

8/18/15

Montessori School of Raleigh Middle School Student Companion

Mission

Mission Statement

The Montessori School of Raleigh is the Triangle's modern embodiment and mindful practice of the time-proven Montessori philosophy, developing agile thinkers, poised communicators, and gracious collaborators—engineers of authentic and fulfilling lives.

Promise Statement

The Montessori School of Raleigh is the Triangle's modern embodiment and mindful practice of the time-proven Montessori philosophy for toddler through ninth grade students.

Through self-directed engagement with MSR's embracing culture, inherently interdisciplinary curriculum, and purposefully prepared environments, students fully inhabit the study of their personal fascinations.

Implicitly and explicitly guided by expert teachers toward individual mastery of evolving social, emotional, and academic lessons, they learn the habits of mind that lead to deep focus, discernment, understanding, and maturity from their earliest years.

MSR's multi-age classroom experiences inspire teachers and students to alternately act as instructor and pupil, leader and follower, ultimately cultivating students' ownership of their distinct self-worth and appreciation of the inherent worth of others.

From this effective and encompassing preparation, Montessori School of Raleigh graduates advance with serene self-assurance to their next schools and into adulthood as agile thinkers, poised communicators, and gracious collaborators— docents of their own learning and engineers of authentic and fulfilling lives

Dear Middle School Student,

At first glance, rising UE students are struck by the significant differences between the elementary environment and the middle school environment. The middle school years are a distinct phase in the development of every young adult. Because the beginning of this phase is a time of great change for young adults, we provide more structure and teacher direction in our school day. In recognition of the growth in your abstract thinking ability at this time, we focus on applications, problem-solving, making connections, and analytical skills, connecting learning with the “real world” and the outdoor environment as often as possible.

Here at the Middle School we are a learning community. During school, you can expect to spend most of your time on academic tasks. We expect behavior that is supportive of others, purposeful, and welcoming. We expect grace and courtesy of all students, parents, and teachers. Our expectations are outlined in *The Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities* included below.

One “great work” of the middle school years is to learn to organize and manage time within a schedule that includes many classes. The workload here is quite challenging at first, as you learn to write down assignments, organize books and supplies, and plan how to use your time, both at home and in school. Teachers and parents know this may not be easy at first, but we have confidence that you will master these new skills. The 9th Year students have a distinct responsibility as role models and "old hands" in our community. Seek out a 9th Year student for help and advice if you wish.

Once you get accustomed to this new environment, you will begin to see some similarities between your elementary environment and the Middle School. Learning is integrated and “hands-on” as often as possible. Teachers are a resource, just as they have always been. They care passionately about you, and that is why they demand excellence in academics. They will listen to you and help you if you ask for it. Your advisor’s job is to get to know you and support you. Just as in UE, students are expected to take care of the school property.

Because we recognize that students at this level are ready to take on increasing responsibility, we give more and more feedback about academic performance directly to the student, expecting each individual to respond to that feedback. As long as you respond to feedback, we will help your parents assume a less immediate guiding role. Students lead conferences and play a central role in explaining and evaluating their own performance.

These three years are a time for you to recognize your own strengths and opportunities for growth. This is also a time to develop new friendships and relationships. To encourage this change, we offer many opportunities for you to take on enriching challenges, work in groups, and receive balanced feedback about progress. Your friends, a positive attitude, and a sense of humor will help you get through the joys and challenges of this phase.

The Middle School Team

The following, The Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities, is a document written by the students of the inaugural class of the middle school when it was first opened. Yearly, students review this document and agree to the principles stated.

The Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities

This Declaration has been drafted so that this community, which we have built, may remain healthy and continue to serve its purpose throughout posterity. Our Community, the Montessori School of Raleigh's Middle School, agrees that the primary function of a community is to allow its people to work together towards one or more common objectives. We acknowledge that our rights and responsibilities and our freedoms and duties go hand in hand. Without one, the other cannot exist. Without either, we have an anarchy. In addition to that which is declared in this document, we must also accept the authority of higher bodies, including, but not limited to, that of our school and of local and federal laws.

We hold these realities to be unambiguous, that we as a community have both rights and responsibilities, among which are: respect, safety, and the pursuit of higher knowledge. For our Community to live up to these truths and expectations, it must find a way to reinforce these truths in order to continue to thrive. Each individual has the responsibility to be forever respectful of all things, including people, their property and their ideas. Everyone's rights entitle them to their privacy. We must do unto others as we would have them do unto us. With this respect, many rights coexist. When respect is given, it will be given back in the form of valuing another's opinion in decision-making processes, as well as fair acknowledgement of everyone's views, whether spoken or written. In our Community, the safety of each member is of the utmost consideration. This emotional stability is coupled directly with respect and is not to be forfeited through verbal or other maltreatment. Each member of the Community has the right to receive positive attention with grace and courtesy. In conjunction, every member has the responsibility to demonstrate positive attention to his or her peers.

We as a community recognize that the primary objective is to emphasize the importance of learning, as well as every member's right to pursue an education without intrusion or obstruction. Essentially, every community member should have the opportunity to develop his or her potential, unimpaired by others. If at any time during one's studies, or merely during a time when a Community member is available, anyone finds that he or she can benefit from the assistance of others, it is that member's right to ask for that assistance. When approached by another member considerately and with legitimate reason, the one asked for help has the right to assist or not. The people of this Community have the right to be accepted unless doing so invades upon another member's privacy. In this respect, we hold that one should not ask what the Community can do for one's self, but what one can do for the Community.

