



Community Handbook 2016-17

In the special environment prepared... in our schools, the children themselves found a sentence that expresses their inner need. "Help me do it by myself."

~Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*

Mission Statement

The mission of River Montessori Charter School is to provide students with a learning culture grounded in Montessori Philosophy. This historically proven educational model supports the whole child, creates lifelong learners, and educates for peace. The resulting academic excellence is supported by a prepared classroom environment that inspires self-paced, individualized discovery; a love of learning; and respect for self, others, and the environment.

Our vision at RMCS is to create a Montessori learning community where children are inspired to realize their academic, personal, and social potential to become global citizens.

Core Values

Collaboration: working together, respecting others, and maintaining a global perspective enlighten students, teachers, families, and the larger community.

Academic Excellence: A prepared and rigorous Montessori environment challenges children cognitively, physically, emotionally, and socially and provides each student with the freedom to progress at their own developmental level and pace.

Individuality: The limitless potential of every child contributes to the strength and diversity of our school community.

Community: Shared experiences foster lifelong commitment to social responsibility.

Respect: Uncompromising responsibility for self, others, and the environment is critical to overall success.

Educating for Peace: Inner contentment, self-actualization, and community harmony engender the all-encompassing goal of peace.

The Montessori Philosophy

1. The Montessori Approach to Education

As the American Montessori Society summarizes:

“A Montessori program is based on non-competitive and cooperative activities that help a child develop a strong self-image, high levels of academic and social competence, and the confidence to face challenges.”

“Encouraged to make decision at an early age, Montessori-educated children are problem-solvers who can make appropriate choices, manage their time, and work well with others. They exchange ideas and discuss work freely. These positive communication skills build the foundation for negotiating new settings.”

“Research has shown that the best predictor of future success is a positive sense of self-esteem. Montessori programs, based on self-directed, non-competitive activities, help children develop the confidence to face change with optimism.”

Dr. Maria Montessori was a physician, research scientist, and educator during the late 1800s-early 1900s who made observations about how children learn. The Montessori Philosophy of Education is based on Montessori’s observation that children have a natural desire to learn and that stages of development exist for which there should be corresponding educational environments and trained adults who prepare these environments. Children learn independently in a prepared environment with teachers who guide and serve as the links between the student and the educational environment of academic materials and lessons. By providing freedom of choice, this enriched learning environment cultivates individuals who learn to make independent decisions and to solve problems creatively. Students learn to develop healthy social relationships, to develop skills in concentration, and to master academic and life skills.

Over the years, the Montessori philosophy has evolved to challenge the whole child’s personality and intellect in a variety of multicultural and international settings. Dr. Montessori used her scientific observations of children to design functional learning environments created to support and enhance a child’s innate desire to learn about the world around him. Based on a strong integration of adult to child observation and practical hands-on activities, classroom materials offer learning experiences in a clear, concrete manner. Students use motor and intellectual discovery when working with these materials, with an emphasis on the sequential and orderly acquisition of both motor and cognitive skills. This ordered work method also allows for individualization and usually offers a three-year age span within the classroom, enabling students to work and learn at their own pace, as well as in group settings. Montessori education is based on a three-year developmental and academic learning cycle.

The integration of varied age spans allows older students to gain confidence by working and role-modeling materials with younger students as well as reinforcing their own understanding of academic subjects. Collaborative learning and projects completed in groups encourage students to teach and learn with each other.

A well-prepared Montessori learning environment is given careful attention, allowing and encouraging the child accessibility to all materials she/he needs in performing and experiencing the step-by-step process of individual work. The classroom is thus arranged in a series of easily accessible shelves designed to accommodate specific work areas. This framework of organization gives accessibility to the necessary learning materials and frees the student to concentrate on the work, allowing an increase in independence and responsibility. This, in turn, decreases the need of direction from the teacher. As a result, children develop internal, rather than external, referencing. The teacher is also better able to observe the total classroom environment as well as the individual student. Each classroom at RMCS follows Montessori's concepts and is carefully designed to provide for the developmental needs of its students.

The Montessori classroom contains materials to support learning in the core subjects of language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, and geometry, while also providing materials in the areas of history, geography, and natural sciences (e.g. biology, astronomy, and chemistry). Each classroom contains materials that teach specific concepts for the particular age range. The materials are designed in a logical sequence of skill acquisition and concept building while reinforcing the development of abstract thinking. The learning materials initially isolate knowledge to one concept at a time in a concrete manipulative style. The child progresses toward an abstract, more divergent, level of evaluation and analysis, while also moving toward self-set, teacher-supported goals.

Through observation and record keeping, the Montessori teacher assesses the needs and level of each student to guide him or her towards a path to meet individual interests, maturity levels, capabilities, educational needs, and academic success. As a result of these observations, teachers can make adjustments in individual learning plans, both academically and behaviorally. Students work at their own speed and must demonstrate mastery of material before progressing.

2. The Prepared Environment

A Montessori classroom is strikingly different from a traditional classroom: there are no rows of desks. Colorful materials are neatly organized into clustered areas—like a science area with materials to conduct experiments, reference texts, binders labeled with student's names charting their individual progress through the curriculum and housing their science reports, and a terrarium. Desks are interspersed with open space where children work together on rugs, or cluster around a teacher sitting on the floor answering questions. Students are typically so actively engaged in their work that visitors are undisturbed and an atmosphere of quiet concentration prevails.

The Montessori classroom facilitates independent learning and exploration. The environment is designed to strike the imagination, to lead the student to abstraction, and to provide a system of information storage and retrieval. The Prepared Environment facilitates the child's exploration of the essential principles of all disciplines through sequenced order and aesthetic appeal.

Technology elements are integrated into classroom life. Children learn to use calculators, computers, and multimedia devices as part of their everyday experience. Throughout the curriculum, as appropriate, internet resources supplement research collected first-hand from resources found in the classroom and the community.

