



PARENT HANDBOOK 2018-2019

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our community, new and returning families. Each child is special and unique to us. We hope you won't lose sight of that sentiment as you read through this year's Parent Handbook. The information in this handbook is all directed to one goal: for all of us to know how we work for the best interests of children.

The information contained within this Parent Handbook reflects the policies and procedures of Montessori Community School. The experience of the faculty and continued input from all employees and parents aids the ongoing assessment of these policies. Our intent is to create a safe, comfortable, professional and educationally excellent environment for the benefit of the children who attend our school.

All faculty employed at MCS share a commitment to offer sound, creative, and valuable education to the students enrolled at MCS. Each employee is expected to contribute his/her professional skills to that part of the school that he/she supports, from the classroom to the office. The faculty is expected to offer constructive input into the many functions of the school and to willingly share enthusiasm for the school's goals with parents. With total faculty involvement, the school can provide the very best learning opportunities to children.

MISSION STATEMENT

Passed by the Board of Trustees in the 2014 Strategic Plan

We are a vibrant Montessori community where together, through our dynamic and relevant curriculum, we guide students toward self-discovery and the realization of their unique contributions to the world.

VISION STATEMENT

Passed by the Board of Trustees in the 2014 Strategic Plan

We imagine a community that works in harmony to educate the whole child in an environment that embraces compassion, care and respect for every being.

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Chapter 1: School Organization

OVERVIEW OF MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

Our guiding philosophy is based upon the scientific research of Dr. Maria Montessori, who opened the first Children's House in 1907. She believed in the student's ability to grow and construct a healthy identity, saying: *Education depends on a belief in the power of the student and on a certainty that the student has within himself the capacity to develop into a being that is far superior to us.*

Within each class, there will be many different activities happening at once. You may see students working independently, conferring with one another, working in small groups, smiling, laughing, reading, receiving a lesson from a teacher, constructing, thinking, and reflecting.

Prepared Environment

Our classrooms are specifically designed by Montessori teachers to meet the needs of the students. Furniture is scaled to the size of the students, and materials are displayed on open shelves that are easily accessible and inviting to the students. The materials are arranged to capture a student's interest and entice him/her to work with them. The environment is designed to integrate life and learning.

Independence

We design our rooms to foster independence. Students learn how to help themselves in their classrooms. They select their work from the shelves, work on it alone or with others, and return it to its place. They put away their own belongings. When students are hungry, they choose to eat snack. They clean up after themselves as well. Independence is nurtured and fostered by the design of the classroom, the guidance of the teachers, and the mentoring of other students. It is an ongoing learning process.

Freedom and Responsibility

Freedom is very important to the nurturing of independence. However, freedom is also one of the most misunderstood aspects of Montessori. Many people assume that when we describe freedom, we mean that students can do whatever they wish, but real freedom means making choices within limits. Freedom has a counterpart – responsibility. They are inseparable; they work in concert with one another. Freedom to choose one's own work is a hallmark of Montessori education. Students in our classes are accorded more freedom of choice as they demonstrate higher degrees of responsibility. Responsible behavior includes respect for classroom materials and using them for their intended purpose, the ability to concentrate and be engaged in work, and to work within reasonable time frames on an activity or follow-up from a lesson.

A student has freedom of movement within our classes, as long as he is able to move responsibly. In fact, there is a lot of movement within our classrooms. Students move around when they are ready to choose new work, when they are finished with some work, when they want to talk with someone, or when they go to the bathroom or get a drink. In our environment, these are choices that the students make, not choices that the teachers make.

Role of the Teacher

In a Montessori environment the adults are not the focus of the classroom, the students are. In fact, sometimes it may be difficult to spot the teachers when you first walk into a classroom, because they are often sitting on the floor with students.

Montessori teachers give students lessons with the materials, but the students actually learn through their own work. The student teaches himself/herself. The adult's role is to observe each student's needs and then link the student with the appropriate materials of the prepared environment when the student is ready.

The teacher is a trained observer who notices developmental milestones and when a student is ready for another presentation. They are always ready to guide a student in a new direction.

All MCS faculty are expected to uphold and abide by the American Montessori Society Code of Ethics. Faculty and staff serve as models for student behavior and as representatives of MCS and its Code of Ethics to the community at large.

MCS is committed to providing an environment of respect to all members of its community, irrespective of religion, race, physical abilities, personal beliefs, sexual orientation, cultural background, or learning style. All members of the faculty are expected to uphold this commitment through their behavior, language and general courtesies in their interactions with parents, students, visitors, and co-workers.

The Work

Each day, each class strives to have an uninterrupted work cycle. Dr. Montessori observed that students need long periods of time in which to make choices and work on activities. She discovered that three hours is the optimum amount of time for development of focus and deep concentration.

HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION

Founded in 1980 by a group of parents from the Montessori Children's House of Chapel Hill, Montessori Community School has been operating at its current location since 1984. Today, MCS's 13-acre campus accommodates students over four levels: Toddler (18 months-3); Primary (3-K/Elder)); Lower Elementary (Grades 1-3); Upper Elementary (Grades 4-6); and Adolescent (Grades 7-8). MCS is one of only five schools in North Carolina to be fully accredited by the American Montessori Society (AMS), with its most recent re-accreditation taking place in the Fall of 2016.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Montessori Community School is a not-for-profit organization governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board is charged with furthering the school's mission and ensuring the school's success through systematic long-term planning, policy-making, fiduciary oversight, fundraising leadership, and yearly evaluation of the Head of School's performance. Membership is open to all parents through the election process. Meetings are open to parents and staff, except for executive sessions.

The by-laws state that the board is responsible for the following:

- holding the mission of MCS in trust
- ensuring that the operation of MCS is consistent with the Montessori philosophy and is in the best interest of its students, teachers, and parents
- promoting MCS within the community

- maintaining an up-to-date medium and long-range strategic plan for MCS
- ensuring the Board, Head of School, and administration carry out the direction of the strategic plan
- maintaining a connection with the Parent Teacher Organization
- reviewing and passing an annual budget; monitoring finances
- recruiting and terminating the Head of School
- evaluating and determining the salary of the Head of School on an annual basis
- operating in a manner consistent with the by-laws and established policies defined for trustees serving on the boards of independent schools
- exercising the role of legal fiduciaries (including risk management and oversight of compliance with local, state and federal laws and regulations)
- overseeing the school's long-range and annual fundraising plans and implementing the annual campaign

Officers

Cecily Peterson	President
Shannon Leslie	Vice President
Harry Park	Secretary
Jennifer Credle	Treasurer

Ex-Officio

Tim Daniel, Head of School
 Rochelle Hayes, Faculty Representative
 Corinna Page, PTO Representative

Members At-Large

Gary Furda	Trustee
Amanda Ingraham	Trustee
Lauren Smith-Hong	Trustee
Hoty Taylor	Trustee
Gabriela Valdivia	Trustee

To Whom Do I Talk?

As a general rule, always start by going directly to the person most immediately involved:

- For questions about anything in a classroom, go to your student's teacher. If your initial conversation with a teacher does not resolve the matter, you may follow up by talking to the Program Directors.
- See the toddler, elementary or adolescent Program Director for questions about overall curriculum, scheduling, parent education, or procedures at each level.
- For billing questions, consult the business office.
- For admissions questions, contact the Admissions Director.
- For questions about PTO events or activities, go to your room parent or a PTO officer.

If you are unsure of whom to approach, you may ask the Office Manager, a Program Director, or the Head of School, who will be happy to direct you to the best person.

FUNDRAISING

Montessori Community School raises funds in the following ways:

- Annual Fund
- Capital Campaign
- Parent Teacher Organization sponsored activities
- Endowment

The Annual Fund

- The Annual Fund offers parents, faculty, and staff a tax-deductible opportunity to contribute to school operational costs, thereby reducing tuition increases. The success of the Annual Fund continues to be invigorating for the entire school.
- The Annual Fund drive commences each fall. Personal contacts are made with parents, grandparents, and special friends through the mail and face-to-face discussion to secure gifts. The Annual Fund plays a significant role in the budget for MCS: it provides a succinct, tax-deductible giving opportunity for all MCS families.

MCS Development Committee

Under the domain of the Board of Trustees, the development committee coordinates the capital and annual campaigns, along with grant and endowment requests to foundations and corporations. Every gift dollar and volunteer hour committed to MCS helps build an ever-strengthening community for our students. Parent and family commitment makes MCS what it is: a great space for expanding minds. Thank you in advance for your support to MCS.

Capital Campaigns

The school's 2001-2009 *Campaign to Complete the Community* raised close to \$3 million for the expansion and improvement of our facilities, including construction of the 600 building, acquisition of the Greene Property, and Spark Center. The financial commitment of parents, grandparents, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends was crucial to the Campaign's success.

The Endowment at MCS

An Endowment fund has been held and invested by the Triangle Community Foundation of North Carolina since 2004. The fund continues to grow as families choose to give to the MCS endowment.

Other Community Service and Fundraising Efforts

MCS supports community service projects or fundraisers that are student initiated and student led. We do not place any solicitation information in parent mailboxes.

THE PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is a strong and active parent-led organization at Montessori Community School that provides a wide variety of community building and service efforts to improve the overall experience of families at our school. Membership in the PTO consists of all parents or guardians of students currently enrolled in MCS. The PTO serves the community in several ways: planning events to help build community on campus, planning fundraising events to raise money for specific projects such as campus enhancements, and providing community support for MCS families.

Please join the monthly PTO meetings (check the online calendar for dates and times). If you are unable to attend the meetings, there are many other ways to participate in the PTO. Please contact any PTO officer for more details.

Harry Park, President
Shannon Leslie, Treasurer
Elizabeth Sharp, Secretary

SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

- *Montessori Matters* is our email newsletter. This communication will highlight Montessori practices and student experiences across all levels.
- Classroom news and events will be posted monthly.
- Additional communications will be sent out via email as needed.

VOLUNTEERS

We encourage all MCS families to be actively involved in the life of our school community. MCS has been very fortunate to have supportive parents that have made a great difference in the life of the school.

CAMPUS LIMITATIONS

- No pets are allowed on campus.
- There is no admittance on campus after school hours.
- Skateboards and rollerblades are prohibited on campus.
- MCS is a smoke free facility.
- MCS is a weapon free facility
- All doors will remain locked at all times.