The relationship between the individual and the Community must be symbiotic. Without input from every individual, the Community will not be able to serve each citizen as it should. He or she must gather the information necessary to formulate an opinion, but ultimately should come to his or her own conclusion. Every member has the right to an opinion, be it in harmony with the majority of the

Community or not. If an action or event disturbs an individual, he or she has the right to question it and to seek resolution. In this event, the Community Chairman alone may propose a vote in which all of those who are eligible to vote will have their vote counted as an equal with others, regardless of their association to persons in authority. Once a decision is made, it is final for the remainder of the meeting and no other comments relating to the subject are permissible until the subject is brought up during a different meeting.

Trust, when granted carefully, is one of the most powerful and binding aspects of a strong community. Trust allows individuals to take beneficial risks and is a right to which each member is entitled. As trust is a cherished right and one of the more profound elements of the Declaration, there are many responsibilities with which it is associated. In order to maintain trust between individuals, the members must keep their word, speak their truth, and ultimately be able to trust others. If at some time trust is broken between members through failure to act responsibly, all involved parties are responsible for working to regain that trust. Trust is a recoverable right. Attempts to regain trust should not be disregarded, as it is everyone's responsibility to forgive.

A community is driven by its masses. Members of this community have the responsibility to be of service toward the Community's objectives and to its overall health. One must always give his or her best; in return, the Community will attempt to provide each individual with what he or she seeks. In light of these responsibilities, one has the right to a healthy balance during the day. Staying centered without becoming overwhelmed is essential for success within our Community.

Self-expression is a right that allows those who work for numerous causes of the Community to remind themselves that they are separate individuals who have responsibilities and freedoms that are solely theirs. However, the preservation of said individuality must be accomplished without sacrificing group objectives. Each individual must assure themselves and the Community that the direction of the group is moving for the benefit of the overall Community. As a community member, the strength of the group depends upon the individual's ability to exercise his or her rights and to be accountable for his or her actions. Our Community must embrace and practice this concept so that it does not lose its value.

The failure to honor and abide by the principles of the Declaration will result not only in the loss of trust, but also in consequences to be imposed on the individual(s) in violation as can be seen in the Discipline Pyramid. If misconduct occurs during a community meeting, the Community Chairman, his/her appointed Sergeants-at-Arms, and the faculty all have the exclusive right to banish offenders from the meeting for any period of time. It is the responsibility of those who have been slighted, or have witnessed infractions performed, to raise these issues in Community meeting. It is then the duty of the guides and members of the Community to try and resolve the conflict.

If at any time, any part or parts of this Declaration discontinue to serve the people of our Community, it may be amended. This is to ensure that our Community's safety and happiness are kept in the highest regard. The rights and

responsibilities outlined in this Declaration are to apply to all the people of this Community, regardless of race, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, personal preference or any other discrimination that is not based solely on the acts and behaviors of the individual. That for which we have worked will live on through posterity solely if those who follow in our footsteps preserve the integrity of this Declaration and abide by its verses. As a community, we agree to accept and thoughtfully enforce this Declaration, so that we may all serve better and be better served by what we have established as core values and beliefs of this Community.

Academic Policies and Expectations

Grading

Grading at the Middle School is different from the evaluations you received in Upper Elementary. While some students may want to work hard to earn high grades, we hope that you'll continue to be motivated by a genuine desire to learn new skills and to discover new information and ideas. Here at the MS, you will receive numerical scores on tests and papers in addition to narrative feedback. It's critical that you read and seriously consider any written or verbal suggestions for how you can improve, especially regarding drafts of writing assignments. Low grades are almost always a sign that you are not taking responsibility for your work and not participating fully enough in class activities. Ultimately, you are evaluated on the decisions you make. To the extent that you can learn from your mistakes or poor choices, you will be successful.

In general, grades on tests and other assignments are based on two considerations: 1) the percentage of correct answers, and 2) how closely your work compares to a standard of excellence your teacher has in mind. Grades can also reflect the quality of work completed by a group on a project, whether your work exceeded that of typical students at your age, and whether your work was significantly better than your previous work. Often, you will receive an evaluation rubric when given an assignment. We encourage you to work with that rubric in mind as that is a clear indication of the teacher's expectations for the assignment given. Because middle school is the first time that the majority of students here are receiving grades and to set students up for success, we use a 10-point grading scale for all students.

10-Point Grading Scale for all Students

Letter Grade	Numeric Equivalent
A+	97-100
A	93-96
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79

C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	Below 60 (Failing)

Organization and Study Skills

A big factor in your success at the MS is knowing what it is that you should be working on. It is your job (not your parents' job) to know what is assigned. You should have a planner and should get in the habit of writing every assignment you are given in it. Some students prefer to use electronic planners. We encourage you to use a planner that works best for you. It is also a good idea to identify a *reliable* peer (this person may not be your closest friend) in each of your classes who can tell you what's due in case you are absent or in case you are unclear about what is expected for an assignment. For longer projects and major papers, teachers often distribute written information about what's due and when it is due, but often information about regular assignments is shared in class and/or written on the board. It is your job to write that information down in your assignment book. As a "safety net" for you, teachers also post class assignments on their Class Pages, which can be accessed on the Middle School Portal. Some teachers' Class Pages are on Veracross; for this, you will be given a Veracross login and password at the start of the school year. You should get in the habit of checking the Middle School Portal routinely as teachers post assignments and changes to assignments there each day. Keep in mind that not all details about particular assignments will be communicated on the Portal, so it's important that you pay close attention in class when assignments are discussed.