Montessori classrooms tend to fascinate both children and their parents. Typically, they are warm, bright, inviting, and filled with plants, animals, art, music, and books. There are curriculum centers with intriguing learning materials, such as three-dimensional mathematical models, colorful maps, botany charts, and collections of natural specimens. Each material stimulates curiosity and the five senses.

3. Multi-age Learning Communities

Montessori education places children in multi-age groupings. Children aged six to nine and nine to twelve, and thirteen and fourteen are placed in lower and upper elementary and junior high classes respectively. This multi-age grouping gives many advantages to learning, including the following:

- Children can progress through the curriculum at their own pace, guided by an individualized learning plan.
- The classroom serves accelerated students as well as remedial or English Language Learner students well because it is enriched with materials for an age-range, up to the level of challenging the interests of the most advanced students. It is acceptable and expected that students will excel in one area but may struggle with basic concepts in another. The three year curriculum gives each student space to grow at various levels while meeting end-criteria before moving forward.
- Younger students are constantly stimulated by the interesting work of older students.
- Older students serve as tutors and role-models, providing leadership experiences. Older students grow from helping younger students and reinforce their own knowledge by teaching others. They also learn to empathize with the needs of children who are younger than themselves, building important social and character skills.
- In a mixed-age class, teachers work with the same students for three years, forming an integral and close mentoring relationship.
- The class retains a high degree of continuity since the majority of students in each class returns the following year. This makes it easier to orient new children and individualize the ongoing curriculum for each student.

The multi-age classroom is a groundbreaking concept for developing community and supporting students of varying levels of academic and social development. By creating a bond between parents, teachers, and children, Dr. Montessori sought to create a closely-knit community where individuals could learn to be empowered; where children could learn to become contributing, sharing members of their school-family; where students could learn to care for younger children, learn from older people, and trust one another; and where children could find ways to be acceptably assertive rather than aggressive.

4. Individualized Learning

Montessori philosophy posits that for education to touch a child's heart and mind, the child must be learning because he/she is curious and interested. Montessori strives to make learning its own reward with each success fueling the desire to discover even more. To appeal to each child in this way, the curriculum is individualized according to the following principles:

- Individual learning styles, timetables, and capacities are respected. The child must develop herself; the adult acts as a resource and a catalyst for development.
- Students are given the opportunity to choose what to investigate and learn.
- The student is responsible for mastering basic skills and basic core knowledge. The student will follow a written study plan for each week, which is arrived at jointly by the teacher and the student.
- The student will be supported in planning an individual schedule for completing work.

Materials and activities are designed to support different learning styles and multiple intelligences, such as linguistic, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, and interpersonal. Some children – kinesthetic learners — learn best by using their hands, taking measure of materials physically and thereby mapping them mentally.

Others — linguistic learners — are especially attentive to verbal cues and have innate ability to verbalize knowledge and to learn by listening attentively. Other children may benefit greatly from interacting with others, sharing, teaching, and collaborating to master the material; these are children with strong interpersonal learning skills. Montessori philosophy supports these differences and recognizes that children may also transition from one learning skill set to another as they develop during these formative years. One-size-fits-all teaching can fall short for these children.

5. Active Learning

Montessori materials are designed to stimulate the senses and engage students in active learning. Students are encouraged to pursue areas of particular interest to them, becoming “experts” (meaning the student is able to integrate this learning into his or her daily work and practice) and using all available resources, including internet and community sources to engage their curiosity.

The classrooms are prepared with Montessori-sourced materials, which are hands-on and encourage “experiential” learning, as opposed to the more traditional model of lecture and drill exercises, which are comparably passive. Repetition is accomplished by having a variety of materials with which to practice the same concept. It is this repetition — through active and multiple modes of learning — which leads to mastery of the concept.

Students learn by trial and error and by discovery. They learn to ask the right question, spontaneously engage in their own research, analyze what they have found, and draw their own conclusions. The extended work period, typically three hours, offers both the time and resources for investigation and experimentation, using the internet, classroom library, and related indoor and outdoor materials, as well as opportunities to pursue research outside the classroom, in a community garden, the local library or museum, or by contacting outside experts. Throughout this process of discovery, students are not afraid to take risks and to learn constructively from their mistakes.

Students engage with the Montessori materials, which are designed to transition children from concrete understanding in early elementary to abstract thinking. This means that children arrive at abstraction through their own creative process and their desire to understand. This is a joyful process of intellectual development, inner awareness, and creative thinking. Again, the child’s education is forged on the path to discovery.

Active learning is the heart of Montessori education. Rather than present children with the “right information” and supply the “right answers” up front in the form of lessons and lectures, Montessori educators guide students to ask the “right questions” and help them discover the answers for themselves. With this active approach, learning becomes its own reward and each success fuels the desire to discover more.

6. Montessori Curriculum Materials

Credentialed Montessori teachers present core subjects using Montessori materials. Montessori materials have been shown to be an effective way of meeting California state standards and Common Core. In addition, materials are supplemented with books, experiences, technology and other instructional materials to support the child’s individual learning style. Supplemental materials to be added to the Montessori classroom are regularly reviewed staff. Dialogue continuously occurs between teachers and administration based on observation and assessment of individual student progress.

The integrated curriculum includes materials and activities for the development of understanding and skills in mathematics, geometry, natural sciences, physical sciences, technology, language arts (including phonics, spelling, grammar, sentence analysis, creative and expository writing), literature, geography, history, civics, economics, anthropology, sociology, practical life, movement, physical education, music, visual arts, and crafts.

Montessori materials are concrete representations of lessons, which guide the student to understanding a concept. Each Montessori material and lesson is specifically designed with a purpose, prerequisites, direct and indirect aims, typical age ranges, procedure, language, control of error, points of interest, variations and extensions, subsequent lessons, and its placement and importance in the entire curriculum. Teachers are trained in the selection, implementation, and outcomes of each material, thus solidly serving the student in his or her education. Materials are organized and presented sequentially, becoming more complex and abstract. Comprehension and mastery are required before student progresses to the next material. This allows the student to continue on a path of education that is uniquely individual, neither waiting for others to catch up, nor hindering others progress. It also provides constant placement of the student within the framework and assessment of individual student progress, as well as offers an immediate diagnostic capability should a student struggle with any material or concept.

