



FAMILY HANDBOOK

In the special environment prepared... in our schools, the children themselves found a sentence that expresses their inner need.

“Help me do it by myself.”

Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*

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ABOUT RIVER MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL

Who We Are

River Montessori Charter School is a California State Board of Education authorized public charter school serving students who live in California. The purpose of the organization is entirely educational, operating in full compliance with all laws and regulations governing charter schools. A voluntary Board of Directors governs the school.

River Montessori opened its doors for the first time in September 2009 with approximately 80 students enrolled in grades 1 through 4, and will grow to approximately 200 students in grades 1 through 6 in September 2011. Each elementary classroom has one Head Teacher who is Montessori and California State credentialed.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools that are started by parents, teachers, businesses and/or community leaders. In California, these schools operate independently from or within jurisdiction of local school districts, but are held to stringent standards of accountability by the Department of Education.

Mission

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

Educational Philosophy

Montessori philosophy is based on the idea that each student is competent, unique, and has an innate desire to learn. To implement this philosophy, River Montessori Charter School will:

- Create a challenging interdisciplinary curriculum combining the California Curriculum Frameworks with the Montessori lessons.
- Provide an abundance of learning materials specifically developed for the Montessori classroom.
- Empower the child to direct his or her own learning within the structure of the curriculum and with close guidance by the teacher.
- Facilitate inquiry, exploration, critical thinking, and creative problem solving.
- Understand and capitalize on individual learning styles.
- Educate the whole child by infusing the development of self-reliance and independence within academic work.

Complementing the Montessori method, River Montessori Charter School will provide integrated studies of the vast historical, cultural, and natural resources of our region.

MONTESSORI CHARACTERISTICS

Multi-Age Classrooms

In the elementary program multi-age classrooms serve children in three-year age spans, which maximizes curriculum options, encourages cooperation, and fosters self-confidence. During the first and second years the school will have some classes of 2-year age spans, until the school reaches full enrollment in 2011.

Interdisciplinary Approach

Interdisciplinary approach allows subjects to be taught thematically using reading, writing, and mathematics as tools for the pursuit of knowledge and skills.

Montessori Materials

Montessori Materials focus on many levels of understanding, beginning with the concrete and moving to the abstract. Materials are self-correcting and reinforce autonomy, confidence, and self-motivation. Extensive written materials support the Montessori emphasis on research from various sources.

Long Work Periods

Long Work Periods enable students to explore a topic or material thoroughly. Whole-class instruction is minimal, with lessons being given to individuals or in small groups.

Mastery Learning

Mastery Learning goes beyond memorization and repetition to true understanding and application of knowledge, skills, and concepts. The individual student progresses at his own rate, either moving ahead without having to wait for the rest of the group, or taking the time he needs to internalize the material.

Classroom Design

Classroom Design emphasizes study centers, with clusters of student-sized tables and open areas for floor work. Each study center is surrounded by shelves of books and materials pertaining to a particular area, such as language arts, mathematics, history, and geography. Students are allowed to move about the classroom and choose resources, working individually or in small groups.

Community Resources

Community Resources are used as both a source of knowledge and as a means of applying what students learn. The connection and commitment to our community is a logical extension of the Montessori philosophy that grounds the students' knowledge and applies their skills in a meaningful context.

Peace Education

Peace Education is integral to the Montessori method and is woven all through the River Montessori curriculum, in interdisciplinary studies of other cultures, the Fundamental Human Needs curriculum, studies of interdependence, and active outreach to other communities and cultures. Peace education is also evident in our approach to discipline, which is non-punitive, emphasizes protection of civil rights, and encourages students to work together to find peaceful resolution to conflicts.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

Grade Levels

Lower Elementary (6 to 9 year-olds)

Upper Elementary (9 to 12 year-olds)

River Montessori Charter School has aligned the Montessori lessons with the California Curriculum Frameworks for grades 1 to 4. This correlation ensures full coverage of all the material in both curricula.

Curriculum

Math is initially presented through manipulative materials, with the student progressing toward abstract concepts as he or she shows readiness to do so.

Language Arts emphasizes reading skills and includes the etymology of words, syntax, and formations of words from the start. It also includes oral forms such as debate, speeches, and group discussion.

Social Studies and Science (called Cultural Studies in the Montessori curriculum) integrate anthropology, astronomy, biology, chemistry, economics, geography, geology, government, history, philosophy, physics, political science, and sociology.

Montessori uses its Five Great Lessons to present the keys of all the sciences, providing a comprehensive framework to demonstrate how the sciences, art, history, language, and geography are interrelated. From that point, students are introduced to increasing levels of detail and complexity within these broad areas.

Music, Art, and Physical Education are included as special classes during the school week. It is the long-term objective to offer chorus and ultimately band activities.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Governance/Organizational Structure

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

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

ACCOUNTABILITY

Student performance will be assessed through:

Standardized Tests

- Terra Nova tests (language arts, math, science, and social studies) will be administered in the first year of operation.
- STAR testing will be administered annually in all grades in subjects as required by the California Department of Education.

Internal Assessment

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

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

Accountability Progress Reporting (APR)

The Accountability Progress Reporting (APR) is California's integrated accountability system that reports the state Academic Performance Index (API) and the federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

The API is a single number, calculated by the state, ranging from a low of 200 to a high of 1000, which reflects a school's performance level, based on the results of statewide testing.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a series of annual academic performance goals established for each school. AYP is required under Title I of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001.

The performance of RMCS students will meet or exceed the average statewide rank and API scores of elementary schools in the immediate geographic area of RMCS. Statewide rank and API scores will be disaggregated by reportable subgroups (to the extent applicable) and by subject area. These elementary schools include Bernard Eldridge Elementary, La Tercera Elementary, Miwok Valley Elementary, Old Adobe Elementary, and Sonoma Mountain Elementary.