The amount of homework assigned each night varies from week to week and from student to student. Just as in Upper Elementary, you will have less to do at home if you use your time in school efficiently. Every individual works at different rates, so the same assignment may take you more or less time than other students. In general, we would expect you to have about an hour of homework each night in 7th year, gradually growing to at least 2 hours per night in 9th year. If you find yourself doing consistently less than those numbers, you may not be giving your assignments enough effort.

Unless otherwise specified, **assignments are due at the beginning of a class period.** Please do not count on being able to finish something during class. It is also unwise to think that you will finish assignments just before class, during lunch, and so on. Many students use those times for last minute review for a test, but only after they have reviewed thoroughly the night before. Keep in mind, too, that your assignments should be printed before you arrive to class, as you will not have time to print your work during class.

Afternoon Tutorials

Once per week, we offer afternoon tutorial time at the Middle School, typically on Wednesdays

when there is no athletic practice or games. Tutorials provide quiet time for you to complete homework before going home and to meet with teachers as needed to receive help. They are not considered social time, and we expect that students who stay for tutorials will use this time wisely. Tutorials last from 3:00-4:00. You are responsible for bringing a snack for this time if you feel you'll need one.

We ask that parents please be present in the parking lot promptly at 4:00 pm; however, we also request that, for the sake of the focus and quiet study of our students, you refrain from entering the building. We will send your child out to you at the end of tutorial.

Making Up Work After Absences

Whenever you are absent from school, you are missing important instruction and hands-on activities that build insights and understanding. "Make up" work is difficult, especially if you are sick for days. Because it is difficult to make up work once you return to school, the sooner you turn in work that was due while you were sick, the better. In general, you should work with your teachers to set a schedule for work completion that allows you to be successful in getting your work finished and in learning the material missed.

Unless otherwise determined by a teacher, you are expected to complete all assigned work. If you know that circumstances beyond your control will interfere with your completing work on time, it is your responsibility to tell your teachers immediately. **Any course work due on a day(s) that a student anticipates being absent must be submitted prior to that absence unless arranged otherwise with a teacher.**

Assignments that were assigned **prior to your absence** are due on the day you return. *For example, if the assignment was due on Monday and you were absent on Monday and Tuesday, the assignment is due on Wednesday when you return.*

For assignments that were assigned **during your absence**, if you were absent from one to three days, you will have one day to make up the work for every day you were absent. *For example, if you were absent on Monday and Tuesday, the assignments assigned on those days would be due two school days after the day you return (Wednesday), which means they will be due on Friday.*

Whenever a student is **absent more than three days**, he or she will have two days to make up the work for every day absent. *For example, if you were absent Monday through Thursday (4 days), the assignments assigned on those days would be due eight (8) school days after the day you return.* While this is the policy, it is a good idea to complete make-up work sooner if you can.

How do you find out what was assigned while you were absent? You should certainly check the Middle School Portal, but you should also consider this advice: "First ask yourself. Then ask a buddy. Then ask a teacher." This is good preparation for life: Whenever you seek out an authority, the more you already know, the better off you are. It's a good idea to seek out and meet with your teachers to discuss make up work that involves major papers, projects, or tests.

Scoring of Late Work: Any graded work received by teachers after its due date is considered late and will automatically receive a starting grade of 90% of the total possible score. Usually, this will mean you will lose 10 points on your work. Two days late automatically receives a starting grade of 80% of the total score, usually resulting in a loss of 20 points. Work received three or more days late will receive a failing grade.

Please remember that these rules are in place to encourage you to make up work quickly so you can focus on the new material being taught.

Despite everyone's best efforts to be clear and fair, circumstances may arise that call for special arrangements and modified due dates. In order to receive any modification, you must approach the teacher(s) involved. Your parents should notify the teachers of any anticipated absences with a written note. Your faculty advisor is always available to discuss your plans to complete work or make up work.

Testing

Along with your participation in class and your daily work, testing is a way to assess your mastery and thinking. Testing also is a way you and your teachers assess how you learn and remember material and gauge your level of interest in a particular area of the curriculum. Types of testing include quizzes, which check your daily/weekly progress and preparation, and unit tests/exams, which check your ability to absorb a body of material and apply information through critical thinking and making connections. Essay questions included in tests provide an opportunity for you to hone communication skills through writing. Finally, taking tests is practice and preparation for your future educational experiences.

Each of your teachers will make recommendations about how to prepare for his/her tests. These recommendations often include: reviewing your notes, reviewing prior homework to be sure you understand what you might have missed earlier, and reviewing certain material in the text. Often a "Study Guide" will be provided which provides an outline of what you should review. In some cases, you will be asked to prepare a number of essay question outlines ahead of time.

If you have prepared for the test by participating fully in class, doing your homework to the best of your ability, and studying for the test diligently, then re-testing is unnecessary, except in the case of unusual circumstances. If you disappoint yourself by doing poorly on a test, the best remedy is to learn what you can do differently next time and perform better on future tests. We know that test scores alone do not tell the whole story about what you have learned or of what you are capable.