Playground Use After School

Elementary students may not use the toddler or primary playgrounds. Toddler and primary students may not play on the elementary play structures. After 3:30 p.m., the playgrounds will be used by the after school programs.

No one may play on any playground when school is not in session.

Supervision of Students at Events

MCS and the PTO hold several after school parents/child events i.e. International Night, Food Truck Thursdays, and The Chili Cook Off. Parents are expected to supervise their children at these events. It is expected that the playground and campus safety rules will be practiced as well.

Chapter 2: Admissions & Financial Matters

ADMISSIONS AND PLACEMENT

Statement of Non-Discrimination

MCS admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, family structure or sexual orientation in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship programs and athletic and other school administered programs.

Admissions Considerations

MCS welcomes students (ages 18 months - 8th grade) from all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, family structures or sexual orientation. Students with special needs are welcome when those needs can be met in a mixed-age Montessori setting with reasonable accommodations. The school strives to maintain a balance of ages, genders, and learning styles in each classroom. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend a tour and observe at the school before submitting an application.

Re-enrollment and Placements

Re-enrollment contracts will be sent in January and must be returned by their due date in order to secure placement. Placements of students are solely at the discretion of the school and may be subject to change.

TUITION AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

Tuition is divided into 10 payments. A non-refundable deposit of one-tenth (1/10) of the total tuition is due upon enrollment or re-enrollment for each student and constitutes the final tuition payment. The remaining nine tuition payments are made the first of each month, June through February. Re-enrollment contracts will not be accepted if a family is not current with prior payments according to their payment schedule. If two or more students from the same family are enrolled concurrently, full tuition is payable for the older student with a 10% sibling discount per student for all siblings.

ACH tuition payments are due no later than the 5th or the 20th of the month. Interest will be charged at the rate of 1% per month for late payments. Students of families whose accounts become more than sixty (60) days past due may lose their place in the school and the ability to re-enroll the following year.

Parents may opt to make tuition payments in two lump sums. The first payment is due on June 1st after a 10% deposit has been made. Final payment is due on December 1st.

Students are accepted for the entire year or for the remainder of the school year if enrolled after the first day of school. If a student is withdrawn or required to withdraw for any reason, the family is responsible for paying all the tuition and deposits for the full academic year.

All financial matters are transacted through the business office.

FINANCIAL AID

MCS is committed to offering financial assistance based on demonstrated need. Significant funds are allocated and awarded annually. Tuition Aid Data Services (TADS) applications may be accessed from the MCS website under the admissions tab, by clicking on the TADS icon. Forms may also be obtained from the front office. Assistance is offered for one year only and is based upon financial need. In order to be awarded financial aid, families must be currently enrolled or have received an enrollment contract from MCS for the coming year. There is an application fee charged by TADS.

TADS returns to MCS a “report of financial need” for each applicant. This information is used to determine financial aid awards. Parents may write directly to the Head of School, who also serves as Chair of the Financial Aid Committee, to explain unusual circumstances. All financial aid requests and information submitted to the Head of School are kept completely confidential. Awards will be made without regard to race, sex, creed or place of national origin. Recipients will be notified in writing of the dollar amount of the award and the term of the award. In order to apply for financial aid, all tuition payments must be current.

APPLICATION AND ACCEPTANCE FEES

All application and acceptance fees are non-refundable.

WITHDRAWAL

MCS reserves the right to deny, cancel, sever, and/or suspend a student’s enrollment if deemed in the best interest of the student or the school. Withdrawal from school does not release a family from the obligation to pay the full year’s tuition.

TRANSFER OF RECORDS

MCS needs a written request from a parent to transfer records to another school. Copies of student’s recent progress reports, standardized test results, and health and immunization forms will be sent to the school. If you have questions about the transfer of records, please see the Admissions Director. Records will not be released until all financial obligations are current.

REQUIRED FORMS

MCS is required by N.C. state regulations to keep particular information about each student on file. **A student may not be admitted to the classroom until all forms are complete and on file in the office.**

Forms Checklist

- Application and enrollment forms

- Certified copy of birth certificate
- Medical form and immunization records, updated yearly as needed
- One emergency form per student with complete information
- New student information form
- Financial contracts
- Signed copy of discipline policy
- Action plan completed by a physician for students with a debilitating allergy, asthma, diabetes, seizures, and or any other serious medical condition
- Medicine and medication permission forms for students with serious medical conditions (i.e. Epi-Pens, Albuterol inhaler, etc.)

STUDENT FILES AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Official records, files, and data directly related to their children are available to parents. Such records are confidential and may not be released or made available to persons other than parents or students (over 18) without the written consent of such parents or students. Exceptions to these rules include other professional personnel of the school, authorized representatives of State Education Departments or the NC Department of Social Service by court order, and/or for subpoena. These files may not be removed from the office, nor copied except as stated above. No transfers of records may be given until full tuition is made.

NON-SCHEDULED SCHOOL DAYS SIGN-UP

Non-scheduled school day care is offered for our toddler, primary, and elementary students during conference days. Families sign up for non-scheduled school day care slots in advance. MCS may offer winter break and spring break non-scheduled school day care. Non-scheduled school day sign-up is not offered during teacher workdays. Parents must complete the non-scheduled school day care form and submit it with payment in order to enroll.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

Summer programs are offered to all students who have reached the age of 18 months. Elementary and Primary Summer Camp is open to MCS and non-MCS students. Enrollment for summer programs is on a first-come, first-served basis. Tuition for summer camp is due in advance.

Chapter 3: Daily Operations

MCS WEBSITE/PARENT PORTAL

The MCS website at www.mcsdurham.org is a major vehicle for communication for current as well as prospective parent. There are links to the faculty/staff biographies, tuition, financial aid, and much more.

MCS employs *TADS Educate*, suite of products is comprised of several School Management System (SMS) platforms that provide access and features for parents, teachers, and administrators for managing data throughout the entire school. Information is shared across one user record for each category, allowing you to see a “big picture” view of one individual who might be a student, parent, teacher, classroom or administrator, while still providing separation as needed to distinguish between that person’s different roles. Within this central system, personalized permissions allow you to determine who can access each feature, ensuring that every member of our school community can view exactly the information they need.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The MCS Facebook page is located at www.facebook.com/mcsdurham. Our Twitter account is twitter.com/mcsdurham. Our social media presence is both for our current parents to stay connected with our activities, and for the general public to learn more about what goes on at MCS. Please follow us on Twitter and invite friends and relatives to our Facebook page.

COMMUNICATING WITH TEACHERS

At the start of the school year, each classroom will have a formal parent meeting on how to best communicate with your teachers. Please remember, during the school day teachers are occupied with the students and will not be available for a conversation. Following are ways to communicate with teachers:

At the Classroom Door

Teachers and parents often connect during drop-off or pick-up. Please keep in mind, a conversation of more than a sentence or two may not be possible at these times. Parents with a question or concern should make an appointment to meet with the teacher.

By Phone – 919-493-8541

Calls to teachers are appropriate before and after school during the following times:

- Toddler teacher 8:00 – 8:15 a.m. and 3:15 – 3:30 p.m.
- Primary teachers 8:00 – 8:15 a.m. and 3:15 – 3:30 p.m.
- Elementary teachers 8:00 – 8:15 a.m. and 3:15 – 3:30 p.m.
- Adolescent teachers 8:00 – 8:15 a.m. and 3:30 – 3:45 p.m.

Parents may leave messages for teachers at any time during the day on their voicemail by calling MCS directly. Our commitment to students is to return phone calls and emails within 24 hours.

By Email

All email addresses are in the form of first initial + last name@mcsdurham.org. Teachers prefer email correspondence for routine notifications. Sensitive topics about students should be done in a meeting rather than via email. Teacher emails are located on the school's website, in the summer letter, and in the Family Directory.

PARKING LOT SAFETY

Please follow these important guidelines for safety:

- Students must remain with an adult in the parking lot.
- Use sidewalks and crosswalks.
- Park only in designated parking spaces.
- Never leave a child unattended in a car.
- Close the gate when entering or leaving campus.
- Watch for pedestrians at all times while driving.
- The speed limit on campus is 5 mph.
- Please follow the directions of MCS staff during drop-off.

ARRIVAL

Before School Care

All students enrolled in before school care may arrive no earlier than 7:30 a.m. All toddler and primary students enrolled in the before school care must be accompanied to the classroom and signed in. Elementary students may sign in themselves. Students in this program will be accompanied by an adult to their classrooms at 8:15 a.m.

Classroom Arrival Time

Students should arrive for class between 8:15 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. Toddler and primary students need to be escorted to their classroom. Elementary students should be dropped off at the front gate and will sign in themselves. Students and parents are asked not to use the administrative building as a pathway to class.

There will be no teacher supervision of students before 8:15 a.m. unless they are enrolled in the early morning program. Teachers will open their doors to receive students at 8:15 a.m.

Tardiness

The work cycle begins at 8:30 a.m. Students are encouraged to arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of class to allow time to settle into the classroom and prepare for their day. A student is considered tardy if not in the classroom at 8:30 a.m.

In the event a student is late, parents need to come to the office with the student to receive an admittance to class slip from the office manager. Parents must then walk their child to the classroom. No student may walk themselves to their classroom after 8:30. The teachers are not able to greet late students appropriately once class has started.

Tardy Intervention Protocol

- after 6 tardies in a semester, you will receive a letter from the classroom teacher
- after 8 tardies, you will receive a phone call from your teacher to help seek some solutions to prevent further tardiness
- after 10 tardies, you will be invited in for a conference with the teachers and Program Director to discuss and resolve this matter

DISMISSALS AND LATE PICK-UPS

Classroom Dismissal Times

Half Day Toddler	11:30 a.m.
Full Day Toddler	3:00 p.m.
Toddler Afterschool Care	5:45 p.m.
Half Day Primary	11:45 a.m.
Full Day Primary	3:00 p.m.
Primary Afterschool Care	5:45 p.m.
Elementary	3:15 p.m.
Elementary Afterschool Care	5:45 p.m.
Adolescent	3:30 p.m.
Adolescent Study Hall	5:45 p.m.