Materials are presented in small and large group lessons designed to inspire the student and encourage the student’s thoughtful application of mastered materials and concepts. Typically, students progress through most group lessons with their yearly cohort, which incorporates a general pacing but allows for individual rates and movement to another group as necessary, similar to traditional educational system whereby a student would be “pulled out” for specific assistance, although the Montessori student remains in the classroom. In the Montessori Model, students find the specific support they need in a variety of lesson groups in the classroom, combined with the individualized attention of the trained teacher.

Of paramount importance are the Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), created at the beginning of each school year by the student in collaboration with the parent and teacher to determine a path of individual student success. The plans provide a process whereby strengths and areas of improvement are identified, goals are formulated, and specific learning objectives are agreed upon. In this way, the order and manner of learning new material is adjusted to the needs of each child as much as possible. The student’s

progress toward fulfilling his or her ILP is the primary focus of subsequent conferences, progress reports, and student self-evaluations.

Each student, in collaboration with the teacher, also develops a Weekly Work Plan (WWP), setting forth the goals, expectations, and assignments for the week ahead. Weekly Work Plans address core subjects of language, mathematics, and science as well as, other areas of personal development. Whenever possible or appropriate, WWPs offer students the opportunity to propose an alternative assignment that would lead to the fundamental objective, but which would be more interesting to the student. Teachers review the WWP of each student on a weekly basis throughout the school year.

Appropriate measures are taken to respect the confidentiality of any student records protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. All records and assessments are available to parents and are sent to the student's new school in the case of the student transferring to another school.

7. Homework –The Montessori Way

The Montessori student often volunteers to continue research, do community service, and work on classroom related projects. Consequently, the Montessori student naturally develops good study skills, discipline, and responsibility. Continuing school-related projects at home also provides parents the opportunity to be involved in and stay current with their children's education. Daily homework, however, is not a part of a Montessori program. Nonetheless, if the student chooses, the teacher provides guidance for outside projects and activities based on the student's individual interests and needs. RMCS encourages daily reading individually and together, math fact practice, and cultivating a love of learning at home.

River Montessori Charter School Directory Information

Main Office Number: 778-6414

Absences: Ext: 10

	Title	Phone Exten	Email address
Administration			
Kelly Griffith Mannion	Director	Ext. 10	admin@rivermontessoricharter.org
Julie Carolan	Administration/Operations Manager	Ext. 17	jcarolan@rivermontessoricharter.org
Michelle Leonard	Business Manager	Ext. 12	mleonard@rivermontessoricharter.org
Gina Gilardi	Office Coordinator/Admin Associate	Ext. 29	admin@rivermontessoricharter.org
Paola Conde	Finance/Admin Associate	Ext. 10	office@rivermontessoricharter.org
Lorna Rochman-McIntire	Ed. Specialist Teacher/Coordinator of Student Support Services	Ext. 25	speddirector@rivermontessoricharter.org
Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten			
Grace Powers	Copper Creek	Ext. 11	coppercreek@rivermontessoricharter.org
Susie Carrillo	Ellis Creek	Ext. 19	ellisecreek@rivermontessoricharter.org
Lower Elementary			
Lisa Hartman	Kaweah	Ext. 22	kaweah@rivermontessoricharter.org
Emily Miyano	Tuolumne	Ext. 18	tolumne@rivermontessoricharter.org
Deanna Peake	San Lorenzo	Ext. 23	sanlorenzo@rivermontessoricharter.org
Upper Elementary			
Beth Flynn	Yuba	Ext. 21	yuba@rivermontessoricharter.org
Sara Furch	Klamath	Ext. 20	klamath@rivermontessoricharter.org
Before/After School Care	River Crew	Ext. 13	rivercrew@rivermontessoricharter.org

Bell Schedule

Monday through Thursday

7:00 - 8:00	River Crew Care Program
8:00 - 8:15	Arrival
8:15 - 11:45	Montessori work period
11:45 - 12:15	Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and Lower Elementary lunch/ Upper Elementary recess
12:15 - 12:45	Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and Lower Elementary recess/ Upper Elementary lunch
12:45 - 3:00	Montessori work period with group activities such as art, music, physical education, etc.
3:00 - 3:15	Dismissal
3:15 - 6:00	River Crew Care Program

Friday

7:00 - 8:00	River Crew Care Program
8:00 - 8:15	Arrival
8:15 a.m.	Morning gathering in the multi-purpose room
8:25 - 12:00	Montessori work period
12:00 - 12:15	Dismissal
12:15 - 6:00	River Crew Care program

School Policies and Procedures

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival

The Montessori classroom is a structured environment, and at the beginning of the morning work period, activities and work groups are organized each day. Late arrival interferes with the community as a whole and prevents the child from participating in cooperative learning experiences.

Please allow sufficient time for your child to arrive at school and not feel rushed. The feelings of the child as he enters class can set the tone for the day.

Between 8:00 a.m. and 8:15 a.m., RMCS staff and volunteers greet students as they are dropped off from their cars. Please refer to the RMCS parking and traffic flow map available on-line or in the office. Children arriving after 8:15 a.m. are tardy, and **must** be signed in at the front office by a parent or guardian immediately upon arrival. Please park and walk your child in through the main entrance and sign-in at the front office.

Dismissal

Regular pick-up is between 3:00 and 3:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 12:00 to 12:15 p.m. on Friday. Please refer to the parking and traffic flow map posted on the school website for information regarding carline/carpool pick-up. A staff member will assist children to their vehicles in the car pool traffic lane. Please have the back seat on the driver's side available for your child's use so that we are efficient in loading all the cars. Students with written parental permission to sign themselves out from school will be released Monday through Thursday at 3:15 p.m. and Friday at 12:15 p.m. in order to ensure their safety.

