

# Community Handbook

# 2023-2024

*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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## **Mission Statement**

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

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

## **Core Values**

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

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

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

**Community:** Shared experiences foster lifelong commitment to social responsibility.

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

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

**RMCS Non-discrimination Statement**

River Montessori Charter School is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate against any persons (actual or perceived disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code or association with an individual who has any of the aforementioned characteristics).

## **The Montessori Philosophy**

##### **The Montessori Approach to Education**

As the American Montessori Society summarizes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

##### **The Prepared Environment**

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

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

Technology elements are integrated into classroom life. Children learn to use calculators, computers, and multimedia devices as part of their everyday experience. Throughout the curriculum, as appropriate, internet resources supplement research collected first-hand from resources found in the classroom and the community. Montessori classrooms tend to fascinate both children and their families. Typically, they are warm, bright, inviting, and filled with plants, animals, art, music, and books. There are curriculum centers with intriguing learning materials, such as three-dimensional mathematical models, colorful maps, botany charts, and collections of natural specimens. Each material stimulates curiosity and the five senses.

##### **Multi-age Learning Communities**

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

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

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

##### **Individualized Learning**

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

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

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

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

##### **Active Learning**

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

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

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

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

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

##### **Montessori Curriculum Materials**

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

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

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

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

Of paramount importance are the Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), created at the beginning of each school year by the student in collaboration with the family and teacher to determine a path of individual student success. The plans provide a process whereby strengths and areas of improvement are identified, goals are formulated, and specific learning objectives are agreed upon. In this way, the order and manner of learning new material is adjusted to the needs of each child as much as possible. The student’s progress toward fulfilling his or her ILP is the primary focus of subsequent conferences, progress reports, and student self-evaluations.

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

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

##### **Homework –The Montessori Way**

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

## **A Montessori Day**

## (Bell Schedule)

##### **Monday through Thursday**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 7:00am-8:00am | River Crew Care Program |
| 8:00am-8:15am | Arrival |
| 8:15am-11:45am | Montessori Work Period |
| 11:45am-12:15pm | Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and Lower Elementary Lunch/ Upper Elementary Recess |
| 12:15pm- 12:45pm | Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and Lower Elementary Recess/Upper Elementary Lunch |
| 12:45pm-3:00pm | Montessori Work Period with group activities such as art, music, physical  education, etc. |
| 3:00pm-3:15pm | Dismissal |
| 3:15pm-6:00pm | River Crew Care Program/Expanded Learning |
| **Friday** | |
| 7:00am-8:00am | River Crew Care Program |
| 8:00am-8:15am | Arrival |
| 8:15am-8:30am | Morning Gathering in the Multi-Purpose Room |
| 8:30am-12:00pm | Montessori Work Period |
| 12:00pm-12:15pm | Dismissal |
| 12:15pm-6:00pm | River Crew Care Program/Expanded Learning |

**School Procedures**

**Arrival and Dismissal**

###### Arrival

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

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

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

###### Dismissal

Regular pick-up is between 3:00 and 3:15 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and from 12:00 to 12:15p.m. on Friday. Please refer to the parking and traffic flow map posted on the school website for information regarding carline/carpool pick-up. A staff member will assist children to their vehicles in the car pool traffic lane. Please have the back seat on the driver’s side available for your child’s use so that we are efficient in loading all the cars. Students with written familyal permission to sign themselves out from school will be released Monday through Thursday at 3:15 p.m. and Friday at 12:15 p.m. so they are not crossing the car-line in order to ensure their safety.

**Attendance, Absences, & Truancy**

###### Absences

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

**Attendance is mandatory** at our public charter school. If your child is absent, you must email or call the office within 24 hours and (per law) state the reason.

Montessori education is a relationship-based pedagogy which requires presence in the classroom for experiencing the hands-on learning materials and social interactions so necessary for growth and learning. Regular attendance at school helps students succeed in all areas of development, academics, social-emotional confidence, independence, concentration, and leadership. Daily, on-time attendance is expected each and every school day except as provided within this Policy. With a year-round school-year and one early-release day per week, RMCS encourages families to schedule appointments and travel during non-school time, including the five breaks throughout the school year.

### Excused Absences for Classroom Based Attendance

Absence from school shall be excused only for health reasons, family emergencies, and justifiable personal reasons, as permitted by law or school policy.

A student's absence shall be excused for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness, including an absence for the benefit of the pupil’s mental or behavioral health;

2. Quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer;

3. Medical, dental, ophthalmologic, or chiropractic appointments;

4. Attendance at funeral services for a member of the immediate family:

a. Excused absence in this instance shall be limited to one day if the service is conducted in California or three days if the service is conducted out of state.

b. "Immediate family" shall be defined as mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, spouse, son/son-in-law, daughter/ daughter-in-law, brother, sister or any relative living in the student's immediate household.

5. Jury duty in the manner provided by law;

6. Due to the illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child of whom the pupil is the custodial family, including absences to care for a sick child, for which the school shall not require a note from a doctor;

7. Justifiable personal reasons, when accompanied by a written request by the family or guardian and approved by the Executive Director or his/her designee, including, but not limited to:

a. Appearance in court

b. Attendance at a funeral service

c. Observance of a holiday or ceremony of his/her religion

d. Attendance at religious retreats (not to exceed four hours per semester)

e. Attendance at an employment conference

f. Attendance at an educational conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization

7. Serving as a member of a precinct board for an election pursuant to Elections Code § 12302.

8. Spending time with a member of the pupil’s immediate family, who is an active duty of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from, deployment to a combat zone or combat support position. Absences granted pursuant to this section shall be granted for a period of time to be determined at the discretion of the Executive Director or designee.

9. For the purpose of attending the pupil’s naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen.

10. Authorized at the discretion of a school administrator.

##### **Method of Verification**

##### Students who are absent must present a satisfactory explanation verifying the reason for the absence. RMCS uses an electronic Absence Reporting tool which can be found on the website.

Physician's verification may be requested upon continued absences for illness. Insofar as class participation is an integral part of students' learning experiences, families/guardians and students shall be encouraged to schedule medical appointments during non-school hours.

Students in grades K-6 should not be absent from school without their families/guardians' knowledge or consent except in cases of medical emergency.

### Unexcused Absences/Truancy for Classroom Based Attendance

The Director, or designee, shall implement positive steps to reduce truancy. When the student's attendance problems cannot be resolved or the student and family/guardian have failed to respond to directives to correct the problem, a student who has been classified as truant may be referred to the district attorney or probation officer for truancy mediation. Further, the School attendance review board or probation officer may request a juvenile court petition on behalf of the student.

Students shall be classified as truant if absent from school without a 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. Such students shall be reported to the Executive Director or designee. A student's grades may be affected by excessive unexcused absences in accordance with Board policy.

##### Independent Study Contracts

Students who are absent for between 1-14 days may be eligible to study/work at home under adult supervision. A short-term Independent Study Agreement can be designed to allow a student to continue schoolwork while injured or during a family emergency. Independent Studies cannot exceed 14 schooldays within one academic year.

Families are encouraged to inform the teacher of anticipated absences at least one week in advance (5 school days) so that an Independent Study agreement can be approved and academic lessons assigned. RMCS may only mark a student in attendance and receive funding for independent study if the agreement is satisfactorily completed by the due date and based upon the personal determination of a certificated employee assigned to supervise the independent study of the time value of the student work product.

###### Independent Study Timeline

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| At least one week prior to leaving: | Notify the Office & Guide of your desire for an Independent Study |
| 3 days prior to leaving: | Confirm with your Guide |
| 1 day prior to leaving: | Meet with your Guide and child to go over the contract and assigned work |
| While you are gone: | Assist your child with their assignments |
| No later than 5 days after your return: | Return completed assignments to your Guide |

Incomplete Independent Study assignments and those assignments not returned will void the Independent Study Contract and your child’s attendance will be noted as unexcused absences for the dates your child was out of school.

### Communication with RMCS

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

###### Communication Between Home and School:

**School Announcements and News:** Timely announcements such as health alerts, calendar notices, and upcoming special events or deadlines are distributed electronically via Transfamily Classroom and email and are available in English, Spanish, and other languages. Hard copies are provided upon request for families with limited access to the internet.

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

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

**Public Notices:** Public notices and timely calendar changes are all posted in accordance with the Brown Act, in the office and in administration windows, for 24/7 public access.

###### Family Communication with Staff

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

Please keep in mind that classroom Guides are preparing for the students daily from 7:30am –8:00am at which time s/he begins greeting the children and then is involved in classroom structure until the end of the school day. It is best to email your classroom Guide and coordinate information and/or a time to meet.

Partnership Meetings are regularly scheduled two times per year; prior Fall and Spring breaks. Additional meetings can be scheduled with your child’s Guide as necessary.

###### Observations

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

River Montessori opens its classrooms for observations approximately two months after the start of the school year to allow for the children to normalize or adjust as individuals and allow the cohesion of individuals and the group. Anyone interested in observing a classroom must schedule an appointment with the main office and the Guide.

###### Family University: Curriculum Presentations and Family Education Forums

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

###### Family & Community Surveys

Throughout the year RMCS school administration publishes surveys to families and the community, requesting family response. These surveys are an important method of the RMCS administration’s gaining insight and feedback from a busy community. Summary information from these surveys is not only used by school administration but is also shared with the RMCS board of directors, state review agencies, potential funding agencies, and families - all who share differing interests in the RMCS community. RMCS strives to have every voice heard, and urges each family to commit to completing surveys when requested throughout the year.

**Family and Emergency Information/Change of Authorized Pick Up**

Family and Emergency Information forms are completed at the beginning of the school year. This form allows families to identify car pool drivers, care program providers, or other adults such as families of your child’s friends that may routinely pick up your child during the school year. Adults designated on this form are authorized to pick up your child at dismissal. Students may be released to individuals named on their *Family & Emergency Information Form* in the event of a school or family emergency. If you would like your child to be picked up by someone other than those designated on the form, you must notify the office in writing **before noon.** For your child’s safety, your child will not be released to someone who you have not provided written authorization as designated pick-up adult. Notifications by phone and changes during carline will not be accepted. Please email your written request to the office: [admin@rivermontesssoricharter.org](mailto:admin@rivermontesssoricharter.org).

### River Crew Child Care Program

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

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

* The program is overseen by a California credentialed teacher who is an employee of the school.
* Child care is prepaid by the first of the month. Drop-in rates are invoiced monthly and are due immediately upon receipt.
* During scheduled bi-annual Partnership Meetings, child care is available to all families during their conference meeting time at no charge.
* Families whose volunteer activities are during River Crew hours are offered child care at no charge.

Families or care givers are required to sign children in and out from River Crew through an on-line program. This helps to ensure your child’s safety and is necessary for administration to maintain accurate records.

### Student Health

###### Medical Health Forms

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

###### Dispensing Medication

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

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Commitment to Community Wellness

& Consistent Student Attendance

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health/Wellness Occurrence  Students & Staff | School & Classroom Protocol |
| Exhibiting Mild Symptoms  Including but not limited to coughing, runny nose, congestion. | * Staff & Students Attend School * Staff & Students Mask Indoors * Volunteers Do Not Attend School |
| Exhibiting Extreme Symptoms including but not limited to nausea, vomiting, 100 ̊or above fever | * Staff & Students Do Not Attend School, Stay Home to Rest and Recover * Staff and Students Sent Home to Rest and Recover * May Return when extreme symptoms subside and without fever for 24 hrs. without medicine * Independent Study, if feasible, i.e., waiting for fever period to end * Note from Physician if over three absences or if pattern persists |
| Consistent Communicable respiratory illness symptoms among 10% of class | * Staff & Students Attend School and Mask Indoors * Classroom Community Masks until shared common symptoms abate |
| Known exposure to Positive COVID-19 | * Staff & Students Attend School and Mask Indoors * Requested to take COVID test, and again after 5 days or if symptoms develop * May attend school if symptom-free * Mask indoors for 5 days |
| Positive COVID-19 Test | * Remain out of school for 5 days and until symptoms subside and the person has been without fever for 24 hours without medicine * After 5 days, Staff & Students Attend School and Mask Indoors for five additional days * Independent Study highly encouraged while student is symptom-free |

###### 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: Student’s ability to participate fully in their work and activities throughout the school day and the potential for infecting classmates, other students, faculty, and staff.

A physician’s note is required to permit a child with a contagious infection or disease to return to school. Please consult the following additional standards in making your assessment:

**Bronchitis:** on antibiotics for 24 hours or more

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

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

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

**Diarrhea:** free of diarrhea for 24 hours or more if caused by illness and not medication **Ear Infection:** on antibiotics for 24 hours or more

**Fever:** Fever-free (under 100 ̊) without medicine, for at least 24 hours (readings generally lower in morning)

**Rash:** Please provide a physician’s release for any atypical redness or rash **Strep Throat:** after treatment with antibiotics for at least 24hours

**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 family(s)/guardian. 911 will be called and direction from emergency personnel will be followed.

**General Information**

**Accountability**

State Reported Measurements

RMCS complies will all State of California published standards for charter schools in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Sciences, and Physical Education.

Our philosophy dictates that the accomplishment of performance outcomes is achieved by working to develop positive character traits in students while they learn. Montessori education integrates outcomes and the learning process. For example, independence is a behavior that is not separate from the process by which it is attained and practiced. Similarly, academic competence is the disposition to do things in certain ways, the ability to recall knowledge, and the skills to enact appropriate academic procedures. Consequently, in addition to Stat of California published standards RMCS will focus on developing several attributes of successful learners and positive character traits in our students.

ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS

Develop Attributes of Successful Learners River Montessori Charter School provides an environment in which students develop deeply held values of independence, responsibility, self-respect, respect for others, and compassion; this results in a strong sense of self-confidence. Character development is integrated throughout the curriculum. Children of different ages are brought together so the classroom becomes similar to an extended family in which children live and work cooperatively. In this “mini-society,” children help establish the ground rules for behavior, get practice in self-government and thus become responsible for their own behavior. The aim is for children to learn to respect the rights of others, feel responsibility toward others, and gain respect for their own individuality. To facilitate the development of independence and a sense of engagement with the community, RMCS strongly encourages participation in day-to-day classroom management, care of the environment, and decision making. We seek to help each student see the value of commitment both to our own community and to the community of humanity. Children contribute to the betterment of the world through various activities.

In addition to State Standards, RMCS focuses on developing several attributes (listed below) of successful learners and character traits in our students. Nancy Rambusch and John Stoops identify these traits for addressing the whole child as a learner in “The Authentic American Montessori School,” (American Montessori Society, 1992). All of the attributes listed below are monitored and conveyed through Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), progress and report cards, and biannual conferences. 1) Cognitive Understanding and Thinking Skills • Students demonstrate an awareness of order and sequence. • Students demonstrate the development of observation, questioning, and critical thinking skills. • Students evidence a variety of complex thinking processes to help resolve complex issues. • Students are able to access, evaluate, and integrate information from a variety of resources. • Students are able to reflect upon their learning and to transfer learning to new situations.

• In Montessori education, the students are to think for themselves, not merely learn what other people have thought. • Students demonstrate the ability to effectively use technology. 2) Confidence and Competence • Students are capable of correcting their own work upon observation, reflection, discussion, or completion of additional lessons. • Students manage the available array of information with a clear sense of purpose. • Students demonstrate the development of concentration, patience, and persistence. 3) Independence • Students are able to choose their own work, apply energy to that work, complete it to agreed-upon criterion, and return material used to the place it is customarily kept in such a way that another child will be able to find and use it. • Students participate in designing their own Individual Learning Plans. • Students are able to locate resources to continue the self-chosen task, or are able to solicit help if necessary. 4) Autonomy • Students are able to accept or reject inclusion in another child’s work or group with equanimity. 5) Intrinsic Motivation • Students are drawn to continue working for the apparent pleasure of so doing. • Students, once having achieved competence, are able to move on to revel in mastery by showing others. 6) Ability to Handle External Authority • Students are able to accept the “ground rules” of the group and abide by them. • Students, when distant from the teacher, are able to function as if the teacher were nearby. 7) Social Responsibility • Independent and autonomous persons are also always a part of a group and must realize independence and autonomy through participation in group activity. • Students are able to collaborate and work effectively with others in cooperative groups. • Students are respectful of others. 8) Stewardship, Good Citizenship • All children are part of both a world political reality and a world ecological system. Both systems have their constitutions and the citizen must learn to live within the spirit of the laws of man and nature. • Students demonstrate citizenship by planning and implementing a project in service to the school and/or the greater community. • Students demonstrate an understanding of the natural world, and their interconnectedness to it. River Montessori Charter School Page 40 of 122 Renewal Term 2019-24 9) Positive Self-Image • Students are able to express feelings in a healthy manner. • Students demonstrate the ability to solve conflicts effectively and fairly using skills of active listening and negotiation. • Students demonstrate knowledge of pertinent issues of personal health.

