one year** of continuous service with **Acorn Montessori School** will be eligible for funeral leave with pay (up to eight (8) hours at the employee's regular hourly rate of pay). Immediate family is defined as spouse, mother, father, children, and siblings. If you need to travel out of state, you will be given three (3) days paid at the employee's regular hourly rate. Additional time off with pay for bereavement will be at the discretion of the Director. Proof of funeral may be required.

Voting Time Off

Employees who are voters may claim time off, without loss of pay, to vote at statewide elections under Arizona Election Code, if the voter does not have sufficient time outside of working hours to vote. See your Supervisor at least two (2) working days prior to the date if time off for voting in elections is required. No more than two (2) hours of the time taken off for voting will be without loss of pay. The time off for voting will be only at the beginning or end of the regular working shift, whichever allows the most free time for voting and the least time off from the regular working shift. Employee will need to show proof of voting.

Leaves of Absence

The employer with 50 or more employees is covered under the Federal Family Medical Leave Act. There are some very specific requirements to follow. I recommend you consult a labor law advisor.

Medical Leave of Absence (off the job illness/injury): Leave of absence without pay due to illness, injury or other disabling condition, including pregnancy, may be granted to employees, provided the employee submits a written request for such leave and furnishes a physician's certificate which states the necessity for such leave.

Any authorized medical leave of absence will be for a reasonable period required by the medical condition, not to exceed one (1) month. Extensions for medical leaves of absence (with proper medical documentation) may be granted at the discretion of management.

A pregnant employee may ask for a reasonable accommodation if her health care provider says it is medically advisable. The employer must try to grant this request.

Employees may use any available vacation at their request, if eligible. Employees requesting a medical leave for drug or alcohol related illness must be under a physician's care and actively participating in an appropriated rehabilitation program. Leaves for drug or alcohol will only be for thirty (30) days and there will not be a guarantee of a job.

Medical Leave of Absence (on-the- job illness/injury): A leave of absence shall be granted upon written request to any full time or part-time employee who sustains a work-related disability. A leave of absence for a work-related disability shall be extended to the employee for the duration of the work-related disability.

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Notification requirements are the same as those for medical leaves for non-occupational disabilities. The school will retain employees on an extended leave of absence for work-related disabilities until one of the following situations occurs:

- The employee is released for full or partial duty.
- The school receives medical evidence satisfactory to it that the employee will be permanently unable to return to work.
- The employee directly or indirectly informs the school (i.e., by accepting other employment, moving out of the state, et c.) that he/she does not intend to return to the school for employment.

An employee who returns to work at the end of his/her leave of absence will be returned to his former position, if still qualified and it is open, or will be offered the first available opening in a comparable position for which he/she is qualified. The employee must provide a physician's statement that indicates that he/she is fit to return to work.

Personal Leave of Absence: Acorn Montessori School will consider reasonable requests for leave of absence for personal reasons, not to exceed two (2) days. You must give a minimum of thirty (30) days notice except in the case of an emergency. Application for such personal leave shall be submitted in writing (Leave request form).

Acorn Montessori Schools operational needs, reason, your job performance, length of leave and length of employment at will determine whether your request may be granted.

Accrual of Benefits: Employees will not accrue any benefits (such as vacation, sick leave, holidays, etc.) during an approved leave of absence.

Job Status upon Return from Authorized Leave of Absence: Employees returning in a timely manner from an authorized leave of absence for pregnancy disability will be returned to the **same position** at the appropriate rate of pay.

In the event of other medical leaves, you will be returned to your former position, if possible, or you will be offered the first available opening in a comparable position for which you are qualified. Employees are required to contact the Principal/Director one week prior to their anticipated date of return to determine availability.

All returning employees must furnish a physician's certificate verifying the employee is physically able to perform the full duties required for the job.

Conditions Related to Termination During Leave of Absence: During the period of the leave of absence, any employee engaging in gainful employment, including self-employment, unless agreed to in writing by **Acorn Montessori School**, will be discharged. Any employee who fails to return to work on the day agreed without prior approval of **Acorn Montessori School** will be considered to have voluntarily quit.



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Jury Duty/Court Service

If you are called to serve on jury duty, this time will be without pay. You should notify the Director immediately if you receive notice to report for jury duty. Proof of serving on jury duty will be required. Subpoena as a witness or court appearance time will be allowed without pay.

An employee who is a victim of domestic violence may use his/her sick/personal to take time off from work for the purpose of obtaining a temporary restraining order or other relief to help ensure the health, safety or welfare of him or herself and/or his/her child. An employee who is a victim of a crime may use his/her vacation to take time off from work to appear in court as a witness in compliance with a subpoena or other court order. The employee must provide reasonable notice, if possible. The Company may require documented proof from the court or prosecuting attorney that he/she has appeared in court.