Absences and Truancy

Absences

Montessori philosophy requires that we respect the concentration and level of development of each child. The Guides spend time and energy preparing curriculum and lessons for each day so that each child may make continuous progress in their personal and academic development. Please help ensure your child's social and academic progress by avoiding unnecessary absences. If your child is frequently tardy or absent, he or she may not make the progress you expect because we cannot provide a consistent flow of work for the student.

Attendance is mandatory at our public charter school. If your child is absent, you must email or call the office within 24 hours. According to the State of California, absences are considered excused for the following reasons:

- Student illness
- Quarantine by a county or city health officer
- Student medical appointment
- Attendance at a funeral for an immediate family member
- Justifiable personal reasons (religious holidays or celebrations, appearance in court)

All other absences are considered unexcused.

A student who is absent three full days without a valid excuse, or on three occasions is tardy or absent for more than thirty minutes, or any combination thereof, is a truant (E.C. 48260). Truancy can lead to severe consequences, including fines, criminal prosecution of parents, and loss of enrollment. RMCS is required by the California Department of Education to notify parents in writing of attendance concerns.

When a student is absent from school it results in a loss of funding for our District. The State of California does not reimburse school districts for days students are absent. RMCS asks that parents support students and the school with an independent study plan to ensure learning progress and to recoup lost funding.

Tardiness

Students arriving after 8:15 must sign in before going to their classroom. Please note that tardiness is a serious detriment to student and classroom success as lessons and collaborative groups start at 8:15.

Excessive tardiness will result in a mandatory conference with the Executive Director and possible loss of enrollment.

Independent Study

An Independent Study contract can be arranged for an anticipated absence. Please contact your child's guide at least 5 days before the planned absence. Your child's Guide and school administration will prepare documents and a work plan for you and your child to complete. These documents are audited by the state in order for the school to receive its funds for Independent Study.

Circumstances requiring more than 10 days need to be approved by the RMCS Governing Board.

Independent Study Timeline

At least one week prior to leaving:	Notify the office and Guide of your desire for a short term independent study
3 days prior to leaving:	Confirm a meeting time with your Guide
1 day prior to leaving:	Meet with your Guide and child to go over the contract and assigned work
While you are gone:	Assist your child with their assignments
5 days after your return:	Return completed assignments to your Guide

Any incomplete assignments will void the contract and your student's attendance will be noted as unexcused absences for the dates the student was out of school.

Communication with RMCS

Effective communication supports the Montessori triangle of child, school, and parent. RMCS communicates with families in a variety of ways to ensure a successful relationship.

Communication Between Home and School:

School Newsletter: *The River Current* is generally published electronically monthly and provides timely school information and parent educational resources, including a director's letter, calendar of events, student articles, news and tidbits, book reviews, and parenting articles. *The River Current* is available in English and Spanish. Hard copies are posted in the office and provided to families with limited access to the internet upon request.

Announcements and Email Notices: Timely announcements such as health alerts, calendar notices, and upcoming special events or deadlines are distributed via email and are available in English and Spanish. Hard copies are provided for families with limited access to the internet.

School Website: The calendar on the school website is updated monthly. Essential documents pertaining to governance, registration and enrollment, school day information, etc. are all posted on the school website.

Signs Posted: Public notices and timely calendar changes are all posted in the office as necessary.

Family Communication with Staff

In the spirit of our community, if a Guide has a particular concern about your child, he/she will contact you directly to discuss it. Likewise, if a parent has a particular concern about their child, it is expected that the parent will contact the child's Guide directly to discuss it.

Family conferences are regularly scheduled two times per year. Additional conferences can be scheduled with your child's Guide as necessary.

Observations

Montessori has a unique understanding of observation as a tool to discover what a child needs for continued development, whether academic, social, physical, or emotional in nature. Through this relationship, the Guide strives to help the child achieve independence and self-motivated learning. Discovery by the child of what he knows unconsciously is the basis of the approach to learning at the elementary level. It can be a joyful experience for the child and the observer.

River Montessori opens its classrooms for observations approximately two months after the start of the school year. Anyone interested in observing a classroom must schedule an appointment with the main office and the Guide.

Parent University: Curriculum Presentations and Parent Education Forums

Throughout the year, parents are encouraged to participate in the various curriculum activities and presentations offered by RMCS staff, classrooms, or the Board of Directors. These sessions include specific components of the curriculum, Montessori philosophy, or informational forums. The purpose of these events is to educate parents about Montessori education and the design and mission of the school and to further develop a successful collaboration between home and school. Participation in these events also counts toward a family's volunteer hours.

Family and Emergency Information/Change of Authorized Pick Up

Family and Emergency Information forms are completed at the beginning of the school year. This form allows families to identify car pool drivers, care providers, or other adults such as parents of your child's friends that may routinely pick up your child throughout the school year. Adults designated on this form are authorized to pick up your child at dismissal. Students may be released to individuals named on their *Emergency Form* in the event of a school or family emergency. **If you would like your child to be picked up by someone other than those designated on the form, you must notify the office in writing before noon.** For your child's safety, notifications by phone and changes during

carline will not be accepted. Please drop off your written request to the office or email admin@rivermontessoricharter.org.

River Crew Childcare Program

Recognizing that families have needs for their children beyond the hours of the school day, RMCS provides a care program called *River Crew*. River Crew operates with the same philosophical basis as our Montessori classes. Children will engage in arts and crafts projects, planned and unstructured outdoor activities, and enjoy social time with other children.

Information regarding hours and schedules during non-school sessions are available on-line and in the office. It is necessary to register for River Crew. Enrollment forms may be found on our website.

- The program is administered by a California credentialed teacher who is an employee of the school.
- Child care is prepaid by the first of the month. Drop-in rates are invoiced monthly and are due immediately upon receipt.
- During scheduled bi-annual conferences, child care is available to all families during their conference meeting time at no extra charge.