Student performance will be assessed through:

###### California Mandated Standardized Tests

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

###### Local/Internal Assessments

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

Both students and families 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. Families participate formally at least two times a year in conferences, with frequent teacher interaction encouraged.

**Montessori Methods of Student Evaluation**

Assessment in the Montessori classroom incorporates the hourly, daily, and weekly appraisal of student progress. Early in their educational career at RMCS, students learn self-assessment from the prepared environment of self-correcting materials and the examples/modeling provided by the adult teaching staff. Self-assessment, self-reflection, and self-correction are important lifelong skills that student s acquire from the earliest years in a Montessori environment. Additionally, students have experience from their earliest years that their learning is a partnership with teachers and families.

Teachers and students establish and agree upon daily, weekly, and monthly goals. Teachers will maintain written records of the work presented and mastered, and each child has a “work plan” against which his/her progress is measured as he or she moves through various time periods.

At any given time, a Montessori teacher knows precisely where a child is academically, developmentally, socially, and emotionally. With frequent one-on-one interaction and individual, personalized assessment of student work by the classroom teacher, issues and concerns emerge and are quickly addressed. Constant fine-tuning and periodic adjustments maximize student progress and assure intellectual engagement for each child.

In such a highly structured program, families are alerted quickly to any concerns throughout the year. Additionally, RMCS will provide formal documentation of the student’s progress quarterly. Progress reports will be sent home bi-annually (in the Fall and the Spring), and families/guardians receive end-of-term reports at the end of each school semester (January and June).

**Portfolios**

Twice each year, students and teachers go through the student’s completed work and make selections for their portfolios. Students prepare a self-evaluation of the selected work; what he or she accomplished, what he or she enjoyed the most, what he or she would like to learn next.

**Written Evaluations**

Teachers evaluate student’s level of academic mastery and behavior (personal development) once each semester.

**Self-Assessment**

Students reflect on both long and short-term planning of organizational and study skills as well as behavior goals.

**Informal Oral Exams**

Students share current work with the teacher verbally. Teachers continuously solicit feedback and understanding from the children on every aspect of their work, progress, perspective, and analysis.

**Demonstration of Mastery by Peer Teaching**

By guiding and advising each other and sharing shat they have learned. Students in a Montessori classroom reinforce their knowledge through teaching.

**Formal Presentations of Projects and Reports**

Teachers expect group and individual presentations of projects and reports in the Montessori classroom. Teachers evaluate the students’ level of understanding of the topic through these formal presentations.

**Ongoing Teacher Observation**

A core tenet of the Montessori philosophy incudes daily comprehensive observation. These observations go beyond work choices and performance. The teacher records notes on the student’s level of independence, coordination, organization, and concentration, as well as all areas of development, understanding of work, and success in managing student and community responsibilities.

**Rubrics**

A rubric uses descriptors explaining what is and is not present in the work. With these descriptors, the learner knows exactly how to improve his/her score on an assignment or project.

#### School Culture

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

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

**Zones of Regulation**

RMCS has been working at all levels with the “Zones” and students are responding with increased self-awareness and positive success. Please enjoy a brief description of the Zones of Regulation.

Self-regulation is something everyone continually works on, whether we are aware of it or not. We all encounter trying circumstances that test our limits from time to time. If we are able to recognize when we are becoming less regulated, we are able to do something about it to feel better and get ourselves to a better place. This comes naturally for some, but for others it is a skill that needs to be taught and practiced. This is the goal of The Zones of Regulation (or Zones for short).

**The Four Zones: Our Feelings & States Determine Our Zone**

The **Red Zone** is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be elated or experiencing anger, rage, explosive behavior, devastation, or terror when in the Red Zone.

The **Yellow Zone** is also used to describe a heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions; however, one has some control when they are in the Yellow Zone.  A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, the wiggles, or nervousness when in the Yellow Zone.

The **Green Zone** is used to describe a calm state of alertness. A person may be described as happy, focused, content, or ready to learn when in the Green Zone.  This is the zone where optimal learning occurs.

The **Blue Zone** is used to describe low states of alertness and down feelings, such as when one feels sad, tired, sick, or bored.



The Zones can be compared to traffic signs. When given a green light or in the Green Zone, one is “good to go”. A yellow sign means be aware or take caution, which applies to the Yellow Zone. A red light or stop sign means stop, and when one is the Red Zone, this often is the case. The Blue Zone can be compared to the rest area signs where one goes to rest or re-energize. All of the zones are expected at one time or another, but the curriculum focuses on teaching students how to manage their Zone based on the environment and people around them. For example, when playing on the playground or in an active/competitive game, no one would think twice about one being in the Yellow Zone but that would not be same in the library.

#### Snacks and Lunch

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

If you send a snack from home, please eliminate sweets such as candy, cookies, and soda; instead, send healthy foods including high protein and fats to nourish the growing brain, such as yogurt, cheese, vegetables, fresh fruits, and water to drink. Each classroom has its own procedure and schedule for snacks.

As a pedagogy that prioritizes Care of the Environment, RMCS operates a no waste practice. Please use re-sealable containers for snack and lunches. Soft lunch boxes with cooling packs are recommended. Students do not have access to a microwave or refrigeration for their lunches.

In accordance with state requirements, RMCS offers breakfast and/or lunch to families who request it. RMCS continues to pursue collaboration with our authorizing district, other partners and opportunities. As this may change at any time, families are encouraged to reach out with any questions.

#### Special Events

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

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

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

#### Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are special occasions, and RMCS honors and celebrate these events with the Montessori Birthday Celebration and leaves party-style events for the family. Using photographs and personal stories from the child and family for each year of life noting milestones, accomplishments, and growth, RMCS supports an acknowledgment and appreciation for the child’s aging and growth. Classes class may have different expressions to celebrate the day. Because this Montessori ritual is so reverent of the child’s growth, history, and mastery, we do not distract from it with food, goody bags, or treats. If a family is interested and would like to give something, please consider a well-loved book or item from the class wishlist for the classroom for everyone to enjoy. **Please contact your** **classroom teacher at least one week before your child’s birthday to schedule a birthday celebration for your child**.

Birthday invitations are encouraged to be distributed in accordance with our green practices and through family communication portal. If necessary, invitations may be distributed if all students are invited so as to avoid disruption and hurt feelings about an outside event during the schoolday. Invitations may only be distributed via Friday folders if received by Wednesday so that there is enough time for guide to schedule task.

#### Board of Directors

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

The Board of Directors performs most of its work through committees. These committees consist of directors, families, and members of the community. The board meets regular through board or committee meetings, both of which are open to the public. The dates and times of all meetings are posted at the school and on the school website. The board discusses issues, sets policy, and conducts their business for anyone to observe; public comment is invited at the beginning of each meeting.

#### Directory

Individual families opt in/permit family information to be shared in the family communication portal and may be included in an annual family directory published and distributed annually by the River Montessori Foundation.

#### Calendar

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

#### Cell Phones

Cell phones, wrist phones, and other such technology are disruptive to student focus, motivation, learning, and partnership. Students have no need for such technology academically or socially and may not use personal cell phones during school hours. If there is an individual unique need, such technology must be approved by the Executive Director & Superintendent, must remain completely turned off (not in silent mode), and secured in their backpacks or bags, until dismissal. Cell phones may not be out during class time or on the playground. Cell phones may not be in student’s pockets at any time during the school day.

Out of courtesy and respect to the work flow of RMCS students’ and staff, RMCS asks that all staff, volunteers, and visitors, do not use cell phones during the school day. Faculty and/or approved staff may occasionally use a cell-phone to take a picture through the family communication portal/program to document student work/learning, activities, and events.

#### Classroom Volunteers

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

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

#### Computer Use

River Montessori Charter Schooloffers age/grade-level appropriate 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. Please also reference computer use guidelines that families and students are required to sign as part of the enrollment process.

Students do not require social media in the Montessori pedagogy and receive “freedom within limits” for using all technology. Anything disruptive to learning will result in loss of computer privileges.

#### Partnership Meetings/Conferences

Student-led Partnership Meetings including guides and families are conducted twice a year before the Fall and Spring breaks. These conferences are very important to your child’s academic success and it is expected that families or guardians and your child attend both scheduled conferences.

#### Dress Code

Children’s clothing needs to be comfortable and appropriate (see list of non-allowed clothing below) in order to participate fully in all classroom and outdoor activities/play. Clothing labeled with the child’s name is helpful if articles are lost.

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

The following articles of clothing are not permitted:

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

In addition:

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

#### Field Trips and Montessori *Going Out*

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

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.

Families who volunteer to chaperone for field trips are expected to adhere to the Volunteering Guidelines.

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

#### Garden

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

#### Libraries in Montessori Education

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

**Family Lending Library**

RMCS maintains a small lending library; a collection of Montessori, familying, and other reference books/materials that have been favorites of Montessorians and community members over the years. This budding library is maintained in the school office. Families may sign out books and materials, and are welcome to bring reference materials to donate or share with others.

#### Lost and Found

Found items with no identification will be placed in the lost and found area. RMCS is not responsible for lost or damaged personal belongings. Items left in lost and found will be removed quarterly. It is recommended that all items are labeled before being brought to school. Unclaimed lost articles will be kept until the end of each quarter in lost and found and then donated to a local charity.

#### Family Participation

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

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

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

RMCS encourages families to fulfill a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service to the school each academic year. Families with more than one child attending the school are expected to contribute an additional 20 hours of volunteer time for each additional child in attendance. However, no student will be removed from the program if the family(s) fail to meet the target for volunteering. Family Involvement Pledges are included in registration and family materials that allow families to sign up for various volunteer options that align with their talents and interests. Hours donated are logged on a Volunteer log sheet, and are maintained in the school office. The following agreement is included on every log sheet, which is signed by each volunteer:

**VOLUNTEER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT:**

With my signature above, I am in agreement that In my capacity as a family volunteer with River Montessori Charter School (RMCS), I understand that care and courtesy of one another and our environment is key to our environment and commitment. In the course of the school day, or any activity or event sponsored by the RMCS Foundation or school, I may be in a position to hear confidential student information relayed verbally between families, staff and faculty members.

I agree to respect the confidentiality of all students and families currently or previously enrolled at RMCS by not disclosing any information that I may be exposed to in my capacity as a volunteer.

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

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

Families and community members are continuously involved in RMCS through opportunities to participate on the governing board of the school and through the “Foundation,” which coordinates volunteers and family led activities and facilitates communication between students, families, and school faculty/administration.

#### Personal Property

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

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

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

#### River Montessori Foundation

The River Montessori Foundation is the primary fundraising organization for River Montessori Charter School and is led by families and larger community members. Aside from raising funds for RMCS, the Foundation also shares two additional goals: to increase awareness of the Montessori Philosophy and to support the Montessori community. All families are automatically a part of the Foundation, and are welcomed and encouraged to participate in meetings and activities to support the school.

There are many ways that the Foundation supports the school, often behind the scenes, working to provide support to families and the school In addition to publishing an annual family directory and hosting events and activities throughout the year, the Foundation also organizes a monthly coffee social prior to each monthly Foundation meeting. As a 501c3 organization, the Foundation has officers and committees that work tirelessly for the RMCS community. While the primary focus of the monies raised directly fund classroom assistants, music, physical education, other special areas of funding and activities are determined through Foundation members in meetings.

The Foundation also shares weekly messaging to the RMCS community included in the weekly school emails. These messages are always full of valuable and timely information to the community.

*Following is a sampling of events and activities that the Foundation organizes and supports throughout the year:*

#### Social Events

#### Monthly Coffee Socials/Foundation Meetings

#### Dine-n-Donates

#### Walk-a-Thon

#### Creator Faire

#### Book Faire

#### Annual Fund

#### Emergency Preparedness

River will be conducting emergency drills throughout the school year so that students and staff are prepared in the event of an emergency (see the section on Safety below). Another important component of emergency preparedness at school is ensuring that each child has a small emergency kit on site, and that each classroom has a store of basic first aid and emergency supplies. We ask that you support your child and the school in these efforts by sending the following items for your student. Most of these items can be purchased at the local drug store. These kits will be returned to you during the final week of the school year.

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

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

#### Safety

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

###### Emergency Evacuation Plan

The school has an Emergency Plan and coordinates its procedures with 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 families, is prohibited at all times.

#### Transportation Safety

Your cooperation is essential if we are to keep children safe in the parking lot and traffic lanes at River Montessori. **The speed limit on school grounds is 5 mph at all times.** Please refer to the parking and traffic map posted on the school website for detailed information about parking and traffic flow patterns around the school.

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

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

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

#### Visitors and Volunteers

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

**Appendix**

## **Code of Conduct**

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

###### Background

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

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

**Honesty**

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

**Kindness**

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

**Discipline**

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

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

With this in mind:

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

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

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

###### Standards of Behavior

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

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

###### Scope

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

This document is then essentially a guide for all members of the School Community about the standards of behavior which are acceptable in the School environment or when attending any official, learning or social function or activity of or relating to the School or in any location at which the School is represented. The School Community Code of Conduct is a guide for acceptable standards of behavior that extend beyond the immediate family to include guardians, step-families, relatives, friends, supporters, and caregivers of students of the School.

###### General Conduct

School Community members are expected to:

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

###### Physical Safety

In particular, all School Community members must not:

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

All School Community members must:

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

###### Responsibility for Other Community Members

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

###### Breach of the Code of Conduct

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

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

Appendices

Appendix A Annual Notices

Appendix B School Directory/River Flow

**APPENDIX A**

**2023-2024 Annual Notice Guide to Families**

**A. ANNUAL NOTICES**

**Availability of Prospectus**

Upon request, River Montessori Charter School (“RMCS” or “Charter School”) will make available to any parent or legal guardian, a school prospectus, which shall include the curriculum, including titles, descriptions, and instructional aims of every course offered. Please note that, pursuant to law, RMCS may charge for the prospectus in an amount not to exceed the cost of duplication.

**Campus Search and Seizure**

RMCS recognizes and has determined that the occurrence of incidents which may include the possession of firearms, weapons, alcohol, controlled substances, or other items of contraband prohibited by law or RMCS rules and regulations, jeopardizes the health, safety and welfare of students and RMCS employees.

The California Constitution requires that all students and staff of public schools have the inalienable right to attend campuses which are safe, secure, and peaceful. As such, RMCS has adopted a Policy outlining the reasonable search of students and their property, student use areas, and/or student lockers and the seizure of illegal, unsafe, unauthorized or contraband items and materials through a search based upon reasonable suspicion.

Student lockers are school property and remain at all times under the control of RMCS. Students shall assume full responsibility for the security of their lockers. Student lockers may not be used to store illegal, unauthorized, or contraband materials. The acceptance and use of locker facilities on school campus by any student shall constitute consent by the student to the search of such locker facilities by authorized school personnel and/or law enforcement. Inspections of lockers may be conducted by school personnel and/or law enforcement through the use of trained dogs.

A student’s personal cell phone, smartphone, or other personal electronic device shall not be searched by school officials without a warrant, the student's consent, or a legitimate emergency, unless the device is lost or abandoned. An emergency is anysituation involving danger of death or serious physical injury to any person, that requires access to the information located or reasonably believed to be located on the electronic device. If RMCS has a good faith belief that the device is lost, stolen, or abandoned, RMCS may only access electronic device information in order to attempt to identify, verify, or contact the owner of the device.

RMCS is not prohibited from seizing/confiscating a student’s personal electronic device, without searching its contents, if the student’s use or possession of the private electronic device is in violation of RMCS rules or regulations.

**Diabetes**

RMCS will provide an information sheet regarding type 1 diabetes to the parent or guardian of a student when the student is first enrolled in elementary school, pursuant to Education Code Section 49452.6. The information sheet shall include, but shall not be limited to, all of the following:

1. A description of type 1 diabetes.
2. A description of the risk factors and warning signs associated with type 1 diabetes.
3. A recommendation that parents or guardians of students displaying warning signs associated with type 1 diabetes should immediately consult with the student’s primary care provider to determine if immediate screening for type 1 diabetes is appropriate.
4. A description of the screening process for type 1 diabetes and the implications of test results.
5. A recommendation that, following a type 1 diagnosis, parents or guardians should consult with the pupil’s primary care provider to develop an appropriate treatment plan, which may include consultation with and examination by a specialty care provider, including, but not limited to, a properly qualified endocrinologist.

A copy of the information sheet regarding type 1 diabetes is available at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/type1diabetes.asp>. Please contact the office if you need a copy of this information sheet or if you have any questions about this information sheet.