The School shall meet its annual Academic Performance Index growth target as established each year and shall make Adequate Yearly Progress ("AYP").

The director of the school reviews the APR and presents an annual report as a component of the Annual School Progress Report.

ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS

River Montessori Charter School is committed to promoting high attendance rates. Attendance will be recorded daily and measured quarterly and annually.

RMCS Attendance Goal:

2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
95%	95%	95%

Pupils with low attendance and/or chronic tardiness will be identified quarterly for early conferencing with parents or guardians. School-wide attendance will be reported in the Annual School Progress Report (see section III.D.3.).

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parent involvement is a vital component of RMCS, and parents are asked to participate in their children's education by volunteering at River Montessori. Please see the volunteer guidebook for a detailed listing of volunteer opportunities.

Parents are integral to the child-teacher-parent triangle of learning. The presence of parents assures the children that their parents care about their education. As part of our charter, each parent is requested to contribute 40 hours of volunteer time for each child enrolled in the school. A volunteer coordinator documents parent participation hours which are reported annually to the state.

SCHOOL DAY INFORMATION

Monday to Thursday

8:00 a.m.	School opens for morning arrival
8:15 a.m.	School day begins – all campus morning gathering in multi-purpose room
8:25 a.m.	Students dismiss to classrooms
8:25 – 11:45	Morning work period Lower Elementary
8:25 – 12:15	Morning work period Upper Elementary
11:45-12:15	Lower Elementary lunch period
12:15-12:45	Lower Elementary recess
12:45-3:00	Lower Elementary work period with weekly art, music and PE classes
12:15-12:45	Upper Elementary lunch period
12:45-1:15	Upper Elementary recess
1:15-3:00	Upper Elementary work period with weekly art, music and PE classes
3:00	Dismissal
3:00-5:30	River Crew aftercare program and extracurricular discovery courses

Friday

8:00 a.m.	School opens for morning arrival
8:15 a.m.	School day begins – all campus morning gathering in multi-purpose room

8:25 a.m.	Students dismiss to classrooms
8:25 – 11:15	Morning work period Lower Elementary (first, second and third graders)
8:25 – 11:45	Morning work period Upper Elementary (fourth, fifth and sixth graders)
11:15-11:45	Lower Elementary lunch period
11:45-12:15	Lower Elementary recess
11:45-12:15	Upper Elementary lunch period
12:15-12:45	Upper Elementary recess
1:00	Dismissal
1:00-5:30	River Crew aftercare program and extracurricular discover courses

Arrival

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

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

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

Dismissal

Regular pick-up will be *between 3:00 and 3:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 1:00 to 1:15 p. m. on Friday.* Please refer to the parking and traffic flow map posted on the school website for information regarding car pool pick-up. A staff member will assist children to their vehicles in the car pool traffic lane. Please have the back seat on the side of the school building available for your child's use so that we can be efficient in loading all the cars.

Change of Routine and Permission to Pick Up Forms

If you plan to pick up your child from school early, please be sure to complete a *Change of Routine* form and deliver to the school office. This allows your child's teacher to prepare for a change of schedule for your child. A *Change of Routine* form must also be submitted if your child will be picked up by someone who does not routinely pick up your child. In order to dismiss your child to someone other than a parent or routine car pool driver, the name of the person picking your child up *must* appear on the *Change of Routine* form. Students may be released to individuals named on their *Emergency Card* in the event of a school or family emergency.

Permission to pick up forms are completed at the beginning of the school year. This form allows families to identify car pool drivers, care providers, or other adults such as parents of your child's friends that may routinely pick up your child throughout the school year. Adults designated on this form are authorized to pick up your child at dismissal.

River Crew Aftercare Program for Students

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

It is necessary to register for River Crew.

- All children in River Crew are offered a snack at the end of the school day.
- The program is administered by a California credentialed teacher who is an employee of the school.
- Child care is invoiced monthly and is due immediately upon receipt.
- During scheduled bi-annual conferences, child care is available to all families enrolled in River Crew for no extra charge.

Parents or care givers are required to sign children out from River Crew when they are picked up at the end of the day. This helps to ensure your child's safety and is necessary for administration to maintain accurate records.

School Closings

Emergency notification of school closings will be announced via phone contact, emails, and on the school website.

ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

Absences

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

Students at River Montessori are expected to attend school each day of the school year unless there is an extreme emergency or a personal illness. Reasons for absence are to be reported to the school office. In the event a student will be out of school for any reason other than illness or a family emergency, the parent is requested to contact the Executive Director in advance of the absence.

If your child is unable to attend school because of illness or for an appointment, please call the school office. You may also use this line to call your child in late. If you need to speak to someone directly, call the office after 8:00 a.m.

Pupils with low attendance will be identified quarterly for early conferencing with parents or guardians. School-wide attendance will be reported in the Annual School Progress Report (see section III.D.3. of the Charter). Education Code Section 48260 defines a "truant" as any pupil absent without valid excuse three full days in one school year, or tardy or absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof.

Education Code Section 48205 identifies the following as excused absences: illness; quarantine; medical, dental, optometric, or chiropractic appointment; funeral services of a member of the immediate family; and for justifiable personal reasons.

Independent Study

In California, funding to the school is directly tied to the number of days each child is in attendance at school. There is a provision for an Independent Study Plan that allows your child to make up school work while away from school. Independent Study must be arranged in advance of an anticipated absence of more than one day. Your child's teacher and school administration will prepare documents and a work plan for you and your child to complete. These documents are audited by the state in order for the school to receive its funds for Independent Study. If your child will be absent for more than one day, help us plan ahead by letting the front office know in advance.