Signing Out at Dismissal

Each toddler, primary and elementary student must be signed out from his or her classroom by a parent or approved adult. Approved adults are listed on the student's emergency card. Parents need to notify the school in writing of any change in the adults on the approved list. In emergency situations and with the permission of an administrator, parents may email the office manager or fax an alternative name to the school. A phone call will not be acceptable for making such arrangements.

Upper Elementary and Adolescent students are able to safely travel the campus unaccompanied during typical arrival and dismissal times. In order to facilitate their afternoon pickup, families may give their Upper Elementary student permission to meet outside a Lower Elementary sibling's classroom shortly after 3:15. The Upper Elementary student will be signed out at the Lower Elementary door on the sign-out sheet.

Upper Elementary and Adolescent students may walk or ride a bicycle home with written parent permission in writing in advance.

Early Pick-Up

In the event a student needs to leave school at a time other than a regular dismissal time, parents need to come to the office and speak with the office manager who will then notify the classroom that a student needs to leave early. Parents must then walk to their student's classroom to receive their student. No student may walk themselves to the office at a time other than dismissal. Teachers are not able to take students to the office for an early dismissal.

Late Pick-Up

In the case of delay, parents must contact the school so that staff can reassure your child. Except in extenuating circumstances as determined by the Head of School, late pick-ups will result in a late fee charge per student for each instance, on the following schedule:

Late by:

10 minutes: \$10

15 minutes: \$20

20 minutes: \$30

25 minutes: \$40

30 minutes: \$50

ELEMENTARY AND ADOLESCENT ABSENTEE POLICY

Students are expected to be in school when classes are in session, unless they are sick, have a doctor's appointment, or have other excused absences. Families are requested to notify the school in advance of any absences from school. If a student misses 10 days of class, families will be required to conference with the student's teachers. After 15 absences, families will be required to meet with the Program Director to discuss strategies to minimize future absences.

LOST AND FOUND

Parents are encouraged to regularly check the lost and found bin at the front of the school. Items found on campus will be placed in this bin. Unclaimed lost and found items will be donated to charity periodically during the school year.

PARENT EDUCATION

Parent Orientation

Orientation is open to all caretakers including parents, nannies, and other relatives. This meeting will introduce you to the MCS community and important details regarding school policies. Volunteer hours may be applied for this meeting.

Classroom Parent Information Meetings

At the beginning of each school year, each classroom will hold a parent information meeting regarding updates and changes to the program. This is a good opportunity to meet other members of the classroom community.

Parent Education Meetings

Throughout the school year MCS will provide various parent education events on aspects of the curriculum, child development, Montessori philosophy, and much more. We encourage all parents to attend these important meetings. Child care is often offered.

Children's Mornings

Children's Mornings are twice each school year. This is an opportunity for parents to observe and participate in the classroom experience.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent/teacher conferences are offered three times a year; dates are noted on the school calendar. If you would like a conference at any other time, please contact your student's teacher for an appointment. Childcare is available during conference days; drop-in childcare is also available during your conference time.

FIELD TRIPS

Attendance on field trips is required, except in cases of illness or family emergency. Students who do not attend field trips will be marked absent. There will be no childcare provided for students not attending a field trip.

If private cars are used, all students less than eight years of age and less than 80 pounds in weight must be properly secured in a weight appropriate student passenger restraint system. Students younger than five or less than 80 pounds may not ride in seats with airbags. Children under the age of thirteen may not ride in the front seat. Each field trip driver must provide the school with proof of auto insurance, a driver's license, and complete a criminal record check.

When the school bus is used, all students will use the seat belts or safety harnesses.

No adult participating in the field trip (teachers, presenters, docents, drivers, parents, etc.) may be alone with any student (except his or her own child) at any time during the field trip.

MEALS

Lunch

If your student stays at school through lunch, send a nutritious lunch in a bag or box labeled with your child's name. When planning its contents, please keep in mind that primary and toddler classrooms are not able to heat lunches; elementary and adolescent students may use the microwaves. Primary and Toddler lunches are refrigerated. Elementary and adolescent lunches are not refrigerated so an ice-pack should be included when needed. Please do not include candy, gum, soda, or other items that list sugar or high fructose corn syrup as the first or second ingredient. Please try to pack food in reusable containers with tight-fitting lids. Uneaten food will be returned home so parents may monitor eating habits. Water will be served at lunch and snack times.

If your student has a food allergy please inform your student's teacher. Be sure to include this information on your student's emergency card as well. Please follow the allergy protocol under the section entitled "required forms."

Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch is offered Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays beginning early in September. Participation is voluntary.

Snacks

Toddler and primary parents provide snack for the entire class on a rotating basis. For safety reasons, we require that parents not prepare snack at home; snack must come from a store or commercial bakery. Parents may cook treats for special occasions such as birthdays or holidays. Elementary and adolescent students bring their own daily snack.

Limitations on snacks based on the food sensitivities of students in that room are communicated at the start of the year. Good nutrition is important to everyone, especially to developing and growing students. We request that you avoid foods with large (or any) amounts of sugar (where sugar is among the first or second ingredients listed by weight), salt, preservatives, emulsifiers, thickeners, hydrogenated oils (found in some peanut butter, salad dressings, etc.), artificial colorings or flavorings. The following is a list of suggested foods for your student or group snack:

- fresh fruit such as bananas, apples, pears, seedless grapes, melons, peaches
- fresh vegetables such as cucumber, cherry tomatoes, green pepper, broccoli
- store bakery goods such as banana bread, whole-wheat crackers
- miscellaneous items such as natural peanut butter, natural cheese, natural yogurt
- for safety reasons in our toddler and primary programs, no popcorn or nuts are allowed

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

MCS is an independent, non-denominational, and non-sectarian school. We acknowledge the diversity of cultures and religions around the world. Celebrating heritage and traditions can be a special time for students. We encourage parents and students to share their family traditions within the school community. MCS will study religious and cultural events from a historical perspective.

OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

Montessori teachers are trained observers of students. They observe how students use materials, noting degrees of proficiency and understandings of underlying concepts. Teachers maintain records of each student's attendance, academic growth, and social growth and development. Teachers provide feedback to parents by means of written progress reports twice a year and parent teacher conferences.

At the beginning of each school year, elementary and adolescent teachers complete in-house assessments. Standardized tests are given annually for third through eighth grade students. Results provide feedback to teachers regarding the student's strengths and challenges, including test-taking skills. Standardized test results are confidential; they are shared privately with the parents of third through eighth grade students, but not with the students themselves.

If a student is observed to be struggling to make adequate progress, teachers take the following steps: repeating, modifying, or using alternative works or lessons; asking a colleague or administrator to observe and suggest strategies. If these informal steps focused on improving the environment do not result in improvement, or if observations suggest a continued pattern of difficulties, parents are called and asked to help problem-solve in partnership with the teachers

Working together, various accommodations or modifications may be tried. Sometimes teachers and parents will ask an outside specialist to observe and make recommendations. Teachers may also ask for an educational evaluation. The Program Directors and Head of School are available to answer any questions parents may have about this process.

SCHOOL ATTIRE

The responsibility for the attire and grooming of a student rests primarily with the student and their parents or guardians. The responsibility of the school is to ensure a productive learning environment.

- Students may dress comfortably and are permitted to wear clothing that allows for self-expression.
- Students must wear clothing including both a top and bottom or the equivalent and shoes. Hats and other headwear must not interfere with the line of sight to any student or staff.
- Students must have access to suitable clothing for all scheduled school activities.
- Students must not wear clothing that portrays hateful or disrespectful themes.

In the event that a student's attire does not comply with school policy, the teacher may reach out to the parents. Consistent enforcement of the school attire involves support and active involvement by our parents. Any sincere disagreements or concerns about appropriate attire will be handled in a conversation with teachers, administrators and parents or guardians involved.

Chapter 4: Health and Safety

MEDICINE

We request that all medication be administered at home when possible. If medication needs to be administered at school, parents must fill out a medicine authorization form (available in the front office or online) and leave the medication with an administrator in the front office. Office staff will deliver medications and instructions to each classroom teacher. The medicine authorization form must be completed and signed by the parent. **On the “dates to be given” line, do not put “as needed”; a specific instruction is required such as “immediately after outbreak.”**

Teachers will only administer the dosage as indicated on the medicine authorization form and on the prescription itself. Prescription medication shall be in the original container labeled with the students name, date, directions, and physician’s name. **Students are not allowed to carry medicine (including Chapstick, cough drops, vitamins, etc.) with them or in their lunch boxes and/or backpacks.** MCS does not apply any medication, ointment, sprays or creams to a wound. Elementary students may use their own lotions such as sunscreen, bug repellent, etc., not sprays.

HEALTH POLICY

Parents must keep children home for the following reasons:

- oral fever of 100° or fever within the last 24 hours, without the help of a fever- reducing medication
- vomiting within the last 24 hours
- diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- excessive discharge from nose or eyes
- not well enough to play outside
- any type of contagious condition such as streptococcal infection (strep throat), conjunctivitis (pink eye), head lice or nits, chicken pox, measles, mumps, rubella, impetigo, etc.

While MCS reserves the right to send a student home for any type of suspected medical condition, a student will be sent home for the following reasons:

- oral fever of 100°
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- excessive discharge from nose or eyes
- not well enough to play outside
- any type of contagious condition such as streptococcal infection (strep throat), conjunctivitis (pink eye), head lice or nits, chicken pox, measles, mumps, rubella, impetigo, etc.

Students may return to school once they are fever-free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication. Students leaving school because of a contagious condition such as head lice or nits may return to school 24 hours after

successful treatment and if they are lice and nit free. Students leaving school because of streptococcal infection or impetigo may return only after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment. Students leaving school because of conjunctivitis may return 24 hours after successful treatment and if they are no longer contagious.

INCIDENT REPORTS

Staff will complete an incident report when a student is injured at school. Staff will give the completed report form to both parents and their Program Director. All incident reports must be signed by the parent and returned to the front office.

STUDENT ABUSE POLICY

Any member of the MCS faculty or staff who suspects that a student has been abused or neglected must notify the Head of School immediately. By North Carolina law, the school is required to report the case to the Department of Social Services or to the police department, as appropriate. All policies and procedures relating to student abuse and neglect pertain to situations at school and off campus. No staff member is ever exempt, either from behavior policies regarding student-adult interactions, or from reporting requirements and procedures which govern the safety and security of students.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the event that a student becomes ill or is injured while at school, the following procedures will be followed:

- MCS will dial 911 if deemed necessary.
- The staff will call the parents, and seek direction for treatment.
- If the parents cannot be reached, the school will then contact the designated emergency contact;

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

The MCS emergency flip chart contains procedures to use when contacting emergency personnel in the event of emergencies including transporting a sick or injured student to the hospital, severe weather conditions, fires, lockdowns, evacuations and more. All staff receive first aid and CPR training.

