



**Richmond  
Montessori  
School** a world of difference

## **Middle School Community Handbook**

**2009 – 2010**

**"In the soul of the adolescent,  
great treasures are hidden."**

*- Dr. Maria Montessori*

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## **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

Richmond Montessori School meets the needs of adolescents and prepares them for adult life by providing an environment that encourages their natural development, fosters independence, and is connected to the world in which we live. The adolescent takes part in challenging academics, meaningful work, and assumes an active role in community building. We value logical and analytical thinking that aids in problem solving, morality, social responsibility, and cooperation, and we strive to instill these values in our students.

## **COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL LIFE**

Adolescence is a time of intense social development. In fact, Maria Montessori said that the prepared environment for adolescents should be “a school of social experience.” At RMS we build a community that is based on the moral development of the individual and the social needs of the adolescent. Importance is placed on responsibility, solidarity, compassion, reflection and a balance of freedom and limitations. Social interactions are meaningful and allow the students to take on leadership roles and learn how to compromise and find solutions in a respectful manner.

### Specifics for fostering community

- student-led community meetings
- daily jobs that maintain the physical environment
- September trip for bonding and building a sense of community
- service to others (at RMS and in the greater Richmond community)
- personal development class
- advisory groups
- micro-economy
- opportunities for self-expression through physical and creative outlets
- Middle School play
- Socratic seminars
- student-created code of conduct (generated each year)

## **ACADEMIC STUDY**

RMS offers a challenging educational experience with courses based on Montessori philosophy, current learning theories, and research on the developmental needs of adolescents. The classroom design is dynamic and continues to be refined each year. Much of the curriculum is presented in a two-year cycle and builds upon the Montessori elementary curriculum while preparing students for high school in traditional settings. Our goal is for each student to reach his/her individual potential by taking part in specific academic lessons and key experiences that challenge the mind and stimulate curiosity.

## ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS AND HOMEWORK

Our Middle School program is committed to providing engaging educational opportunities, establishing an optimal environment for study and learning, and encouraging higher level and critical thinking skills. Within this framework, each student is expected to take responsibility for his/her own learning by

- ✓ doing assigned work to the best of his/her ability.
- ✓ working respectfully with other students. When working in a group, students are expected to be active, cooperative, and productive members of the group.
- ✓ working efficiently during the school day and avoiding distractions to self or others.
- ✓ completing work in a timely manner, which includes making arrangements to finish work when necessary, and following through with the plan.
- ✓ communicating difficulties to teachers so they might better facilitate the student's success.
- ✓ committing to 1 ½ - 2 hours of homework time per night, in addition to nightly reading requirements.
- ✓ completing tests, quizzes, and any assigned independent work independently within established guidelines.

Recognizing the importance of developing organizational skills, our teachers give students a lot of support in this area. At this level students are expected to organize much more of their time, space, and work than in the past. Each student must keep track of textbooks, binders, worksheets, reading and writing assignments, and research. They are responsible for keeping and consulting a daily planner or agenda, checking the Middle School website each evening, bringing home the proper books and supplies, and returning prepared the following day. Parents can be helpful by checking in with their students during study time and encouraging them to develop an organizational system that works.

Homework is an integral part of the Middle School academic program as it provides reinforcement of information covered during the day as well as an opportunity to expand understanding through synthesis and analysis. Because no class meets every day of the week and many assignments are long-term (projects or research), students must learn time management skills. Parents can help by providing a calendar at home to post due dates of projects and assignments. If your child seems to have a disproportionate amount of homework, please contact a teacher to discuss the student's work habits.

If students have questions about homework assignments after consulting their agendas and the website, they should contact a classmate. As a final option, students may contact teachers after school hours, according to each teacher's guidelines.

It is expected that students arrive at school with completed homework assignments. Printing must be completed at home or after school the day before it is due. Unprinted assignments saved to a computer or flash drive will be considered late.

Incomplete homework due to excused absences must be made up. As a general rule, the student will have one extra day per each day absent to complete missed work.

