

MONTESSORI MIDDLE SCHOOL OF KENTUCKY
An Educational Odyssey

HANDBOOK
2010 - 2011
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859-277-1169

Welcome to MMSK! Please keep this handbook in a safe and convenient place as you will need it throughout the year in order to answer questions about school policies, dates, phone numbers, etc.

SCHOOL HOURS

Daily classes are in session from **8:20 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.** Exceptions are noted on the calendar and families are notified of activities requiring different arrival or dismissal times. Scholars may arrive at school between **8:00 a.m. and 8:20 a.m.** each day and are dismissed at **3:30 p.m.** Individual arrangements can be made should a parent schedule require drop off as early as 7:45 a.m. **Strict adherence to these hours is necessary** as there will be no one to supervise before or after these times. The entrance to MMSK is locked at all times. Late arrival means that a scholar must disturb a class already in session and will miss all or part of an important lesson.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

Families are encouraged to form car pools for transportation to and from school, perhaps designating particular homes or one of the elementary schools as meeting spots.

Arrival: Use the driveway entrance furthest from the school building and the white house. Drop off scholars near the front entrance of the school.

Dismissal: Use the entrance furthest from the school building and the white house. Pull all the way to the end of the drive near the white house so other vehicles will not block Stone Road.

Parents are required to inform the school, in writing, of the scholar's usual mode of transportation and then send notes regarding exceptions, especially pertaining to dismissal arrangements. Only the parent or an authorized driver may pick up a student unless the school is notified otherwise. When it is necessary for a scholar to leave at an irregular time, a parent should send a note so she/he can be ready and waiting at the given time. The parent (or designated person on the note) will need to enter the building and sign the scholar out.

ABSENCES / LATE ARRIVALS / EARLY DISMISSAL

The Kentucky Department of Education requires that attendance records (including late arrival) be kept on file. High schools request these records. This, as well as common courtesy, safety, and - most importantly - meeting academic and planning needs, means that absences and late arrivals should be kept to a minimum. At this level of instruction, it is essential that the middle school scholar be present. We strongly encourage parents to set the scholar up for success by planning vacation days and appointments on non-school days. In the event of any absence, it is the scholar's responsibility to arrange to meet with the guide/s and create a plan for completing the missed work. Generally, work from short absences should be made up within the week (the same number of days absent plus one day) and arrangements for making up larger amounts should be made with the guides.

Scholars will not be permitted to attend school when showing signs of illness. Please have scholars remain at home if they have fever, diarrhea, vomiting, an unexplained rash, and/or any unusual condition for that particular child. Scholars who do not feel well cannot function well in the classroom, may not receive adequate care, and may transmit illness to others. If a scholar should become ill after arriving at school, parents will be notified immediately and will need to make arrangements for pick up as soon as possible.

Guides should be notified if there are significant disruptions to the scholar's routine at home (a death in the family, parent separation, or other extended absences, etc.) Concern for the scholar's complete well-being and ability to attend to work direct the need for such information.

PHONE CALLS AND MESSAGES

For information or questions about general operations please feel free to call the office manager (9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.) or the education director (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) at the school at 277-1169. Other concerns may be directed to the education director at the same number or at 338-5480 at any time.

In order to communicate with classroom guides, please use written messages whenever possible. Please limit calls to the guides to 12:00 p.m. - 12:30 p.m., and after 3:45 p.m. so they may remain undisturbed in the classroom. When the situation necessitates calling at other times, please leave a brief message and the guides will attempt to return the call during the same time period. Feel free to contact Ms. Langefeld at any time (859-338-5480) with any questions or concerns.

When guides and scholars are away from the building, or for emergency situations (if your call prompts a recording to leave a message), you may contact Mrs. Ashby, the school administrator, at Community Montessori School (277-4805) or on her mobile phone (338-8767).

In emergency situations scholars may use the phone in the presence of a staff member. Therefore, it is important to make after school plans and arrangements in advance, from home, in order to keep disruptions at a minimum. **Personal mobile phones are very disruptive and must be turned off and placed in the scholar's locker during school hours, unless special circumstances indicate a need and previous arrangements have been made with the education director.**

Invitations to parties or other social occasions may be communicated in school, orally or in writing, only if **all classmates are invited to a "mixed-gender party" or all same-gender classmates are invited to a "same-gender" party.** Such discretion, especially in this small social environment, will be considered a basic rule of courtesy - there is absolutely no way to keep it a secret!