Attendance during STAR Testing

Attendance during STAR testing is necessary. STAR testing is mandated by the State of California and the U.S. Federal Government under the No Child Left Behind Act. RMCS expects all students in required grades to participate as mandated by the River Montessori Charter document. Daily attendance and the participation rate during testing also determine whether or not the school meets its targets for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

When a child is absent from a testing session, it creates a hardship for the child and the school to make up the test. The child is missing class work and is taking the test in an unfamiliar space with a proctor he or she may not know. Studies indicate that students perform better in familiar surroundings with their classroom teachers administering tests.

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

Your cooperation is essential if we are to keep children safe in the parking lot and traffic lanes at River Montessori. **The speed limit on school grounds is 10 MPH at all times.** Please refer to the parking and traffic map posted on the school website for detailed information about parking and traffic flow patterns around the school.

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

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

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

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

River Current Newsletter

The River Current Newsletter that is published monthly provides timely school information and parent education resources, including a director's letter, calendar of events, student articles, river news and tidbits, and

book reviews and parenting articles. Hard copies are posted on the school bulletin board and provided to families with limited access to the internet.

Email Notices

Timely announcements such as health alerts, calendar notices, and upcoming special events or deadlines are distributed via email. Hard copies are provided for families with limited access to the internet.

School Website

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

Signs Posted

Public notices and timely calendar changes are all posted on signs at school as necessary.

Mailings

Reports cards and STAR test results are mailed to the residence address on record for each child.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF

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

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

OBSERVATIONS

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

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

CURRICULUM PRESENTATIONS AND PARENT EDUCATION FORUMS

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

SCHOOL CULTURE

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

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

Appropriate Dress

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

Students will set their own class standards during initial community meetings for what is respectful and appropriate clothing. Teachers will let a member of the class know if they think a child's dress is inappropriate. Elementary students generally feel that extremes of clothing are out of place. In general, clothing with messages and icons of pop culture are not welcome by the faculty. Personal appearance, dress, or grooming must not disrupt the educational process or threaten the health or safety of any individual.

Personal Property

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

Therefore, we do not encourage the child to bring articles to school that may distract him from his learning experiences. We welcome books, tapes or other objects that relate to the work of the classroom.

All students will need to bring a variety of supplies to school. Many items, such as paper and writing implements, may need to be replenished during the year.

Snacks and Lunch

RMCS is a nut free and sesame free school. There are children enrolled at RMCS with life-threatening allergies. Please support us in providing a safe and healthy environment for all of the children at RMCS and do not send snacks or lunch items to school containing nuts or sesames.

If you send a snack from home, please eliminate sweets such as candy and soda; instead, send healthy foods such as fresh fruit, cheese, crackers, and fruit juices. We ask that you not send drinks colored with a red dye, as they permanently stain carpet when spilled.

Each classroom has its own procedure and schedule for snacks.

River Montessori does not offer a hot lunch program and students must bring a lunch from home,

We encourage the use of re-sealable containers for lunches to minimize trash. Soft lunch boxes with cooling packs are recommended. Students do not have access to a microwave or refrigeration for their lunches.

Library

RMCS does not currently have a designated library. Individual classrooms stock books that are relevant to the children's curriculum. RMCS teaching staff routinely utilizes the services of the Sonoma County Office of Education bookmobile to supplement classroom materials. Families are encouraged to use the Sonoma County Public Library.

Computer Use

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

Access to the Internet is a privilege. All students are supported to practice computer etiquette and safety.

SCHOOL SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES

Fire Drills

Randomly scheduled fire drills will be conducted in conjunction with the local fire department. Teachers and students periodically review the drill procedures, which are posted in a visible location in each classroom.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

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

Fire, Weapons, Illegal Substances, and Tobacco

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

ENRICHMENT AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Special Subjects

Art, music, and physical education are integral parts of the River Montessori curriculum as they correlate with classroom studies on a regular basis. Art classes are held once weekly and taught by the classroom teacher or parent volunteer. The format addresses both individual interests and California State Standards. Children are encouraged to pursue their own strengths and to explore multiple mediums for expanding their talents.

Students attend weekly music classes which are aligned with the California State Standards. In addition to providing weekly classes, the music teacher coordinates music programming with the classroom teachers to integrate cultural studies with the music curriculum being provided. RMCS also plans to offer chorus for students in the near future.

Traditional physical education classes are held once a week and are taught by classroom teachers with support from parent volunteers. Physical Education focuses on cooperative games, team sports, individual sports, aerobic activities, and fitness.

After-School Enrichment – “Discovery Courses”

Extracurricular fee-based enrichment classes are offered after school at RMCS on a quarterly schedule. Please see the RMCS website for a detailed listing of discovery course offerings. Scholarships may be available through the River Montessori Foundation. Children attending discovery courses attend River Crew for one half hour prior to the start of Discovery Courses at 3:30..

Field Trips and Going Out

The school will periodically conduct field trips to provide cultural, scientific, social or educational experiences for the children. Some of these will be directly coordinated with an area of study or integrated into our Curriculum Partners Program. Notices will be sent home in advance describing the objectives of the field trip and requesting drivers, if needed.

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

Parents who volunteer to chaperone for field trips are expected to adhere to the Parent Guidelines for Trips outside the School. Please see appendix.

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

Social Events

Throughout the year, members of our school community come together for educational meetings, student performances, open houses, and fund-raisers. These community building gatherings afford an opportunity for us to get to know each other and meet our children’s peers and other families.