Military Service

Any employee who enters the Armed Forces of the United States shall be afforded such rights as may be provided by law upon compliance with the provisions of the law. Employees will not be compensated by the school, nor will the school pay any benefits during the time off for military duty. The Director should be given the dates of your military leave as far in advance as possible.

Worker's Compensation

Worker's Compensation is provided at no cost to the employee through **Acorn Montessori School** contributions. Employees may be eligible for worker's compensation if they are injured in a job-related accident and are unable to work for some time period. If you need assistance, please see the HR Department.

State Disability Insurance

State Disability Insurance is provided by the state. It is funded by employee contributions, which state law requires to be withheld from the employee's wages. The amount withheld is computed as a percentage of an employee's gross wages, up to a maximum specified by the state.

Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment insurance is provided, at no cost to the employee, through **Acorn Montessori School** contributions. Employees are not eligible for unemployment insurance if they voluntarily quit without good cause or are discharged for misconduct connected with their employment.

Social Security

As an employee of **Acorn Montessori School**, you are covered under the provisions of the federal Social Security law (F.I.C.A. and Medicare). The school matches the amount of deduction from your wages for Social Security taxes. The benefit you receive at retirement is a complicated matter based on your career earnings record, age, and date of retirement. For more details, contact your local Social Security Office.

Substance Abuse

Acorn Montessori School is concerned about the use of alcohol in the work place. This concern is based upon the effect that the use of alcohol has on an employee's performance on the job. Use of alcohol on the job adversely affects and employee's work performance, efficiency, safety, and



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health and therefore seriously impairs the employee's value to the school. In addition, the use of alcohol on the job constitutes a potential danger to the welfare and safety of other employees and exposes the school to the risks of property loss or damage or injury to other persons.

Similarly, **Acorn Montessori School** requires and demands a work force and work place free of illegal drugs and controlled substances. This requirement is based upon the fact that any measurable amount of an illegal drug or controlled substance may render the employee physically or mentally impaired. While **Acorn Montessori School** recognizes its employee's right to their own lifestyle, the school will not accept the risk that on-the-job or off-the-job drug abuse by employees may cause or contribute to accidents or other job performance problems.

Furthermore, the use of prescription drugs and/or over the counter drugs may also affect an employee's job performance and seriously impair the employee's value to the school. Employees who feel or have been informed that the use of a legal drug and may present a safety risk, are to report such drug use to the **Director**.

To provide employees some guidance concerning unacceptable behavior, the following are strictly prohibited by **Acorn Montessori School**.

- ▶ Possession, use, or working under the influence of a controlled substance;
- ▶ Distribution, sale, or purchase of a controlled substance while on the job;
- ▶ Driving a school vehicle or your personal car on school time, while under the influence of alcohol or an illegal substance;
- ▶ Possession use or being under the influence of alcohol while on the job.

To enforce this policy, **Acorn Montessori School** reserves the right to conduct searches of school property and to implement other measures necessary to deter abuse of this policy, such as random drug testing.

Acorn Montessori School will encourage and assist employees with chemical dependencies (alcohol or drugs) to seek treatment and/or rehabilitation. To this end, employees desiring such assistance should request a treatment or leave.

An employee who violates the above rules and standards of conduct is subject to discipline, up to and including immediate discharge, even for a first violation. **Acorn Montessori School** may also bring the matter to the attention of appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Suspected Child Abuse

By Arizona law you are required to report any suspicions of child abuse. The correct way to do this is to:

- a. Call the child abuse hotline, 1-888-767-2445 and give your phone number;
- b. Call law enforcement;
- c. Complete the online abuse form.
- d. Report the suspected child abuse to the Director.



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We suggest that for your protection as well as for the school that you immediately contact the Director in suspected abuse cases. **Acorn Montessori School** will not tolerate child abuse in any form: physical, verbal or sexual.

Supervision of Children

Each employee carries the responsibility for supervision of the children when needed, not only in his/ her own classroom, but also wherever he/she may be on **Acorn Montessori School** grounds. Such responsibility is not limited to time on areas of specific duty assignments. The standard of behavior will be result of the cooperation of all staff members in sharing responsibility for maintaining behavior. Such supervision includes:

- Keeping all cleaning supplies locked away, keeping sharp objects such as adult scissors out of the reach of children and keeping any coffee pots, etc., out of the reach of children.
- Count the children when you leave to go or return from the playground and count again on the playground.
- One teacher may supervise a maximum of twelve (12) preschool children or six (6) toddlers and 1 to 40 for school aged children, Acorn recommends a second staff member at that time, if not before.
- Never leave a child unattended. If you need to leave for a minute, ask another staff person to cover for you.