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Parents are strongly encouraged to observe in the classroom during the school year and are welcome in the classroom at any time. For convenience, because scholars are often involved in learning experiences at other locations, and if you wish to speak with a guide, it is best to schedule observations in advance. Non-parent visitors are required to schedule observations in advance.

SCHOLAR-PARENT-GUIDE CONFERENCES

Each school year begins with a goal-setting conference. Additional conferences are scheduled twice each year, and on an as-needed basis. Scholars and parents are required to participate in these conferences. Interim conferences may be requested by guides, parents, and/or scholars. Parents and scholars are urged to contact the scholar's advisor with questions or concerns.

GRADES

At MMSK (in keeping with Montessori philosophy), scholar success is determined by individual efforts to perform to the best of one's ability. Grades are not the emphasis of the evaluation process. Detailed written evaluations provide feedback on scholar progress. Records of grades are kept in order to fulfill the requirements for entrance into some high school courses and are available at the request of a parent. Scholar records, including grades needed for specific subjects, are mailed to the high school that the scholar will be attending.

SNOW DAY POLICY

School closings due to bad weather/roads/etc. will be decided by 6:30 a.m. of the day in question and without strict regard to other school's decisions. Parental discretion is also encouraged. Announcements will be made on radio stations WVLK 590 AM and WLAP 630 AM and on local network television stations WLEX 18, WKYT 36, and WTVQ 27. These stations announce closings only. If there is no mention of MMSK closing by 7:00 a.m., assume that school will be in session.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

Electronic games, toys, and devices (including walkmans, CDs, laser pointer, and mobile phones) are very disruptive and must remain at home. Lap top computers may be used in an appropriate manner with guide permission. **Personal mobile phones are extremely disruptive at school and must be turned off and kept in the scholar's locker. On school outings, mobile phones must be left at home unless special circumstances indicate a need and previous arrangements have been made with the education director.**

Skateboards, roller blades, etc. must remain at home unless they are being used in a supervised activity with proper safety equipment (a helmet, wrist guards, and knee pads). These items may not be used in the parking lot before or after school. The school cannot assume responsibility for the safety of scholars when they use this type of equipment.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Due to our size and limited budget, we must rely on parent volunteers to help provide scholars with additional experiences such as sports teams, academic clubs, and special interest groups. Parents should inform the education director of interest in organizing a group of this type.

Scholars and parents are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities regardless of skill or experience as participation helps develop trust and strengthens relationships while providing experiences that are not possible during regular school hours.

Extracurricular activities with MMSK students are not the direct responsibility of the school or staff.

CLOTHING

Participation in land experiences, and in Physical and Performing Arts class requires that scholars come to school dressed in tennis shoes and clothing that does not restrict movement. For safety and comfort loose fitting jeans and a tee shirt with tennis shoes are recommended.

In the interest of protecting the learning environment, the staff of MMSK determines when clothing or accessories are too distracting. **However, it is essential that parents assume the responsibility for assuring that scholars are dressed appropriately before leaving home each day.** This prevents embarrassing situations for the scholar and the guide. Please be aware of the weather and comfort when making choices as all students go outdoors on a daily basis (weather permitting - at the discretion of the supervising guide) and often walk to community resources.

FOOD AND LUNCH

Specified areas and times are available for eating and for lunch period. Ready-to-eat lunches are necessary as microwave use is very limited. Please consider good nutrition when planning food and drinks for lunches. Scholars may not bring sodas or energy drinks (Red Bull, etc.) for lunch or snack.

GOING-OUT ACTIVITIES

Consistent with an understanding of Montessori philosophy concerning broadening scholar's learning arenas, scholars and staff will plan excursions away from the school building, usually in connection with a specific unit of study. These trips may include going to the library for research materials, service work, camping, and overnight trips to museums or nature study centers, etc.

Parents are asked to sign one form giving permission for scholars to participate in school-sanctioned, going-out activities. However, parents are always made aware of any plans to be away from school.

In determining tuition, every effort has been made to take into account major costs of going-out activities. In most cases, families will need to provide funds only for food and incidentals.

