



Desert Mountain Elementary School

Sarah Kulesa

623-445-3551

Sarah.Kulesa@dvusd.org



We are committed to partner with parents through open communication focused on the needs of your child. Mutual trust and respect between parents and teachers is critical to maintain a positive learning experience at any school. We believe that your trust in Desert Mountain is essential to ensure your child's success.



ABOUT ME: My name is Sarah Kulesa, and I am excited to be your child's 4th grade teacher. I earned my bachelor's degree in Science from Northern Arizona University. This is my seventh year in education, and I have had the opportunity to teach kindergarten, 3rd grade, 4th grade, and art. This is my third year at Desert Mountain, and I am proud to be part of this school community. Although I was born in Chicago, I have lived in Arizona for most of my life and grew up in the local area. Outside of the classroom, I enjoy gardening, crafting, and spending time with my pets. I have two dogs, two cats, and a fish, and I have always had a love for animals and creative activities.

I look forward to partnering with you to provide a positive, engaging, and successful learning experience for your child throughout the school year.

Academic Integrity Statement

To be college-, career-, and community-ready, students in the Deer Valley Unified School District are expected to demonstrate academic integrity. Academic integrity is all about being honest and fair in your schoolwork. It means doing work that is entirely your own and giving credit to others (including generative Artificial Intelligence tools) through proper citation when you use their ideas or words. If you have questions about the guidelines for academic integrity, you should discuss them with your teacher.



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Academic Dishonesty Statement

Academic dishonesty refers to any action that compromises the integrity of academic work or evaluation processes. This includes but is not limited to:

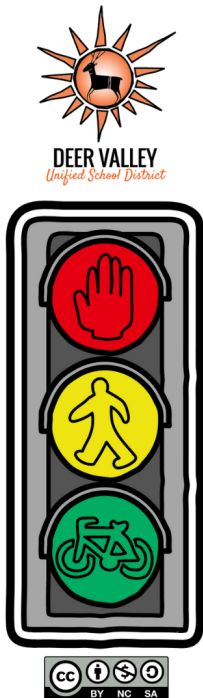
- Copying or stealing another person's work or data (plagiarism);
- Allowing another person to copy one's work;
- Doing another person's classwork;
- Creating more than one copy of one's work for distribution;
- Providing another person with the answers on tests or quizzes;
- Noncompliance with teachers' test-taking procedures;
- Unauthorized copying or development of software; and
- Unauthorized use of generative Artificial Intelligence.

Consequences for instances of academic dishonesty range from a conference and loss of credit (student will be given another opportunity to show mastery of learning) up to a 5-day suspension and loss of credit.

Artificial Intelligence

In the Deer Valley Unified School District, we are committed to providing our students with an extraordinary education while ensuring their safety, privacy, and well-being. As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance learning experiences, teachers may incorporate generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the classroom for student use.

Students must adhere to the specific guidelines provided in the assignment details. If no explicit guidance is provided regarding the use of generative AI, students are expected to follow the "restrictive" level outlined in the [Student Use of Generative AI chart](#). If a student is unsure whether a tool or website is permitted, they should contact the teacher before using the resource or submitting their work.



Student Use of Generative AI

Level	Description	Example Instruction
Restrictive No!	AI tools are prohibited for the assignment, and all work must be the student's original creation.	"Do not use AI tools for this assignment. All content must be original, and any use of AI will be treated as plagiarism."
Moderate Whoa!	Students can use teacher-approved AI tools from the district list for specific parts of their assignments, such as brainstorming or initial research, but the core content and conclusions should be original. Proper citation is required for any AI-generated content.	"You can employ AI tools to assist brainstorming or initial research, however the main content, arguments, and conclusions should be your own."
Permissive Go!	Students can use teacher-approved AI tools from the district list to assist in their assignments, such as generating ideas, proofreading, or organizing content.	"You may use AI tools as you see fit to enhance your assignment and demonstrate your understanding of the topic, however proper citation is required for any AI-generated content."

Adapted From: Code.org, CoSN, Digital Promise, European EdTech Alliance, Larimore, J., and PACE (2023). AI Guidance for Schools Toolkit. Retrieved from teachai.org/toolkit. [2004].

RESOURCES for parents and guardians:

- [DVUSD Math Resources for Parents](#)
- [DVUSD English Language Arts Resources for Parents](#)
- [DVUSD Social Studies Resources for Parents](#)
- [DVUSD Science Resources for Parents](#)
- [What is Depth of Knowledge \(DOK\)?](#)

Overview of Arizona State Standards: We teach the Arizona State Standards with all the District approved and adopted materials ie: Engage NY and Into Reading. We also use Mystery Science and Gizmos. All curriculum is using the Arizona State Standards including the high expectations and rigor we provide for our students' learning experiences.