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

Birthdays

Birthdays are special occasions, and River Montessori honors and celebrate these events. The school supports a common theme of acknowledgment, but each class may have different expressions to celebrate the day. You may choose to donate a book to the library in the name of your child or consult the teacher regarding other contributions or celebratory snacks for the classroom. Please contact your classroom teacher a week before your child’s birthday to arrange a birthday celebration for your child.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Special Education Program

The Montessori educational model is well-suited to children with different needs and learning styles. There is an emphasis for all children to work at their own pace, using an individualized program and multi-sensory materials.

At River Montessori, the Resource Specialist functions according to an inclusion model, providing extra assistance in the classroom to children on Individual Education Plans (IEPs). There will be ongoing consultation between teachers and the Resource Specialist. When necessary, direct services in the form of a “pull-out” from class will occur.

In accordance with state and federal regulations, our inclusion program ensures students the right to a free and appropriate education within the least restrictive environment. River Montessori will have an IEP team made up of the Resource Specialist, the classroom teacher, parents/guardians and other school personnel when necessary. In addition, contracted services by a psychologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and speech and language therapist are available as needed.

If you have a concern about your child regarding special education, please contact your child’s teacher directly. The teacher will facilitate a referral to the Resource Specialist.

Special Needs Evaluation

When a special needs student enrolls at River Montessori with an IEP, a team meeting will be held with special education staff and parents to determine how best to meet the child’s needs in the new school setting. With the parents’ consent, certain goals and objectives may be modified to fit the River Montessori curriculum and inclusion model. The special education team will reconvene as often as necessary to monitor the student’s progress.

Special Needs Referral Process

If a student presents learning or behavioral problems in school, the pre-referral process for special needs services will be initiated. A short-term intervention will be developed and used by the teacher, parents, and psychologist for a specific period of time to remedy the problem. If this process is unsuccessful, there will be a formal CHILD STUDY TEAM evaluation and team meeting in order to determine if the student qualifies for special needs services. If the child qualifies, an IEP will be developed and implemented in conjunction with the ILC.

504 Plan

If a disability is determined, but the student is making sufficient academic progress, a 504 plan will be developed to create specific modifications to assist the student in the classroom. The River Montessori Charter School 504 coordinator is the Executive Director

HEALTH SERVICES

School Nurse

A credentialed school nurse is available to provide state required health screenings, maintain student health records, provide in-service staff training, and implement health curriculum for students. Additional tasks performed by the school nurse may include:

- Treatment of minor health issues that may arise on a day-to-day basis
- Dispense required medication
- Perform periodic screenings
- Maintain student health records
- Notify school community of possible exposure to any serious communicable diseases

In addition, a consulting physician is available on an as-needed basis.

Medical Health Forms

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

Dispensing Medication

Medication may be dispensed during the school day. School policy requires both parental and physician consent forms for regularly scheduled medicine to be dispensed at school. For short-term medication, such as antibiotics, parental consent is required but a prescription is sufficient to document physician consent. Over-the-counter medications may be dispensed at the school office with parental consent, and provided they are received in their original container.

Guidelines for Returning to School After Illnesses

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

Bronchitis: on antibiotics for 24 hours or more

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

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

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

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

Ear Infection: on antibiotics for 24 hours or more

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

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

Vomiting: free from vomiting for 24 hours or more

Medical Emergencies

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

CODE OF CONDUCT

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

Honesty

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

Kindness

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

Discipline

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

Every student at River Montessori has a right to learn and thrive in a school atmosphere that is conducive to academic achievement and social growth. Any behavior by a student that threatens to disrupt the learning process or pose a danger to others is unacceptable.

In the event a student is unable to comply with classroom rules and appropriate behavior, the Code of Conduct (See appendix) outlines the process for handling such offenses.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS AND DISCIPLINE

Students with disabilities have the same responsibilities and rights as other students and may be disciplined for the same behavioral offenses. However, certain Code of Conduct proceedings must be altered if the student being considered for suspension or expulsion is a special needs student.

The Executive Director and Resource Specialist are familiar with Chapter 766 Regulation 9 concerning serious discipline considerations. If the student facing a disciplinary hearing is a special needs student with an IEP, the Resource Specialist or a trained special needs teacher will be included as a member of the discipline committee in order to ensure the student's rights and to make recommendations as to appropriate penalties or actions. See appendix for more details.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

If a student feels that he or she is being harassed because of their gender or sexual orientation, the student should speak immediately to his or her teacher, the Executive Director, or another trusted adult in the community.

See appendix for guidelines and the River Montessori Non-Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The school and the Authorizer (California State Board of Education - "SBE") will always attempt to resolve any disputes amicably and reasonably without resorting to formal procedures. Unless legally required to do otherwise, both shall refrain from public commentary regarding any disputes until any grievance matter has progressed through the dispute resolution process.

Any complaints/concerns received by the Authorizer about any aspect of the operation of the Charter School or about the charter school shall be promptly forwarded by the Authorizer to the governing Board of Directors. To the extent that such concerns/complaints may involve issues related to possible revocation or non-renewal of the charter, the Authorizer may request that the Charter School inform the Authorizer of how such

concerns/complaints were or will be addressed. The Charter School agrees to provide such information. The parties recognize that the Charter School shall not be obligated to release information that is determined by law to be confidential in nature and not subject to release to the Authorizer.

Mediation

Prior to the filing of any litigation between the Authorizer and Charter School, the parties agree to meet to attempt to resolve the issues. If such meetings are not successful, the parties shall attempt to resolve the issue by way of non-binding mediation. Each party shall be responsible for its own costs and expenses related to participation in mediation. The parties shall mutually agree on a mediator and the Charter School shall bear the full expense of the mediator.