Parents should know that in general:

- The first person on the scene of an accident calls 911 and notifies the office;
- Administrative staff will alert the proper agencies;
- An administrator will remain with the student in an emergency situation until the parent or emergency contact arrives;
- In the case of school evacuation, MCS will go to its emergency evacuation site. MCS will notify families through our emergency alert notification system.

POLICY FOR STUDENTS WITH ALLERGIES

Families of students with allergies needing accommodations must provide the school with written documentation from their physician. A written action plan from the physician is also required in the event the child experiences an allergic reaction. The school will follow the action plan and alert the family in the event of an emergency. MCS will work with families to create a safe environment for every child.

Accommodations may vary depending on the type and severity of the allergy. Should an allergic reaction occur and result in the child being picked up from school, that child will be monitored by an Administrative staff member until picked up.

Should the student be given a dose of epinephrine due to anaphylaxis, an ambulance will be called and appropriate actions will be taken.

OUTSIDE PLAY ALERTS

When outside temperatures are extreme, students will not spend extended periods of time outdoors. In the event of red ozone alerts, students will remain indoors during the hours of the alert. If thunder is heard or lightning is seen, staff will evacuate outdoor areas and return students to their classrooms or emergency shelter.

WEATHER ALERT

In the case of a severe weather warning, administration will notify classrooms to take proper precautions. An outside weather siren will notify staff, students and parents who are outside when to seek immediate shelter.

FIRE AND TORNADO DRILLS

MCS is required by the state to conduct drills on a monthly basis.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

MCS operates independently of the public school systems regarding inclement weather. Typically, decisions to close MCS are made by the Head of School. Notifications will be made through our emergency alert system, posted on the MCS website, and on local television stations.

If conditions become treacherous when school is in session, we will close school at our discretion. An alert from the school will be sent with the closing information.

Parents may still obtain MCS information in the following ways:

- Call the school and listen to the recorded message.
- Check our school website.

REQUIRED ASBESTOS STATEMENT

The E.P.A. requires that we annually notify all families and employees that MCS is asbestos free. We have a management plan in place to monitor any hazardous substances, of which we currently have none. This plan is kept in the Head of School's office.

CAMPUS SAFETY: PARENTS, VISITORS, AND VOLUNTEERS

To provide a safe and consistent environment for our students, we require that all parents, visitors, and volunteers enter and exit the campus through the front office, and receive a visitor's badge. Staff members who observe parents, visitor or volunteer without a badge will remind the visitor to return to the office to obtain one. All classroom doors will remain locked at all times.

For safety reasons, no adult at MCS may be alone with a student except his or her own child at any time. A student needing individual assistance such as bathroom, health emergency, etc. will require a second adult or another student to accompany him or her.

All volunteers/chaperones must submit a criminal history check and a release of information form. These forms are located in the front office and on the school website. A criminal history check for all volunteers must be completed and reviewed prior to entering campus.

Chapter 5: Discipline

PHILOSOPHY

Montessori Community School supports the development of well-rounded, articulate, and caring students. Our teachers prepare the classrooms and outdoor environments so that each student can feel safe, secure and respected. They model grace and courtesy in their own daily interactions. They give active lessons in peace education, offering all students a safe place in which to build habits of self-confidence, self-discipline and internal control.

At MCS we promote respect for each person's personal boundaries and actively teach that an individual has the right to have his or her boundaries respected by others.

When students enter MCS, it is assumed that both they and their parents agree to support the rules of the school as outlined in this Parent Handbook. In situations of repeated violations of school rules, or if at any time after reasonable interventions have been attempted a student's influence is considered by administration to be harmful or undesirable, the school reserves the right to require withdrawal.

In keeping with the Montessori philosophy MCS will observe the following guidelines at all times:

- Staff prepares the environment for the discipline that will gradually and indirectly be achieved. The environment itself is ordered to nurture self-discipline in each student. When the student first becomes intensely absorbed in his work, he/she has taken the initial step toward genuine self-discipline.
- Each staff member will respect the dignity of the individual student.
- A soft, well-modulated voice will be used at all times.
- The Montessori student learns how to learn through freedom, exploration, and self-discovery. This method of learning encourages self-confidence and inner discipline.
- A student is not forced to share an individual work with another student. Generosity develops from within as a student matures and gains self-confidence. In time, sharing comes naturally when sharing is appropriate or necessary.
- Students will never be ridiculed, scolded, or embarrassed. Whenever possible students are encouraged to work out their own solutions.
- The student may express feelings in appropriate ways. All students must know that they will never be allowed to hurt another person's body or feelings.
- All staff encourages the student to use materials respectfully in a way that will not disturb the activities of others.
- If a staff member finds that none of the above techniques work, he/she should ask the assistance of the Program Director, so that appropriate resources may be called on to determine and implement the best course of action for the student and MCS.

We:

DO support and encourage students.

DO reason and set limits for students.

DO model appropriate behavior for students.

DO modify the classroom environment to attempt to prevent problems before they occur.

DO listen to students.
DO provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior of the students.
DO provide students with natural and logical consequences of their behavior.
DO treat students as people and respect their needs, desires and feelings.
DO ignore minor misbehaviors.
DO explain things to students on their level.
DO stay consistent in our behavior management program.
DO use short supervised periods of “time-out.”

We:

DO NOT spank, shake, bite, pinch, pull, slap or otherwise physically punish the students.
DO NOT make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks about, use profanity or otherwise verbally abuse the students.
DO NOT shame or punish the students when bathroom accidents occur.
DO NOT deny food or rest as punishment.
DO NOT relate discipline to eating, resting or sleeping.
DO NOT leave the students alone, unattended or without supervision.
DO NOT place the students in locked rooms, closets or boxes as punishments.
DO NOT allow discipline of students by students.
DO NOT criticize, make fun of or otherwise belittle students’ parents, families or ethnic groups.

THE STOP RULE

- When a student’s boundaries have been crossed, it is up to the student to say the word “stop” to the other person.
- Once someone has been asked to stop, they must stop. If they do not, then the student who asked them to stop should go and get the help of an adult.
- The adult gathers the students who are involved and provides support while the first student states his or her desire for the behavior to stop. It is up to the other student to listen.
- Many times the student will spontaneously offer an apology, although this is not mandatory. If there has been intentional aggression, the teacher will follow the zero tolerance behavior policies.

EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIORS

The following are the developmentally-based behavior expectations which most students at each age level should be able to manage.

Expected Toddler Behaviors:

- able to function in the class without the presence of a parent
- can respond to gentle teacher direction or redirection even when angry or distressed

Expected Primary Behaviors:

- approach a task with a reasonable willingness to complete it

- communicate needs and ideas
- accept and comply when redirected from a task or activity without the need for excessive adult supervision or other adult intervention
- participate in group lessons without disturbing others
- apply and respond to the “stop rule” in times of distress or anger

Expected Elementary and Adolescent Behaviors:

- initiate and complete a work cycle with relative independence
- concentrate in an environment with moderate distractions
- participate cooperatively in peer group work and in lessons without disturbing others
- have respect for the classroom environment and for classmates
- demonstrate self-control in difficult situations
- apply and respond to the “stop rule” in times of distress or anger
- avoid violence towards people, things or animals
- respond to redirection
- use appropriate language and behavior in the presence of peers and younger students
- discuss situations with involved parties when a student has been offended

Student Needs Action Plan (SNAP)

A SNAP will be initiated for a student exhibiting one or more repeated zero tolerance behaviors whereby removal and dismissal does not sufficiently influence a change in behavior. The teaching team and Program Director will outline expected behaviors, a timetable, and consequences. A SNAP may include a professional evaluation. The Head of School reviews all SNAPs. If the behavior is not followed or adhered to, MCS reserves the right to dismiss the student.

Types of Intervention

The following interventions include but are not limited to:

- disruptive unsafe behaviors
- learning differences
- excessive tardiness/absentees
- social/emotional behaviors
- academic behaviors

Behaviors Requiring Intervention

Disruptive Behaviors

Disruptions are inappropriate behaviors that are of a nature that are not harmful or dangerous to others. Disruptions may be one or more of the following: damage to property, disregard of a safety rule, repeated inappropriate silliness, repeated shouting, overly rough play, unsportsmanlike behavior, incidental disrespect of adults or peers, not complying with the “stop rule”, incidental non-compliance with teacher direction or redirection, hiding, or throwing tantrums.

Interventions for Disruptive Behaviors:

When disruptions occur, teachers practice interventions that allow students to self-correct in a supportive environment. Interventions may include one or more of the following: verbal or physical redirection to another activity or location, providing appropriate language or modeling appropriate behavior, limitations of freedom of movement (assigned work space, proximity to teacher, etc.), informal parent feedback, behavior contract (older students). If a student is physically out of control it may be necessary to hold the student until composure is

regained or remove the student to a quiet location.

Unsafe Behaviors

Unsafe Behaviors are behaviors which cause or pose a danger or harm to one or others which are interpreted by an adult as impulsive rather than intentional. In these cases a student may not be aware of the potential consequences of his or her action. Unsafe behaviors for toddler and primary students may include biting, kicking, slapping, and running away. Unsafe behaviors for elementary and adolescents may include but not limited to tripping, pushing, hitting, etc.

Interventions for Unsafe Behaviors will include one or more of the following, depending on circumstances: immediate removal of the student from the situation, creating a safe environment, discussion with the student about the real or potential consequences of the action, dismissal from school, facilitated discussion with any student harmed by the action, and parent notification of injury.

Intimidation / Bullying (elementary and adolescent students only)

MCS addresses behaviors which are targeted to a student in such a way as to cause that individual distress or which exhibit a pattern of teasing or bullying an individual, including name calling, spreading rumors, exclusion, intimidation, verbal threats or hate speech, or repeated physical or verbal disrespect of the student.