Safety

The safety of our students and staff is above all else. Staff must be vigilant at all times to ensure accidents do not occur. For your safety, please don't hesitate to ask the Director about ANY phase of your job that may seem to be hazardous or unfamiliar. TEACHERS AND STAFF NEED TO BE EXTREMELY AWARE and ALERT FOR THE SAFETY AND WELL BEING OF ALL THE CHILDREN AND EACH OTHER **ALWAYS**. Employees may not lift over 60 pounds by yourself. If the load is over 60, you **must** get assistance and not attempt to lift the load alone.

Physical Examination

Acorn Montessori School may require that you have a physical examination, at the expense of **Acorn Montessori School**, in the event of an on or off-the-job injury or illness.

Staff Social Media Guidelines

Social media and digital communication devices and methods offer a means by which staff can quickly communicate with others, share information, and exchange ideas. Acorn Montessori School understands the value of social media and the benefits offered by digital communication devices for providing quick and easy interaction among peers, students, and families. These regulations are intended to support staff by ensuring that all staff members clearly understand the many factors and possible ramifications to consider.

Your online behavior must reflect the same standards of professionalism, respect, and integrity as your face-to-face communications. When using personal social media sites, if you identify yourself as an employee of Acorn Montessori School, you must remember that you have associated yourself with your colleagues and your school community; therefore, you must ensure that any associated content is consistent with the mission Acorn Montessori School.



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Staff who have identified themselves as associated with Acorn Montessori should consider using the following disclaimer on personal social media sites, including blogs, “The views on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions, or vision of Acorn Montessori School.” However, even with this disclaimer, posting inappropriate comments does not absolve staff from being subject to disciplinary actions if found in violation of this regulation. Even when using the most stringent privacy settings, when posting online comments that are related to school, students, or families, even in a personal capacity, staff should act as if all comments/postings are in the public domain.

Please keep the following in mind:

Personal Responsibility

- When posting online, please remember that you are an employee of Acorn Montessori School and representative of your colleagues, students, parents, and the school community.
- Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face.
- Blogs, wikis, and podcasts are an extension of your classroom and considered official content. What is inappropriate in the classroom should be deemed inappropriate online.
- Do not post photos or movies of fellow employees without their permission. Do not use photos or movies taken at school without permission. Do not post photos or movies that contain students without parental consent.
- When posting online be sure not to post confidential student information.
- Cyberbullying is not to be tolerated. Any incidence of cyberbullying should be reported to the director immediately. All cyberbullying incidents are to be taken seriously.
- Acorn Montessori staff and employees are personally responsible for all comments/information and hosted content they publish online. Be mindful that things such as Tweets and Status Updates will be visible and public for a long time.
- By posting comments, having online conversations, etc. on social media sites you are broadcasting to the world, be aware that even with the strictest privacy settings, what you ‘say’ online should be within the bounds of professional discretion. Comments expressed via social networking pages under the impression of a ‘private conversation’ may still end up being shared into a more public domain, even with privacy settings on maximum.
- Photographs relating to alcohol or tobacco use may be deemed inappropriate. Remember, your social networking site is an extension of your personality, and an extension of your professional life and classroom. If it would seem inappropriate to put a certain photograph on the wall, then it should be considered inappropriate to post online.
- Microblogging (Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, etc.) comments made using such media are not protected by privacy settings. Employees should be aware of the public and widespread nature of such media and refrain from any comment and/or #hashtags that could be deemed unprofessional.
- Acorn Montessori employees are not permitted to solicit or accept “Friend” Requests from enrolled Acorn students on any personal Social Media Account.

Confidentiality Agreement

As an employee of **Acorn Montessori School**, you will respect all children and their families' privacy. The employee acknowledges a child's positive self-esteem as critical and it may be damaged by violating his/her privacy. All information concerning children and their families shared in any classroom is of a

Acorn Montessori Charter School Staff Handbook

North Campus Preschool-Pre-K: 8085 E Manley Drive, Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 – Phone 928.772.5225

West Campus K – 3rd: 7555 E. Long Look Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 - Phone 928.775.0238; Fax 928.775.2638

Main Campus 4th – 8th: 8556 E. Loos Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 - Phone 928.772.5778; Fax 928.775.8654

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very sensitive nature and should be respected.

It is understood and agreed between you and **Acorn Montessori School** that confidential school or information about a staff member, a child or one of our parents is not to be disclosed to people outside of **Acorn Montessori School**, without prior approval from the owner. **ALL** outside inquiries are to be directed to the attention of the **Director**. Failure to follow this policy may result in your immediate discharge and legal action against you may become necessary.