**Education of Foster and Mobile Youth**

**Definitions**: For the purposes of this annual notice the terms are defined as follows:

* *“Foster youth”* means any of the following:

1. A child who is the subject of a petition filed pursuant to California Welfare and Institutions Code (“WIC”) section 309 (whether or not the child has been removed from the child’s home by juvenile court).
2. A child who is the subject of a petition filed pursuant WIC section 602, has been removed from the child’s home by the juvenile court, and is in foster care.
3. A nonminor under the transition jurisdiction of the juvenile court, as described in WIC section 450, who satisfies all of the following criteria:
   1. The nonminor has attained 18 years of age while under an order of foster care placement by the juvenile court.
   2. The nonminor is in foster care under the placement and care responsibility of the county welfare department, county probation department, Indian tribe, consortium of tribes, or tribal organization.
   3. The nonminor is participating in a transitional independent living case plan.
4. A dependent child of the court of an Indian tribe, consortium of tribes, or tribal organization who is the subject of a petition filed in the tribal court.[[1]](#footnote-1)
5. A child who is the subject of a voluntary placement agreement, as defined in WIC section 11400.

* “*Former juvenile court school student*” means a student who, upon completion of the student’s second year of high school, transfers from a juvenile court school to RMCS.
* *“Child of a military family”* refers to a student who resides in the household of an active duty military member.
* *“Currently Migratory Child”* refers to a child who, within the last 12-months, has moved with a parent, guardian, or other person having custody to RMCS from another Local Educational Agency (“LEA”), either within California or from another state, so that the child or a member of the child’s immediate family might secure temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity, and whose parents or guardians have been informed of the child’s eligibility for migrant education services. This includes a child who, without the parent/guardian, has continued to migrate annually to secure temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity.
* *“Student participating in a newcomer program”* means a student who is participating in a program designed to meet the academic and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrant students that has as a primary objective the development of English language proficiency.

Within this notice, foster youth, former juvenile court school students, a child of a military family, a currently migratory child, and a student participating in the newcomer program will be collectively referred to as “Foster and Mobile Youth.” Within this notice, a parent, guardian, or other person holding the educational rights for a Foster and Mobile Youth will be referred to as a “parent/guardian.”

**Foster and Mobile Youth Liaison**: The Executive Director & Superintendent or designee designates the following staff person as the Liaison for Foster and Mobile Youth:

Kelly Griffith Mannion, M.Ed.

Executive Director & Superintendent

3880 Cypress Drive, Ste B

Petaluma, CA 94954

707.778.6414 x 101

The Foster and Mobile Youth Liaison’s responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

1. Ensuring and facilitating the proper educational placement, enrollment in school, and checkout from school of foster children.
2. Assisting foster children when transferring from one school to another school in ensuring proper transfer of credits, records and grades.

**School Stability:** RMCS will work with foster youth and their parent/guardian to ensure that each pupil is placed in the least restrictive educational programs, and has access to the academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all pupils, including, but not necessarily limited to, interscholastic sports. All decisions regarding a foster youth’s education and placement will be based on the best interest of the child and shall consider, among other factors, educational stability and the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress.

Foster youth, currently migratory children and children of military families have the right to remain in their school of origin if it is in their best interest. RMCS will immediately enroll a foster youth, currently migratory child or child of a military family seeking reenrollment in RMCS as the student’s school of origin (subject to RMCS’s capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in RMCS’s charter and Board policy). If a dispute arises regarding a foster youth’s request to remain in RMCS as the school of origin, the foster youth has the right to remain in RMCS pending the resolution of the dispute. RMCS will also immediately enroll any foster youth, currently migratory child or child of a military family seeking to transfer to RMCS (subject to RMCS’s capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in RMCS’s charter and Board policy) regardless of the student’s ability to meet normal enrollment documentation or uniform requirements (e.g., producing medical records or academic records from a previous school).

Foster youth, currently migratory children, and children of military families have the right to remain in their school of origin following the termination of the child’s status as a foster youth, currently migratory child or child of a military family, as follows:

1. For students in Kindergarten through eighth grade, inclusive, the student will be allowed to continue in the school of origin through the duration of the academic year in which the student’s status changed.
2. For students enrolled in high school, the student will be allowed to continue in the school of origin through graduation.

**Student Records:** When RMCS receives a transfer request and/or student records request for the educational information and records of a foster youth from a new local educational agency (“LEA”), RMCS shall provide these student records within two (2) business days. RMCS shall compile the complete educational record of the student, including but not limited to a determination of seat time, full or partial credits earned, current classes and grades, immunization and other records, and, if applicable, a copy of the student’s special education records including assessments, IEPs, and/or 504 plans. All requests for student records will be shared with the Foster and Mobile Youth Liaison, who shall be aware of the specific educational record keeping needs of Foster and Mobile Youth.

RMCS shall not lower a foster youth’s grades as a result of the student’s absence due to a verified court appearance, related court ordered activity, or a change the placement of the student made by a county or placing agency. If a foster youth is absent from school due to a decision to change the placement of the student made by a county or placing agency, the grades and credits of the pupil will be calculated as of the date the student left RMCS.

In accordance with RMCS’s Educational Records and Student Information Policy, under limited circumstances, RMCS may disclose student records or personally identifiable information contained in those records to certain requesting parties including but not limited to a foster family agency and state and local authorities within a juvenile justice system, without parent/guardian consent.

**Discipline Determinations:** If RMCS intends to extend the suspension of any foster youth pending a recommendation for expulsion, RMCS will invite the student’s attorney and an appropriate representative from the relevant county agency to participate in the meeting at which the extension of the suspension will be discussed.

If RMCS intends to suspend for more than ten (10) consecutive school days or expel a student with a disability who is also a foster youth due to an act for which the recommendation for expulsion is discretionary, RMCS will invite the student’s attorney and an appropriate representative from the relevant county agency to participate in the Manifestation Determination Review meeting.

**Complaints of Noncompliance:** A complaint of noncompliance with any of the requirements outlined above may be filed through RMCS’s Uniform Complaint Procedures. A copy of the Uniform Complaint Policy and Procedures is available on the RMCS website.

**Availability of Complete Policy:** For any Foster and Mobile Youth who enrolls at RMCS, a copy of RMCS’s complete foster youth policy shall be provided at the time of enrollment. A copy of the complete Policy is available on the RMCS website.

**Education of Homeless Children and Youth**

The term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. It includes children and youths who (42 U.S.C. § 11434a):

1. Are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
2. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
3. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and/or
4. Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition of “homeless.”

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the parent or guardian. In the case of unaccompanied youth, status is determined by RMCS Liaison.

**School Liaison**: The Executive Director & Superintendent or designee designates the following staff person as the School Liaison for homeless students (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)):

Kelly Griffith Mannion, M.Ed.

Executive Director & Superintendent

3880 Cypress Drive, Ste B

Petaluma, CA 94954

707.778.6414 x 101

RMCS Liaison shall ensure that (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)):

1. Homeless students are identified by school personnel and through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies, and through the annual housing questionnaire administered by RMCS
2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at RMCS.
3. Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act, early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, any other preschool programs administered by RMCS, if any, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
4. Parents/guardians are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places frequented by parents or guardians of such youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, and in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless youth and unaccompanied youth.
6. Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with law, RMCS’s charter, and Board policy.
7. Parents/guardians and any unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
8. Charter School personnel providing services receive professional development and other support.
9. RMCS Liaison collaborates with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.
10. Unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school; have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth; and are informed of their status as independent students under section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and that the youths may obtain assistance from RMCS Liaison to receive verification of such status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid described in section 483 of the Act.

The California Department of Education publishes a list of the contact information for the Homeless Education Liaisons in the state, which is available at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>

**Housing Questionnaire:** Charter School shall administer a housing questionnaire for purposes of identifying homeless children and youth. Charter School shall ensure that the housing questionnaire is based on the best practices developed by the CDE. Charter School shall annually provide the housing questionnaire to all parents/guardians of students and to all unaccompanied youths at Charter School. The housing questionnaire shall include an explanation of the rights and protections a student has as a homeless child or youth or as an unaccompanied youth. The housing questionnaire shall be available in paper form. The housing questionnaire shall be available in English, and if fifteen (15) percent or more of the students enrolled at Charter School speak a single primary language other than English, it shall also be written in the primary language. The questionnaire shall be translated into other languages upon request of a student’s parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth. Charter School shall collect the completed housing questionnaires and annually report to the CDE the number of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled. (Education Code Section 48851.)

**English Learners**

RMCS is committed to the success of its English Learners and support will be offered both within academic classes and in supplemental settings for students who need additional support for English language learning. RMCS will meet all applicable legal requirements for English Learners as they pertain to annual notification to parents, student identification, placement, program options, English Learners and core content instruction, teacher qualifications and training, reclassification to fluent English proficient status, monitoring and evaluating program effectiveness, and standardized testing requirements. RMCS will implement policies to assure proper placement, evaluation, and communication regarding English Learners and the rights of students and parents.

**Universal School Meals**

Pursuant to California law, RMCS shall provide two (2) nutritionally adequate meals to each student who requests a meal without consideration of the student’s eligibility for a federally funded free or reduced-price meal, with a maximum of one (1) free meal per meal service (breakfast and lunch) each school day.

**Human Trafficking Prevention**

California has the highest number of incidents of human trafficking in the U.S., and all students may be vulnerable. Information and materials for parents/guardians about the prevention of human trafficking are available at the following links:

<https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/ht/HTPoster_ENG_SP.pdf>

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/about/ways-endtrafficking>

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/about/myths-facts-human-trafficking>

**Immunizations**

Pursuant to the California Health and Safety Code and the California Code of Regulations, children must provide proof of having received required immunizations (shots) before they can attend school unless they meet the requirements for an exemption. Immunization records are required for all incoming students. Verification of immunizations will be completed with written medical records from the child’s doctor or immunization clinic. To ensure a safe learning environment for all students, RMCS follows and abides by the health standards set forth by the state of California. The immunization status of all students will be reviewed periodically. Those students who are not in compliance with the State requirements must be excluded from attendance until the requirements are met. Students who have been exposed to a communicable disease for which they have not been immunized may be excluded from school at the discretion of RMCS.

These required immunizations include:

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| **Child’s Grade** | **List of shots required to attend school** |
| **TK/K-12 Admission** | Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (DTaP) - Five (5) doses Polio - Four (4) doses  Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) - Two (2) doses Hepatitis B (Hep B) - Three (3) doses  Varicella (chickenpox) – Two (2) doses  **NOTE:** Four doses of DTaP are allowed if one was given on or after the fourth birthday. Three doses of DTaP meet the requirement if at least one dose of Tdap, DTaP, or DTP vaccine was given on or after the seventh birthday (also meets the 7th-12th grade Tdap requirement.) One or two doses of Td vaccine given on or after the seventh birthday count towards the requirement for DTaP. Three doses of Polio are allowed if one was given on or after fourth birthday. MMR doses must be given on or after first birthday. Two doses of measles, two doses of mumps, and one dose of rubella vaccine meet the requirement, separately or combined. Combination vaccines (e.g., MMRV) meet the requirements for individual component vaccines. |

**Involuntary Removal Process**

No student shall be involuntarily removed by RMCS for any reason unless the parent or guardian of the student has been provided written notice of intent to remove the student no less than five (5) schooldays before the effective date of the action (“Involuntary Removal Notice”). The written notice shall be in the native language of the student or the student’s parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student’s educational rights holder. The Involuntary Removal Notice shall include the charges against the student and an explanation of the student’s basic rights including the right to request a hearing before the effective date of the action. The hearing shall be consistent with RMCS’s expulsion procedures. If the student’s parent, guardian, or educational rights holder requests a hearing, the student shall remain enrolled and shall not be removed until RMCS issues a final decision. As used herein, “involuntarily removed” includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not include suspensions or expulsions pursuant to RMCS’s suspension and expulsion policy.

Upon parent/guardian request for a hearing, RMCS will provide notice of hearing consistent with its expulsion hearing process, through which the student has a fair opportunity to present testimony, evidence, and witnesses and confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses, and at which the student has the right to bring legal counsel or an advocate. The notice of hearing shall be in the native language of the student or the student’s parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student’s educational rights holder, and shall include a copy of RMCS’s expulsion hearing process.

If the parent/guardian is nonresponsive to the Involuntary Removal Notice, the student will be disenrolled as of the effective date set forth in the Involuntary Removal Notice. If the parent/guardian requests a hearing and does not attend on the date scheduled for the hearing the student will be disenrolled effective the date of the hearing.

If, as a result of the hearing, the student is disenrolled, notice will be sent to the student’s last known school district of residence within thirty (30) days.

A hearing decision not to disenroll the student does not prevent RMCS from making a similar recommendation in the future should student truancy continue or re-occur.

**Lost or Damaged School Property**

If a student willfully damages RMCS’s property or the personal property of a Charter School employee, or fails to return a textbook, library book, computer/tablet or other Charter School property that has been loaned to the student, the student’s parents/guardians are liable for all damages caused by the student’s misconduct not to exceed ten thousand dollars ($10,000), adjusted annually for inflation. After notifying the student’s parent or guardian in writing of the student’s alleged misconduct and affording the student due process, RMCS may withhold the student’s grades and transcripts until the damages have been paid. If the student and the student’s parent/guardian are unable to pay for the damages or to return the property, RMCS will provide a program of voluntary work for the minor in lieu of the payment of monetary damages. Upon completion of the voluntary work, the student’s grades will be released.

**Mental Health Services**

RMCS recognizes that when unidentified and unaddressed, mental health challenges can lead to poor academic performance, increased likelihood of suspension and expulsion, chronic absenteeism, student attrition, homelessness, incarceration, and/or violence. Access to mental health services at RMCS and in our community is not only critical to improving the physical and emotional safety of students, but it also helps address barriers to learning and provides support so that all students can learn problem-solving skills and achieve in school and, ultimately, in life. The following resources are available to your child:

Available on Campus:

* School-based counseling services – your child is encouraged to directly contact a Charter School counselor by coming into the counseling office during school hours and making an appointment to speak with a counselor. The counseling office can also be reached at 707.778.6414 x 114. Our Charter School Education Specialist & Student Services Coordinator supports students by providing individual sessions, group or parent consultations whenever a student is having a difficult time due to academic stress, transition to changes in their environment, or social concerns, including isolation. Counseling services, whether provided by our Charter School or by an outside provider listed herein, are voluntary.
* Special education services – if you believe your child may have a disability, you are encouraged to directly contact Education Specialist and Student Services Coordinator, Lorna Rochman-McEntire at 707.778.6414 x to request an evaluation.
* Prescription medication while on campus – if your child requires prescription medication during school hours and you would like assistance from School staff in providing this medication to your child, please contact our Office Coordinator Alex Van Houten at 707.778.6414 x 103.

Available in the Community:

* County of Sonoma Department of Health Services provides health coverage, food assistance, housing assistance, foster care, and a broad range of programs and services designed to promote, develop and sustain the health of individuals, families, and communities.  [(707) 565-4700](tel:+17075654700) or CA Relay: [711](tel:711;phone-context=+1) or visit: https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services
  + County of Sonoma Mental Health Hotlines-
    - 24 Hour Hotline [(707) 565-6900](tel:+17075656900) or [(800) 870-8786](tel:+18008708786)
    - 24-hour Suicide Prevention [(855) 587-6373](tel:+18555876373)
    - 24-Hour Crisis Services -[(707) 576-8181](tel:+17075768181)
* Child Parent Institute provides child therapy, family resource assistance, parent education, facilitated supervised visitation, therapeutic and recreational creative arts programming. (707) 585-6108 or visit: https://calparents.org/
* Petaluma Health Center- This organization ensures access to high-quality health care and health equity for the community. 707.559.7500 or visit: https://phealthcenter.org/
* Mentor Me at Cavanaugh Recreation Center- This organization services youths ages 5-17 with trained adult mentors. 707.765.8488 or visit: www.wearementorme.org.

Available Nationally:

* National Suicide Prevention Hotline - This organization provides confidential support for adults and youth in distress, including prevention and crisis resources. Available 24 hours at 1-800-273-8255.
* The Trevor Project - This organization provides suicide prevention and crisis intervention for LGBTQ youth between the ages of 13 and 24.  **Available at 1-866-488-7386 or visit** <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>**.**
* Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America – This organization is a community- based mentorship program. Community-specific program information can be found online at <https://www.bbbs.org> or by calling (813) 720-8778.

**Nondiscrimination Statement**

RMCS does not discriminate against any person on the basis of actual or perceived disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, immigration status, religion, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes in the California Penal Code.

RMCS adheres to all provisions of federal law related to students with disabilities, including, but not limited to, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (“ADA”), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (“IDEIA”).