Test Dates and Assignment Deadlines

In order to help you and your peers to succeed, the teachers try to spread out the due dates for major assignments and tests. Whenever conflicts arise, the teachers may make adjustments. However, studying for tests and completing projects and writing assignments should take place

over a period of days, sometimes weeks. If you leave projects and test preparation until the last minute, you may be overwhelmed.

Teachers will assign a student **no more than two tests or major assignments on any given day**. Tests take more than half a class time to complete, whereas “quizzes” take less than half the class time. It is the responsibility of the student who has been assigned more than two tests to bring this problem to the attention of the teacher who assigns the third test and to do so prior to the actual day of the tests so any changes in the assignments can be discussed by the faculty and communicated to all concerned.

Academic Integrity

Many schools have a formal “Honor Code” that says you can’t “lie, cheat, or steal.” At the MSR Middle School, we take these behaviors quite seriously. Lying undermines basic trust and renders your word questionable. It is quite painful to be disbelieved, so always tell the truth. Taking something that belongs to someone else not only impacts that person’s learning but again undermines basic trust and renders your presence a potential problem. *Grace and courtesy* requires you to ask someone before borrowing anything of theirs.

Cheating is a more complicated subject. In a Montessori school, students often collaborate on assignments, although tests and major papers are always to be done individually. It is your job to listen when teachers explain what is expected on any assignment, and that includes when teachers explain whether or not you may collaborate. In middle school, high school, college, and beyond, teachers vary in what they will allow, and you need to get used to listening carefully when they explain their expectations. Despite these ambiguities, work that is supposed to be your own must be your own.

Learning to be honest, to respect property, and to do your own work are important life lessons. But should you make a mistake, remember this: To err is human. Students make mistakes. Students make poor choices. You are judged not by a mistake but by how you respond in the future. Being honest and admitting your mistake, accepting the consequences, and resolving to do better next time are important life lessons. And they are lessons better learned now than when you are older.

Plagiarism: The Middle School *Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities* focuses on *trust*. To maintain trust, “people must keep their word.” In a school setting, that means that when you say that a piece of work is yours, it must be. Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s ideas and work without proper and clear citation. Unless you are given specific permission by a teacher to use the work of others in your homework, tests, or essays, doing so is considered plagiarism. The most common form of plagiarism involves written material, and it has grown increasingly problematic with reliance on the Internet. In order to use the ideas or work of someone else without risking plagiarism, you must credit the original author of the work. You will learn methods for doing this in your classes, but we have found that the best way to avoid plagiarism is to stay on top of your work and not leave it until the last minute. Those who plagiarize usually do so out of a sense of panic when they do not have enough time to complete an assignment on their

own. It is our expectation that your work be your own, and plagiarism is behavior that will result in disciplinary measures.

Read the information under **Discipline** for further information about how any possible violations of these expectations would be handled.

Student-Led Conferences

As part of the process of taking responsibility for your own learning and as a continuation from Upper Elementary, you are now expected to lead your conferences. These conferences begin with a goal-setting conference at the beginning of each year and continue throughout the year on scheduled conference days. Your advisor, co-advisor, and parent(s) attend your conferences.

Your role in your conferences is to share what you hope to accomplish and what assistance you might need to accomplish this. You will be asked to prepare for these conferences by assessing your strengths and weaknesses both as a student and as a member of the community. As the adults discuss your progress, they will often turn to you to solicit your views. At first, talking about yourself candidly can feel awkward, and you may not know the words to use to express what you want to say, but in time you will grow accustomed to this role. A word of advice: Don't agree to anything you can't follow through on. You will be held accountable for your promises.

If at any time during the school year your parents or teachers wish to have a conference outside of the scheduled conference days, they may schedule one.

The Work of the Home

Your parents care greatly that you succeed and thrive in school, and naturally, they want to be involved. Having a look at what you are doing for homework lets them know something about what you are learning. Their role, however, is to prepare the home environment so that your study time is consistent and free from distractions. As you show you can assume responsibility for getting homework done on time, their job is to allow you to become increasingly independent.

Your parents should not do your homework for you, but they can assist you in understanding directions, helping you break a task down into smaller parts, and observing how you use your time. They can help you identify mistakes or highlight writing problems, but the words you put on paper should be your own. Their goal in the long run, and your desire as well, is for them to be involved as little as possible in your homework. The more responsibility you successfully take for getting your work done well and on time, the less involved they will need to be.

Your parents can support you by providing appropriate study space for you. A kitchen, eat-in room, family room, or living room table are examples of such places. Your parents can also insist, whenever needed, that your space and time be respected.

We live in a society where electronic communication devices are increasing by leaps and bounds. Your parents may need to assist you in managing the use of these devices. When

working on homework, you should be away from all distractions, including smart phones, iPods, video games, television sets, or any other electronic devices that might prove to be a distraction. Computer use should be limited to only what is needed for successful completion of your homework and, thus, should not include Facebook, Skype, Chat, and other social networking sites. Your parents can lend a hand when needed and help you maintain productivity.

You will often need a computer with a word processor and printer to complete your writing assignments. You are encouraged to use the local library for research. However, you may also use the Internet, paying special attention to obtaining reliable, professional sources and to citing your sources properly.

Arrival and Departure

Just as for working adults, it's critical that you arrive on time for each school day. Our days begin at 8:15 with Morning Meeting. During this time, we greet one another and prepare for our day by discussing events and schedule changes. If you are going to be late, you or your parent should notify the school. Our days end at 3:00, and we ask that you be picked up on time. Parents should call to let us know if you will be picked up later so that we can ensure that someone will be here with you.