Parents or care givers are required to sign children in and out from River Crew. This helps to ensure your child's safety and is necessary for administration to maintain accurate records.

Student Health

Medical Health Forms

At the beginning of each school year, a student health history form is required as part of new and continuing student registration. This form is used to update and document health information for all students including allergies, medication taken prior to and during school, and recent illnesses or medical conditions.

Dispensing Medication

Forms are available should a student require medicine to be dispensed during the school day. Parental and Physician consent are required for any medication (prescription or over the counter) dispensed at school. Medication must be in the original pharmacy container, labeled with the student's name, name of the medication, proper dosage and instructions, expiration date, and name of the prescribing physician. Parents are responsible for maintaining current prescriptions and current dosages. In addition, for those students with asthma or severe food allergies, a food allergy action plan and/or asthma action plan must be completed by the provider.

Guidelines for Returning to School After Illnesses

When assessing your child's readiness to return to school after an illness, please consider the following factors: the child's ability to participate fully in their work and activities throughout the school day; and the potential for infecting child's classmates and other students.

A physician's note is required to permit a child with a contagious infection or disease to return to

school. Please consult the following additional standards in making your assessment:

Bronchitis: on antibiotics for 24 hours or more

Chicken Pox: when lesions are crusted over (approximately one week)

Colds: no presence of yellow or green mucus, which may be related to an infection (may return if there is no elevated temperature, sore throat, or severe cough)

Conjunctivitis: when discharge from eyes has stopped; for bacterial conjunctivitis, usually 24 hours after starting antibiotic eye drops; see physician regarding viral infections

Diarrhea: free of diarrhea for 24 hours or more if caused by illness and not medication

Ear Infection: on antibiotics for 24 hours or more

Fever*: fever-free for at least 24 hours (readings generally lower in morning)

Rash: Please provide a physician's release for any atypical redness or rash

Strep Throat: after treatment with antibiotics for at least 24 hours

Vomiting: free from vomiting for 24 hours or more

**a fever is defined as having a temperature over 100 degrees*

Medical Emergencies

In case of a medical emergency, the most expedient procedure for the safety of the child will be followed, with immediate attempts to reach the parent(s)/guardian. Child will be transported to the emergency facilities at Petaluma Valley Hospital or the nearest hospital if the child is on a field trip. 911 will be called.

General Information

Accountability

Student performance will be assessed through:

California Mandated Standardized Tests

- CAASPP – California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (Levels 3-6)
- STAR Science Assessment (Level 5)
- PFT (Level 5)

Internal Assessments

A cornerstone of Montessori education is keen observation of each student as they pursue their work. RMCS teaching staff uses a series of internal assessments to monitor individual progress, including daily observation, record keeping, weekly individual learning contracts, work plans, and portfolios. These techniques are designed to provide a holistic assessment of the student's learning.

Both students and parents play central roles in assessment. As each student matures, they play an increasingly integral role in setting their own goals, assessing their own work, and tracking their own progress. Parents participate formally at least two times a year in conferences, with frequent teacher interaction encouraged.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are special occasions, and RMCS honors and celebrate these events with the Montessori Birthday celebration using a picture of the child for each year of life noting milestones, accomplishments, and growth. RMCS supports a common theme of acknowledgment, but each class may have different expressions to celebrate the day. You may choose to donate a book to the classroom in the name of your child or consult the teacher regarding other contributions or celebratory sugar free healthy snacks for the classroom. Please contact your classroom teacher a week before your child's birthday to arrange a birthday celebration for your child.

Board of Directors

River Montessori Charter School is governed by the Board of Directors. The Board has the ultimate responsibility for the success of the school. The Board sets policy for the school and hires a Director, who, in turn, hires the staff of the school. Working through the Director, the Board ensures that all laws and regulations are being followed and that day-to-day operation is consistent with the mission of the school. In consultation with the Director and Business Manager, the Board develops and approves the budget for the school.

The Board of Directors performs most of its work through committees. These committees consist of directors, parents, and members of the community. The Board has regular monthly meetings that are open to the public. The dates and times of all meetings are posted at the school, on the school website and in the school's e-mail newsletter. The Board discusses issues, sets policy, and conducts their business for anyone to observe; public comment is invited at the beginning of each meeting.

Directory

The RMCS directory is published and distributed annually by the River Montessori Foundation.

Calendar

The RMCS calendar is approved by the Board of Directors and is available on our webpage (www.rivermontessoricharter.org).

Cell Phones

Students are not allowed to use personal cell phones during school hours. They must remain completely turned off (not in silent mode), and secured in their backpacks or bags, until dismissal. Cell phones may not be out during class time or on the playground. Cell phones may not be in student's pockets at any time during the school day.

Classroom Volunteers

RMCS loves and whole heartedly welcomes its dedicated volunteers! In order to volunteer for RMCS, volunteers must pass a criminal background check with the California Department of Justice using Live Scan fingerprinting. Please obtain a Live Scan form with our school codes from the office. In addition, Ed Code requires that volunteers who are exposed to children on a frequent basis must also have tuberculosis (TB) clearance in order to help prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Volunteers assume all costs associated with the clearance. Please advise the office if this is a hardship. All classrooms must complete the normalization period before parent volunteers are invited in to help. For additional information please refer to the Volunteer Guidelines located on our website.

If you will be driving students other than your own for school related field trips or excursions, a driving clearance is required. A copy of your driver's license and insurance policy showing liability and coverage limits (not the insurance card) must be on file and current at the time of driving.

Computer Use

River Montessori offers limited access to the Internet from computers in the classrooms. The Internet is compatible with Montessori philosophy as a teaching resource because it allows students to become familiar with the global nature of information and to form links with children around the world. Access to the Internet is a privilege. All students are supported to practice computer etiquette and safety.

Conferences

Parent/Guide conferences are conducted twice a year before the Fall and Spring breaks. These conferences are very important to your child's academic success and it is expected that parents or guardians will attend both scheduled conferences.