The employee will not, either during the term of his/her employment or at any time thereafter, use or disclose to any person, firm, or corporation any information concerning the accounts, dealings, correspondence, connections, secrets, data processing information, activities or affairs of **Acorn Montessori School** which he/she may have acquired in the course of, or incidental to his/her employment, whether for his/her own benefit, or to the detriment, or intended or probable detriment of **Acorn Montessori School**.

Personnel Files

Employees may inspect records that he/she has a lawful right to see, on off-duty time, and to take notes on any material contained therein. If you wish to inspect your file, please let the **Director** know so an appointment may be scheduled.

Materials maintained in an employee's personnel file will not be disclosed to anyone outside **Acorn Montessori School** except upon prior written authorization of the employee, in compliance with a lawfully served subpoena or other authority upon prior approval of the school.

It is your responsibility to immediately advise the **Director** and the Human Resource Department of any change in your status, telephone, address, or name. It is important, and to your benefit, that this information be accurate and timely.

Personal Business at Work

You are at a place of work. You are expected to take care of your personal affairs when you are not at work. This includes using your cell phone, receiving personal mail, cashing personal checks, and using the school telephone for personal reasons.

You are permitted to use the school phone in the office to receive personal calls while you are on the job if this practice does not interfere with the supervision of children.

Cell phones should be kept up and away from students throughout the day and only used during work hours in case of emergency.

Gifts and Tipping

The acceptance by any employee of a tip or gratuity from a parent or vendor, without prior approval of the Director, will be cause for immediate discharge.

Non-Solicitation Rule

Solicitation of any type by employees during working time is prohibited. Distribution of literature of any type or description by employees during working time or in working areas is prohibited.

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The words "working time," as used herein, do not apply during meal periods, rest periods, or other specified periods during the workday when employees are properly not engaged in performing their work tasks.

Violation of the above rules will result in immediate disciplinary action, including discharge.

Housekeeping

You are responsible for a clean and safe classroom. Have the children pick up and clean up after themselves as much as possible. The lunch and yard should also be kept clean and safe. Please remember to clean up after yourself after leaving an area.

Staff Parking

We realize with a smaller school comes a smaller parking lot. To ensure our parents and visitors have a space to park safely in our parking lot, there are signs designated for parents/visitors. Please ensure that you do not park in these reserved spaces. Staff should park in the staff lots at both West Campus and North Campus. At Main Campus, staff that arrive for the early shifts may park in the parking lot in spaces not reserved. Once the parking lot is full, staff should park in the designated spaces on the street.

Outside Employment

No employee may solicit any parent of the school to perform any babysitting after hours. Violation of this policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

Acorn Montessori School has no objection to you holding another job as long as you effectively meet the performance standards for your job with the school. **Acorn Montessori School** asks that you think seriously about the effects that such extra work may have on the limits of your endurance, your overall personal health and your effectiveness with the school and the children. **Acorn Montessori School** will hold all employees to the same standards of performance and scheduling demands and cannot make exceptions for employees who also hold an outside job.

Policy Changes

It is inevitable that new policies and benefits will need to be written from time to time and that old policies (including benefits) will need to be revised. While **Acorn Montessori School** reserves the right to make these changes without notice, **Acorn Montessori School** will strive to timely advise you of any changes affecting your employment.

Acorn Montessori School has attempted to be as comprehensive as possible in preparing this Handbook. However, this Handbook is not a contract of employment. It merely establishes guidelines to govern **Acorn Montessori School** staff daily activities. Should you need further information, or if you would like to discuss any policies in the Handbook, please feel free to speak to the Director/Principal.

Again - Welcome to
Acorn Montessori Schools



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Return to Finance/Human Resource Department

Acknowledgment of Receipt of Handbook

By my signature below, I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Employee Handbook on the date indicated below. I also acknowledge that I have read and understand the contents of the Employee Handbook. I also acknowledge that this Employee Handbook supersedes and replaces any other Employee Handbook or similar document that may have previously been distributed by the company.

Print Name of Employee: _____

Employee
Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Confidentiality Agreement

Whereas, children/classroom professionals respect enrolled children's and families' privacy, and

Whereas, a child's positive self-esteem is critical and may be damaged by violating his/her privacy,

Whereas, all information concerning the childcare center/charter school, staff, the children and their families shared in this education environment is of very sensitive nature and should be respected.

I, _____ agree to keep All INFORMATION discussed in the childcare center/ charter school /related outside the schools/relating to any child/adult/staff/relative or community member totally confidential.

I agree that I will keep all personal and sensitive information disclosed by adults completely confidential and will report only pertinent information to Administration/proper authorities in writing. I understand that relaying information to other staff members, community or Parents would be a violation of the agreement.

Violation of this agreement may result in job termination.

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the Confidentiality Agreement above as it is presented.

Employee Signature

Date

Director's/HR Officer Signature

Date



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