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Overview of Curriculum:

Math: (I-Ready) This is a new curriculum for us this year. Areas of study are: Place Value, Operations, Operations and Measurement, Fractions and Decimals, Geometry and Measurement.

Reading: (Amplify) Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Range of reading and text complexity.

Writing: (Amplify) Opinion, Informative, Explanatory, and Narrative Writing

Science: (AZ State Standards) Core Ideas for Knowing Science, Physical Science, Earth and space, and Life Science.

Social Studies: (AZ State Standards) Regions and cultures of the Americas.

COMMUNICATION

- School-wide:
 - [Desert Mountain School Website](#)
 - Frequent Smores via social media, email, and texts
- [Teacher Website](#): Updated weekly
 - Links to information:
 - Schedule
 - Upcoming Specials
 - Behavior/Assignments/Grades/Snacks and Birthday treats information
 - Supply List
 - Resources
- Contact Details
 - The best way to reach me is through email. I check it throughout the day. If you need a message to get to your child on that same day - please call the office to contact us.
 - Email Address: sarah.kulesa@dvusd.org

Please schedule specific times to meet with me, as we need time to communicate effectively. I often have professional duties directly before and after school hours. Please understand that I will not be able to meet or discuss issues while I am teaching or supervising students. However, I will contact you as soon as I can.



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- *Desert Mountain has implemented email office hours and a “curfew” to ensure that we maintain a healthy work-life balance. I will respond to emails Monday through Friday from 7:30am to 8:00am and again from 3:15-4:00pm.*

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLC's)

Most Fridays, students will be released early so that we are able to participate in PLC work. This work is directly related to the planning, instruction, and interventions we implement in our classrooms to ensure that students master the standards.

A professional learning community is a group of educators that meet regularly and work collaboratively to improve teaching practices and the achievement of students. The questions that drive the work of PLC's are:

- What do we want all students to know and be able to do?
- How will we know if they learn it?
- How will we respond if some students do not learn?
- How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

Please be sure to read the weekly newsletter for ongoing information regarding the content of each early release day.

HOMEWORK & GRADES

- The intent of homework is to practice, extend learning, and provide opportunities for students to develop critical, independent study skills and self-discipline for their life-long educational journeys.
- Grades are a reporting tool utilized to reflect what a student knows and is able to do in a content area. We measure achievement, not effort or behavior, in our grading system.
- Grades will be equitable, accurate, specific, and consistent.
- A student's grade should reflect academic learning and should never be used as a punitive tool.
- Grades are for reporting the status of academic learning, not behavioral conduct.
- The primary purpose of assessment and grading is to provide detailed feedback to inform and support student learning.
- Learning is a process that takes place over time and at different speeds for different students.
- PowerSchool is an essential resource for parents and students. It is not only a tool for communication regarding grades, it is a resource for our students and parents to check progress, missing work, and what is being taught/learned regularly. Please ensure that you and your child have access (separate accounts) and even sign up for the app and push notifications or weekly email updates as an option in [PowerSchool](#).



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MEANINGFUL GRADE ENTRIES

Teachers are expected to enter a meaningful grade for each student in the electronic gradebook on a regular basis so that students, parents, and support staff can better monitor student progress. A meaningful grade is a grade entry for an assessment or coursework that measures learning standards. The frequency of entering meaningful grades is as follows:

- Classes that typically meet 4-5 days per week = at least 1 meaningful grade each week
- Classes that typically meet 2-3 days per week = at least 1 meaningful grade every other week
- Classes that typically meet 1 day per week = at least 1 meaningful grade every 3rd week

At least one meaningful assessment/assignment grade entry must be entered each week, but an entry that impacts the course grade must be entered at least every 2 school weeks (every 3rd week for classes meeting once per week).

3-12 Grade Scale

Students in grades 3 through 12 will receive marks reflecting their proficiency toward grade-level standards using the following scale.

- 4 = Highly Proficient
- 3 = Proficient
- 2 = Partially Proficient
- 1 = Minimally Proficient

Students in grades 3 through 12 will receive marks for their overall performance in each course of study using the following letter-grade scale.

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89%
- C = 70-79%
- D = 60-69%
- F = 0-59%

Grades of "D" and above are passing marks. A course grade of "F" indicates that the student has failed the course.