RMCS does not discourage students from enrolling or seeking to enroll in RMCS for any reason, including, but not limited to, academic performance, disability, neglect or delinquency, English proficiency, for being homeless or a foster/mobile youth, economic disadvantage, nationality, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. RMCS shall not encourage a student currently attending Charter School to disenroll or transfer to another school based on any of the aforementioned reasons except in cases of expulsion and suspension or involuntary removal in accordance with RMCS’s charter and relevant policies.

RMCS does not request nor require student records prior to a student’s enrollment.

RMCS shall provide a copy of the California Department of Education Complaint Notice and Form to any parent, guardian, or student over the age of 18 at the following times: (1) when a parent, guardian, or student over of the age of 18 inquires about enrollment; (2) before conducting an enrollment lottery; and (3) before disenrollment of a student.

RMCS is committed to providing an educational atmosphere that is free of unlawful harassment under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (sex); Titles IV, VI, and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (race, color, or national origin); The Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the IDEIA; and Section 504 and Title II of the ADA (mental or physical disability). RMCS also prohibits sexual harassment, including cyber sexual bullying, and harassment based upon pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, race, religion, religious affiliation, creed, color, immigration status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital status, age, sexual orientation, or any other basis protected by federal, state, local law, ordinance or regulation. RMCS does not condone or tolerate harassment of any type, including discrimination, intimidation, or bullying, including cyber sexual bullying, by any employee, independent contractor or other person with which RMCS does business, or any other individual, student, or volunteer. This applies to all employees, students, or volunteers and relationships, regardless of position or gender. RMCS will promptly and thoroughly investigate any complaint of harassment and take appropriate corrective action, if warranted. Inquiries, complaints, or grievances regarding harassment as described in this section, above, should be directed to RMCS Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) Compliance Officer.

The lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission or participation in RMCS’s programs or activities. RMCS prohibits retaliation against anyone who files a complaint or who participates or refuses to participate in a complaint investigation.

**Oral Health Assessment**

Students enrolled in kindergarten in a public school or while enrolled in first grade if the student was not previously enrolled in kindergarten in a public school are required to have an oral health assessment completed by a dental professional. Please contact the main office if you have questions about this requirement.

**Physical Examinations and Right to Refuse**

All students must complete a health screening examination on or before the 90th day after the student’s entrance into first grade or such students must have obtained a waiver pursuant to Health and Safety Code Sections 124040 and 124085. This examination can be obtained from your family physician or possibly through the services provided by your County Health Department. Information and forms are distributed to students enrolled in kindergarten. If your child’s medical status changes, please provide the teacher with a physician’s written verification of the medical issue, especially if it impacts in any way your child’s ability to perform schoolwork.

A parent/guardian having control or charge of any child enrolled in RMCS may file annually with the Executive Director & Superintendent a written and signed statement stating that the parent/guardian will not consent to a physical examination of the child. Thereupon the child shall be exempt from any physical examination, but whenever there is a good reason to believe that the child is suffering from a recognized contagious or infectious disease, the child shall be sent home and shall not be permitted to return until the school authorities are satisfied that any contagious or infectious disease does not exist.

**Pregnant and Parenting Students**

RMCS recognizes that pregnant and parenting students are entitled to accommodations that provide them with the opportunity to succeed academically while protecting their health and the health of their children. A pregnant or parenting student is entitled to eight (8) weeks of parental leave, or more if deemed medically necessary by the student’s physician, which the student may take before the birth of the student’s infant if there is a medical necessity and after childbirth during the school year in which the birth takes place, inclusive of any mandatory summer instruction, in order to protect the health of the student who gives or expects to give birth and the infant, and to allow the pregnant or parenting student to care for and bond with the infant. RMCS will ensure that absences from the student’s regular school program are excused until the student is able to return to the regular school program.

Upon return to school after taking parental leave, a pregnant or parenting student will be able to make up work missed during the pregnant or parenting student’s leave, including, but not limited to, makeup work plans and reenrollment in courses.

Complaints of noncompliance with laws relating to pregnant or parenting students may be filed under the RMCS Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) with the RMCS UCP Compliance Officer. A copy of the UCP is available on the RMCS website. For further information on any part of the complaint procedures, including filing a complaint or requesting a copy of the complaint procedures, please contact the Executive Director & Superintendent.

**Safe Storage of Firearms**

The purpose of this notice is to inform and to remind parents and legal guardians of all students at the Charter School of their responsibilities for keeping firearms out of the hands of children as required by California law. There have been many news reports of children bringing firearms to school. In many instances, the child obtained the firearm(s) from his or her home. **These incidents can be easily prevented by storing firearms in a safe and secure manner, including keeping them locked up when not in use and storing them separately from ammunition.**

To help everyone understand their legal responsibilities, this notice spells out California law regarding the storage of firearms. Please take some time to review this notice and evaluate your own personal practices to assure that you and your family are in compliance with California law:

* With very limited exceptions, California makes a person criminally liable for keeping any firearm, loaded or unloaded, within any premises that are under their custody and control where that person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to the firearm without the permission of the child’s parent or legal guardian, and the child obtains access to the firearm and thereby (1) causes death or injury to the child or any other person; (2) carries the firearm off the premises or to a public place, including to any preschool or school grades kindergarten through twelfth grade, or to any school-sponsored event, activity, or performance; or (3) unlawfully brandishes the firearm to others.
  + The criminal penalty may be significantly greater if someone dies or suffers great bodily injury as a result of the child gaining access to the firearm.
* With very limited exceptions, California also makes it a crime for a person to negligently store or leave any firearm, loaded or unloaded, on their premises in a location where the person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to it without the permission of the child’s parent or legal guardian, unless reasonable action is taken to secure the firearm against access by the child, even where a minor **never** actually accesses the firearm.
* In addition to potential fines and terms of imprisonment, as of January 1, 2020, a gun owner found criminally liable under these California laws faces prohibitions from possessing, controlling, owning, receiving, or purchasing a firearm for 10 years.
* Finally, a parent or guardian may also be civilly liable for damages resulting from the discharge of a firearm by that person’s child or ward.

The county or city may have additional restrictions regarding the safe storage of firearms. Thank you for helping to keep our children and schools safe. Remember that the easiest and safest way to comply with the law is to keep firearms in a locked container or secured with a locking device that renders the firearm inoperable.

**School Bus and Passenger Safety**

All students who are transported in a schoolbus or school student activity bus shall receive instruction in school bus emergency procedures and passenger safety. A copy of the Transportation Safety Plan is available upon request.

**School Safety Plan**

RMCS has established a Comprehensive School Safety Plan. The Plan is available on the RMCS website.

**Section 504**

RMCS recognizes its legal responsibility to ensure that no qualified person with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program of RMCS. Any student who has an objectively identified disability which substantially limits a major life activity, including, but not limited to learning, is eligible for accommodations by RMCS. The parent of any student suspected of needing or qualifying for accommodations under Section 504 may make a referral for an evaluation to the Executive Director & Superintendent. A copy of RMCS’s Section 504 policies and procedures is available on the RMCS website.

**Special Education /Students with Disabilities**

We are dedicated to the belief that all students can learn and must be guaranteed equal opportunity to become contributing members of the academic environment and society. RMCS provides special education instruction and related services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act (“IDEA”), Education Code requirements, and applicable policies and procedures of the El Dorado County SELPA. These services are available for special education students enrolled at RMCS. We offer high quality educational programs and services for all our students in accordance with the assessed needs of each student. RMCS collaborates with parents, the student, teachers, and other agencies, as may be indicated, in order to appropriately serve the educational needs of each student.

Pursuant to the IDEA and relevant state law, RMCS is responsible for identifying, locating, and evaluating children enrolled at RMCS with known or suspected disabilities to determine whether a need for special education and related services exists. This includes children with disabilities who are homeless or foster youth. RMCS shall not deny nor discourage any student from enrollment solely due to a disability. If you believe your child may be eligible for special education services, please contact Lorna Rochman-McEntire, Education Specialist & Student Services Coordinator, 707.778.6414 x 114.

**State Testing**

RMCS shall annually administer required state testing to the applicable grades (e.g., the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress [“CAASPP”].) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a parent’s or guardian’s written request to Charter School officials to excuse their child from any or all parts of the CAASPP shall be granted. Upon request, parents have a right to information on the level of achievement of their student on every State academic assessment administered to the student.

**Student Records, including Records Challenges and Directory Information**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older (“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 thirty (30) days after the day RMCS receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to RMCS Executive Director & Superintendent or designee a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. RMCS 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, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student’s privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask RMCS to amend a record should write RMCS’s Executive Director & Superintendent or designee, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it should be changed. If RMCS decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, RMCS will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and 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. If RMCS decides to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the Executive Director & Superintendent must order the correction or the removal and destruction of the information and inform the parent or eligible student of the amendment in writing.

1. The right to provide written consent before RMCS discloses personally identifiable information (“PII”) from 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 Charter School officials with legitimate educational interests. A Charter School official is a person employed by RMCS as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on RMCS’s Board of Directors. A Charter School official also may include a volunteer, consultant, vendor, or contractor outside of RMCS who performs an institutional service or function for which RMCS would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, therapist, or contracted provider of digital educational platforms and/or services; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another Charter School official in performing their tasks. A Charter School official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill their professional responsibility.

Upon request, RMCS discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled, if the disclosure is for purposes of the student’s enrollment or transfer.

Note that Charter School will not release information to third parties for immigration-enforcement purposes, except as required by law or court order.

1. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by RMCS to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Student Privacy Policy Office

U.S. Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20202

1. The right to request that RMCS not release student names, addresses and telephone listings to military recruiters or institutions of higher education without prior written parental consent.

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from a student’s education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in §99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to Charter School officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, §99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires RMCS to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A Charter School may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student to the following parties:

* + - 1. Charter School officials who have a legitimate educational interest as defined by 34 C.F.R. Part 99;
      2. Other schools to which a student seeks or intends to enroll so long as the disclosure is for purposes related to the student’s enrollment or transfer. When a student transfers schools, RMCS will mail the original or a copy of a student’s cumulative file to the receiving district or private school within ten (10) school days following the date the request is received from the public school or private school where the student intends to enroll. RMCS will make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or eligible student of the request for records at the parent’s or eligible student’s last known address, unless the disclosure is initiated by the parent or eligible student. Additionally, RMCS will give the parent or eligible student, upon request, a copy of the record that was disclosed and give the parent or eligible student, upon request, an opportunity for a hearing;
      3. Certain government officials listed in 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1) in order to carry out lawful functions;
      4. Appropriate parties in connection with a student’s application for, or receipt of, financial aid if it is necessary to determine eligibility, amount of aid, conditions for aid or enforcing the terms and conditions of the aid;
      5. Organizations conducting certain studies for RMCS in accordance with 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(F);
      6. Accrediting organizations in order to carry out their accrediting functions;
      7. Parents of a dependent student as defined in section [152 of the Internal Revenue Code](http://www.lexis.com/research/buttonTFLink?_m=6abc13686deebc8da5c10abc89f02b9d&_xfercite=%3ccite%20cc%3d%22USA%22%3e%3c%21%5bCDATA%5b34%20CFR%2099.31%5d%5d%3e%3c%2fcite%3e&_butType=4&_butStat=0&_butNum=3&_butInline=1&_butinfo=26%20USC%20152&_fmtstr=FULL&docnum=1&_startdoc=1&wchp=dGLbVlb-zSkAl&_md5=e6f62af1ce041b02d5bf8cf8786c505b) of 1986;
      8. Individuals or entities, in compliance with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. Subject to the exceptions found in 34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(9)(i), reasonable effort must be made to notify the parent or eligible student of the order or subpoena in advance of compliance, so that the parent or eligible student may seek a protective order;
      9. Persons who need to know in cases of health and safety emergencies;
      10. State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law;
      11. A foster family agency with jurisdiction over a currently enrolled or former student, a short-term residential treatment program staff responsible for the education or case management of a student, and a caregiver (regardless of whether the caregiver has been appointed as the student’s educational rights holder) who has direct responsibility for the care of the student, including a certified or licensed foster parent, an approved relative or nonrelated extended family member, or a resource family, may access the current or most recent records of grades, transcripts, attendance, discipline, and online communication on platforms established by RMCS for students and parents, and any individualized education program (“IEP”) or Section 504 plan that may have been developed or maintained by RMCS; and/or
      12. A victim of an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence or a non-forcible sex offense. The disclosure may only include the final results of the disciplinary proceedings conducted by RMCS with respect to that alleged crime or offense. RMCS discloses the final results of the disciplinary proceeding regardless of whether RMCS concluded a violation was committed.

“Directory Information” is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released. RMCS may disclose the personally identifiable information that it has designated as directory information without a parent’s or eligible student’s prior written consent. RMCS has designated the following information as directory information:

1. Student’s name
2. Student’s address
3. Parent’s/guardian’s address
4. Telephone listing
5. Student’s electronic mail address
6. Parent’s/guardian’s electronic mail address
7. Photograph/video
8. Date and place of birth
9. Dates of attendance
10. Grade level
11. Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
12. Weight and height of members of athletic teams
13. Degrees, honors, and awards received
14. The most recent educational agency or institution attended
15. Student ID number, user ID, or other unique personal identifier used to communicate in electronic systems that cannot be used to access education records without a PIN, password, etc. (A student’s social security number, in whole or in part, cannot be used for this purpose.)

If you do not want RMCS to disclose directory information from your child’s education records without your prior written consent, you must notify RMCS in writing at the time of enrollment or re-enrollment. Please notify the Executive Director & Superintendent at: admin@rivermontessoricharter.org. A copy of the complete Policy is available on the RMCS website.

**Surveys About Personal Beliefs**

Unless the student’s parent/guardian gives written permission, a student will not be given any test, questionnaire, survey, or examination containing any questions about the student’s, or the student’s parents’ or guardians’ personal beliefs or practices in sex, family life, morality, or religion.

**Tobacco-Free Schools**

Ample research has demonstrated the health hazards associated with the use of tobacco products, including smoking and the breathing of secondhand smoke. RMCS provides instructional programs designed to discourage students from using tobacco products. RMCS’s Governing Board recognizes that smoking and other uses of tobacco and nicotine products constitute a serious public health hazard and are inconsistent with the goals of RMCS to provide a healthy environment for students and staff.

In the best interest of students, employees, and the general public, the Board therefore prohibits the use of tobacco products at all times on Charter School property and in Charter School vehicles. This prohibition applies to all employees, students, visitors, and other persons at school or at a school-sponsored activity or athletic event. It applies to any meeting on any property owned, leased, or rented by or from RMCS.

Smoking or use of any tobacco-related product or disposal of any tobacco-related waste is prohibited within 25 feet of any playground, except on a public sidewalk located within 25 feet of the playground. Smoking or use of any tobacco-related product is also prohibited within 250 feet of the youth sports event in the same park or facility where a youth sports event is taking place. In addition, any form of intimidation, threat, or retaliation against a person for attempting to enforce this policy is prohibited.

The Executive Director & Superintendent or designee shall inform students, parents/guardians, employees, and the public about this policy. All individuals on Charter School premises share in the responsibility of adhering to this policy. Additionally, RMCS will post signs stating "Tobacco use is prohibited" prominently at all entrances to school property.

**Uniform Complaint Procedure (“UCP”)**

RMCS is the local agency primarily responsible for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations governing educational programs. RMCS shall investigate and seek to resolve complaints using policies and procedures known as the Uniform Complaint Procedure (“UCP”) adopted by our Governing Board for the following types of complaints:

Complaints alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying against any protected group on the basis of the actual or perceived characteristics of age, ancestry, color, mental disability, physical disability, ethnic group identification, immigration status, citizenship, gender expression, gender identity, gender, genetic information, nationality, national origin, race or ethnicity, religion, medical condition, marital status, sex, or sexual orientation, or on the basis of a person’s association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics in any Charter School program or activity.

Complaints alleging a violation of state or federal law or regulation governing the following programs:

* Accommodations for Pregnant, Parenting or Lactating Students;
* Adult Education;
* Career Technical and Technical Education;
* Career Technical and Technical Training;
* Child Care and Development Programs;
* Consolidated Categorical Aid;
* Education of Students in Foster Care, Students who are Homeless, former Juvenile Court Students now enrolled in a public school, Migratory Children and Children of Military Families;
* Every Student Succeeds Act;
* Migrant Education Programs;
* Regional Occupational Centers and Programs;
* School Safety Plans; and/or
* State Preschool Programs.