The school recognizes that because the SBE is not a local educational agency, it may choose to resolve a dispute directly instead of pursuing mediation as specified here, provided that if the SBE does choose to resolve a dispute directly, it must first hold a public hearing to consider arguments for and against the direct resolution of that dispute.

When a dispute is of a nature where the result of taking appropriate action could include, but is not limited to, revocation of the charter in accordance with Education Code Section 47604.5, the matter will be addressed at the State Board of Education's discretion in accordance with that provision of law and any regulations pertaining thereto.

ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT

Enrollment

River Montessori is contracted through its charter to enroll a maximum of 200 students. The school strives to maintain roughly equal numbers in each age group, in order to balance as well as possible the multi-age classrooms. The goal of RMCS is to have 100 students in both the lower elementary (ages 6 to 9) and the upper elementary (ages 9 to 12) programs.

Once RMCS is fully enrolled, openings will generally be at the grade one level. However, RMCS may offer admission to students on other grades if openings become available. The determination of which grades have openings is strictly at the discretion of the Executive Director. Attrition from an age/grade does not automatically create openings in that age/grade.

Outreach and Applications

Applications will be accepted during a publicly advertised open-enrollment period each spring for enrollment in the following school year. During the annual enrollment period, River Montessori recruits its students through broad outreach and multi-media advertising. RMCS holds a series of public information meetings to help families understand the Montessori philosophy and curriculum before they apply. Parents are also offered an opportunity to tour the school and observe in the classrooms.

Currently enrolled students who are returning need not reapply. At the end of the posted application period, the school will conduct a lottery if there are more applications for any given grade than openings in that grade.

Applicants are grouped by age as of December 2 of the upcoming academic year. For example, 6-year-olds are grouped into grade one, 7-year-olds in grade two, and so on. The school is not required to accept applications for children who do not meet the standard age guidelines for enrollment of the state of California.

Parent Education

River Montessori strives to give prospective parents and students a thorough understanding of the mission of the school, the Montessori philosophy and methodology, and expectations of students and families.

The school strongly encourages parents to complete the following prior to enrollment:

- Attend an information session
- Observe in a classroom
- Review the school website

If the number of applications received during the open application period exceeds spaces available in any grade, the school holds a public lottery as outlined in the RMCS charter. The lottery consists of two separate draws: one for siblings of currently enrolled students (*the sibling list*) and one for non-siblings from the school's chartered region (*the general list*).

Each application is assigned an identification number. At a public meeting, an unbiased third party not affiliated with the school draws the numbers randomly, establishing lists of students ranked in numerical order within each age/grade. The school then offers admission to the age/grades for which there are openings in the following sequence:

1. Those on the sibling list, and then
2. Those on the general list.

When an applicant is offered admission to the school, the family must provide a timely response to the offer. The school's application packet shall contain clear procedures for offers and response deadlines.

Notification is by telephone initially. In the event that the school does not have the opportunity to tender the verbal offer for enrollment within a 24-hour period, a letter is sent with the formal offer. Offers for enrollment must be accepted or declined within a specified time frame from the date of the offer.

If the school is unable to make direct contact despite repeated attempts as outlined in the published procedures, or if the family declines the offer, the enrollment offer is no longer valid. Should the family want to enroll at a later date, they must reapply.

Wait List

All applicants who were not granted admission during the lottery shall be given the option to put their name on a wait list. Applications received after the annual enrollment period deadline may also choose to go on the wait list.

This wait list will allow students the option of enrollment in case of an opening during the school year. The wait list is maintained only through one week prior to the open enrollment date of the following school year. Once on the wait list, a family will remain in that position until they are offered a spot in the school or express no further interest, until one week prior to open enrollment. A new application must be submitted each year.

If families from the wait list are offered a position, they must accept that position within three business days of the enrollment offer. If they decline the offer of enrollment, they may choose to be removed from the wait list or placed at the bottom of the wait list for that given year.

APPENDIX

PARENT GUIDELINES FOR TRIPS OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

“To go out of a classroom to enter the outside world, which includes everything, is obviously to open an immense door to instruction.....When the child goes out, it is the world itself that offers itself to him. Let us take the child out to show him real things instead of making objects which represent ideas and closing them in cupboards.”

From Childhood to Adolescence by Dr. Maria Montessori

Thank you for your willingness to drive and chaperone students for the field trips. We truly appreciate your participation and support. We hope that you enjoy these opportunities, too.

1. The children in your car are your responsibility for the duration of the entire trip.
 - Encourage respectful interactions and conversational tones.
 - Use secure seat belts or booster chairs, as required by law.
 - No food is allowed to be consumed in the car. Choking and food allergies compromise the driver’s ability to keep everyone safe.
 - Electronic games and other devices are not permitted for use by students.
2. To support the academic focus of these trips, siblings are not allowed to attend. During the car ride, the potential for them to distract may cause an unsafe driving situation.
3. Please do not allow students to listen to or watch media (rap songs, news broadcasts, and movies) as the content may not be appropriate for all children.
4. Use cell phones only to contact the teachers in the event you are lost or become separated from the group. Driving and talking on cell phones is not safe and we ask that you honor this request. However, please keep your cell phone turned on in the event that the teacher needs to contact you.
5. Upon arrival, please supervise this group of children during the entire program. Please do not stand in adult groups and talk. Some places provide special instructions for chaperones. Please respectfully follow their directives and do not use this opportunity to make cell phone calls.
6. Please do not stop at gift shops, restaurants, or coffee houses and provide food or shopping opportunities for the students in your car. This generates an inequitable situation between the other students on the trip. It also creates the potential for students with food allergies to be exposed to a difficult choice and health hazard.
7. If you ever have any question about a situation that occurs on the trip, please notify one of your teachers immediately, either personally or by cell phone if you are not in the same location.