## **THE CURRICULUM**

### **Math**

The RMS Middle School math program includes in-depth studies of Pre-Algebra, Basic Algebra, and Algebra I concepts, procedures, and real-world applications. The primary goals of the program are to prepare the students for a rigorous high school math curriculum, to expand their intellectual growth through creative and critical thinking, and to expose them to the relevance of math in their everyday lives. The courses are composed of both traditional and hands-on direct instruction, daily independent computation practice, individual and group practice of application to solve real-life problems, and journaling. Algebra students participate in a weekly Math Lab designed to extend their technology skills using spreadsheets and graphing calculators. Projects are assigned periodically to reinforce concepts through creative and critical thinking connections. In addition to traditional testing, grading includes organization, following directions, participation, and extra credit opportunities. To enhance the retention of computation skills, there is an emphasis on vocabulary both directly and indirectly related to math, mnemonic learning, and repetition and review. The teacher is available two days a week for after-school extra help. Should it be deemed necessary by the math teacher, an individualized program of study may be made available for students requiring additional accommodations.

### **Science**

The RMS Middle School science curriculum builds upon the Five Great Lessons taught throughout the elementary years. The two-year curriculum is planned to spark wonder and to build a love for learning in the areas of physical and life sciences. The curriculum will foster a creative, eager learner and responsible, global citizen.

What does a creative, eager learner and responsible, global citizen need to know and be able to do regarding the discipline of science?

- ✓ Students will know about and understand the universe through direct observation and hands-on experiments whenever possible. They will learn to formulate good questions built upon their own curiosity and wonder.
- ✓ Students will be able to evaluate the quality of scientific information on the basis of its source and the methods used to generate it. They will be able to read scientific articles/journals in the popular press and to engage in social conversation about the validity of the conclusions based upon the given data.
- ✓ They will learn to appreciate the beauty of nature by embarking on topics from genetics to astronomy. They will broaden their scope of academic understanding and become more aware of themselves and their relationship with nature.

Life science year: organization of the human body, generation of genetics, fun with forensic science, environmental science.

Physical science year: digging through earth science, mystery with chemistry, Newton's physics, conserving energy.

## **Language Arts**

The goal of the language arts curriculum is to provide students with a strong foundation and understanding of the English language, while preparing them for the demands of high school. It includes formal instruction in grammar, vocabulary, writing, literature and public speaking. Seventh and eighth graders take language arts in separate classes.

In addition to daily grammar and punctuation practice, students apply what they have learned to their written work. Students participate in the editing and revision of all of their own work. They also take part in weekly vocabulary lessons, learning new vocabulary that is relevant to subjects studied across the entire curriculum.

The writing component of the language arts curriculum includes descriptive, narrative, and expository writing. Students are taught essential traits of effective composition and have numerous opportunities throughout the year to apply what they have learned. Writing assignments include various essay formats, persuasive writing and debate, research papers (MLA format), analytical writing and various forms of creative writing.

Literature studies are often integrated with history themes. Students read at least six to eight novels a year and also read short stories, poetry and biographies. Students demonstrate their comprehension of literature through various written assignments, book talks, and tests or quizzes, as appropriate. Students gain an understanding of many literary concepts and devices.

Middle school students have ample opportunities for public speaking and oral presentations. Formal instruction is given in this area and students exercise their speaking skills in all academic areas. The eighth grade students present at *Middle School Parent Education Night* and individually deliver speeches at graduation, providing them with real-world experience.

## **History**

The study of history encompasses the study of human progress and the building up of civilizations. Students begin to see a real and profound union between all people and begin to recognize that they, too, have a role in humanity's timeline. Students synthesize their knowledge through research papers, discussions, timelines, art projects, simulations, drama, and tests and quizzes. The history curriculum is on a two-year cycle and seventh and eighth graders are combined for these classes.

World History year: civilizations, world religions, scientific and industrial revolutions.

U.S. History year: foundations and structure of our democratic system, civic responsibilities, and key historical events of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

### **Spanish**

The Spanish curriculum for Middle School is based on the belief that the purpose of learning Spanish is to communicate with the people who speak it and to understand their cultures. It provides the students with strategies to be effective communicators whether listening, speaking, reading or writing. Each performance-based task includes a useful strategy that connects to a step-by step approach that helps students plan, rehearse, and present what they have learned. Spanish lessons include vocabulary, oral language practice, listening comprehension, reading strategies, reading comprehension, videos, cultural comparisons, grammar, and hands-on projects.