Dress Code

Children need comfortable and appropriate clothing in order to participate fully in all classroom and outdoor activities. Clothing labeled with the child's name is helpful if articles are lost. Unclaimed lost articles will be kept until the end of each quarter in lost and found and then donated to charity.

Students will discuss classroom community responsibilities and standards during initial community meetings for what is respectful and this includes appropriate clothing. Guides will let a member of the class know if they think a child's dress is inappropriate. Elementary students generally feel that extremes of clothing are out of place. Clothing with messages and icons of pop culture distract from the work and peaceful culture of the school and classroom. Personal appearance, dress, or grooming must not disrupt the educational process or threaten the health or safety of any individual.

The following articles of clothing are not permitted:

- Commercial images or icons i.e. cartoon/television characters, etc.
- See-through or revealing shirts
- Backless, strapless or tank tops
- Halter tops or dresses
- Low-cut tops or dresses
- Bare-midriff tops
- Clothing that fails to conceal undergarments
- Shorts or skirts shorter than the middle finger when arms are held down by their sides and also not more than 5 inches above the kneecap when kneeling
- Pajamas or slippers
- Extremely tight or excessively oversized clothes

In addition:

- Pants or shorts must be worn above the hip bones
- Make up is not permitted. Nail polish may be worn.
- Headwear may be worn outside only
- Shoes should be solidly on the student's feet to help ensure safe participation in school activities. No flip flops, backless sandals, high heels, or shoes with wheels (hidden or exposed) or games are permitted. Tight open toed sandals are permitted.
- Any clothing, jewelry, or accessories that create safety or health concerns or cause or threaten to cause a disruption to the educational process are prohibited (long earrings, chain belts, etc.)

Emergency Preparedness

River will be conducting emergency drills throughout the school year so that students and staff are prepared in the event of an emergency (see the section on Safety below). Another important component of emergency preparedness at school is ensuring that each child has a small emergency kit on site, and that each classroom has a store of basic first aid and emergency supplies. We ask that you support your

child and the school in these efforts by sending the following items for your student. Most of these items can be purchased at the local drug store. These kits will be returned to you during the final week of the school year.

Write your child's name, date, and classroom CLEARLY on the outside of a one gallon zip-lock bag with a waterproof marker (one bag per child please). Then assemble the following items in the one gallon zip-lock bag.

1. An emergency card that includes *all* of your contact information (including email) plus a friend or relative living more than 50 miles from Petaluma
2. A plastic garbage bag that can double as a rain poncho
3. Food such as jerky, energy bars, or granola bars (4) (**nut and sesame free**)
4. A dust mask
5. Water or juice boxes (2)
6. An emergency solar blanket
7. Band aids
8. A family photo, small card game, or a comfort item that will fit into the bag and have meaning for your child
9. Whistle on a lanyard
10. A small flashlight with batteries

Field Trips and Going Out

The school will periodically conduct field trips to provide cultural, scientific, social, or educational experiences for the children. Notices and permission slips will be sent home in advance describing the objectives of the field trip, and requesting drivers, if needed.

Walking field trips may encompass local businesses or outings to nearby Schollenberger and Ellis Creek. A permission slip for walking field trips throughout the year is included in registration documents. Field trips requiring vehicle transportation require a separate permission slip for each outing.

Parents who volunteer to chaperone for field trips are expected to adhere to the Parent Guidelines for Trips outside the School (see Appendix).

“Going out” is a term unique to the Montessori approach to the elementary-aged child. It is a mini- field trip, usually four to six students who have a particular interest in a certain area. The children plan all the details and arrange the logistics of the trip. These excursions encourage individual interests and responsibility for learning. They provide research opportunities that are an integrated extension of the curriculum.

Garden

Children will be encouraged to work in classroom gardens, to plant, to water, and harvest their “crops”. From time to time, children may come home a little dirtier than usual—at RMCS gardening is considered hands-on science. Parents are encouraged to assist in the garden on weekends or evenings. Please contact your child's guide or the office for volunteer opportunities.

Libraries in Montessori Education

Montessori classrooms maintain their own libraries and can consequently offer great overview materials while specializing in the children's interests. Books serve as learning materials in the classroom and are used daily for research, language work, and enjoyment. We appreciate the many books families share to maintain exposure and inspiration. Families are encouraged to use the Sonoma County Public Library.

Lost and Found

Found items with no identification will be placed in the lost and found area. RMCS is not responsible for lost or damaged personal belongings. Items left in lost and found will be removed quarterly. It is recommended that all items are labeled before being brought to school.

Parent Participation

Achieving high academic outcomes, teaching values, and developing character cannot be accomplished without the close partnership of parents/guardians and families. For example, the role of parent/guardian is a paramount in developing civic values and ethical behavior in their children.

Consequently, we believe that children learn more when their families and schools work closely together.

RMCS encourages parents to be an integral part of their child's education by learning about the Montessori philosophy, observing the classrooms, and volunteering in the school. Families are encouraged to make a commitment of time and energy to support the school, thus utilizing their skills and talents. There are many different ways in which parents and families can participate: helping in the classroom, organizing and chaperoning field trips, serving on the Governing Board or school committees, organizing and directing after-school enrichment activities, and providing clerical assistance to the teachers and staff of the school.

RMCS encourages parents to fulfill a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service to the school each academic year. Parents with more than one child attending the school are expected to contribute an additional 20 hours of volunteer time for each additional child in attendance. However, no student will be removed from the program if the parent(s) fail to meet the target for volunteering. Policies address parent participation and a formal program of choice and options in volunteering and participation is included in registration and parent materials.

In addition to the active participation of families in RMCS, a secondary emphasis of the program is to provide parenting classes and support to help parents recognize the uniqueness of their child(ren) and to enhance their ability to parent and be their child's primary teacher. Parent education opportunities also enable parents to learn more about the Montessori philosophy and the classroom environments to serve their children in learning.