Thank you for your attention to these guidelines and other safe driving practices.

RIVER MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL GUIDELINES FOR THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Dr. Maria Montessori said that to let the child do as he likes when he has not yet developed any powers of control, is to betray the idea of freedom. The Montessori approach to conduct is one of nurturing the development of self-discipline, effecting positive behavior change through a prepared environment that is a unique interaction between the teacher, other students, and the physical space. Self discipline is a personal goal that a child usually achieves. However, we recognize that a child will make mistakes and that this is part of learning. As adults who are responsible for guiding the child, we have developed a Code of Conduct that reflects the positive culture of our school and is clear, consistent, and equitable to support the whole community during an incident.

Discipline is based on:

- **respect for the community and the child**
- **knowledge and understanding of the developmental needs and characteristics of the child**
- **the needs of the group**
- **understanding that appropriate behavior is not only taught, but modeled.**

To that end, the River Montessori Code of Conduct defines a respectful process that:

- supports the student community, the child, the teacher, and the parent
- helps the child to learn to socialize and take responsibility for actions as part of personal growth

When a conflict occurs, the priority of the teacher and the school is to restore the balance in the classroom community and to begin the process of helping the child who has made a mistake to begin the corrective measures needed. Communications to parents follow in order.

In the Montessori classroom, discipline is primarily an internalized learning experience and less a punitive experience for the child. Each teacher develops his or her own individual way of addressing behavior within the principles of the Montessori philosophy. The child wants to follow guidelines if the adult clearly defines the expectations and then invites the child to acknowledge the rule and to assume responsibility for his or her behavior.

Assuming responsibility for behavior is to understand and accept the consequences for not keeping the commitment to the community. A tenet of our approach to discipline is to involve the child in the resolution of the conflict and offer as much support as is needed for the success of the child including a self-evaluation of his or her responses after the child has had opportunity to resolve the issue.

In the event a student is unable to honor classroom ethics and appropriate behavior, the following Categories of Behavior outline how particular offenses will be handled. The Executive Director, along with the teacher and other professionals, will determine the level of response that applies to a situation based on the number of previous incidents, type of behavior, and the severity of the incident. The number of incidents for a student does not carry forward to the next year. Days of suspension are accumulated for the period of one school year only. Please reference the pages immediately following the Code of Conduct for the legal process related to Special Education students who have 10 days or more of suspensions.

If a parent desires to appeal the resolution of a discipline sanction, then he or she is to bring this to the attention of the Executive Director. If this appeal does not result in an agreeable resolution, then the parent may follow the guidelines for the Grievance process.

River Montessori Charter School complies with all applicable California and Federal Laws having to do with harassment and discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, or sexual orientation , race, color or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); sex (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1974); or disability (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) in all educational programs and activities.

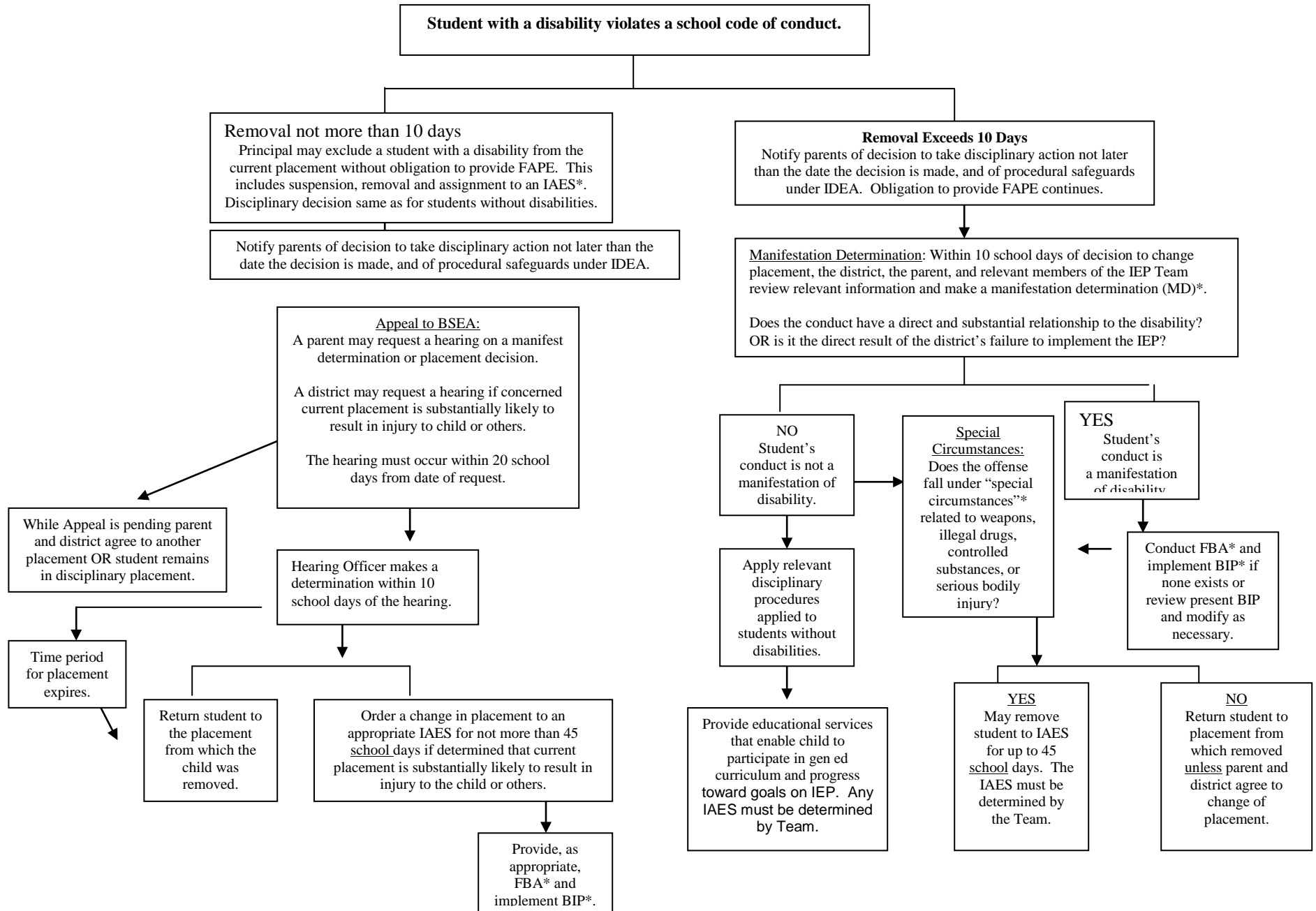
The Executive Director will contact the appropriate authorities, depending on the severity of the dangerous behavior.