Intervention for intimidation/bullying

In cases where such a pattern of behavior becomes suspected or apparent, the teaching team will inform the Program Director, who will initiate a plan of action to gather information, meet with parents of any involved students, and write a SNAP to address restrictions and/or consequences, observations and record-keeping, communications and a timeline. The Program Director will oversee the process to resolution.

Zero Tolerance Behaviors

Zero tolerance behaviors are behaviors which are intended to cause harm. Zero tolerance behaviors include intentional physical violence, bringing a weapon (including pocket knife) to school, sexually explicit behavior, and/or threatening physical violence or harm.

Interventions for zero tolerance behaviors (elementary and adolescent students only) will include immediate removal of the student from the presence of other students, immediate parental notification, and early dismissal from school. In all cases, MCS will hold a parent teacher conference. A Student Needs Action Plan (SNAP) may be generated if the behavior continues.

Chapter 6: Toddler Program

TODDLER ENTRY LEVEL PREREQUISITES

The following are the minimum basic readiness skills for entry into the toddler program. Matriculation decisions are made in consultation between the classroom teachers and the Program Director(s).

Developmental Readiness

- is walking
- is 18 months old

MONTESSORI TODDLER EDUCATION

The toddler classroom, like all Montessori environments, is an orderly arrangement of learning materials that invite the student to learn at his or her own rate. Central to the Montessori philosophy is a deep respect for oneself, for others, and for the world in which we live. In order to promote the self-esteem from which this respect grows, many opportunities are provided for the toddlers to be self-sufficient and successful in the classroom. Dr. Montessori said, “The most important period of life is not of university studies, but the first one, the period from birth to the age of six.” MCS strives to create an environment that provides security, guidance, and affection for the toddler student.

The toddler community consists of 12 to 14 students per classroom that begin the school year between 18 months and three years. There is one Montessori infant/toddler certified teacher and one assistant or intern on each room. The daily schedule includes time for individual work, one or two group times for singing, reading, music and movement, outside time, and a snack. During the individual work time, the student is free to choose from the materials or “work” on the shelves. Work includes language enrichment, eye-hand coordination, art, and practical life (such as plant watering, mopping and table washing).

SCHOOL ATTIRE AT THE TODDLER LEVEL

- All students in a toddler class need at least one complete change of clothes. The teacher will inform you of a need for additional clothing.
- Be sure to label all items with your child’s name.
- School clothing should be suited to the weather.
- School clothing should be designed for independent toileting work. For example, elastic waistbands work well for those students who are not yet able to button, snap and/or zipper. Onesies and overalls are difficult for students manage independently.
- Students need indoor shoes/slippers into which they will change when they are indoors. A design that supports student independence in removing and putting shoes on is recommended.

- Students needs outdoor shoes that are safe, with a tread, for outdoor play. A design that supports student independence in removing and putting shoes on is recommended.

NAPS

All students under the age of five who stay at MCS past noon are required to rest at school. Students should bring linens to school in a bag with a zipper. Label the following items: a crib-size sheet, a small blanket, and perhaps a small cuddly toy. Bring the nap bag to school every Monday and please take it home every Friday to launder the linens.

Chapter 7: Primary Program

PRIMARY ENTRY LEVEL PREREQUISITES

The following are the minimum basic readiness skills for entry into the primary program. Matriculation decisions are made in consultation between the classroom teachers and the Program Director(s).

- wears underpants and can independently manage toileting needs
- is able to dress him/herself
- is able to use receptive and responsive verbal communication
- is able to follow 2 to 3 step directions
- is reasonably healthy
- is able to spend several hours a day interacting with small and large groups of children
- is able to ask for what he or she needs
- is able to take turns
- is able to pay attention for short periods of time to adult-directed tasks

MONTESSORI PRIMARY EDUCATION

The primary program is a multi-age, three-year cycle designed to meet the needs and recognize the special gifts of students between the ages of three and six years old. The classroom layout is based on the principle that students absorb their environment, language, and culture in a way that is unique to these ages. The rooms in the primary program are arranged to include a variety of both academic and cultural material. Students are free to move about the classroom and relate to others in conversation and play.

Concrete materials are designed to be appealing and to reveal principles and concepts through manipulation. These materials reinforce the student's tendency to count, compare, compute, and measure as the student begins a progression from the concrete experience to abstraction. Enriched vocabulary, poetry, prose reading, and word play are all part of the environment. Through the use of manipulative materials, students learn reading, writing, language, mathematics, geography, science, history, music, and art. Primary students receive lessons and are free to choose activities within the prepared environment guided by their own particular interests and periods of readiness.

Students can be seen actively engaged in the environment and making independent work choices based on their developmental needs. The furniture and equipment are lightweight and scaled to the student. The materials are arranged carefully on low shelves within easy reach of the students. Teachers guide the student's activity within the environment.

PRIMARY ORIENTATION

In August, the school schedules a parent information meeting to discuss classroom routines and expectations. If a student starts later in the year, the teacher will arrange a meeting with the student and the parents.

NAPS

All students under the age of five who stay at MCS past noon are required to rest at school. Students should bring linens to school in a bag with a zipper. Label the following items: a crib-size sheet, a small blanket, and perhaps a small cuddly toy. Bring the nap bag to school every Monday and please take it home every Friday to launder the linens.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Primary parents should say goodbye and pick up at the door of their student's classroom. Parents should not enter the classroom. Should parents need to drop something off for a student, a lunch box, snack, or forgotten nap bag for example, please check the item in at the office and rest assured that it will be delivered to the appropriate classroom. Teachers may stop parents at the door rather than inviting them in. The goal is not to keep parents out, or say that they are unwelcome, but rather, the goal is to help parents to understand the importance of the child's classroom environment and to respect it by allowing the space to belong to the child with the least amount of distraction and interruption.

PRIMARY PLAYGROUND RULES

General Rules

- no rough play
- no weapon play
- place sticks over the fence
- always wear shoes or boots
- walk to and from the playground
- no climbing on or pulling on fences
- dig in sandboxes and designated areas only
- no throwing sand, water, rocks, sticks, mulch or toys
- show care and respect for plants and animals
- water fountains are for drinking only
- no playing in the swales

Toys

- treat toys with care and respect – no throwing or kicking toys during playground time
- sandbox and water toys stay in the sandbox and off of the climbing structures
- Toys will be returned to the appropriate place at the end of each play period.

Slides

- go down slide on bottom, feet first
- do not climb up the slide

Swings

- one person per swing
- both hands on chains
- sit on bottom
- no standing, twisting, or swinging side to side; swing straight
- walk far around the swing's drop zone
- exit swings from the front
- no jumping from swings

Play Structure

- no running on play structures
- no toys on play structures
- no jumping off of the structures

Climbing Wall

- no jumping from the top of the wall

Picnic Tables

- do not stand on benches or sit on top of tables

SCHOOL ATTIRE AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

- All students in a primary class need at least one complete change of clothes. The teacher will inform you of a need for additional clothing.
- Be sure to label all items with your child's name.
- School clothing should be suited to the weather.
- School clothing should be suited to working on the floor as well as at tables.
- School clothing should be designed for independent toileting work. For example, elastic waistbands work well for those students who are not yet able to button, snap and/or zipper.
- Students need indoor shoes/slippers into which they will change when they are indoors. A design that supports student independence and ease in removing and putting shoes on is recommended.
- Students need outdoor shoes that are safe, with a tread, for outdoor play. A design that supports student independence and ease in removing and putting shoes on is recommended.

For Elders:

Because elder students begin participating in PE, the following safety-based attire guidelines are required for a child to participate in PE.

- Students need to have *good athletic footwear* for P.E. classes. Many children keep an extra pair of athletic shoes in their cubbies. Athletic shoes must be closed toed and have tread. Crocs, flip flops and boots are unsafe during PE classes.
- It is recommended that students not wear dresses or skirts on PE days as they tend to get tangled around legs during activities
- Students with long hair need to have it pulled out of their eyes on PE days.

Chapter 8: Elementary Program

LOWER ELEMENTARY ENTRY LEVEL PREREQUISITES

The following are the minimum basic readiness skills for entry into the lower elementary program. Matriculation decisions are made in consultation between the classroom teachers and the Program Director.

Developmental Readiness

- exhibits indications of growing physical and mental maturation
- engages cooperatively in peer group work
- reasoning mind wants to know how and why
- consistently shows respect for the classroom environment and for the classroom rules
- able to consistently use the stop rule in times of anger
- understands that actions may involve consequences
- follow multi-step directions
- responds appropriately to teacher re-direction
- able to initiate and complete a work cycle independently
- developed fine and gross motor control
- developing concentration in the midst of moderate distraction
- showing signs of reasoning skills
- demonstrates age appropriate self-control and patience
- demonstrates sufficient cutting skills
- able to dress him/herself, including using a button, zipper and buckle independently
- able to manage his/her lunch items and other belongings

Skill-Based Readiness

Language

- has been exposed to cursive
- exposure to word families and able to build 3-5 letter phonetic words
- ability to communicate ideas and form a story
- has had exposure to reading some sight words
- reads phonetic text
- correct formation of lower case cursive letters and numbers
- phonemic awareness or phonemic mastery
- ability to identify beginning and ending sounds
- introduction to consonant vowel consonant (cvc) words
- ability to transpose shapes, words, and letters onto paper

Math

- has a strong one-to-one correspondence
- recognizes and writes numbers to 100
- understands the basic concepts of addition and subtraction
- identify two and three dimensional shapes

Geography

- familiar with the names of all seven continents
- knows the six basic land and water forms
- trace, color, and label a world map
- familiar with this continent and can identify own country and state

Concept of Time

- knows the days of the week and months of the year
- has been exposed to the calendar

SCHOOL ATTIRE AT THE LOWER ELEMENTARY LEVEL

- A change of clothes is always recommended due to the occasional bathroom accident, fall on a muddy field, etc.
- Rain gear and boots are needed for play in the mud and/or puddles.
- School clothing should be suited to working on the floor as well as at tables.
- Students need to have good athletic footwear for P.E. classes. Many children keep an extra pair of athletic shoes in their cubbies. Athletic shoes must be closed toed and have tread. Crocs, flip flops and boots are unsafe during PE classes.
- It is recommended that students not wear dresses or skirts on PE days as they tend to get tangled around legs or limit movement (depending on their length) during activities
- Students with long hair need to have it pulled out of their eyes on PE days.