Complaints alleging noncompliance with laws relating to pupil fees. A student enrolled in a public school shall not be required to pay a pupil fee for participation in an educational activity. A pupil fee includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:

* A fee charged to a pupil as a condition for registering for school or classes, or as a condition for participation in a class or an extracurricular activity, regardless of whether the class or activity is elective or compulsory or is for credit.
* A security deposit, or other payment, that a pupil is required to make to obtain a lock, locker, book, class apparatus, musical instrument, clothes, or other materials or equipment.
* A purchase that a pupil is required to make to obtain materials, supplies, equipment, or clothes associated with an educational activity.

Complaints of noncompliance with laws relating to pupil fees may be filed with the Executive Director & Superintendent or the Compliance Officer identified below.

Complaints alleging noncompliance with the requirements governing the Local Control Funding Formula (“LCFF”) or Local Control and Accountability Plans (“LCAP”) under Education Code sections 47606.5 and 47607.3, as applicable. If RMCS adopts a School Plan for Student Achievement (“SPSA”) in addition to its LCAP, complaints of noncompliance with the requirements of the SPSA under Education Code sections 64000, 64001, 65000, and 65001 shall also fall under the UCP.

Complaints alleging noncompliance regarding child nutrition programs established pursuant to Education Code sections 49490-49590 are governed by Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations (“C.F.R.”) sections 210.19(a)(4), 215.1(a), 220.13(c), 225.11(b), 226.6(n), and 250.15(d) and Title 5, California Code of Regulations (“C.C.R.”) sections 15580 - 15584.

Complaints alleging noncompliance regarding special education programs established pursuant to Education Code sections 56000-56865 and 59000-59300 are governed by the procedures set forth in 5 C.C.R. sections 3200-3205 and 34 C.F.R. sections 300.151-300.153.

Complaints regarding state preschool health and safety issues in local educational agencies exempt from licensing are governed by 5 C.C.R. sections 4690-4694, except as otherwise indicated.

Complaints other than complaints relating to pupil fees must be filed in writing with the following Compliance Officer:

Kelly Mannion, Executive Director & Superintendent

River Montessori Charter School

3880 Cypress Drive, Ste B

Petaluma, CA 94954

(707) 778-6414

Only complaints regarding pupil fees or LCAP compliance may be filed anonymously and only if the anonymous complainant provides evidence or information leading to evidence to support an allegation of noncompliance with laws relating to pupil fees or LCAP.

Complaints alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, must be filed within six (6) months from the date the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, occurred or the date the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying. All other complaints under the UCP shall be filed not later than one (1) year from the date the alleged violation occurred. For complaints relating to the LCAP, the date of the alleged violation is the date on which RMCS’s Board of Directors approved the LCAP or the annual update was adopted by RMCS.

The Compliance Officer responsible for investigating the complaint shall conduct and complete the investigation in accordance with California regulations and RMCS’s UCP Policy. The Compliance Officer shall provide the complainant with a final written investigation report (“Decision”) within sixty (60) calendar days from RMCS’s receipt of the complaint. This sixty (60) calendar day time period may be extended by written agreement of the complainant.

The complainant has a right to appeal RMCS’s Decision to the California Department of Education (“CDE”) by filing a written appeal within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of RMCS’s written Decision, except if RMCS has used its UCP to address a complaint that is not subject to the UCP requirements. The appeal must include a copy of the complaint filed with RMCS, a copy of RMCS’s Decision, and the complainant must specify and explain the basis for the appeal of the Decision, including at least one of the following:

1. RMCS failed to follow its complaint procedures.
2. Relative to the allegations of the complaint, RMCS’s Decision lacks material findings of fact necessary to reach a conclusion of law.
3. The material findings of fact in RMCS’s Decision are not supported by substantial evidence.
4. The legal conclusion in RMCS’s Decision is inconsistent with the law.
5. In a case in which RMCS’s Decision found noncompliance, the corrective actions fail to provide a proper remedy.

A complainant who appeals RMCS’s Decision on a UCP complaint to the CDE shall receive a written appeal decision within sixty (60) calendar days of the CDE’s receipt of the appeal, unless extended by written agreement with the complainant or the CDE documents exceptional circumstances and informs the complainant.

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the CDE’s appeal Decision pursuant to 5 C.C.R. section 4633(f)(2) or (3), either party may request reconsideration by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (“SSPI”) or the SSPI’s designee. The request for reconsideration shall specify and explain the reason(s) for contesting the findings of fact, conclusions of law, or corrective actions in the CDE’s appeal Decision.

If a UCP complaint is filed directly with the CDE and the CDE determines that it merits direct intervention, the CDE shall complete an investigation and provide a written decision to the complainant within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the complaint, unless the parties have agreed to extend the timeline or the CDE documents exceptional circumstances and informs the complainant.

If RMCS finds merit in a UCP complaint, or the CDE finds merit in an appeal, RMCS shall take corrective actions consistent with the requirements of existing law that will provide a remedy to the affected student and/or parent/guardian as applicable.

A complainant may pursue available civil law remedies outside of RMCS’s complaint procedures. Complainants may seek assistance from mediation centers or public/private interest attorneys. Civil law remedies that may be imposed by a court include, but are not limited to, injunctions and restraining orders. For unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaints arising under state law, however, a complainant must wait until sixty (60) calendar days have elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the CDE before pursuing civil law remedies. The moratorium does not apply to injunctive relief and is applicable only if RMCS has appropriately, and in a timely manner, apprised the complainant of the complainant’s right to file a complaint in accordance with 5 C.C.R. § 4622.

A copy of the UCP shall be available upon request free of charge on the RMCS website. For further information on any part of the complaint procedures, including filing a complaint or requesting a copy of the UCP, please contact the Executive Director & Superintendent.

**Use of Student Information Learned from Social Media**

RMCS complies with all federal, state, and local guidelines regarding the gathering and/or maintenance of information about any enrolled student obtained from social media in the student’s educational record. RMCS gathers student information from social media. Such information shall be maintained in RMCS’s records with regard to the student and shall be destroyed within one (1) year after a student turns 18 years of age or within one (1) year after the student is no longer enrolled in RMCS, whichever occurs first. A non-minor student or a student’s parent or guardian may access the student’s records for examination of the information, request the removal of information or corrections made to information gathered or maintained by RMCS by contacting the Executive Director & Superintendent.

**B. COMPLETE POLICIES**

**Professional Boundaries: Staff/Student Interaction Policy**

RMCS recognizes its responsibility to make and enforce all rules and regulations governing student and employee behavior to bring about the safest and most learning-conducive environment possible.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment shall not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of, or willfully causing the infliction of, physical pain on a student.

For purposes of this policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee’s use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff or other persons or to prevent damage to property.

For clarification purposes, the following examples are offered for direction and guidance of School personnel:

Examples of PERMITTED actions (NOT corporal punishment)

* 1. Stopping a student from fighting with another student;
  2. Preventing a pupil from committing an act of vandalism;
  3. Defending yourself from physical injury or assault by a student;
  4. Forcing a pupil to give up a weapon or dangerous object;
  5. Requiring an athletic team to participate in strenuous physical training activities designed to strengthen or condition team members or improve their coordination, agility, or physical skills;
  6. Engaging in group calisthenics, team drills, or other physical education or voluntary recreational activities.

Examples of PROHIBITED actions (corporal punishment)

* + 1. Hitting, shoving, pushing, or physically restraining a student as a means of control;
    2. Making unruly students do push-ups, run laps, or perform other physical acts that cause pain or discomfort as a form of punishment;
    3. Paddling, swatting, slapping, grabbing, pinching, kicking, or otherwise causing physical pain.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Staff/Student Behavior

This policy is intended to guide all School faculty and staff in conducting themselves in a way that reflects the high standards of behavior and professionalism required of school employees and to specify the boundaries between students and staff.

Although this policy gives specific, clear direction, it is each staff member’s obligation to avoid situations that could prompt suspicion by parents, students, colleagues, or school leaders. One viable standard that can be quickly applied, when you are unsure if certain conduct is acceptable, is to ask yourself, “Would I be engaged in this conduct if my family or colleagues were standing next to me?”

For the purposes of this policy, the term “boundaries” is defined as acceptable professional behavior by staff members while interacting with a student. Trespassing the boundaries of a student/teacher relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust.

Some activities may seem innocent from a staff member’s perspective, but can be perceived as flirtation or sexual insinuation from a student or parent point of view. The objective of the following lists of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors is not to restrain innocent, positive relationships between staff and students, but to prevent relationships that could lead to, or may be perceived as, sexual misconduct.

Staff must understand their own responsibility for ensuring that they do not cross the boundaries as written in this policy. Disagreeing with the wording or intent of the established boundaries will be considered irrelevant for disciplinary purposes. Thus, it is crucial that all employees learn this policy thoroughly and apply the lists of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors to their daily activities. Although sincere, competent interaction with students certainly fosters learning, student/staff interactions must have boundaries surrounding potential activities, locations and intentions.

Duty to Report Suspected Misconduct

When any employee reasonably suspects or believes that another staff member may have crossed the boundaries specified in this policy, he or she must immediately report the matter to a school administrator. All reports shall be as confidential as possible under the circumstances. It is the duty of the administrator to investigate and thoroughly report the situation. Employees must also report to the administration any awareness or concern of student behavior that crosses boundaries or where a student appears to be at risk for sexual abuse.

Examples of Specific Behaviors

The following examples are not an exhaustive list: Unacceptable Staff/Student Behaviors (Violations of this Policy)

1. Giving gifts to an individual student that are of a personal and intimate nature.
2. Kissing of any kind.
3. Any type of unnecessary physical contact with a student in a private situation.
4. Intentionally being alone with a student away from the school.
5. Making or participating in sexually inappropriate comments.
6. Sexual jokes.
7. Seeking emotional involvement with a student for your benefit.
8. Listening to or telling stories that are sexually oriented.
9. Discussing inappropriate personal troubles or intimate issues with a student in an attempt to gain their support and understanding.
10. Becoming involved with a student so that a reasonable person may suspect inappropriate behavior.

Unacceptable Staff/Student Behaviors without Parent and Supervisor Permission

(These behaviors should only be exercised when a staff member has parent and supervisor permission.)

1. Giving students a ride to/from school or school activities.
2. Being alone in a room with a student at school with the door closed.
3. Allowing students in your home.

Cautionary Staff/Student Behaviors

(These behaviors should only be exercised when a reasonable and prudent person, acting as an educator, is prevented from using a better practice or behavior. Staff members should inform their supervisor of the circumstance and occurrence prior to or immediately after the occurrence)

1. Remarks about the physical attributes or development of anyone.
2. Excessive attention toward a particular student.
3. Sending emails, text messages or letters to students if the content is not about school activities.

Acceptable and Recommended Staff/Student Behaviors

1. Getting parents’ written consent for any after-school activity.
2. Obtaining formal approval to take students off school property for activities such as field trips or competitions.
3. E-mails, text, phone and instant messages to students must be very professional and pertaining to school activities or classes (Communication should be limited to school technology).
4. Keeping the door open when alone with a student.
5. Keeping reasonable space between you and your students.
6. Stopping and correcting students if they cross your own personal boundaries.
7. Keeping parents informed when a significant issue develops about a student.
8. Keeping after-class discussions with a student professional and brief.
9. Asking for advice from fellow staff or administrators if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to boundaries.
10. Involving your supervisor if conflict arises with the student.
11. Informing the Executive Director about situations that have the potential to become more severe.
12. Making detailed notes about an incident that could evolve into a more serious situation later.
13. Recognizing the responsibility to stop unacceptable behavior of students or coworkers.
14. Asking another staff member to be present if you will be alone with any type of special needs student.
15. Asking another staff member to be present when you must be alone with a student after regular school hours.
16. Giving students praise and recognition without touching them.
17. Pats on the back, high fives and handshakes are acceptable.
18. Keeping your professional conduct a high priority.
19. Asking yourself if your actions are worth your job and career.

**Discipline Philosophy and Suspension and Expulsion Procedures**

Montessori philosophy recognizes the importance of an orderly and safe environment as a cornerstone to the learning experience for children. Personal community values such as sharing, kindness, cleanliness, and personal responsibility as well as respect for self, others, and the environment are an integral part of the Montessori experience. As these values are continually modeled and reinforced, children need less and less correction over time.

However, if a student persistently has difficulty accepting the school’s code of conduct or engages in dangerous behavior, parents, the student, and the Executive Director & Superintendent work together find appropriate solutions.

This Pupil Suspension and Expulsion Policy and Procedures have been established in order to promote learning and protect the safety and well-being of all students at RMCS. In creating this policy, RMCS has reviewed Education Code Section 48900 *et seq.* which describe the offenses for which students at noncharter schools may be suspended or expelled and the procedures governing those suspensions and expulsions in order to establish its list of offenses and procedures for suspensions, expulsions and involuntary removal. The language that follows is largely consistent with the language of Education Code Section 48900 *et seq.* RMCS is committed to annual review of policies and procedures surrounding suspensions, expulsions, and involuntary removals, and, as necessary, modification of the lists of offenses for which students are subject to suspension, expulsion or involuntary removal.

Consistent with this Policy, it may be necessary to suspend or expel a student from regular classroom instruction. This shall serve as RMCS’s policy and procedures for student suspension, expulsion, and involuntary removal, it may be amended from time to time without the need to seek a material revision of the charter so long as the amendments comport with legal requirements. Charter School staff shall enforce disciplinary policies and procedures fairly and consistently among all students. This policy and its procedures will be printed and distributed as part of the Student Handbook and will clearly describe discipline expectations.

Corporal punishment shall not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a student. For purposes of the Policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee’s use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff or other persons or to prevent damage to school property.

RMCS administration shall ensure that students and their parents/guardians are notified in writing upon enrollment of all discipline and involuntary removal policies and procedures. The notice shall state that this Policy and Procedures are available on request at the Executive Director & Superintendent’s office.

Suspended or expelled students shall be excluded from all school and school-related activities unless otherwise agreed during the period of suspension or expulsion.

A student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom RMCS has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (“IDEA”) or who is qualified for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (“Section 504”) is subject to the same grounds for suspension and expulsion and is accorded the same due process procedures applicable to general education students except when federal and state law mandates additional or different procedures. RMCS will follow all applicable federal and state laws including but not limited to the applicable provisions of the California Education Code, when imposing any form of discipline on a student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom RMCS has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability or who is otherwise qualified for such services or protections in according due process to such students.

No student shall be involuntarily removed by RMCS for any reason unless the parent or guardian of the student has been provided written notice of intent to remove the student no less than five (5) school days before the effective date of the action. The written notice shall be in the native language of the student or the student’s parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student’s educational rights holder, and shall inform him or her of the basis for which the pupil if being involuntarily removed and their right to request a hearing to challenge the involuntary removal. If a parent/guardian/educational rights holder requests a hearing, RMCS shall utilize the same hearing procedures specified below for expulsions, before the effective date of the action to involuntarily remove the student. If the student’s parent, guardian, or educational rights holder requests a hearing, the student shall remain enrolled and shall not be removed until RMCS issues a final decision. As used herein, “involuntarily removed” includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not include removals for misconduct which may be grounds for suspension or expulsion as enumerated below.

**Procedures**

1. **Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion of Students**

A student may be suspended or expelled for prohibited misconduct if the act is related to school activity or school attendance occurring at any time including but not limited to: a) while on school grounds; b) while going to or coming from school; c) during the lunch period, whether on or off the school campus; or d) during, going to, or coming from a school-sponsored activity.

1. **Enumerated Offenses**
   1. Discretionary Suspension Offenses. Students may be suspended when it is determined the pupil:
      1. Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.
      2. Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except self-defense.
      3. Unlawfully possessed, used, or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053- 11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.
      4. Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid substance or material and represented same as controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.
      5. Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
      6. Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
      7. Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
      8. Possessed or used tobacco or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets and betel. This section does not prohibit the use of a pupil’s own prescription products by a pupil.
      9. Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
      10. Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5.
      11. Knowingly received stolen school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
      12. Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.
      13. Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.
      14. Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.
      15. Engaged in, or attempted to engage in hazing. For the purposes of this policy, “hazing” means a method of initiation or preinitiation into a pupil organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective pupil. For purposes of this section, “hazing” does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.
      16. Made terroristic threats against school officials and/or school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases. For purposes of this policy, “terroristic threat” shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars ($1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for their own safety or for their immediate family’s safety, or for the protection of school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases, or the personal property of the person threatened or their immediate family.
      17. Committed sexual harassment, as defined in Education Code Section 212.5. For the purposes of this policy, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual’s academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This provision shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
      18. Caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause or participated in an act of hate violence, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 233 of the Education Code. This provision shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
      19. Intentionally harassed, threatened or intimidated school personnel or volunteers and/or a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting class work, creating substantial disorder and invading the rights of either school personnel or volunteers and/or student(s) by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment. This provision shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
      20. Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act.
          1. “Bullying” means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a student or group of students which would be deemed hate violence or harassment, threats, or intimidation, which are directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:
             1. Placing a reasonable student (defined as a student, including, but is not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of their age, or for a person of their age with exceptional needs) or students in fear of harm to that student’s or those students’ person or property.
             2. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on their physical or mental health.
             3. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their academic performance.
             4. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by RMCS.
          2. “Electronic Act” means the creation or transmission originated on or off the schoolsite, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
             1. A message, text, sound, video, or image.
             2. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:

Posting to or creating a burn page. A “burn page” means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in subparagraph (1) above.