PLACEMENT IN DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Under IDEA 2004: Section 615(k)

(to be read in conjunction with state law under M.G.L. c.71, §§ 37H & 37H1/2)

A Principal may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether to order a change in placement for a student with a disability who, after a disciplinary hearing, has been found to have violated a school code of conduct.



DEFINITIONS & ACRONYMS

IAES - interim alternative educational setting

FAPE - Free and Appropriate Public Education – the student continues to receive educational services while in an IAES in order to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the student's IEP

FBA - Functional Behavioral Assessment

BIP – Behavioral Intervention Plan for dispensing Behavior Intervention Services

Manifestation Determination – determine if the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the student's disability; or if the conduct in question was the direct result of the LEA's failure to implement the IEP.

Special Circumstances – carries or possesses a weapon to or at school, on school premises, or to or at a school function under the jurisdiction of a State or local educational agency (LEA); knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance, while at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of a State or local educational agency; or has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of a State or local educational agency.

Serious Bodily Injury – bodily injury that involves a substantial risk of death, extreme physical pain, protracted and obvious disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty.

DISCIPLINE FOR STUDENTS ON 504 PLANS

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal statute which prohibits a qualified individual with a disability from being excluded from the participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance because of his/her disability. 29 U. S. C.-- 794 and its implementing regulations, 34 C. F. R. 104 *et seq.* School personnel may not suspend a student on a 504 plan for more than ten (10) school days without first conducting a manifestation determination.

Please contact the 504 Coordinator at the school for more information on the discipline of students on 504 plans.

NOTICE TO THE RIVER MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

This notice provides information regarding legislation that guides the school in its employment and educational policies. These laws are promulgated by the River Montessori Charter District to insure the equal enjoyment of all opportunities and privileges regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. River Montessori is an equal opportunity employer that complies with provisions of Title IX and the Drug Free School Act of 1988.

Title IX

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972). In compliance with these regulations, The River Montessori Charter District has a designated Title IX Coordinator: Executive Director/Sexual Harassment Officer.

Title VI

Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., was enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.). In compliance with these regulations, The River Montessori Charter District has a designated Title VI Coordinator: Executive Director/Civil Rights Officer.

Contact Information for Titles IX and VI and McKinney-Vento Compliance: Executive Director, River Montessori Charter School, 3880 Cypress Drive, Petaluma, CA 94952 (707-000-0000).

Section 504

No otherwise qualified individual...shall solely by reason of handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. (Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973). In compliance with the above regulation, the River Montessori Charter District has designated a Coordinator of 504 activities. If there are any questions regarding River Montessori's compliance with Section 504, please contact: Resource Specialist/504 Coordinator, River Montessori Charter School, 3880 Cypress Drive, Petaluma, CA 94952, (707-000-0000).

Special Education

Special education and related services are available to eligible students and ensures that they receive individual educational opportunities in the least restrictive environment in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. If there are any questions regarding River Montessori's compliance with Special Education benefits, please contact: Resource Specialist at the School

BOOK LIST FOR PARENTS

Books by Dr. Maria Montessori

The Absorbent Mind
To Educate the Human Potential
The Discovery of the Child
The Child, Society and the World
The Formation of Man
The Child in the Family
What You Should Know About Your Child
Spontaneous Activity in Education
Education of a New World
Education and Peace
The Secret of Childhood

These books are available from Clio Publishers' Montessori Library. The Michael Olaf Company sells the books in a set or separately. Telephone: 707-826-1557

Books about Dr. Maria Montessori

Britton, Lesley. Montessori: Play & Learn. New York: Crown Publishers, 1992.
Kramer, Rita. Maria Montessori, a Biography. Putnam, 1996.
Lilliard, Paula Polk. Montessori: A Modern Approach. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.
Lilliard, Paula Polk. Montessori Today. New York: Schocken Books, 1996.
Montessori, Mario, Jr. Education for Human Development. New York: Schocken Books, 1977.

Books on Early Development

Montanaro, Dr. Silvana. Understanding the Human Being, the Importance of the First Three Years. Mountain View, CA: Nienhuis USA, English Edition, 1991.
Verny, Dr. Thomas. The Secret Life of the Unborn Child. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1981

Books about Adolescents

Giannetti, Charlene C., and Margaret Sagarese. The Roller Coaster Years: Raising Your Child through the Maddening Yet Magical Middle School Years (Ages: 10 to 15). Broadway Books, 1997.
Turian, Michael. The Wonder of Boys: What Parents, Mentors, and Educators Can Do to Shape Boys into Exceptional Men. J. P. Tardner, 1997.
Kindlon, Daniel J. Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys. Ballentine Books, 2000.
Pipher, Mary Bray, Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls. Ballentine Books, 1995.