UPPER ELEMENTARY ENTRY LEVEL PREREQUISITES

The following are the minimum basic readiness skills for entry into the upper elementary program. Matriculation decisions are made in consultation between the classroom teachers and the Program Director.

Developmental Readiness

- able to plan, initiate, and complete work within the parameters of a weekly work plan
- demonstrates readiness for large project work (i.e., work that lasts anywhere from a few days to several weeks)
- able to participate in group discussions
- cooperates with peers and adults
- able to sleep away from home

Academic Readiness

- reads for pleasure and information
- able to write legibly, using both upper and lower case letters
- able to construct a paragraph
- able to write a story with a beginning, middle, and end
- able to conduct beginning research, answer research questions in complete sentences, and use classroom reference material
- has begun development of note taking skills

- has memorized math facts of all four operations
- can perform addition and subtraction abstractly with exchanges
- has an understanding of multiplication and long division with multiple multipliers and divisors respectively

SCHOOL ATTIRE AT THE UPPER ELEMENTARY LEVEL

- School clothing should be suited to working on the floor as well as at tables.
- Students need to have *good athletic footwear* for P.E. classes. Many children keep an extra pair of athletic shoes in their cubbies. Athletic shoes must be closed toed and have tread. Crocs, flip flops and boots are unsafe during PE classes.
- It is expected that students will dress appropriately for PE classes that are highly physical in nature (running, jumping, climbing, scooting, etc.) It is recommended that students not wear dresses or skirts on PE days as they tend to get tangled around legs during activities.
- Students with long hair need to have it pulled out of their eyes on PE days.
- In the upper elementary, field trips and the Washington DC trip require business casual attire (sneakers are okay in DC due to the amount of walking).

MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The elementary program is based on developmental needs common to six- to twelve-year- old students and is also highly individualized. Elementary students are driven most strongly by an innate curiosity directed at a much larger world, which includes their universe, culture and community. Their explorations are aided by their powers of reason and imagination. The Montessori elementary classroom meets this stage of student development with a curriculum that is large in scope, open-ended, and creative. Students extend their knowledge of fundamental concepts by developing their own projects, both large and small.

The elementary curriculum - Dr. Montessori called it a “Cosmic Education” - emphasizes the interconnectedness of the many things students observe and learn. Connections excite the student and stimulate the imagination. Above all, students are not dependent on teachers to give them all the information; they learn how to be resourceful and obtain information independently.

The Montessori elementary curriculum helps students appreciate the wonder and beauty of the natural world and also the historic accomplishments of mankind. From this, they can develop a sense of their own place in the universe, their individual responsibility, and their potential to enhance both the natural and cultural environments in which they live. Their studies of nature and man emphasize the tremendous diversity that abounds in the world that is nonetheless united by certain profound principles and relationships. This framework not only offers a key to understanding complex subjects, but it leads to an attitude of tolerance and respect.

Mathematics and Geometry

During the elementary years, a sequence of lessons bring students naturally and gradually to the point where they understand an abstract mathematical operation. The structure of the decimal system, the operations of addition,

subtraction, multiplication, and division and other key concepts follow this same pattern. Students keep track of their own progress in memorizing the basic arithmetic facts. By using the Montessori math material, students are able to experience at an early age many concepts traditionally taught much later, such as squaring, cubing, and algebra.

The Montessori geometry materials offer students satisfying, open-ended fields of exploration. These materials and lessons permit students to discover important principles and relationships.

Language

The elementary students, exercising their powers of reasoning and curiosity, learn the history of writing. Grammar, etymology, word study (synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, affixes, compound words, word families, etc.), sentence analysis, and parts of speech are a fundamental part of the language curriculum.

Reading, writing and spelling skills develop, not only through language activities, but through the work in all subjects. Writing develops in connection with explorations, research, and experiments. Creative writing allows students to acquire very early in life a valuable tool for self-expression.

Having acquired both the mechanics of language and a sense of its history and spirit, students can explore poetry, prose, drama, dialogue, discussion, debate, and research.

History

We use stories to spark the students' interest in all areas. The history of life, both before and after the arrival of humankind, is inextricably linked to other subjects such as geology, geography, and biology. Thus it might be said that history is the framework for all fields of study in Montessori education. Even in mathematics and language, students hear stories of the great discoveries and inventions throughout history.

Natural history materials, such as the timeline of life, show students life forms and their development. Human history is presented from a perspective of the fundamental human needs (food, shelter, protection, transportation, and spiritual expression) and the variety of ways in which different peoples meet them. This framework guides their research and reveals both the unique attributes of different cultures and the universality of all.

Geography

Studies begin with theories on the origin of the universe, in which basic principles of physical science are revealed, and then proceed to examine the forces that have acted over the ages to shape the world. Students explore volcanism, the work of water, wind, and air, and the basic physical properties of matter. Through simple demonstrations, field activities, and experiments, students learn on their own. The relationships of earth, sun, seasons, zones of climate, etc., are also revealed as part of the geography work. Students are initially given the "big picture" - answers to the fundamental why's and how's - and then acquire specific concepts.

Biology

At MCS, students devote a good deal of attention to the great variety of life forms. The emphasis is on understanding plant and animal behavior and physiology. A key to this study is the basic needs of plants and animals - nutrition, defense, reproduction, movement, etc. This framework makes physiology interesting to the student, which then gives rise to investigating biology in more depth.

The essence of the Montessori elementary experience is to create an environment that allows students to exercise their strengths and interests. An adult guides and inspires students to use a rich environment to encourage self-directed learning.

Senior Explorations

6th year students participate in a research project entitled Senior Explorations. Each student will complete a year-long research project. Students choose a topic of personal interest and are guided through a multi-disciplinary research process that includes note-taking and writing skills, editing, word-processing, field research, an art component and public speaking. In the spring the students and two teachers travel to Washington, D.C. to explore aspects of their topics and demonstrate their knowledge of their subject to their peers.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Open Circle

MCS offers elementary students Open Circle, a program designed for students to promote their social skills and emotional well-being. The curriculum is skill-building, helping students recognize and manage emotions, develop empathy, create positive relationships and problem solve. It is also community-building, helping schools develop communities where students feel safe, cared for and engaged in learning.

Adolescent students continue their social and emotional learning through the practice of Mindfulness. This practice provides a framework for students to nurture self-awareness, self-esteem, self-discipline, and grace and courtesy in their lives.

Our Whole Lives (OWL)

MCS offers 5th and 7th year students Our Whole Lives (OWL), a comprehensive curriculum designed to help students understand their changing bodies and emotions as they enter puberty and become adolescents. The 5th years have classes geared towards learning about and discussing the physical and emotional changes of puberty. They examine topics such as values and sexuality, communication, and decision-making. Sessions include a take-home activity for parents and children to do together.

In the Adolescent Community, 7th year students continue the discussion in more depth while still at an age-appropriate level. Each 8th year student will care for a baby simulator called “Baby Think It Over” for 3 days and 3 nights. This simulation is intended to expose students to the challenges involved in caring for a newborn baby while juggling other commitments and activities.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology is incorporated into the classroom in the Upper Elementary and Adolescent environments. The goal is to familiarize students with the integration of technology as part of the learning process, a way to present data, and a way to communicate. Students will learn basic keyboarding skills in order to type reports efficiently. They are encouraged to use both printed materials and internet resources when engaging in research projects. Students will learn to use available software to assist with presentations, such as Power Point presentations, Excel spreadsheets, graphs and data tables, and word documents for outlining and report writing. In the adolescent community, students use computers to submit work online, check grades, and communicate with their teachers.

FIELD TRIPS

Montessori fosters independence and experiential learning. At each level, primary through adolescence, students participate in trips off campus. Attendance on all trips is expected, except in cases of illness or family emergency. At the lower elementary level, students explore the local environment and go on day trips to support the classroom curriculum. Third year students culminate their lower elementary experience with an overnight field trip. Upper Elementary students continue to enjoy day trips to support their learning, and have two three-day, two-night field trips each Fall and Spring. Students are also encouraged to organize “going-out” experiences to support individual research. Sixth year students culminate the upper elementary experience with an additional three-day, two-night field trip in conjunction with their year-long research papers. Adolescents continue the tradition of “going-out” field trips, and take three overnight trips each year. The graduating students culminate their experience at MCS with a solo experience, camping alone in the wilderness for one night. This experience provides an opportunity for self-reflection before graduating from MCS.

STANDARDIZED TESTS

Every year MCS conducts a week long, nationally standardized test with 3rd through 8th-year students in the Spring. Students will take a practice test and learn the practical life lessons of filling in bubbles, making careful choices, managing time, etc., in the week before the test administration.

Parents should mark these testing days on their calendars, as it is most comforting for students to take the test with their group on the scheduled days, rather than have to take make up tests in a separate environment.

If a child needs special accommodations for testing due to a learning difference, MCS requires documentation of these needs. As stated in the ERB testing guidelines, “accommodations, such as untimed testing or a reader or scribe, can be granted to students who receive testing allowances under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or have another documented disability.” In general, evaluations should be repeated every 2 to 3 years to provide an update on the individual’s progress in treatment and determine whether treatment should be modified. In some cases, a re-evaluation may be unnecessary, especially if the condition that prompted the first evaluation has resolved and there are no further concerns and no testing accommodations needed. MCS will be happy to provide accommodations for any student who has a documented diagnosis, testing within 3 years and recommendation from a therapist or psycho-educational evaluation.

ELEMENTARY ORIENTATION

Before school starts, all elementary classrooms have an event for students and parents to visit their new classes and meet their new classmates. All elementary students start together on the first day of school.

Near the start of the school year, a parent information meeting is held for all elementary families. Parents are introduced to “a day in the life” of an elementary student, the curriculum, and classroom expectations. In the late spring of their elder year, primary students visit their new elementary classroom to meet their teachers and new classmates.

Twice a year in the fall and spring, parents are invited to attend Children's Morning where students demonstrate classroom work and use of materials.

Elementary teachers also offer parent education meetings about various aspects of the curriculum. Parents who make a point of attending these meetings develop a strong partnership with their classroom teachers and are better able to discuss school with their children.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTARY OFFERINGS

MCS offers a variety of after-school activities to students every year. These will vary from year to year. Detailed information and sign-up opportunities will be available when school opens; classes start in September. MCS reserves the right to change offerings as needed from year to year based on student interest.