Absences

Your parents should call the Lead Mine Road campus number, 848-1545, and notify the receptionist if you are sick. She will collect all such calls and report to the Middle School staff at 9:00 AM. Your parents should also send your advisor an email or note explaining any circumstances that may bear on your ability to make up work.

If you are ever absent for extended periods of time, we ask your parents to streamline your schedule of outside activities so you can focus on catching up.

The Work of the Student

The middle school years are a time of change and adjustment. The changes for you are physical, academic, and social, and there is no timetable for these changes. Some students begin to experience changes before others, and all students find that their physical, academic, and social changes may not take place at the same time. To make matters even more complicated, the changes you experience also affect the relationship you have with adults: your parents and your teachers.

Whether you realize it or not, your mind is changing, and you are becoming better able to make connections between ideas, plan ahead, predict consequences, and anticipate feelings. You are developing a keener sense of humor, and you see the humor in many more situations. You are better able to see the weaknesses in others, both adults and peers. Students your age often enjoy debating, arguing, stating opinions, and discussing the world around them.

The nature of your relationships is also changing, and that change can be difficult at times. Your peers' actions and views assume greater importance and are more often the primary topic of conversation. You may develop a dramatic perception of life: The "highs are higher, and the lows are lower." It may often seem as if you are living out your own personal fable where you are the protagonist and those around you are the antagonists. This sometimes makes life seem as if adults don't "get it," that they sometimes don't see that something is very important to you.

The MSR Middle School is a place where you can try on new roles, take on more adult kinds of responsibilities, express your opinions, and find ways to express your idealism. You will get feedback from your peers and from your teachers. You might have a tendency to be sensitive to criticism and feel that if a teacher is critical of something you do that the teacher "doesn't like me." It is helpful to remember that the adults around you are here to help you grow and learn about yourself and that their feedback is critical in that process. They can be upset with your actions but still like you and want the best for you.

As one way of responding to your desire to be treated more as an adult, you will be given increasing responsibility for your academic work and your actions. That means that your teachers will (more and more as you progress into 8th and 9th years) tell you *first* about any concerns they have. If you respond before their concerns escalate, you will be appreciated for "taking care of it yourself." You can be very proud of doing this.

However, if you don't respond to your teachers' concerns, your parents will be notified. Parental involvement in your school life can be highly emotional for many reasons. It is hard for your parents to "let go" and experience the surprise of finding out that there is a problem. They understandably wish they had known earlier so they could have helped fix the problem sooner. You won't be happy, either. It's nice to be given responsibility when things go well, but it's tough to accept the consequences when things don't go well. Just as you got the credit for "taking care of it," now you get to accept the responsibility for not doing so. It is natural to try to pin the blame on someone else, but your parents and teachers know that doing so only postpones the real discussion: How can you, the student, do things differently next time? At times like this, remember: We are judged not by the mistakes we make but by how we respond to the mistakes we make.

Sometimes your parents or your teachers are just not aware of how much hard work you are doing. Typically when parents ask their children "How was today?" students your age respond briefly. Often you wish they wouldn't ask, and your irritation sometimes shows. But you are missing a great opportunity because the more you communicate honestly (don't just tell them about the 90 you got on a test, tell them also about the 70) the more they will trust you and appreciate your success.

Communication about Your Academic Progress

Your parents are making a considerable sacrifice to send you to MSR, and they care deeply about your progress. They want to know how you are doing. They attend conferences with you

and your advisors each year and receive written narrative reports, but they would like to know more than that. The more you tell them, the less they will question you for information.

In middle school, we give you a chance to accept greater responsibility for your own learning. In part, that means that we give you, rather than your parents, ongoing feedback about how you are doing. We summarize that feedback when we write narrative reports or have a parent/student conference. But our summaries don't include nearly all that we tell you. Thus, when your work improves, your parents will eventually find out, but you can tell them sooner. As well, when your work is not improving, your parents will eventually find out, but again, you can tell them sooner. Of course you know that your parents want to know and will be upset when they eventually learn if you are struggling in some area, but we feel that this information is best coming from you.

To that end, as you progress through the Middle School, your teachers will rely more and more on you to communicate with your parents about your progress. This means that we will be in more direct contact with parents of 7th Years, and that by 9th Year, you should be responsible almost fully for communicating your progress to your parents. Of course, if at any point we feel that your progress must be discussed, we will contact your parents.

Your Capstone Year

The 9th Year at Middle School is the Capstone Year, just as the 6th Year is at Upper Elementary. The Chewonki Leadership Trip is just one of the many unique privileges associated with the 9th Year. Over the past years, many MSR graduates have reflected on their experience at our Middle School, and most of them specifically point to their 9th Year as the most rewarding.

Communication to Secondary Schools about Your Academic Progress

As a 9th Year, your grades become a part of your permanent High School record. 9th Year grades are reported to secondary schools on a formal transcript. Secondary schools also receive your final 9th Year Narrative Report, and testing results. All independent secondary schools also receive teacher recommendations as requested by the school. These are generally written in November or December. All of this means that your academic performance in the 9th Year is very important to your continued progress through high school and to the opportunities you are afforded upon leaving MSR.