NOTICE OF THE RIVER MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Asbestos Management Plan for the River Montessori Charter School is annual notification to families, employees, and the public that the building occupied by the school was constructed without the use of asbestos materials.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Dispute Resolution

Governing Law: The procedures to be followed by the charter school and the entity granting the charter to resolve disputes relating to provisions of the charter—California Education Code Section 47605(b)(5)(N)

Disputes between the Authorizer and the School

The school and the Authorizer will always attempt to resolve any disputes between them amicably and reasonably without resorting to formal procedures. Both shall refrain from public commentary regarding any disputes until the matter has progressed through the dispute resolution process unless legally required to do otherwise.

Any complaints/concerns received by the Authorizer about any aspect of the operation of the charter school or about the charter school shall be promptly forwarded by the Authorizer to the charter school Board. To the extent that such concerns/complaints may involve issues related to possible revocation or non-renewal of the charter, the Authorizer may request that the charter school inform the Authorizer of how such concerns/complaints were or will be addressed. The charter school agrees to provide such information. The parties recognize that the charter school shall not be obligated to release information that is determined by law to be confidential in nature and not subject to release to the Authorizer.

Mediation: Prior to the filing of any litigation between the Authorizer and charter school, the parties agree to meet to attempt to resolve the issues. If such meetings are not successful, the parties shall attempt to resolve the issue by way of non-binding mediation. Each party shall be responsible for its own costs and expenses related to participation in mediation. The parties shall mutually agree on a mediator and the Charter School shall bear the full expense of the mediator.

The school recognizes that because the SBE is not a local educational agency, it may choose to resolve a dispute directly instead of pursuing mediation as specified here, provided that if the SBE does choose to resolve a dispute directly, it must first hold a public hearing to consider arguments for and against the direct resolution of that dispute.

If the substance of a dispute is a matter that could result in the taking of appropriate action, including, but not limited to, revocation of the charter in accordance with Education Code Section 47604.5, the matter will be addressed at the State Board of Education's discretion in accordance with that provision of law and any regulations pertaining thereto.

Internal Disputes

All disputes involving the school shall be resolved by the school according to the school's own internal policies. The District shall not be involved with internal disputes of the school unless the school requests District involvement, or unless the internal dispute relates to one of the reasons under Education Code Section 47607 for which a charter may be revoked.

A Note Regarding the Nature of the Grievance Process:

The Board of Trustees is aware that any complaint or issue that reaches the Grievance Committee level will naturally have a strong emotional element. It is the job of those on the committee to evaluate the issue in a thoughtful and respectful manner, without allowing the emotions involved to overwhelm their work. The committee will be as impartial as possible, and strive not to prejudge any individual or situation. Any party involved in a grievance should be prepared to present a factual account of the situation, to remain respectful of other people and other perspectives, and to allow the committee reasonable time to do its work.

RIVER MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL

For *students or parents* complaints may be taken to:

Mailing Address:

California Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

Phone Numbers:

General: 916-319-0800
TTY/TDD: 916-445-4556

Department of Education

For *employees* or applicants for employment, complaints may be taken to:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
1801 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20507
202-663-4900

Each agency has a specific time period for filing a claim. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) allows at least 180 days (may be longer in some circumstances) to file a complaint.

Disciplinary Action

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has been committed by a River Montessori Charter School teacher, student, parent, supervisor, co-worker, vendor, or other third party, the River Montessori Charter School will take action that is appropriate under the circumstances. Action may range from counseling to termination of employment, discipline, up to and including expulsion, or reporting to state and/or federal agencies.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT NOTIFICATION

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

(1) The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit to the School Director a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

(2) The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate.

Parents or eligible students may ask the School to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate. They should write the School Director, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

(3) The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the School discloses education records with written parental consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

(4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the *School District* to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-5901

More information can be found at the Family Policy Compliance Office's Web site at www.ed.gov/policy.

NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER THE PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (PPRA)

PPRA affords parents certain rights regarding our conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to:

- *Consent* before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas (“protected information survey”) if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education (ED)–

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student’s parent;
2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or student’s family;
3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships;
6. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents; or
8. Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.

- *Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of –*

1. Any other protected information survey, regardless of funding;
2. Any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law; and
3. Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.

- *Inspect*, upon request and before administration or use –

1. Protected information surveys of students;
2. Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and
3. Instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.

These rights transfer to from the parents to a student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under State law.

River Montessori Charter School has adopted policies, in consultation with parents, regarding these rights, as well as arrangements to protect student privacy in the administration of protected information surveys and the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes. River Montessori will directly notify parents of these policies at least annually at the start of each school year and after any substantive changes. River Montessori will also directly notify, such as through U.S. Mail or email, parents of students who are scheduled to participate in the specific activities or surveys noted below and will provide an opportunity for the parent to opt his or her child out of participation of the specific activity or survey. River Montessori will make this notification to parents at the beginning of the school year if the District has identified the specific or approximate dates of the activities or surveys at that time. For surveys and activities scheduled after the school year starts, parents will be provided reasonable notification of the planned activities and surveys listed below and be provided an opportunity to opt their child out of such activities and surveys. Parents will also be provided an opportunity to review any pertinent surveys. Following is a list of the specific activities and surveys covered under this requirement:

- Collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales or other distribution.
- Administration of any protected information survey not funded in whole or in part by ED.
- Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening as described above.

Parents who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-5901

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING PROTOCOL Role of Staff as Mandated Child Abuse Reporters

All classified and certified staff will be mandated child abuse reporters and follow all applicable reporting laws.