Creating a credible impersonation of another actual pupil for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph

above. “Credible impersonation” means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a pupil for the purpose of bullying the pupil and such that another pupil would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the pupil was or is the pupil who was impersonated.

Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. “False profile” means a profile of a fictitious pupil or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual pupil other than the pupil who created the false profile.

* + - * 1. An act of cyber sexual bullying.

For purposes of this policy, “cyber sexual bullying” means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a pupil to another pupil or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in subparagraphs (i) to (iv), inclusive, of paragraph (1). A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.

For purposes of this clause, “cyber sexual bullying” does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.

* + - 1. Notwithstanding subparagraphs (1) and (2) above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.
    1. A pupil who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, except that a pupil who has been adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (1)(a)-(b).
    2. Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any knife or other dangerous object of no reasonable use to the student unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Executive Director & Superintendent or designee’s concurrence.
  1. Non-Discretionary Suspension Offenses: Students must be suspended and recommended for expulsion when it is determined the pupil:
     1. Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, explosive, or other destructive device unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Executive Director & Superintendent or designee’s concurrence.
     2. Brandished a knife at another person.
     3. Unlawfully sold a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code.
     4. Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Penal Code Sections 261, 266c, 286, 287, 288, or 289 or former Section 288a of the Penal Code, or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Section 243.4.
  2. Discretionary Expellable Offenses: Students may be recommended when it is determined the pupil:
     1. Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.
     2. Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except self-defense.
     3. Unlawfully possessed, used, or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053- 11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.
     4. Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid substance or material and represented same as controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.
     5. Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
     6. Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
     7. Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
     8. Possessed or used tobacco or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets and betel. This section does not prohibit the use of his or her own prescription products by a pupil.
     9. Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
     10. Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5.
     11. Knowingly received stolen school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
     12. Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.
     13. Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.
     14. Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.
     15. Engaged in, or attempted to engage in hazing. For the purposes of this policy, “hazing” means a method of initiation or preinitiation into a pupil organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective pupil. For purposes of this policy, “hazing” does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.
     16. Made terroristic threats against school officials and/or school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases. For purposes of this policy, “terroristic threat” shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars ($1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for their own safety or for their immediate family’s safety, or for the protection of school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases, or the personal property of the person threatened or their immediate family.
     17. Committed sexual harassment, as defined in Education Code Section 212.5. For the purposes of this policy, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual’s academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This provision shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
     18. Caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause or participated in an act of hate violence, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 233 of the Education Code. This provision shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
     19. Intentionally harassed, threatened or intimidated school personnel or volunteers and/or a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting class work, creating substantial disorder and invading the rights of either school personnel or volunteers and/or student(s) by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment. This provision shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
     20. Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act.
         1. “Bullying” means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a student or group of students which would be deemed hate violence or harassment, threats, or intimidation, which are directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:
            1. Placing a reasonable student (defined as a student, including, but is not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of their age, or for a person of their age with exceptional needs) or students in fear of harm to that student’s or those students’ person or property.
            2. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on their physical or mental health.
            3. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their academic performance.
            4. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by RMCS.
         2. “Electronic Act” means the creation or transmission originated on or off the schoolsite, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
            1. A message, text, sound, video, or image.
            2. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:

Posting to or creating a burn page. A “burn page” means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in subparagraph (1) above.

Creating a credible impersonation of another actual pupil for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph

above. “Credible impersonation” means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a pupil for the purpose of bullying the pupil and such that another pupil would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the pupil was or is the pupil who was impersonated.

Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. “False profile” means a profile of a fictitious pupil or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual pupil other than the pupil who created the false profile.

* + - * 1. An act of cyber sexual bullying.

For purposes of this policy, “cyber sexual bullying” means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a pupil to another pupil or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in subparagraphs (i) to (iv), inclusive, of paragraph (1). A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.

For purposes of this policy, “cyber sexual bullying” does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.

* + - 1. Notwithstanding subparagraphs (1) and (2) above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.
    1. A pupil who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, except that a pupil who has been adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (3)(a)-(b).
    2. Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any knife or other dangerous object of no reasonable use to the student unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Executive Director & Superintendent or designee’s concurrence.
  1. Non-Discretionary Expellable Offenses: Students must be recommended for expulsion when it is determined pursuant to the procedures below that the pupil:
     1. Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, explosive, or other destructive device unless, in the case of possession of any device of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Executive Director & Superintendent or designee’s concurrence.
     2. Brandished a knife at another person.
     3. Unlawfully sold a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code.

Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Penal Code Sections 261, 266c, 286, 287, 288, or 289, or former Section 288a of the Penal Code or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Section 243.4.

If it is determined by the Administrative Panel and/or Board of Directors that a student has brought a firearm or destructive device, as defined in Section 921 of Title 18 of the United States Code, on to campus or to have possessed a firearm or destructive device on campus, the student shall be expelled for one year, pursuant to the Federal Gun Free Schools Act of 1994. In such instances, the pupil shall be provided due process rights of notice and a hearing as required in this policy.

The Charter School will use the following definitions:

* The term “knife” means (A) any dirk, dagger, or other weapon with a fixed, sharpened blade fitted primarily for stabbing; (B) a weapon with a blade fitted primarily for stabbing; (C) a weapon with a blade longer than 3½ inches; (D) a folding knife with a blade that locks into place; or (E) a razor with an unguarded blade.
* The term “firearm” means (A) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (B) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (C) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or (D) any destructive device. Such term does not include an antique firearm.
* The term “destructive device” means (A) any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas, including but not limited to: (i) bomb, (ii) grenade, (iii) rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, (iv) missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, (v) mine, or (vi) device similar to any of the devices described in the preceding clauses.

1. **Suspension Procedure**

Suspensions shall be initiated according to the following procedures:

* 1. Conference

Suspension shall be preceded, if possible, by a conference conducted by the Executive Director & Superintendent or the Executive Director & Superintendent’s designee with the student and the student’s parent/guardian and, whenever practical, the teacher, supervisor or Charter School employee who referred the student to the Executive Director & Superintendent or designee.

The conference may be omitted if the Executive Director & Superintendent or designee determines that an emergency situation exists. An “emergency situation” involves a clear and present danger to the lives, safety or health of students or Charter School personnel. If a student is suspended without this conference, both the parent/guardian and student shall be notified of the student’s right to return to school for the purpose of a conference.

At the conference, the pupil shall be informed of the reason for the disciplinary action and the evidence against the pupil and shall be given the opportunity to present their version and evidence in their defense, in accordance with Education Code Section 47605(c)(5)(J)(i). This conference shall be held within two (2) school days, unless the pupil waives this right or is physically unable to attend for any reason including, but not limited to, incarceration or hospitalization. The conference shall be held as soon as the student is physically able to return to school for the conference. No penalties may be imposed on a pupil for failure of the pupil’s parent or guardian to attend a conference with Charter School officials. Reinstatement of the suspended pupil shall not be contingent upon attendance by the pupil’s parent or guardian at the conference.

* 1. Notice to Parents/Guardians

At the time of the suspension, an administrator or designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent/guardian in person, by email, or by telephone. Whenever a student is suspended, the parent/guardian shall be notified in writing of the suspension and the date of return following suspension. This notice shall state the specific offense(s) committed by the student as well as the date the student may return to school following the suspension. If Charter School officials wish to ask the parent/guardian to confer regarding matters pertinent to the suspension, the notice may request that the parent/guardian respond to such requests without delay.

* 1. Suspension Time Limits/Recommendation for Expulsion

Suspensions, when not including a recommendation for expulsion, shall not exceed five (5) consecutive school days per suspension. Upon a recommendation of expulsion by the Executive Director & Superintendent or Executive Director & Superintendent’s designee, the pupil and the pupil’s parent/guardian will be invited to a conference to determine if the suspension for the pupil should be extended pending an expulsion hearing. In such instances when RMCS has determined a suspension period shall be extended, such extension shall be made only after a conference is held with the pupil and the pupil’s parent/guardian, unless the pupil and the pupil’s parent/guardian fail to attend the conference.

This determination will be made by the Executive Director & Superintendent or designee upon either of the following: 1) the pupil’s presence will be disruptive to the education process; or

2) the pupil poses a threat or danger to others. Upon either determination, the pupil’s suspension will be extended pending the results of an expulsion hearing.

4. Homework Assignments During Suspension

In accordance with Education Code Section 47606.2(a), upon the request of a parent, a legal guardian or other person holding the right to make education decisions for the student, or the affected student, a teacher shall provide to a student in any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, who has been suspended from school for two (2) or more school days, the homework that the student would otherwise have been assigned.

In accordance with Education Code Section 47606.2(b), if a homework assignment that is requested pursuant to Section 47606.2(a) and turned into the teacher by the student either upon the student’s return to school from suspension or within the timeframe originally prescribed by the teacher, whichever is later, is not graded before the end of the academic term, that assignment shall not be included in the calculation of the student’s overall grade in the class.

1. **Authority to Expel**

As required by Education Code Section 47605(b)(5)(J)(ii), students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing adjudicated by a neutral officer to determine whether the student should be expelled. The procedures herein provide for such a hearing and the notice of said hearing, as required by law.

A student may be expelled either by the neutral and impartial Charter School Board of Directors following a hearing before it or by RMCS Board of Directors upon the recommendation of a neutral and impartial Administrative Panel, to be assigned by the Board of Directors as needed. The Administrative Panel shall consist of at least three members who are certificated and neither a teacher of the pupil nor a member of RMCS Board of Directors. Each entity shall be presided over by a designated neutral hearing chairperson. The Administrative Panel may recommend expulsion of any student found to have committed an expellable offense, and the Board of Directors shall make the final determination.

1. **Expulsion Procedures**

Students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing to determine whether the student should be expelled. Unless postponed for good cause, the hearing shall be held within thirty (30) school days after the Executive Director & Superintendent or designee determines that the pupil has committed an expellable offense and recommends the student for expulsion.

In the event an Administrative Panel hears the case, it will make a recommendation to the Board for a final decision whether to expel. The hearing shall be held in closed session (complying with all pupil confidentiality rules under FERPA) unless the pupil makes a written request for a public hearing in open session three (3) days prior to the date of the scheduled hearing.

Written notice of the hearing shall be forwarded to the student and the student’s parent/guardian at least ten (10) calendar days before the date of the hearing. Upon mailing the notice, it shall be deemed served upon the pupil. The notice shall include:

* 1. The date and place of the expulsion hearing;
  2. A statement of the specific facts, charges and offenses upon which the proposed expulsion is based;
  3. A copy of RMCS’s disciplinary rules which relate to the alleged violation;
  4. Notification of the student’s or parent/guardian’s obligation to provide information about the student’s status at RMCS to any other school district or school to which the student seeks enrollment;
  5. The opportunity for the student and/or the student’s parent/guardian to appear in person or to employ and be represented by counsel or a non-attorney advisor;
  6. The right to inspect and obtain copies of all documents to be used at the hearing;
  7. The opportunity to confront and question all witnesses who testify at the hearing;
  8. The opportunity to question all evidence presented and to present oral and documentary evidence on the student’s behalf including witnesses.

1. **Special Procedures for Expulsion Hearings Involving Sexual Assault or Battery Offenses**

RMCS may, upon a finding of good cause, determine that the disclosure of either the identity of the witness or the testimony of that witness at the hearing, or both, would subject the witness to an unreasonable risk of psychological or physical harm. Upon this determination, the testimony of the witness may be presented at the hearing in the form of sworn declarations that shall be examined only by RMCS or the hearing officer. Copies of these sworn declarations, edited to delete the name and identity of the witness, shall be made available to the pupil.

* 1. The complaining witness in any sexual assault or battery case must be provided with a copy of the applicable disciplinary rules and advised of their right to (a) receive five days’ notice of their scheduled testimony, (b) have up to two (2) adult support persons of their choosing present in the hearing at the time the complaining witness testifies, which may include a parent, guardian, or legal counsel, and (c) elect to have the hearing closed while testifying.
  2. RMCS must also provide the victim a room separate from the hearing room for the complaining witness’ use prior to and during breaks in testimony.
  3. At the discretion of the entity conducting the expulsion hearing, the complaining witness shall be allowed periods of relief from examination and cross-examination during which the complaining witness may leave the hearing room.
  4. The entity conducting the expulsion hearing may also arrange the seating within the hearing room to facilitate a less intimidating environment for the complaining witness.
  5. The entity conducting the expulsion hearing may also limit time for taking the testimony of the complaining witness to the hours the complaining witness is normally in school, if there is no good cause to take the testimony during other hours.
  6. Prior to a complaining witness testifying, the support persons must be admonished that the hearing is confidential. Nothing in the law precludes the entity presiding over the hearing from removing a support person whom the presiding person finds is disrupting the hearing. The entity conducting the hearing may permit any one of the support persons for the complaining witness to accompany the complaining witness to the witness stand.
  7. If one or both of the support persons is also a witness, RMCS must present evidence that the witness’ presence is both desired by the witness and will be helpful to RMCS. The entity presiding over the hearing shall permit the witness to stay unless it is established that there is a substantial risk that the testimony of the complaining witness would be influenced by the support person, in which case the presiding official shall admonish the support person or persons not to prompt, sway, or influence the witness in any way. Nothing shall preclude the presiding officer from exercising their discretion to remove a person from the hearing whom they believe is prompting, swaying, or influencing the witness.
  8. The testimony of the support person shall be presented before the testimony of the complaining witness and the complaining witness shall be excluded from the courtroom during that testimony.
  9. Especially for charges involving sexual assault or battery, if the hearing is to be conducted in public at the request of the pupil being expelled, the complaining witness shall have the right to have their testimony heard in a closed session when testifying at a public meeting would threaten serious psychological harm to the complaining witness and there are no alternative procedures to avoid the threatened harm. The alternative procedures may include videotaped depositions or contemporaneous examination in another place communicated to the hearing room by means of closed-circuit television.
  10. Evidence of specific instances of a complaining witness’ prior sexual conduct is presumed inadmissible and shall not be heard absent a determination by the entity conducting the hearing that extraordinary circumstances exist requiring the evidence be heard. Before such a determination regarding extraordinary circumstances can be made, the witness shall be provided notice and an opportunity to present opposition to the introduction of the evidence. In the hearing on the admissibility of the evidence, the complaining witness shall be entitled to be represented by a parent, legal counsel, or other support person. Reputation or opinion evidence regarding the sexual behavior of the complaining witness is not admissible for any purpose.

1. **Record of Hearing**

A record of the hearing shall be made and may be maintained by any means, including electronic recording, as long as a reasonably accurate and complete written transcription of the proceedings can be made.

1. **Presentation of Evidence**

While technical rules of evidence do not apply to expulsion hearings, evidence may be admitted and used as proof only if it is the kind of evidence on which reasonable persons can rely in the conduct of serious affairs. A recommendation by the Administrative Panel to expel must be supported by substantial evidence that the student committed an expellable offense. Findings of fact shall be based solely on the evidence at the hearing. While hearsay evidence is admissible, no decision to expel shall be based solely on hearsay. Sworn declarations may be admitted as testimony from witnesses of whom the Board or Administrative Panel determines that disclosure of their identity or testimony at the hearing may subject them to an unreasonable risk of physical or psychological harm.

If, due to a written request by the expelled pupil, the hearing is held at a public meeting, and the charge is committing or attempting to commit a sexual assault or committing a sexual battery as defined in Education Code Section 48900, a complaining witness shall have the right to have their testimony heard in a session closed to the public.

1. **Expulsion Decision**

The decision of the Administrative Panel shall be in the form of written findings of fact and a written recommendation to the Board of Directors, which will make a final determination regarding the expulsion. The Board of Directors shall make the final determination regarding the expulsion within ten (10) school days following the conclusion of the hearing. The decision of the Board of Directors is final.

If the Administrative Panel decides not to recommend expulsion, or the Board of Directors ultimately decides not to expel, the student shall immediately be returned to their previous educational program.