Community Service

We believe that serving those around us, both near and far, honors not just others but also ourselves. This proves especially true for adolescents who are seeking to understand their world and themselves. To this end, all MS students are required to complete community service hours in their homes, at MSR, and with outside agencies. The specific requirements are as follows:

7th Year Requirement: 25 hours TOTAL with 5 minimum in each of the following areas: home, MSR, agency

8th Year Requirement: 25 hours TOTAL with 5 minimum in each of the following areas: home, MSR, agency

9th Year Requirement: 50 hours TOTAL with 10 minimum in each of the following areas: home, MSR, agency

Some students complete many hours by helping with the MSR athletic program or assisting in classrooms at the Lead Mine Road campus. At times, an advisory or other MS group might organize a community service outing. It's critical that you get written confirmation of your participation in service, whether that be at your home, at MSR, or with an agency, so that you can provide that confirmation to your advisor. Your advisor will keep track of your hours and will periodically meet with you to discuss your progress with them.

Occupations and Intersessions

Occupations and week-long Intersessions provide opportunities for you to explore and develop your interests and try new things. Occupations are offered each trimester and take place once per week, with some offerings remaining constant (for example, Land and Livestock, Pottery Shack, Cycle Shack) and others changing with trimester breaks (for example, Cake Boss, Just Jewelry, Drumming). As well, some Intersession offerings recur (for example, the farm trip, cooking, community service) while others may occur only once in a three-year cycle (for example, the Washington, D. C., and Charleston trips). Once the offerings have been explained, we ask students to rank order their choices for Occupations and Intersessions. It's important that you consider first and foremost your sincere interests rather than the interests and choices of your peers. We have found that students most enjoy those Occupations and Intersessions that they truly care about rather than the ones that they sign up for because their friends have also signed up for them.

We try to offer a range of choices each trimester and Intersession week, taking into account the interests and abilities of current students and teachers. While it's not always possible to give every student his or her first choice, we aim to engage all, and we ensure that all will get their first choices at some point in their three years at the MS.

Overnight Trips

Long after you have forgotten what happened at lunch today, you will remember the overnight trips you take at the MSR Middle School. You will take at least two trips each year, including an "odyssey" trip at the beginning of the year and a national or international trip at the end of the year. What you experience on these trips is an essential part of the curriculum. Even more important, the experiences you share as you live together as a community away from home will solidify your friendships.

Our trips to places like Rome, London, Barcelona, Boston, Gettysburg, Santa Fe, and

Washington, D.C., are fascinating and fun, but your cooperation is necessary. You are expected to follow directions promptly, observe curfew, and never wander off from the group. Please don't turn your teachers into policemen. The contract you sign before embarking on a trip notes that in extreme cases of misbehavior you may be sent home.

MSR students have always distinguished themselves on trips with the quality of their questions, their purposeful behavior, their positive spirit (occasionally in the face of bad weather and other discomforts), and their helpfulness toward each other and the adults with them. You are a role model and an ambassador for MSR.

Bus Behavior

For reasons of safety and out of respect for the welfare of your fellow students, it is critical that you behave appropriately when riding the bus, whether to and from the Middle School or while on an outing. Remain seated wearing a seatbelt and avoid making loud noises. Bus rides tend to be a social time, but remember that you have signed a pledge to treat others with respect and be a supportive friend. Your remarks spoken on the bus about anyone else should be respectful and supportive.

As you wait for the bus in the morning at the Lead Mine Campus, remain by the garden circle. You are welcome in Watson Center when it is raining or bitterly cold outside. When in the Watson Center, remain in the foyer and talk quietly enough that the person at the front desk can listen and talk on the phone. Do not go in the Kitchen or Encore rooms unless invited to do so. You must check out and shake hands with the staff member on duty when you are picked up after school. Finally, do not leave litter on the bus.

Use of Technology & Electronic Devices

The following limitations on electronic technology are designed to support our Community. We want students and teachers to be present for each other. We also want to avoid the potential for lost valuables that can be so demoralizing.

Students are not allowed to use smart phones, iPods, mp3 players, etc. during school hours. Between 8:00 and 3:00, cell phones must be on "silent mode" and must be stored in the students' cubbies or backpacks. Electronic devices used in violation of this policy will be confiscated.

As an outcome of a Community Meeting decision, iPods and other portable music players are allowed on the bus as long as they are put away and never used or seen during the school day. With the exception of the students who ride the bus and have permission to use electronic devices, all others should have no visible electronics on their person at any time.

Because students may not use cell phones between 8:00 and 3:00, we encourage you to make plans ahead of time. If anyone needs to be in touch with you during the day, they should call the main number at 848-1545, and the receptionist will get in touch with your teachers. Cell phones should not be used on the bus.

You may bring your own laptop to school if you wish, but you may only use it for schoolwork. No games, non-school-related e-mail, or IM are allowed at school.

The increase in social networking sites provides great opportunities for positive interactions with your peers. However, they can also provide outlets for not so positive interactions. It is critical that you be careful about what you choose to post on these sites. First, you should be mindful of the feelings of others. Second, you should be mindful of the fact that your posts can be viewed by many. A good rule of thumb is to limit your posts to only those comments that you would make to a person directly.

Expectations for Behavior and Discipline Philosophy

The MSR Middle School is a community whose primary purpose is learning. Our discipline philosophy stems from the rights and responsibilities that come with being a member of our Community, as expressed in *The Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities*. As *The Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities* spells out, every student is to be treated with respect. Every student's physical and emotional safety is to be guarded carefully by all members of the community. And every student pledges to behave in a manner that supports learning.