*For graded work in the Assessment Category, teachers will enter the proficiency marks for each standard measured and use the following guide to assign a score to the assignment. Parents will see the percentage score for each grade book entry with the letter grade mark on the front page of the PowerSchool parent portal.



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Highly Proficient A 100%-90%			Proficient B 89%-80%		Proficient C 79%-70%	
100-97	96-94	93-90	89-85	84-80	79-75	74-70
All 4's on standards	All 4's except for one 3	Mostly 4's with some 3's and/or 2's	Mostly 3's with some 4's All 3's on standards	Mostly 3's and 4's with a 2	Mostly 3's with some 2's	Mostly 2's with 3's and/or 4's
Partially Proficient D 69%-60%			Minimally Proficient F 59%-50%			
69-65		64-60	59-56		55-50	
Mostly 2's and 3's with a 1		All 2's on standards	Mostly 2's and some 1's		All 1's on standards	
No Evidence						
49% - 0%						

Categories (1st-12th Grades Only)

All grade entries in the gradebook will be attributed to one of the following categories.

ASSESSMENT: This category includes all items used to measure a student's proficiency toward the learning standards once the student has had sufficient practice and at a specified point in time. This category can include summative tests, performance assessments, reports, unit or module assessments, quizzes, long-term projects, short-term projects, presentations, capstone projects, research papers, and lab reports.

COURSEWORK: This category includes formative work that provides students with the opportunity to learn content and skills and to receive feedback on their learning. Coursework is assigned to provide meaningful, independent practice, reinforce learning targets, and extend learning. This category can include in-class assignments, exit tickets, checks for understanding, and daily activities.



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PRACTICE: This category includes formative student work that a student completes while in the process of learning specific skills. Student work done inside and outside the classroom, such as classwork and homework, falls into this category.

WEIGHTS:

All 1st-8th grade teacher gradebooks will utilize the following weights for each category in the gradebook.

- ASSESSMENT CATEGORY 80%
- COURSEWORK CATEGORY 20%
- PRACTICE CATEGORY 0%

Missing Work (3rd-12th grades)

An assignment is considered missing work when it is not submitted by the due date.

Missing work will be treated as such:

- The assignment will be marked with the “Missing” special code in the gradebook
- A zero (“0”) will be entered as the score for the assignment in the gradebook
- No Evidence (NE) will be entered for the standards attached to the assignment
-

Late Work

An assignment is considered late work when the assignment is not submitted by the due date that was established, but is submitted within the parameters listed below.

For **Late Work** to be accepted, students must meet the following parameters:

- Assignment is not due within the class period
- Assignment is not a timed activity (such as a Quick-Write Essay)
- Assignment is not a Long-Term assignment (over multiple weeks)
- Assignment is turned in within the following time frame
 - K-2 Grades: By the end of the marking period
 - 3-8 Grades: Within 5 school days after the end of the unit ***of learning/project/assignment***
 - 9-12 Grades: By the end of the unit



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Reassessment

Retakes are allowed for assessments for full credit, if reperformance opportunities (another assessment on the same learning target later in the marking period as part of the instructional cycle) will not be available during the marking period or in addition to reperformance opportunities during the marking period.

To earn a retake opportunity, a student must complete all of the following:

- Complete all formative coursework related to the content/skill assessed
- Consult with the teacher
- *Submit a reassessment plan or application, if required by the teacher*

A reassessment plan must be scheduled within the following time frames:

- **K-2nd Grades:** Until the week before the end of the marking period
- **3rd-8th Grades:** Within **5** school days of receiving the assessment score
- **9-12th Grades:** Within 5 school days of receiving the assessment score. The student must communicate with the teacher to create a reassessment plan.

Novel Studies (for courses using novel studies)

Parents/guardians will be provided with the titles of novels that will be read in class at least two weeks prior to instruction commencing, if not already listed on this course syllabus.

Parents/guardians may reach out to the teacher at any time with questions or concerns about a novel. In compliance with A.R.S. § 15-120.03, any novel containing material that falls under this statute—but is utilized for its serious educational or literary value—will require prior written parental consent on a per-material basis before the student may use it. For any student whose parent/guardian does not grant consent, a comparable alternative assignment that does not contain the material will be provided without academic penalty.

EXTRA CREDIT:

Just as imposing grade penalties for poor behavior distorts academic grades, so does awarding higher grades or extra credit for good behavior. Extra credit renders an academic grade less accurate since it is not based upon performance of the standards, but rather on compliant behaviors. **No extra credit will be awarded.**