ELEMENTARY PLAYGROUND AND GYM RULES

Playground

- wear appropriate shoes such as tennis shoes on the play structure
- monkey bars are for swinging only
- students must be within the sight of a supervising adult
- respect the Stop Rule
- make sure that no one is on the slide before applying sand on the ramp slide
- students should only go down standing on the ramp slide
- no balls, jump ropes, and other equipment on the play structure
- students should keep tag and other similar games off the play structure
- no pushing and jumping off the play structure
- no playing in the swales

Gym

- do not use any of the equipment until you have obtained permission from an adult
- for safety, use equipment properly

Chapter 9: Adolescent Program

ADOLESCENT PROGRAM ENTRY PREREQUISITES

Student, as developing personalities:

- have self-motivation, the ability to concentrate, and a willingness to take on challenges both social and academic
- are in the practice of managing their time, have support of their parents, and ability to work in small or large groups with grace and courtesy

Areas of skill acquisition:

Mathematics

- basic operations and arithmetic plus memorization of basic arithmetic facts
- ability to do arithmetic with whole numbers, decimals, fractions
- exposure to plots, graphs, measurement, ratio and proportion

Research

- ability to take notes
- outlining, bibliography composition, and solid paragraph writing
- topic sentences, body, closure, and summarizing

Oral Presentation

- has been exposed to instruction in ordering and form, visuals, and articulation

Reading

- strong comprehension skills
- discussion or seminar practice
- ability to record the main idea

Writing

- skills as above including experience with a large-scale research paper
- understanding of punctuation, structure of sentences and composition

Miscellaneous

- keyboarding skills
- internet and cloud-based curriculum management
- experience with at least 60 minutes of homework (30 minutes of reading plus additional regular work.)

MISSION

The MCS Adolescent Community provides age appropriate academic, physical, and social challenges. It is an authentic community experience wherein each student is called upon to contribute large and small acts of leadership. This environment allows for reflection, creative self-expression, debate, and hands-on connection to the land, the surrounding community and the world. The MCS Adolescent Community extends the Montessori Model, allowing for better preparedness for high school and beyond.

OBJECTIVES

A successful adolescent community is a place where all students are actively engaged across a wide range of areas each receiving the support they deserve from observant knowledgeable guides. To create such a community, students receive:

- **Community Experience**
Students should feel like they are leaving a safe, comfortable home with their families and arriving in a safe, comfortable home-like learning environment at school. This type of environment is vital during the transitional time of early adolescence.
- **Differentiated Instruction**
Montessori education seeks to identify and support every student's individual learning style. The MCS adolescent program will attempt to meet the needs of each learner in the manner that is most effective for the student and community.
- **Academic, Physical, and Social Challenges**
Students will be called upon to make choices within limits, contribute large and small acts of leadership, be accountable to the community, and push the limits of what is presently possible in their own minds.
- **Travel and Study**
At the beginning of the school year, students embark on a three day community building experience with an outdoor focus. This is a time when our mindfulness curriculum is introduced and the norms of our community are established. In the Spring, the intention of our traveling adventures shift to an academic focus, as the students either engage in an eight day Odyssey trip through the American South or participate in a week long Peace Study experience, in the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico. Each of these trips have a significant research component, the results of which are presented to the MCS community upon their return. Lastly in early June, our 8th year students are offered a Solo trip, which serves as a rite of passage experience and a culmination of one's time at MCS. Preparation for this last great work, stems from our mindfulness practice, providing students an opportunity to reflect on where they have been and where they might go in the world.

- **Micro-Economy**

All students in the adolescent community are responsible for running Cool Beans Café, a small business venture. Students take turns preparing and selling coffee from 7:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. Students also keep records, plan and execute promotions and advertising, and have a weekly business meeting.

- **Environmental Stewardship**

Environments will include access to constructed wetland areas, surrounding woods, and our community vegetable garden. All of these these outdoor environments provide a basis for our studies in the area of science. Additionally our vegetable garden is a source of delicious, student grown produce that is used in our bi-weekly community meals.

MONTESSORI EDUCATION AS PREPARATION FOR LIFE

Dr. Maria Montessori observed that adolescents needed:

- physical activity coupled with time set aside for relaxation and contemplation
- meaningful work plus opportunities to contribute to their communities
- community building experiences encompassing reliable and close relationships with peers and at least one adult
- opportunities to express themselves creatively as new interests, thoughts, and emotions unfold
- to acquire flexible and inquiring habits of mind
- to develop a personal vision – to begin to think about their lives as future adults.

One of the consistent themes in Montessori education at all levels is the idea that education is preparation for life. This is why MCS will create an authentic community experience for adolescents. Therefore, the program is built on a foundation of carefully experiences which challenge students academically, physically and socially. These experiences challenge students academically, physically, and socially, so that each student is grounded and has time for reflection, creative problem solving, self-expression, critical thinking, and hands-on connections to nature, the surrounding community, and the world.

It is through this process that adolescents begin the work of what it means to be an adult. Skills like adaptability and collaboration, self-evaluation and improvement, as well as the ability to delay gratification are critical to an adult's effective functioning in today's world.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

The MCS adolescent community will use North Carolina State and National Standards as a beginning point for study. A choice to enroll your student in the MCS Adolescent Community, therefore, is a choice that will preserve your student's opportunity to attend any public high school. Since preparation for real life is a cornerstone of a Montessori education, no matter what future educational plans you or your student have, your student will be well prepared for the academic rigors of any suitable high school setting.

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE MCS ADOLESCENT PROGRAM **8 Things That Set Us Apart**

Self-Reflection, Self-Expression, Character Development

- Mindfulness lessons aimed at developing self-awareness and conscious decision making cultivate the ability to respond rather than a react
- Creative Expression opportunities allow for exploration of the self in the context of key questions such as: Who am I? Where do I fit in? What can I contribute? Examples of Creative Expression include: cooking, dance, campus art, improv, ukulele, theatrical productions (tech and acting), & ceramics
- Morning review of current events and subsequent discussion fosters a knowledge of geography and an understanding of our role in the greater world

Ambitious Experiential Trips

- Fall: Community Building Trip (Aug/Sept)
- Spring: Peace Study or Odyssey Trip
- End of Year: 8th Year Solo Rite of Passage

Preparation for the Adult World through Occupations

- Cool Beans coffee business introduces students to production & exchange through participation in regular the day-to-day business operations, record keeping, inventory management, marketing strategy/initiatives, and new product launches
- Tending to the community garden nurtures an appreciation for the care and maintenance of the garden, the natural environment, and the gifts of the Earth
- Seasonal harvests are incorporated into our bi-weekly, student prepared Community Meals
- Occupations are supplemented by the Stock Market Game & discussions regarding topics in economics as part of the Math curriculum

Student Choice

- Choosing science topics for in depth individual exploration drawn from current scientific publications & choosing individual Science Expo topics
- Choosing literature for discussion, and topics for writing
- Choosing project work from an array of options within themes in Humanities
- Creative Expression and Occupations are taught in 6 to 7 week rotations so students can choose to gain exposure to multiple areas throughout the year
- Community Meeting encourages group decision-making and fosters interdependence & self-governance

Assessment that is Honest/Informative

- 7 point rubric assesses level of mastery; it is not a numerical grade
- The rubric and accompanying comments provide feedback that students need without placing emphasis on value judgment
- The rubric allows students to go beyond what is asked and to grow into adult-type initiative taking
- Guides adapt assignments and curriculum to provide the appropriate level of challenge, and accompanying support for each individual student

Cross-Curricular Integration of Subject Matter

- Guides work together to emphasize cross-curricular connections
- Subject study is not discipline specific, but integrates various lenses through which to view the material
- Class projects and trips often bring together multiple disciplines in support of a common objective

Small, But Not too Small

- Carnegie report on Adolescence: in early Adolescence smaller schools are critical to nurture the mind at the most delicate stage of development since infancy

- Big enough so that there are opportunities for a variety of peers, but students cannot run from their problems; they must face them, and work with those who aren't necessarily their best friends
- Each student has an advisor who brings together the student, parents, and guides to work in concert in support of the student's needs
- Time is set aside for what is important to adolescents – resolution and discussion of social issues

Emphasis is on Learning How to Learn While Developing Competence & Confidence

- It takes a village - the program relies on a large team of passionate teachers with expertise in specific subjects, but knowledge and/or curiosity in many areas, to guide (or follow) the child as appropriate
- Curriculum's emphasis is not on "coverage" but on redo/review/revise to understand
- Curriculum expects the best of adolescents and recognizes the adolescent's immense creativity and capacity to learn
- Executive functioning skills are explicitly taught (time management, note taking, physical organization, communication, creative problem solving)
- Work deadlines are set but may be adjusted as necessary on basis of real workload and teachers conferring

SCHEDULING

The thematic and integrated nature of the curriculum, as well as the need for students this age to delve deeply into major projects (such as an annual theatrical production), necessitates a flexible approach to the weekly schedule. That having been said, a certain amount of predictability assures that the many curriculum elements will each receive the time and attention they demand. So the curricular focus may change slightly from week to week depending upon study emphasis.

ACADEMIC ADVISORY PROGRAM

Each guide in the adolescent program is assigned responsibility for advising a group of students. Specifically, the academic advisor checks in with students regarding academic progress and development of organizational skills. They also provide the main contact between the school and the students' families. Each group of students is selected by teachers and communicated to parents at the outset of the school year. Academic advisors are usually consistent across the two-year program; your child's academic advisor will not change unless there is an overriding reason to do so. Each guide in the adolescent program can, and is able, to act as a sounding board or mentor for students who need assistance with social or academic concerns. Students will be encouraged to approach whomever they are most comfortable with when problems arise. Because of familiarity, this may be the student's academic advisor, but we remain dedicated to student choice within limits, and thus we believe that students should ultimately decide with whom they wish to confer on sensitive issues.

INCLUSIVENESS

It is a natural human tendency to actively cultivate a sense of security and belonging. As a result of this tendency, our young people may gravitate toward establishing exclusive relationships, romantic or otherwise. These types of relationships can represent an impediment to community building, in some cases. Therefore, guidelines will be established for these relationships that mirror those social mores found in the workplace. Specifically, this means that we will insist on proper decorum and that public displays of affection be limited to time outside of school.