RMCS's Board of Directors and Director/Principal regularly consult with both parents and teachers regarding the school's educational programs. Methods of communication include, but are not limited to parent-teacher conferences, meetings and surveys.

Parents and community members are continuously involved in RMCS through opportunities to participate on the governing board of the school and through the Parent-Teacher-Student Partnership Group, which coordinates volunteers and parent led activities and facilitates communication between students, parents, and school faculty/administration.

Personal Property

The Montessori classroom is an enriched “prepared environment” of didactic materials that lead children toward abstraction of the concepts being studied. This beautiful apparatus engages the students to seek meaning in knowledge and provides learning at an individualized pace in a self-paced, supportive environment. Montessori does not use textbooks as its core curriculum and supplements the research and culturally based studies with appropriate resources.

Therefore, we do not encourage the child to bring articles to school that may distract from learning experiences. We welcome books or other objects that relate to the work of the classroom to continually maintain the inspiration and collaborative work of the group. Items related to culture, heritage, science, and history are appreciated. Toys, games and commercial products should not come to school.

All students need a variety of supplies at school. Many items, such as paper and writing implements, need to be replenished during the year. We appreciate the generous donations of our families to ensure that every classroom is well stocked for great learning and inspiration as it occurs.

River Montessori Foundation

The Foundation or “RMF” is the fundraising organization of River Montessori Charter School led by parents and larger community members. Its goal is to increase awareness of the Montessori Philosophy and support the Montessori community. The Foundation is the primary fundraiser for the school working to fund classroom assistants, music, physical education, and other activities.

Safety

Fire & Earthquake Drills: Randomly scheduled fire, earthquake, and emergency drills will be conducted in conjunction with the local emergency departments. Guides and students periodically review the drill procedures, which are posted in a visible location in each classroom.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

The school has an Emergency Plan and will coordinate its procedures with our local emergency responders.

Fire, Weapons, Illegal Substances, and Tobacco

Possession or use of fire, weapons of any kind, illegal substances, or alcohol or tobacco products within the school building, on school grounds, or on school buses by any individual, including school personnel, students, and parents, is prohibited at all times.

School Culture

One of the keys to success for children at RMCS is their ability to balance freedom with responsibility. Students take a role in their own learning that is increasingly active, self directed and independent as they get older. Children are supported to be responsible and respectful toward themselves, other people, and their environment, and to have a positive attitude toward their work.

RMCS is committed to teaching conflict resolution skills through modeling. Discipline is non-punitive, with an emphasis on protecting the civil rights of all students, and teaching positive communication skills and guiding students to work together to find peaceful resolution to conflicts. RMCS discipline practice is rooted in the belief that peace can be learned by example and modeled as an active, positive value.

Snacks and Lunch

RMCS is a nut-free and sesame-free school. There are children enrolled at RMCS with life-threatening allergies. Please support the school community in providing a safe and healthy environment for each and every child at RMCS and do not send snacks or lunch items to school containing nuts sesame seeds, or sesame products.

If you send a snack from home, please eliminate sweets such as candy and soda; instead, send healthy foods such as fresh fruit, cheese, crackers, and fruit juices. Each classroom has its own procedure and schedule for snacks.

River Montessori Charter School does not offer a hot lunch program and students must bring a lunch from home. As a school focused on care of the environments, we operate a no waste practice. We encourage the use of re-sealable containers for lunches. Soft lunch boxes with cooling packs are recommended. Students do not have access to a microwave or refrigeration for their lunches.

Special Events

Throughout the year, members of our school community come together for educational meetings, student performances, open houses, and fundraisers. These community-building gatherings afford an opportunity for families, faculty, staff, and children to get to know each other better and learn more about Montessori and RMCS.

During events on school grounds, participants must respect the classroom learning environments by not going into classrooms unless it is a part of the planned activity. Our teaching staff devotes considerable time and effort in preparing classroom environments, and honoring the integrity of classroom materials and structure is essential.

Parents are expected to provide firm and consistent supervision of their children during special events at the school. Children need parental support during events outside of regular school hours in understanding that school rules are still in place before and after school and on evenings and weekends.

Transportation Safety

Your cooperation is essential if we are to keep children safe in the parking lot and traffic lanes at River Montessori. **The speed limit on school grounds is 5 mph at all times.** Please refer to the parking

and traffic map posted on the school website for detailed information about parking and traffic flow patterns around the school.

Both gates on the school site will be closed during the school day. Full use of the playground and outdoor space around the school is essential to the health of our students! For this reason, the gates are opened during arrival and dismissal times only. If you need to enter the school building during the school day, please park in designated areas in front of the school and enter through the main office.

Parking on the East side of the building is reserved for Cypress School.

Please do not leave children unattended outside of the school building, in the parking lot, or at neighboring properties. Parking and traffic lanes are in close proximity to the school building, and children left unattended outside or in a parked car are not safe and require your supervision.

Visitors and Volunteers

Each time an adult visits the campus, they must check in at the office and get an identification badge. This is a mandatory requirement even for those parents who frequently work in the classrooms. Not only does this protect the safety of our children but it also allows us to identify who is on campus in the event of an emergency. Classroom volunteers must submit to Live Scan screening and have verification of a negative TB reading on file in the office.

Appendix

Code of Conduct

RMCS is a place which promotes values that are in keeping with the School's Mission. All students, parents, Guides, and staff have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school community. With this right comes the responsibility to be law-abiding citizens and to be accountable for actions that intimidate or put at risk the safety of others or oneself. This includes behavior that may be considered intentional anti-social. For the purpose of this Code of Conduct, "School Community" comprises the Director, Guides, staff, learning specialists, program directors, students, parents, guardians, step-parents, relatives, friends, supporters, caregivers, and invitees of the School who attend the School, or elsewhere, for the purpose of visiting, viewing, participating, supporting or being present for any official activity, whether learning or social, held by or for the benefit of the School and its students. The School Community Code of Conduct sets clear standards of behavior which are expected of members of the School Community. It specifies the consequences for any member of the School Community who does not comply with those standards of behavior, whether those persons are on the School's campus, in transit to or at another location for the purpose of any School-authorized events or activities.