1. **Written Notice to Expel**

The Executive Director & Superintendent or designee, following a decision of the Board of Directors to expel, shall send written notice of the decision to expel, including the Board of Directors’ adopted findings of fact, to the student and the student’s parent/guardian. This notice shall also include the following: (a) Notice of the specific offense committed by the student; and (b) Notice of the student’s or parent/guardian’s obligation to inform any new district in which the student seeks to enroll of the student’s status with RMCS.

The Executive Director & Superintendent or designee shall send a copy of the written notice of the decision to expel to the chartering authority. This notice shall include the following: (a) The student’s name; and (b) The specific expellable offense committed by the student.

1. **Disciplinary Records**

RMCS shall maintain records of all student suspensions and expulsions at RMCS. Such records shall be made available to the chartering authority upon request.

1. **No Right to Appeal**

The pupil shall have no right of appeal from expulsion from RMCS as RMCS Board of Directors’ decision to expel shall be final.

1. **Expelled Pupils/Alternative Education**

Students who are expelled shall be responsible for seeking alternative education programs including, but not limited to, programs within the County or their school district of residence. RMCS shall work cooperatively with parents/guardians as requested by parents/guardians or by the school district of residence to assist with locating alternative placements during expulsion.

1. **Rehabilitation Plans**

Students who are expelled from RMCS shall be given a rehabilitation plan upon expulsion as developed by the Board of Directors at the time of the expulsion order, which may include, but is not limited to, periodic review as well as assessment at the time of review for readmission. The rehabilitation plan should include a date not later than one year from the date of expulsion when the pupil may reapply to RMCS for readmission.

1. **Readmission or Admission of Previously Expelled Student**

The decision to readmit a student after the end of the student’s expulsion term or to admit a previously expelled student from another school district or charter school who has not been readmitted/admitted to another school or school district after the end of the student’s expulsion term, shall be in the sole discretion of the Board of Directors following a meeting with the Executive Director & Superintendent or designee and the student and the student’s parent/guardian to determine whether the pupil has successfully completed the rehabilitation plan and to determine whether the pupil poses a threat to others or will be disruptive to the school environment. The Executive Director & Superintendent or designee shall make a recommendation to the Board of Directors following the meeting regarding the Executive Director & Superintendent’s or designee’s determination. The Board shall then make a final decision regarding readmission or admission of the student during the closed session of a public meeting, reporting out any action taken during closed session consistent with the requirements of the Brown Act. The pupil’s readmission is also contingent upon RMCS’s capacity at the time the student seeks readmission or admission to RMCS.

1. **Notice to Teachers**

RMCS shall notify teachers of each pupil who has engaged in or is reasonably suspected to have engaged in any of the acts listed in Education Code Section 49079 and the corresponding enumerated offenses set forth above.

1. **Special Procedures for the Consideration of Suspension and Expulsion or Involuntary Removal of Students with Disabilities**
   1. Notification of SELPA

RMCS shall immediately notify the SELPA and coordinate the procedures in this policy with the SELPA of the discipline of any student with a disability or student that RMCS or the SELPA would be deemed to have knowledge that the student had a disability.

* 1. Services During Suspension

Students suspended for more than ten (10) school days in a school year shall continue to receive services so as to enable the student to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting (which could constitute a change of placement and the student’s IEP would reflect this change), and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child’s IEP/504 Plan; and receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention services and modifications, that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur. These services may be provided in an interim alterative educational setting.

* 1. Procedural Safeguards/Manifestation Determination

Within ten (10) school days of a recommendation for expulsion or any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct, RMCS, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team shall review all relevant information in the student’s file, including the child’s IEP/504 Plan, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parent/guardian to determine:

1. If the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child’s disability; or
2. If the conduct in question was the direct result of the local educational agency’s failure to implement the IEP/504 Plan.

If RMCS, the parent/guardian, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team determine that either of the above is applicable for the child, the conduct shall be determined to be a manifestation of the child’s disability.

If RMCS, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team make the determination that the conduct was a manifestation of the child’s disability, the IEP/504 Team shall:

1. Conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavioral intervention plan for such child, provided that RMCS had not conducted such assessment prior to such determination before the behavior that resulted in a change in placement;
2. If a behavioral intervention plan has been developed, review the behavioral intervention plan if the child already has such a behavioral intervention plan, and modify it, as necessary, to address the behavior; and
3. Return the child to the placement from which the child was removed, unless the parent/guardian and RMCS agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the behavioral intervention plan.

If RMCS, the parent/guardian, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team determine that the behavior was not a manifestation of the student’s disability and that the conduct in question was not a direct result of the failure to implement the IEP/504 Plan, then RMCS may apply the relevant disciplinary procedures to children with disabilities in the same manner and for the same duration as the procedures would be applied to students without disabilities.

* 1. Due Process Appeals

The parent/guardian of a child with a disability who disagrees with any decision regarding placement, or the manifestation determination, or RMCS believes that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others, may request an expedited administrative hearing through the Special Education Unit of the Office of Administrative Hearings or by utilizing the dispute provisions of the 504 Policy and Procedures.

When an appeal relating to the placement of the student or the manifestation determination has been requested by either the parent/guardian or RMCS, the student shall remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer in accordance with state and federal law, including 20 U.S.C. Section 1415(k), until the expiration of the forty-five (45) day time period provided for in an interim alternative educational setting, unless the parent/guardian and RMCS agree otherwise.

In accordance with 20 U.S.C. Section 1415(k)(3), if a parent/guardian disagrees with any decision regarding placement, or the manifestation determination, or if RMCS believes that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others, the parent/guardian or Charter School may request a hearing.

In such an appeal, a hearing officer may: (1) return a child with a disability to the placement from which the child was removed; or (2) order a change in placement of a child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 school days if the hearing officer determines that maintaining the current placement of such child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others.

* 1. Special Circumstances

Charter School personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether to order a change in placement for a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct.

The Executive Director & Superintendent or designee may remove a student to an interim alternative educational setting for not more than forty-five (45) school days without regard to whether the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student’s disability in cases where a student:

1. Carries or possesses a weapon, as defined in 18 U.S.C. Section 930, to or at school, on school premises, or to or at a school function;
2. 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; or
3. Has inflicted serious bodily injury, as defined by 20 U.S.C. Section 1415(k)(7)(D), upon a person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function.
   1. Interim Alternative Educational Setting

The student’s interim alternative educational setting shall be determined by the student’s IEP/504 Team.

* 1. Procedures for Students Not Yet Eligible for Special Education Services

A student who has not been identified as an individual with disabilities pursuant to IDEA and who has violated RMCS’s disciplinary procedures may assert the procedural safeguards granted under this administrative regulation only if RMCS had knowledge that the student was disabled before the behavior occurred.

RMCS shall be deemed to have knowledge that the student had a disability if one of the following conditions exists:

1. The parent/guardian has expressed concern in writing, or orally if the parent/guardian does not know how to write or has a disability that prevents a written statement, to Charter School supervisory or administrative personnel, or to one of the child’s teachers, that the student is in need of special education or related services.
2. The parent/guardian has requested an evaluation of the child.
3. The child’s teacher, or other Charter School personnel, has expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the child, directly to the director of special education or to other Charter School supervisory personnel.

If RMCS knew or should have known the student had a disability under any of the three (3) circumstances described above, the student may assert any of the protections available to IDEA-eligible children with disabilities, including the right to stay-put.

If RMCS had no basis for knowledge of the student’s disability, it shall proceed with the proposed discipline. RMCS shall conduct an expedited evaluation if requested by the parents; however the student shall remain in the education placement determined by RMCS pending the results of the evaluation.

RMCS shall not be deemed to have knowledge that the student had a disability if the parent/guardian has not allowed an evaluation, refused services, or if the student has been evaluated and determined to not be eligible.

**TITLE IX, HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, DISCRIMINATION, AND BULLYING POLICY**

Discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment, intimidation, and bullying are all disruptive behaviors, which interfere with students’ ability to learn, negatively affect student engagement, diminish school safety, and contribute to a hostile school environment. As such, River Montessori Charter School (“RMCS” or the “Charter School”) prohibits any acts of discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment, intimidation, and bullying altogether. This policy is inclusive of instances that occur on any area of the school campus, at school-sponsored events and activities, regardless of location, through school-owned technology, and through other electronic means.

As used in this policy, discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment, intimidation, and bullying are described as the intentional conduct, including verbal, physical, written communication or cyber-bullying, including cyber sexual bullying, based on the actual or perceived characteristics of mental or physical disability, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions, and parental status), sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, immigration status, nationality (including national origin, country of origin, and citizenship), race or ethnicity (including ancestry, color, ethnic group identification, ethnic background, and traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles such as braids, locks, and twist), religion (including agnosticism and atheism), religious affiliation, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, age or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics or based on any other characteristic protected under applicable state or federal law or local ordinance. Hereafter, such actions are referred to as “misconduct prohibited by this Policy.”

To the extent possible, the Charter School will make reasonable efforts to prevent students from being discriminated against, harassed, intimidated, and/or bullied, and will take action to investigate, respond, address and report on such behaviors in a timely manner. RMCS school staff who witness acts of misconduct prohibited by this Policy will take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so.

Moreover, the Charter School will not condone or tolerate misconduct prohibited by this Policy by any employee, independent contractor or other person with whom RMCS does business, or any other individual, student, or volunteer. This Policy applies to all employee, student, and volunteer actions and relationships, regardless of position or gender. RMCS will promptly and thoroughly investigate and respond to any complaint of misconduct prohibited by this Policy in a manner that is not deliberately indifferent and will take appropriate corrective action, if warranted. RMCS complies with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations and local ordinances in its investigation of and response to reports of misconduct prohibited by this Policy.

**Title IX, Harassment, Intimidation, Discrimination and Bullying Coordinator (“Coordinator”)**:

Kelly Griffith Mannion, M.Ed.  
Executive Director & Superintendent  
(707) 778-6414  
[kmannion@rivermontessoricharter.org](mailto:kmannion@rivermontessoricharter.org)

**Definitions**

**Prohibited Unlawful Harassment**

* Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments or slurs.
* Physical conduct including assault, unwanted touching, intentionally blocking normal movement or interfering with work or school because of sex, race or any other protected basis.
* Retaliation for reporting or threatening to report harassment.
* Deferential or preferential treatment based on any of the protected characteristics listed above.

**Prohibited Unlawful Harassment under Title IX**

Title IX (20 U.S.C. § 1681 *et seq.*; 34 C.F.R. Part 106) and California state law prohibit discrimination and harassment on the basis of sex. Under Title IX, “sexual harassment” means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

* An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
* Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient's education program or activity; or
* “Sexual assault” as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), “dating violence” as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), “domestic violence” as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), or “stalking” as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30).

In accordance Title IX and California law, discrimination and harassment on the basis of sex in education institutions, including in the education institution’s admissions and employment practices, is prohibited. All persons, regardless of sex, are afforded equal rights and opportunities and freedom from unlawful discrimination and harassment in education programs or activities conducted by RMCS.

RMCS is committed to providing a work and educational environment free of sexual harassment and considers such harassment to be a major offense, which may result in disciplinary action. Inquiries about the application of Title IX and 34 C.F.R. Part 106 may be referred to the Coordinator, the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education, or both.

Sexual harassment consists of conduct on the basis of sex, including but not limited to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct on the basis of sex, regardless of whether or not the conduct is motivated by sexual desire, when: (a) Submission to the conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or a condition of an individual’s employment, education, academic status, or progress; (b) submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis of employment, educational or academic decisions affecting the individual; (c) the conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact upon the individual’s work or academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or educational environment; and/or (d) submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis for any decision affecting the individual regarding benefits and services, honors, programs, or activities available at or through the educational institution.

It is also unlawful to retaliate in any way against an individual who has articulated a good faith concern about sexual harassment against themselves or against another individual.

Sexual harassment may include, but is not limited to:

* Physical assaults of a sexual nature, such as:
  + Rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults.
  + Intentional physical conduct that is sexual in nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, grabbing, brushing against another’s body, or poking another’s body.
* Unwanted sexual advances, propositions or other sexual comments, such as:
  + Sexually oriented gestures, notices, remarks, jokes, or comments about a person’s sexuality or sexual experience.
  + Preferential treatment or promises of preferential treatment to an individual for submitting to sexual conduct, including soliciting or attempting to solicit any individual to engage in sexual activity for compensation or reward or deferential treatment for rejecting sexual conduct.
  + Subjecting or threats of subjecting a student or employee to unwelcome sexual attention or conduct or intentionally making the student’s or employee’s performance more difficult because of the student’s or the employee’s sex.
* Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the work or educational environment, such as:
  + Displaying pictures, cartoons, posters, calendars, graffiti, objections, promotional materials, reading materials, or other materials that are sexually suggestive, sexually demeaning or pornographic or bringing or possessing any such material to read, display or view in the work or educational environment.
  + Reading publicly or otherwise publicizing in the work or educational environment materials that are in any way sexually revealing, sexually suggestive, sexually demeaning or pornographic.
  + Displaying signs or other materials purporting to segregate an individual by sex in an area of the work or educational environment (other than restrooms or similar rooms).

The illustrations of harassment and sexual harassment above are not to be construed as an all-inclusive list of prohibited acts under this Policy.

**Prohibited Bullying**

**Bullying** is defined as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act. Bullying includes one or more acts committed by a student or group of students that may constitute sexual harassment, hate violence, or creates an intimidating and/or hostile educational environment, directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing a reasonable student [[2]](#footnote-2) or students in fear of harm to that student’s or those students’ person or property.
2. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on the student’s physical or mental health.
3. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantial interference with the student’s academic performance.
4. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantial interference with the student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by RMCS.

**Cyberbullying** is an electronic act that includes the transmission of harassing communication, direct threats, or other harmful texts, sounds, video or images on the Internet, social media, or other technologies using a telephone, computer, or any wireless communication device. Cyberbullying also includes breaking into another person’s electronic account and assuming that person’s identity in order to damage that person’s reputation.

**Electronic act** means the creation or transmission originated on or off the schoolsite, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

1. A message, text, sound, video, or image.
2. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:
   1. Posting to or creating a burn page. A “burn page” means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in the definition of “bullying,” above.
   2. Creating a credible impersonation of another actual student for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in the definition of “bullying,” above. “Credible impersonation” means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a student for the purpose of bullying the student and such that another student would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the student was or is the student who was impersonated.
   3. Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in the definition of “bullying,” above. “False profile” means a profile of a fictitious student or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual student other than the student who created the false profile.
3. An act of “Cyber sexual bullying” including, but not limited to:
   1. The dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a student to another student or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in definition of “bullying,” above. A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.
   2. “Cyber sexual bullying” does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.
4. Notwithstanding the definitions of “bullying” and “electronic act” above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.

**Formal Complaint of Sexual Harassment** means a written document filed and signed by a complainant who is participating in or attempting to participate in RMCS’s education program or activity or signed by the Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against a respondent and requesting that RMCS investigate the allegation of sexual harassment. At the time of filing a formal complaint of sexual harassment, a complainant must be participating in or attempting to participate in RMCS’s education program or activity.

**Respondent** means an individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

**Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Procedures**

RMCS has adopted the following procedures for preventing acts of bullying, including cyberbullying.

1. **Cyberbullying Prevention Procedures**

RMCS advises students:

* 1. To never share passwords, personal data, or private photos online.
  2. To think about what they are doing carefully before posting and by emphasizing that comments cannot be retracted once they are posted.
  3. That personal information revealed on social media can be shared with anyone including parents, teachers, administrators, and potential employers. Students should never reveal information that would make them uncomfortable if the world had access to it.
  4. To consider how it would feel receiving such comments before making comments about others online.

RMCS informs Charter School employees, students, and parents/guardians of RMCS’s policies regarding the use of technology in and out of the classroom. RMCS encourages parents/guardians to discuss these policies with their children to ensure their children understand and comply with such policies.

1. **Education**

RMCS employees cannot always be present when bullying incidents occur, so educating students about bullying is a key prevention technique to limit bullying from happening. RMCS advises students that hateful and/or demeaning behavior is inappropriate and unacceptable in our society and at RMCS and encourages students to practice compassion and respect each other.

Charter School educates students to accept all student peers regardless of protected characteristics (including but not limited to actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identification, physical or cognitive disabilities, race, ethnicity, religion, and immigration status) and about the negative impact of bullying other students based on protected characteristics.

RMCS’s bullying prevention education also discusses the differences between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and includes sample situations to help students learn and practice appropriate behavior and to develop techniques and strategies to respond in a non-aggressive way to bullying-type behaviors. Students will also develop confidence and learn how to advocate for themselves and others, and when to go to an adult for help.

RMCS informs RMCS employees, students, and parents/guardians of this Policy and encourages parents/guardians to discuss this Policy with their children to ensure their children understand and comply with this Policy.