Furthermore, “togetherness” time will be encouraged during free time like lunch and study periods. The teaching team reserves the right to curtail these privileges if it is deemed that students in relationships are letting it affect their academic engagement.

A SPECIAL CAVEAT CONCERNING TRIPS

One of the main purposes of our trips are to create and establish community bonds. Establishing romantic relationships, or exclusive friendships (cliques), can seriously counter efforts at creating interdependence within the adolescent cohort. It is for this reason that we will ask students, prior to leaving on the trip, to consciously work toward community and sign a contract that they will not form cliques or enter into romantic relationships while away from campus. We will aid in this endeavor by purposefully designing situations and environments that demand that the group discover ways to work and get along with all classmates and get to know each other more deeply while on the trip.

HOMEWORK EXPECTATIONS

Completing a reasonable amount of homework is necessary to prepare for ongoing classroom discussion, seminar, and assignments, both at MCS and later in high school. Developing a commitment to deadlines is one of the goals of the middle school years. Some students may struggle with the cognitive demands of a regular program. If this is the case we will work with families to find a balance for the individual student. Conversely, a more academically able student may need extension activities to enrich the concepts studied in class. One of the goals of our approach to student learning is to differentiate instruction so that it meets the needs of the individual learner. Homework can be a key part of this differentiation process.

The adolescent community staff relies on parent and student communication to provide feedback if homework load and level of difficulty have become problematic for a student. If we receive such feedback, we will work with families to make adjustments and ensure that a student is set up for success. This, after all, is the intent of a Montessori program: to be appropriately individualized so each student can continually discover appropriate challenges and thereby experience satisfying success and want to keep learning.

If we observe that a student’s homework is not consistently completed on time, first we will speak privately to that student; then, after allowing the student the opportunity to address the issue, we will inform the parents. Developing the habit of completing all homework on time can be a difficult task, made possible only by parental partnership, timely communication, and consistent consequences tailored to each situation. Since “homework” is completed outside regular class hours, we believe the family must play a leading role to restructure the environment after school so homework gets done. That said, homework is student work, not parent work, and should therefore be completed by the student independent of parental help.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

As young people begin the foray into more serious academic achievement, it becomes a shared obligation of the school, the faculty, the student and their parents/guardians to ensure that academic achievement is truly

representative of the student. Students therefore, will be given explicit guidelines on how to give credit in their written work for material that comes from other sources. Academic dishonesty will be subject to appropriate consequences.

Consequences for any of the forms of academic dishonesty include an informal review where the student, the teacher and the head of school will discuss the student's conduct, discuss the situation and reach an agreement about future behavior. In such cases, the parents will be informed of the interview before it occurs. Subsequent infractions will be treated with increased concern.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

In general, adolescents want frank communication from the adults they trust about the quality of their work. They depend on information from trusted adults for how to self-evaluate and make adjustments for the next task, project or piece of work. In this way, we will model an environment that emphasizes constructive and individualized feedback on performance, offering support and assistance, while maintaining high standards of achievement, without an emphasis on peer-to-peer competition, which can become disruptive and destructive to the community.

Our belief is that anyone who is willing to invest consistent effort will develop proficiency given reasonable time. Reasonable deadlines accompany each assignment. These can be adjusted based on individual agreements between the teacher and student. Generally we ask that students learn to take the initiative to discuss changes in a deadline with their teacher and that parents let the students do so. The partnership between student, parent, and teachers is critical whenever an individual student is not working up to his or her capacity.

The teachers break down the learning steps and objectives, to offer suggestions for internalizing the knowledge, and to give the students the strategies, time and experience necessary to learn the information and/or master the skill. Our method of evaluation is based on a 7-point rubric, described in detail in the adolescent handbook. Teachers and students often evaluate the level of mastery via presentations, seminars, investigations, lab exercise, rubrics, tests, or a combination of some or all of these. It is important to note that assignments may be revisited and improved upon and re-evaluated at any time before the end of each trimester, when formal progress reports are done.

In our adolescent program at MCS we view student self-evaluation as a vital key to students making a habit of quality work. When teachers can persuade students to evaluate themselves in such a way that a student becomes aware of and willing to personally work on strengths and weaknesses for the sake of self-improvement, education is achieving its aim of developing independent life-long learners. Reflective evaluation methods such as rubrics created by teachers and/or students describing the quality expectations of an assignment are extremely useful and valid ways to engage students in self-evaluation. Rubrics are often used to show students the connection between what is being evaluated and their level of performance. They also break assignments up into discrete steps with specific objectives, making evaluation a useful tool in checking for understanding.

FORMAL REPORTING AND CONFERENCES

Goal setting conferences occur in the early fall. Progress reporting will occur twice each year. Prior to our two formal conferences, which occur in February and June, parents receive a detailed report of the student's level of

mastery in key skill areas, a list of topics of study, and an indication of the present level of completion, as well as a short narrative describing the student's level of effort. It is important to note, however, that any academic or social concern will be addressed immediately through a phone call or email as soon as the issue is deemed problematic to the student or the community.

Students are specifically trained to run the conference and advocate for themselves.

Parents may request an additional private parent-teacher conference at any time during the school year.

STANDARDIZED TESTS

Students will take one standardized test in the spring. Standardized test results will typically be made available for review and discussion. The diagnostic purpose of standardized testing is to glean information useful to parents, teachers, and students. A standardized test simply measures what a student recalls at a given point in time (a snapshot of all that he or she has learned) compared with a sample of all students who have taken that specific test. The student's knowledge has typically been acquired from a variety of sources over time – school, home, reading, and other outside activities.

Standardized testing never measures the breadth of the curriculum, nor can it measure such qualities as persistence, creativity, hunger for learning, or leadership. Test results do, however, provide the school with summary information about individual achievement and assist us in evaluating our instructional practice. MCS is dedicated to the education of the whole person; therefore, we balance the curriculum to focus on both cognitive and social/emotional outcomes. And we evaluate each student's progress, as well as the effectiveness of the adolescent program, using a number of indicators, of which standardized test scores are but one. That is, in addition to standardized test scores we use our observations about process and end products, student self-evaluations, criterion-based "unit" testing, and progress (at 80% accuracy or better) itself. Lastly, we prize highly a number of behaviors that are far more predictive of success in later life than test scores, such as the ability to work in a group, the ability to problem-solve both socially and academically, the ability to demonstrate empathy, perseverance, and self-awareness.

If a child needs special accommodations for testing due to a learning difference, MCS requires documentation of these needs. As stated in the ERB testing guidelines, "accommodations, such as untimed testing or a reader or scribe, can be granted to students who receive testing allowances under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or have another documented disability." In general, evaluations should be repeated every 2 to 3 years to provide an update on the individual's progress in treatment and determine whether treatment should be modified. In some cases, a re-evaluation may be unnecessary, especially if the condition that prompted the first evaluation has resolved and there are no further concerns and no testing accommodations needed. MCS will be happy to provide accommodations for any student who has a documented diagnosis, testing within 3 years and recommendation from a therapist or psycho-educational evaluation.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

School Attire At the Adolescent Level

- Students need to have *good athletic footwear* for P.E. classes. Many children keep an extra pair of athletic shoes in their cubbies. Athletic shoes must be closed toed and have tread. Crocs, flip flops and boots are unsafe during PE classes.
- It is expected that students will dress appropriately for PE classes that are highly physical in nature (running, jumping, climbing, scooting, etc.). It is recommended that students not wear dresses or skirts on PE days as they tend to get tangled around legs or limit movement (according to their length) during activities
- Students with long hair need to have it pulled out of their eyes on PE days.

Respect

Students are to show respect in all their interactions. This includes respect for others, respect for self, and respect for the community.

Examples of appropriate vs. non-compliant behaviors for a number of different scenarios are described in the adolescent handbook.

Consequences for a Pattern of Non-Compliance

Students who consistently exhibit non-compliant behaviors, thereby creating a pattern of non-compliance, may be asked to leave the school, or may be denied re-enrollment for the next year. Before such actions are considered, however, teachers will make every effort to assist the student in solving the issues identified as problematic. If it is observed that a pattern of non-compliance is emerging, teachers will first talk with the student, then immediately contact the parents to have a conference. This conference typically will include the student but any of the adults involved may request that a preliminary discussion take place prior to the student's entrance, in order to discuss and understand the teachers' observations and proposed remedies. Together teachers, parents, and students will negotiate the terms for the student to become more successful in class.

If the behavior persists, however, the teachers will meet with the parents and the Program Director. At that time, the student, along with his or her parents, will discuss review the progress or lack of progress to date, discuss and agree on a plan to address deficiencies, and place the student on probation. This meeting will be followed by a letter briefly confirming what was discussed.

If the student cannot meet behavior expectations as outlined in this second meeting with regularity, the student will be asked to leave the school. It goes without saying that certain behaviors (including but not limited to the use of illegal drugs, bringing weapons to school, deliberately hitting or repeatedly demeaning another student, racial or gender slurs, and so on) are more serious than other forms of non-compliant behavior. Also, as described above, any behavior becomes more serious if it is repeated. In situations involving repeated violations of school rules or serious academic problems, or if at any time a student's or parent's influence is considered harmful or his/her presence in the school is regarded as undesirable, the School reserves the right to require withdrawal.

TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

The Adolescent Program Director, teachers and the Head of School will work closely with parents, students, and other schools to assure proper placement of our graduates in their next academic communities. The MCS adolescent program will prepare students for a smooth transition to public or independent high schools.

For those students and families eager to look at independent school options in the area or elsewhere, the teachers and Program Director also will work closely, both to provide the necessary application materials, and to help assure a good “match” between the needs of each student and the program at any such school. Typically, independent secondary schools have an entrance exam and criteria that they use to assess potential students.

Teachers will advocate on a student’s behalf as they supply application materials (such as transcripts and recommendation forms) that a high school may request as evidence of a student’s aptitude and ability. The application process typically involves completing an application and scheduling a visit in the fall.

Recommendation forms may be given to the admissions director, who will see that all information, including transcripts, test scores, and copies of narrative reports are supplied.

Students who are applying to area public high schools will receive support and guidance concerning the assembly of all the materials they need prior to registering at these high schools, which occurs toward the end of the winter months every year. This process typically involves attending an open house at that high school, in addition to attending a parents’ night for students who are coming from out of state or from an independent school.