Background

Dr. Maria Montessori integrated a code of conduct into her curriculum emphasizing grace and courtesy. Behavior in a Montessori classroom is no different in our homes or the social community; respect and care for each other, our environment and ourselves.

The following are the principles which provide the framework for the River Montessori Code of Conduct:

Honesty

Honesty in all matters is the basic expectation at River Montessori. Trust, an outgrowth of honesty, is essential to relationships that hold our community together. In the face of social pressures, truthfulness can sometimes be difficult to maintain; however, honesty is the quality that we value the most in our students.

Kindness

We expect that all River Montessori student will treat others with consideration both inside and outside of the classroom. Students' treatment of each other must be respectful at all times, whether or not an adult is present. River Montessori encourages students, faculty, and parents to accept, tolerate, and welcome differences.

Discipline

The Montessori approach to conduct is based on self-discipline. We understand that students test limits as they grow and that they will have challenges. Our discipline system is based on the philosophy that if a child is supported in learning self-awareness and honesty, his or her straightforwardness and ability to communicate is the first step in accepting responsibility for inappropriate behavior or mistakes.

Every student at River Montessori has the right to learn and thrive in a school atmosphere that is conducive to academic achievement and social growth. Any behavior by a student that threatens to disrupt the learning process or pose a danger to others is unacceptable. In the event that a student is unable to comply with classroom rules and appropriate behavior, the student will be liable for Breach of Conduct and subject to the actions outlined in this document.

With this in mind:

- All members of the School Community are to be treated with respect and dignity
- Insults, disrespect, and other hurtful acts disrupt learning and teaching in the School Community, and are a direct contradiction to the Schools Mission and Values. Members of the School Community have a responsibility to maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner
- Members of the School Community are expected to use non-violent means to resolve any conflict
- Responsible citizenship involves appropriate participation in the civic life of the School Community. Active and engaged members are aware of their rights but, more importantly, they accept responsibility for protecting their rights and the rights of others.

Parents play an important role in the education of their children and have a responsibility to support the efforts of School staff in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. Parents fulfill this responsibility when they:

- Show and active interest in their child's schoolwork and progress
- Communicate regularly with the School
- Help their child be neat, appropriately dressed and prepared for School
- Ensure that their child attends School regularly and on time
- Promptly report to the School any absence, late arrival or early departure
- Become familiar with the Family Handbook
- Encourage and assist their child to learn and practice healthy social skills
- Work with school staff in dealing with disciplinary issues

Standards of Behavior

As a minimum, all members of the School Community are expected to behave with respect, civility, and in the manner of a responsible citizen. This means, all School Community members must:

- Respect all applicable Federal and State laws
- Respect differences in people, their ideas, and opinions
- Respect the legal and moral rights of others
- Take appropriate measures to help those in needs
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity
- Treat one another with dignity and respect at all times, especially when there is a disagreement
- Respect persons who are in positions of authority
- Show proper care and regard for School property and the property of others
- Respect the needs of others to work in an environment of learning and teaching
- Respect and treat others fairly, regardless of their disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code, equal rights and opportunities in the educational institutions of the State

Scope

River Montessori's School Community Code of Conduct is intended to provide members of the School Community with guidelines for effective development of positive relationships within the School Community and, as expressed in the introduction, to assist in promoting the values that are in keeping with the School's Mission.

This document is then essentially a guide for all members of the School Community about the standards of behavior which are acceptable in the School environment or when attending any official, learning or social

function or activity of or relating to the School or in any location at which the School is represented. The School Community Code of Conduct is a guide for acceptable standards of behavior that extend beyond the immediate family to include guardians, step-parents, relatives, friends, supporters, and caregivers of students of the School.

General Conduct

School Community members are expected to:

- Support the Director, Guides, and schools staff in the development of a learning community based upon the Montessori Pedagogy
- Work with School teaching staff to deal promptly with areas of concern
- Acknowledge and affirm success in individual and School achievement
- Acknowledge that the Director has the ultimate responsibility to implement these policies
- Treat all members of School Community with respect and courtesy
- Abide by the School's policy

Physical Safety

In particular, all School Community members must not:

- Use any objects (whether as a weapon or otherwise) to threaten or intimidate any other person; or cause injury to any person by the use of any object
- Be in possession of, or under the influence of, or provide others with, alcohol or illegal drugs. The exception(s) is when, in the normal course of festivities, alcohol is made available to members or guests of the School community

All School Community members must:

- Not cause, inflict or encourage other to verbally abuse, threaten or inflict bodily harm on any other person by any physical aggression
- Seek staff assistance, if necessary, to resolve conflict peacefully

Responsibility for Other Community Members

Any parent or School Community member who invites a relative, friend, support, caregiver, or other person to be present at any official learning or social activity held by or for the benefit of the School and its students must at all times be responsible for that person and ensure that they act at all times in a manner consistent with this Code of Conduct.

Breach of the Code of Conduct

The consequences to a member of the School Community for breaching this Code of Conduct will be as determined at the Director's discretion. The consequences include any one or more of the following:

- The School may ban any member of the School Community from attending any school sponsored extra-curricular activity or social/fundraising event
- The School may ban any member of the School Community from within on the School ground in general
- The School may direct that any parent may only communicate with members of the teaching staff through a nominated School representative
- In the case of extreme or prolonged breach of the Code of Conduct by a parent, the School may terminate the enrollment of the child of that parent
- The School may take such other steps as it may in its reasonable discretion determine appropriate according to the nature of the breach

Right of Appeal

Please refer to the Grievance Policy in the

Appendix.

Evaluation

This Policy will be reviewed as necessary. Last Update: 8/15/12

Appendix