1. **Professional Development**

RMCS annually makes available the online training module developed by the California Department of Education pursuant Education Code section 32283.5(a) to its certificated employees and all other RMCS employees who have regular interaction with students.

RMCS informs certificated employees about the common signs that a student is a target of bullying including:

* Physical cuts or injuries
* Lost or broken personal items
* Fear of going to school/practice/games
* Loss of interest in school, activities, or friends
* Trouble sleeping or eating
* Anxious/sick/nervous behavior or distracted appearance
* Self-destructiveness or displays of odd behavior
* Decreased self-esteem

Charter School also informs certificated employees about the groups of students determined by RMCS, and available research, to be at elevated risk for bullying. These groups include but are not limited to:

* Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth (“LGBTQ”) and those youth perceived as LGBTQ; and
* Students with physical or learning disabilities.

RMCS encourages its employees to demonstrate effective problem-solving, anger management, and self-confidence skills for RMCS’s students.

**Grievance Procedures**

**1. Scope of Grievance Procedures**

RMCS will comply with its Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) policy when investigating and responding to complaints alleging unlawful harassment, discrimination, intimidation or bullying against a protected group or on the basis of a person’s association with a person or group with one or more of the protected characteristics set forth in the UCP that:

1. Are written and signed;
2. Filed by an individual who alleges that that individual has personally suffered unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying, or by one who believes any specific class of individuals has been subjected to discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying based on a protected characteristic, or by a duly authorized representative who alleges that an individual student has been subjected to discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying; and
3. Submitted to the RMCS UCP Compliance Officer not later than six (6) months from the date the alleged unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying occurred, or the date the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying.

The following grievance procedures shall be utilized for reports of misconduct prohibited by this Policy that do not comply with the writing, timeline, or other formal filing requirements of a uniform complaint. For formal complaints of sexual harassment, RMCS will utilize the following grievance procedures in addition to its UCP when applicable.

**2. Reporting**

All staff are expected to provide appropriate supervision to enforce standards of conduct and, if they observe or become aware of misconduct prohibited by this Policy, to intervene when safe to do so, call for assistance, and report such incidents. The Board requires staff to follow the procedures in this policy for reporting alleged acts of misconduct prohibited by this Policy.

Any student who believes they have been subject to misconduct prohibited by this Policy or has witnessed such prohibited misconduct is encouraged to immediately report such misconduct to the Coordinator.

Complaints regarding such misconduct may also be made to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Civil law remedies, including, but not limited to, injunctions, restraining orders, or other remedies or orders may also be available to complainants.

While submission of a written report is not required, the reporting party is encouraged to submit a written report to the Coordinator. RMCS will investigate and respond to all oral and written reports of misconduct prohibited by this Policy in a manner that is not deliberately indifferent. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action cannot be based solely on an anonymous report.

Students are expected to report all incidents of misconduct prohibited by this Policy or other verbal, or physical abuses. Any student who feels they are a target of such behavior should immediately contact a teacher, counselor, the Executive Director & Superintendent, Coordinator, a staff person or a family member so that the student can get assistance in resolving the issue in a manner that is consistent with this Policy.

RMCS acknowledges and respects every individual’s right to privacy. All reports shall be investigated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the integrity of the process to the greatest extent possible. This includes keeping the identity of the reporter confidential, as appropriate, except to the extent necessary to comply with the law, carry out the investigation and/or to resolve the issue, as determined by the Coordinator or administrative designee on a case-by-case basis.

RMCS prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual who files a report or complaint, testifies, assists, participates, or refuses to participate in any investigation or proceeding related to misconduct prohibited by this Policy. Such participation or lack of participation shall not in any way affect the status, grades, or work assignments of the individual. Individuals alleging retaliation in violation of this Policy may file a grievance using the procedures set forth in this Policy. Knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information during the grievance process is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action.

All supervisors of staff will receive sexual harassment training within six (6) months of their assumption of a supervisory position and will receive further training once every two (2) years thereafter. All staff, and any individual designated as a coordinator, investigator or decision-maker and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process will receive sexual harassment training and/or instruction concerning sexual harassment as required by law.

**3. Supportive Measures**

Upon the receipt of an informal or formal complaint of sexual harassment, the Coordinator will promptly contact the complainant to discuss the availability of supportive measures. The Coordinator will consider the complainant’s wishes with respect to supportive measures, inform the complainant of the availability of supportive measures with or without the filing of a formal complaint of sexual harassment, and explain the process for filing a formal complaint of sexual harassment.

Supportive measures are non-disciplinary, non-punitive individualized services offered as appropriate, as reasonably available, and without fee or charge to the complainant or the respondent before or after the filing of a formal complaint of sexual harassment or where no formal complaint of sexual harassment has been filed. Such measures are designed to restore or preserve equal access to RMCS’s education program or activity without unreasonably burdening the other party, including measures designed to protect the safety of all parties or RMCS’s educational environment, or deter sexual harassment. Supportive measures available to complainants and respondents may include but are not limited to counseling, extensions of deadlines or other course-related adjustments, modifications of work or class schedules, campus escort services, mutual restrictions on contact between the parties, changes in work locations, leaves of absence, increased security and monitoring of certain areas of the campus, and other similar measures. RMCS will maintain as confidential any supportive measures provided to the complainant or respondent, to the extent that maintaining such confidentiality would not impair the ability of RMCS to provide the supportive measures.

**4. Investigation and Response**

Upon receipt of a report of misconduct prohibited by this Policy from a student, staff member, parent, volunteer, visitor or affiliate of RMCS, the Coordinator (or administrative designee) will promptly initiate an investigation. In most cases, a thorough investigation will take no more than twenty-five (25) school days. If the Coordinator (or administrative designee) determines that an investigation will take longer than twenty-five (25) school days and needs to be delayed or extended due to good cause, the Coordinator (or administrative designee) will inform the complainant of the reasons for the delay or extension and provide an approximate date when the investigation will be complete.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Coordinator (or administrative designee) will meet with the complainant and, to the extent possible with respect to confidentiality laws, provide the complainant with information about the investigation, including any actions necessary to resolve the incident/situation. However, the Coordinator (or administrative designee) will not reveal confidential information related to other students or employees.

For investigations of and responses to formal complaints of sexual harassment, the following grievance procedures will apply:

* Notice of the Allegations
  + Upon receipt of a formal complaint of sexual harassment, the Coordinator will give all known parties written notice of its grievance process, including any voluntary informal resolution process. The notice will include:
    - A description of the allegations of sexual harassment at issue and to the extent known, the identities of the parties involved in the incident, the conduct allegedly constituting sexual harassment, and the date and location of the alleged incident;
    - A statement that the respondent is presumed not responsible for the alleged conduct until a final decision is reached;
    - A statement that the parties may have an advisor of their choice, who may be an attorney, and may inspect and review evidence; and
    - A statement that RMCS prohibits an individual from knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information during the grievance process.
* Emergency Removal
  + RMCS may place a non-student employee respondent on administrative leave during the pendency of a formal complaint of sexual harassment grievance process in accordance with RMCS’s policies.
  + RMCS may remove a respondent from RMCS’s education program or activity on an emergency basis, in accordance with RMCS’s policies, provided that RMCS undertakes an individualized safety and risk analysis, determines that an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations of sexual harassment justifies removal, and provides the respondent with notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal.
  + This provision may not be construed to modify any rights under the IDEA, Section 504, or the ADA.
* Informal Resolution
  + If a formal complaint of sexual harassment is filed, RMCS may offer a voluntary informal resolution process, such as mediation, to the parties at any time prior to reaching a determination regarding responsibility. If RMCS offers such a process, it will do the following:
    - Provide the parties with advance written notice of:
      * The allegations;
      * The requirements of the voluntary informal resolution process including the circumstances under which the parties are precluded from resuming a formal complaint of sexual harassment arising from the same allegations;
      * The parties’ right to withdraw from the voluntary informal resolution process and resume the grievance process at any time prior to agreeing to a resolution; and
      * Any consequences resulting from participating in the voluntary informal resolution process, including the records that will be maintained or could be shared; and
    - Obtain the parties’ advance voluntary, written consent to the informal resolution process.
  + RMCS will not offer or facilitate an informal resolution process to resolve allegations that an employee sexually harassed a student.
* Investigation Process
  + The decision-maker will not be the same person(s) as the Coordinator or the investigator. RMCS shall ensure that all decision-makers and investigators do not have a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents.
  + In most cases, a thorough investigation will take no more than twenty-five (25) school days. If the investigator determines that an investigation will take longer than twenty-five (25) school days and needs to be delayed or extended due to good cause, the investigator will inform the complainant and any respondents in writing of the reasons for the delay or extension and provide an approximate date when the investigation will be complete.
  + The parties will be provided with an equal opportunity to present witnesses, to inspect and review any evidence obtained that is directly related to the allegations raised, and to have an advisor present during any investigative meeting or interview.
  + The parties will not be prohibited from discussing the allegations under investigation or to gather and present relevant evidence.
  + A party whose participation is invited or expected at an investigative meeting or interview will receive written notice of the date, time, location, participants, and purpose of the meeting or interview with sufficient time for the party to prepare to participate.
  + Prior to completion of the investigative report, RMCS will send to each party and the party’s advisor, if any, a copy of the evidence subject to inspection and review, and the parties will have at least ten (10) days to submit a written response for the investigator’s consideration prior to the completion of the investigation report.
  + The investigator will complete an investigation report that fairly summarizes all relevant evidence and send a copy of the report to each party and the party’s advisor, if any, at least ten (10) days prior to the determination of responsibility.
* Dismissal of a Formal Complaint of Sexual Harassment
  + If the investigation reveals that the alleged harassment did not occur in RMCS’s educational program in the United States or would not constitute sexual harassment even if proved, the formal complaint with regard to that conduct must be dismissed. However, such a dismissal does not preclude action under another applicable RMCS policy.
  + RMCS may dismiss a formal complaint of sexual harassment if:
    - The complainant provides a written withdrawal of the complaint to the Coordinator;
    - The respondent is no longer employed or enrolled at RMCS; or
    - The specific circumstances prevent RMCS from gathering evidence sufficient to reach a decision on the formal complaint or the allegations therein.
  + If a formal complaint of sexual harassment or any of the claims therein are dismissed, RMCS will promptly send written notice of the dismissal and the reason(s) for the dismissal simultaneously to the parties.
* Determination of Responsibility
  + The standard of evidence used to determine responsibility is the preponderance of the evidence standard.
  + Determinations will be based on an objective evaluation of all relevant evidence and credibility determinations will not be based on a person’s status as a complainant, respondent, or witness.
  + RMCS will send a written decision on the formal complaint to the complainant and respondent simultaneously that describes:
    - The allegations in the formal complaint of sexual harassment;
    - All procedural steps taken including any notifications to the parties, interviews with parties and witnesses, site visits, and methods used to gather other evidence;
    - The findings of facts supporting the determination;
    - The conclusions about the application of RMCS’s code of conduct to the facts;
    - The decision and rationale for each allegation;
    - Any disciplinary sanctions the recipient imposes on the respondent, and whether remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to the education program or activity will be provided to the complainant; and
    - The procedures and permissible bases for appeals.

**5. Consequences**

Students or employees who engage in misconduct prohibited by this Policy, knowingly make false statements or knowingly submit false information during the grievance process may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from RMCS or termination of employment. The Coordinator is responsible for effective implementation of any remedies ordered by RMCS in response to a formal complaint of sexual harassment.

**6. Right of Appeal**

Should the reporting individual find RMCS’s resolution unsatisfactory, the reporting individual may, within five (5) business days of notice of RMCS’s decision or resolution, submit a written appeal to the Chair of the RMCS Board, who will review the investigation and render a final decision.

The following appeal rights and procedures will also apply to formal complaints of sexual harassment:

* The complainant and the respondent shall have the same appeal rights and RMCS will implement appeal procedures equally for both parties.
* Within five (5) business days of RMCS’s written decision or dismissal of the complaint, the complainant or respondent may submit a written appeal to the Coordinator.
* The decision-maker(s) for the appeal will not be the same person(s) as the Coordinator, the investigator or the initial decision-maker(s).
* The complainant and respondent may appeal from a determination regarding responsibility, and from RMCS’s dismissal of a formal complaint or any allegations therein, on the following bases:
  + Procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter;
  + New evidence that was not reasonably available at the time the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal was made, that could affect the outcome of the matter; and
  + The Title IX Coordinator, investigator(s), or decision-maker(s) had a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or the individual complainant or respondent that affected the outcome of the matter.
* RMCS will notify the other party in writing when an appeal is filed.
* The decision-maker for the appeal will give both parties a reasonable, equal opportunity to submit a written statement in support of, or challenging, the outcome; issue a written decision describing the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result; and provide the written decision simultaneously to both parties.

**7. Recordkeeping**

All records related to any investigation of complaints under this Policy are maintained in a secure location.

RMCS will maintain the following records for at least seven (7) years:

* Records of each sexual harassment investigation, including any determination of responsibility; any audio or audiovisual recording or transcript; any disciplinary sanctions imposed on the respondent; and any remedies provided to the complainant.
* Records of any appeal of a formal sexual harassment complaint and the results of that appeal.
* Records of any informal resolution of a sexual harassment complaint and the results of that informal resolution.
* All materials used to train Title IX coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process.
* Records of any actions, including any supportive measures, taken in response to a report or formal complaint of sexual harassment.

**TITLE IX, Harassment, Intimidation, Discrimination & Bullying COMPLAINT FORM**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Alleged Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person(s) you have a complaint against: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

List any witnesses that were present: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Where did the incident(s) occur? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the events or conduct that are the basis of your complaint by providing as much factual detail as possible (i.e., specific statements; what, if any, physical contact was involved; any verbal statements; what did you do to avoid the situation, etc.) (Attach additional pages, if needed):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**I hereby authorize RMCS to disclose the information I have provided as it finds necessary in pursuing its investigation. I hereby certify that the information I have provided in this complaint is true and correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief. I further understand that providing false information in this regard could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Complainant

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

**To be completed by the Charter School:**

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Follow up Meeting with Complainant held on: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**

**River Montessori Charter School Directory Information**

**Main Line:**  (707) 778-6414

**Attendance:** Extension 10

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Position** | **Ext.** | **Email** |
| Kelly Griffith Mannion | Executive Director & Superintendent | 101 | [kmannion@rivermontessoricharter.org](mailto:kmannion@rivermontessoricharter.org) |
| Lorna Rochman-McEntire | Education Specialist/ Coordinator of Student Support Services | 114 | [edspecialist@rivermontessoricharter.org](mailto:edspecialist@rivermontessoricharter.org) |
| Alex Van Houten | Office Coordinator & River Crew Program Supervisor | 102 | [avan](mailto:avan)houten@rivermontessoricharter.org |
| Lesly Perez | Registrar & Finance Support | 102/115 | [lperez@rivermontessoricharter.org](mailto:lperez@rivermontessoricharter.org) |
| **Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten** | | | |
| Yoli Sheridan | Copper Creek Guide | 105 | [coppercreek@rivermontessoricharter.org](mailto:coppercreek@rivermontessoricharter.org) |
| Emma Thompson | Ellis Creek Guide | 106 | [elliscreek@rivermontessoricharter.org](mailto:elliscreek@rivermontessoricharter.org) |
| **Lower Elementary** | | | |
| Lisa Hartman | Kaweah Guide | 107 | [kaweah@rivermontessoricharter.org](mailto:kaweah@rivermontessoricharter.org) |
| Emily Miyano | Tuolumne Guide | 109 | [tuolumne@rivermontessoricharter.org](mailto:tuolumne@rivermontessoricharter.org) |
| Deanna Peake | San Lorenzo Guide | 108 | [sanlorenzo@rivermontessoricharter.org](mailto:sanlorenzo@rivermontessoricharter.org) |
| **Upper Elementary** | | | |
| Kimberly Sharp | Yuba Guide | 111 | [yuba@rivermonessoricharter.org](mailto:yuba@rivermonessoricharter.org) |
| Jana Heath | Guadalupe Guide | 110 | [guadalupe@rivermontessoricharter.org](mailto:guadalupe@rivermontessoricharter.org) |
| **River Crew** | | | |
| Alex Van Houten | River Crew Program Supervisor | 115 | rivercrew@rivermontessoricharter.org |

1. RMCS shall not require an Indian tribe or tribal court representative to certify that any student is a dependent of an Indian tribe, consortium of tribes, or tribal organization. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Reasonable student” is defined as a student, including, but not limited to, an exceptional needs student, who exercises care, skill and judgment in conduct for a person of the student’s age, or for a person of the student’s age with the student’s exceptional needs. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)