When you sign *The Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities*, you are agreeing to behave in a way that supports each student's right to respect, safety, and learning. That means you agree to not put others down, to not talk or act disrespectfully towards anyone, to not physically or verbally abuse anyone, and to not make fun of anyone who asks a question. This means you agree to act with grace and courtesy, to help others when asked, and to participate in class constructively.

Community Meetings are held regularly, and at times, the whole Middle School will agree to other rules or guidelines that you must follow and support once they are adopted by the Community. If you have a concern about any behavior that you feel contradicts the letter or spirit of *The Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities*, you have a responsibility to bring that concern to a Community Meeting, checking first with a teacher and then contacting the student who is the Chair.

As in all communities, the more responsibility everyone takes, the fewer rules will be necessary.

What happens when someone behaves in a manner that contradicts *The Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities*? In some cases, the students involved are asked to problem-solve and come up with a solution to the problem, just as in UE and LE. As often as possible, every attempt is made to treat all misbehavior as an opportunity to learn from one's mistake, and you will be asked to think about how you could have handled the situation better. In some cases, the adults determine if the behavior contradicts *The Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities*, and, if it does, they determine consequences.

Maintaining the Community

The most important part of maintaining a learning community is treating everyone with respect, maintaining trust, acting with grace and courtesy, and supporting your peers and teachers as they learn. Another critical part of maintaining a learning community is care for the environment.

Books, handouts, materials and games, furniture, the copy machine, phones, computers, and kitchen items -- all require care and should be used properly and carefully. In order to maintain trust, never take something off a teacher's work space without permission, and never "borrow" another student's books or possessions without expressed permission.

Serious Incidents

Poor choices made by students may result in serious consequences. We'll discuss our Discipline Policy, which is attached at the end of this document, during our opening week of school. This policy lays out specific infractions and resulting consequences. Serious incidents are referred to as Category II or Category III behaviors. The seriousness of any incident is based on the nature of the behavior and whether the behavior is a continuing pattern of inappropriate behaviors.

The possible consequences for serious misbehavior include a written Discipline Referral, a phone call home, a parent/student conference, suspension from school for one or more days, and required withdrawal from school.

If a student is involved in any serious incident, the following steps will occur:

- The teachers will investigate the situation in order to find out the important facts about the incident. In some cases, this will lead to a clear decision with all the issues resolved.
- The teachers will notify the parents of everyone directly involved, usually by phone.
- Once everyone involved has had an opportunity to express their insights, a decision will be made about what happened and possible consequences. Our foremost goal is to undo any harm that has taken place, possibly starting with restitution for property damaged or for injury inflicted. Another goal is to allow a student to earn back any broken trust. One or both are often necessary before full peace in the community can be restored.
- The Head of School or his/her delegate will be involved in all incidents that result in suspension from school for one or more days or required withdrawal from school.
- The decision about consequences is then communicated to the student(s) involved, to their parents, and to their advisor.

If any student is suspended from school for a day or more, he or she will complete missed work (see guidelines for making up work after absence) and return to school prepared. In most cases, a returning student will be required to meet with the Head of School or his/her delegate prior to resuming school. In some cases, students will serve suspension at the Lead Mine Road campus.

Sometimes temporary or permanent separation from the community is appropriate. In the most

serious cases, the Head of School reserves the right to require immediate withdrawal from MSR or to deny re-enrollment the following school year. It is important to know that suspension from school is the most serious consequence short of required withdrawal. It sends the message that a student could be required to leave the school next time his/her behavior raises a concern that results in a Category II or III consequence.

School Attire

The Middle School dress code seeks to create a safe and welcoming environment where students can participate in all activities comfortably and respectfully while being dressed modestly. This code was developed as a partnership between students and teachers, and will be upheld in that spirit.

- Leggings and tight pants are acceptable under the guidelines that your shirt covers your torso generously (your body excluding your arms and legs.)
- Your shorts and/or dresses/skirts should allow for you to be able to participate in all school activities (PE, sitting on the floor, sitting criss-cross apple sauce, etc.) while staying modest and not showing any undergarments. Avoid oversized t-shirts that hide your shorts.
- Tank tops are acceptable as long as you cover your undergarments and avoid spaghetti straps.
- On school trips you must dress nicely to represent the MSR community appropriately. You should not wear graphic t-shirts while on trips. You should wear nice pants/shorts or skirts/dresses. Athletic shorts are prohibited on school outings unless other notified.

The faculty will support the students in making appropriate clothing choices by asking that they call for a change of clothes if they cannot comfortably and respectfully participate in all activities.

MSR Middle School Discipline Policy

Maria Montessori believed that positive behavior rooted in respect and responsibility builds confidence, self esteem, and leadership. The Montessori concept of discipline is an "inner discipline; self control which the child develops through purposeful activity." In a classroom atmosphere characterized by freedom and responsibility, each child is given the opportunity to develop inner discipline at his or her own pace. At the same time, respect for the rights of others in an environment of grace and courtesy is necessary for the successful growth of all students and the community. We all make choices. When a choice is made that results in the disruption of the environment and community, there will be consequences. The following shows the consequences when poor choices are made.

Category I (Minor)

Behaviors	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eating during class ● Inappropriate communication ● Inappropriate dress ● Unprepared for class(es) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To support students in correcting minor behaviors, we will employ warnings; removal from the classroom for regrouping; and circle discussions with the child's advisor and teachers, parents, and administration as appropriate for the number of accumulated offenses.