Please be aware that every effort is made to plan going-out activities and special P.E. outings well in advance of the event. Occasionally factors, such as weather or an organization's program changes, require last minute changes in our plans. While we will continue to make every effort to keep changes at a minimum, your understanding and flexibility are greatly appreciated. If last minute changes cause undo hardships to any parent, please contact one of the guides. We are happy to help.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

Research consistently indicates that social situations are extremely important to the life of the adolescent. With this in mind and to encourage the development of skills needed to organize this type of event, the guides provide the opportunity for scholars to plan three social events (parties, dances) each year that are a positive and supervised outlet for this need. These activities are on the school calendar. Should the opportunity for an unusually meaningful social activity arise, we will make plans and notify parents well in advance of the event. Drugs, alcohol, or tobacco are strictly prohibited at these functions.

Social gatherings that are sponsored by parents and scholars will not be chaperoned by MMSK staff. However, in the best interest of our scholars, we ask that parents and scholars support MMSK's policy on no drugs, alcohol, or tobacco at any functions involving scholars. We also require that the MMSK policy for inclusion of all classmates be supported, as **it is devastating to an adolescent to be excluded**. There is absolutely no way to keep it a secret!

Again, invitations to parties or other social occasions may be communicated in school, orally or in writing, only if all classmates are invited to a "mixed-gender party" or all same-gender classmates are invited to a "same-gender" party. Such discretion, especially in this small social environment, will be considered a basic rule of courtesy.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

MMSK is a non-profit organization made up of parents and other concerned persons who are interested in providing a continued program of Montessori education for adolescents. Our commitment to being conscientious about the cost of education requires operating on a tight budget and working with the assumption of considerable on-going parent contribution. All parents are expected to volunteer time for committee work, class projects, Celebration for Education, assisting with materials preparation, transportation, supplementary supervision, and/or going-out ventures throughout the year. These contributions are necessary for budgetary reasons and also form an integral part of the school's philosophy regarding mutual cooperation and good will. Parents are encouraged to form alliances with other parents in the school for building trust and sharing ideas and responsibility. The school appreciates family donations of new or good used material such as books, paper products, computers, audio/visual and other equipment, tools for carpentry or gardening, and of course, personal time.

CELEBRATION FOR EDUCATION

Celebration for Education is the only fundraiser sponsored by CMS, Inc. **requiring** parent participation. It is a formal event featuring a silent auction, a live auction, raffles, good food, music, dancing, and lots of fun. Information packets about expectations and participation choices will be available this fall. This fundraiser directly affects the tuition at MMSK and provides funding for various needs that otherwise would not be met.

EMERGENCIES AND/OR OTHER UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

(power outage, no heat, severe weather, etc.)

In emergency situations, scholars will be dismissed as soon as parents can be notified. School staff will be prepared to care for/supervise scholars until parents can be contacted. In the case of a tornado or severe storm warning, staff will be in communication with appropriate local emergency services. In the event of any emergency requiring school dismissal, the following procedures apply:

⇒ No student will be dismissed from school unless a parent or guardian (or individual designated by the parent or guardian) arrives. No student will be allowed to leave with a person other than his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) - not even a relative or babysitter, unless that person is listed on the scholar's release form or permission has otherwise been given. With this in mind, parents are reminded to keep the emergency information updated. All parents or designated parties who come for students must sign them out.

Parents are requested to assist in these ways:

- Do not call the school - the phone line must stay open for emergency communication.
- Following a tornado or other disaster, do not drive to the school, as streets and other access routes may be cluttered with debris. The street and school entrance must remain clear for emergency vehicles.
- Listen to the radio. As soon as possible, staff will communicate with the media announcing the status of the emergency and directions for picking up scholars, etc.

TUITION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS – TUITION POLICY

Should a payment be refused by the bank, it is reported to the school and a fee of \$30.00 is assessed by Tuition Management Systems. Arrangements would need to be made for bringing the account up to date by calling the CMS office manager at 277-4805 as soon as possible.

The following steps are taken when handling delinquent accounts:

1. The CMS, Inc. Board Treasurer or the school office manager will notify parents of delinquent accounts.
2. If needed, a follow-up meeting with the treasurer and board president is arranged.
3. If the above steps are insufficient to remedy the situation, there will be a referral to initiate legal actions.

Admission to CMS, Inc. is decided without regard to race, religion, national, or ethnic background.