Category II (Medium)

Behaviors	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chronic disruption of instruction as documented in <i>Category I Behaviors</i> ● Cheating ● Destruction of property ● Electronic misuse of either personal or school property ● Harassment ● Leaving the environment without permission ● Profanity or obscenity ● Plagiarism ● Stealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discipline referral to administration resulting in conference with administrator and parent and possibly resulting in administrative suspension (attendance on Lead Mine campus in administrative office)

Category III (Major)

Behaviors	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chronic disruption of instruction as documented in Categories I and II ● Alcohol/drug possession on campus ● Weapons ● Fighting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discipline referral to administration resulting in conference with administrator and parent and possibly resulting in administrative suspension (attendance on Lead Mine campus in administrative office)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Verbal or physical assault ● Sexual misconduct ● Arson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Placement in Intervention Program: alternative placement; expulsion; involvement of outside resources
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Miners Athletics Policies

All members of an MSR team will be held accountable for their actions both on a team and in a classroom environment. Student expectations are put in place where children learn to represent the school in a positive manner, while given the opportunity to fulfill an active role in the school community.

Expectations

Participating in sports at MSR plays a major role in the whole development of the child. Through sports, we can teach self-discipline, time management, leadership, self-worth and personal accountability. With student expectations put into place, children learn to represent the school in a positive manner, while students are given the opportunity to fulfill an active role in the school community.

Academics

All student athletes must be in good academic standing, which includes acceptable academic performance, based on the student's ability, individual classroom community expectations, and a strong work ethic demonstrated by participation, effort, and follow through in academic work. A middle school student will be considered ELIGIBLE to participate in athletics at The Montessori School of Raleigh if their most recent academic report reflects:

*Passing grade or better in all core subjects as well as community responsibility in the classroom environment.

*Satisfactory standard in participation and conduct in all special subjects.

A student will be considered ON PROBATION should his/her most recent academic report reflect any one or a combination of the following academic grades or conduct:

1. One failing grade or one incomplete in any subject.
2. Below Satisfactory in any special subjects.
3. Below Satisfactory conduct in any subject.

A student-athlete will also be considered ON PROBATION should his/her behavior require:

1. Removal from a classroom.
2. Out-of-school suspension.

**While athletic eligibility is based on a passing grade and appropriate behavior in the student's classes, the final decision is at the discretion of the Middle School faculty.

Probation is one, two-week period during which a student works to improve his/her grades and/or conduct. During this two-week period, a student is still considered a full, participating member of the athletic team, but time should be spent wisely in improving one's grades and conduct. Students are encouraged to seek extra help either before school or after school from those teachers in courses where he/she is struggling. The Montessori School of Raleigh faculty and staff are always willing to assist students in their academic studies and personal growth as young adults.

Character

MSR team goals not only include athletic skill building but developing strong character. The traits that strong programs are built upon are pride, honesty, respect, humility, and self-discipline. Being a member of an MSR athletic team is a privilege. Player's behavior and attitude should always show respect for their school, teachers, parents, coaches, opponents, officials and themselves.

The student must maintain a reasonable level of compliance with MSR behavior expectations. If the student's behavior puts them or the group at risk while traveling to a game or practice, the student may be asked to not participate or to discontinue participation in the trip. It will be the parents' responsibility to arrange for the student to be picked up from the game location.

Sportsmanship

Good sportsmanship is one of the goals MSR values as part of the athletic program. Parents, guardians, students and other fans can assist our athletes by honoring and modeling the rules of good sportsmanship.

Registration

All players must have the proper documentation turned in before any student will be allowed to participate in a Miners team function. Late registration for any Miners team will require all documentation to be turned in before the student may participate in a Miners team function and must have participated in a minimum of **5** team practices before any student will be permitted to participate in a Miners athletic competition. Coaches will use discretion and proper judgment when determining if a student is physically and mentally ready to compete. **To register your child for a Miners team go to www.msr.org/store.**

Practice

Prior to each season players and parents will receive a practice schedule. Parents and fans are asked to attend games rather than to watch practices. Practices will not be held on weekends or holidays. Players are required to attend each practice and arrive in a timely manner. Exceptions are limited to unavoidable absences that are verified by a parent/guardian. Playing for an MSR team is a season-long commitment and each team member is equally important for the success of the Miners athletic program. This commitment needs to be respected by each player.

Games and Playing Time

The student's effort, attendance, participation at practice, teamwork, and off-court behavior will be some of the factors considered by the coach when determining playing time. While playing in

a game is not guaranteed, every effort shall be made to maximize each participant's playing time. Because the middle school years are developmental years, both physically and mentally, we want all players on the team to have a chance to be successful throughout the season and future seasons as well.

**Montessori School of Raleigh Middle School
Student Companion Agreement Form**

Please complete and return this Student Companion Agreement Form to your advisor.

As a member of the Montessori School of Raleigh Middle School, I am responsible for acting in ways that benefit the Community and that demonstrate respect for my Community and each of its members.

We have read and discussed the expectations outlined in the Montessori School of Raleigh Middle School Student Companion, and we agree to abide by them. We understand that these expectations have been developed to ensure a safe and nurturing learning community for all, and we realize that failure to abide by the stated expectations will lead to the consequences presented in this document.

Student Name

Parent Name

Student Signature

Parent Signature

Date

Date

Advisor