### **Critical Thinking and Select Skills (CTSS)**

Using a trimester cycle, students are divided across grade levels into three small Advisory groups for this weekly class. They rotate through studies/discussions in three areas. Real-world questions of ethics in science encourage contemplation and thoughtful development of personal positions. An introduction to banking and financial operations exposes students to basic money management skills. Efficient study, test-taking, and memory strategies can be used to enhance learning across the curriculum. The small groups and seminar format also offer an opportunity for self-expression in a more relaxed setting. "Quote of the Week" journaling and sharing are a requirement of this pass/fail class.

### **Personal Development Class**

Personal Development is a pass/fail class offered once a week. The class participates as a whole or is split up by grade and/or gender, depending on the nature of the class. There are class discussions specific to maintaining the social balance of the class community and on relevant topics that affect adolescents. Students practice conflict-resolution procedures and team-building activities.

### **Music**

The Middle School music curriculum focuses on the development of musicianship skills through the study of music history, music theory and choral music. The study of music history affords an opportunity for in-depth analysis of musical masterworks. This study provides a basis of cultural literacy by making a connection to the historical, philosophical and social context in which the work was created. Music theory helps students become conversant in the language and mechanics of music. The study of choral music allows students to hone ensemble skills and proper vocal production and provides an outlet for their own musical expression. Guest artists are invited to perform and interact with the students.

## **Art**

The art program is developed to enrich the lives of our students through artistic experiences. The students learn the basic elements and principles of art and learn how to identify art elements in their daily lives. They develop and improve motor skills through experimenting with various techniques and mediums. They learn how to use the language of art to describe qualities in their own artwork and in the artwork of others. Their exposure to art history not only includes the discussion of artworks by masters and ancient civilizations but also what cultures recognize as having value and how artists express themselves in their own time and in their own community. Activities are designed to promote creativity, self-awareness, self-expression, self-confidence, and problem-solving abilities. The organization of materials in the art room promotes independence, self-direction, responsibility, and cooperation.

The goal of the art program at the Middle School level is to strengthen the students' skills acquired from previous experiences and to provide an opportunity for more self-directed projects. At this level students work with more precise techniques and execute even more complex activities, further developing their motor and cognitive skills. Art history, aesthetics, and art criticism are important subjects to discuss as these students expand their art vocabulary. Integrated projects continue to reinforce what the students are learning in their classroom.

## **Research/Technology**

The middle school research and technology program endeavors to help students develop information literacy skills and strategies to efficiently and effectively access, evaluate, and use information in a digital age. Sequential research skills are taught in the context of curriculum goals: planning the assignment, accessing and evaluating resources, recording and using information to complete short and long term projects.

Middle school students are taught responsible use of print and electronic sources. Internet safety issues, source citations, plagiarism issues, and copyright law are included in the curriculum. There are enough netbooks for all Middle School students to have access during the school day. Our students have use of a variety of resources, including our library media center, online resources, and community resources.

## **Physical Education**

Physical Education consists of three classes per week. The typical class format includes a dynamic warm-up activity, an aerobic/fitness tune-up that includes a strength building component, a competitive and/or cooperative group activity, and a cool down static stretching activity.

Appropriate clothing includes:

- ✓ loose-fitting, comfortable clothing that allows free physical movement
- ✓ athletic shoes which may be kept in the student's locker until P.E. class

## **ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

### **Micro-economy**

Maria Montessori believed that adolescents need to engage in real meaningful work in order to understand themselves and the society in which they live. The students run a business that sells a product(s), thereby promoting social and economic independence. The idea of production and exchange is introduced and examined as the basis on which society is formed. Participating in the micro-economy allows the students to experience challenging adult-like work, physical work, cooperation, and opportunities to practice flexibility. Profits from the micro-economy are used to fund school trips and related expenses. The RMS Middle School helps operate the school pizza business and holds a winter and spring bazaar, featuring student-made goods. Parents are encouraged to let faculty know if they have special talents or interests, and would be interested in working with our students in preparation for the bazaars.

### **Field Trips**

The Middle School staff works hard to put together a program that meets the needs of early adolescents and expands upon classroom learning. Educational, cultural, and service opportunities are available for all students. Attendance at all of these activities is important and expected. If for some reason a student is unable to participate, a plan should be made with teachers to fulfill the goals of the activity in another way.

During the first week of school, the entire Middle School participates in an overnight camping trip and ropes course experience designed to build community spirit. Through the school year, field studies are an integral part of the science curriculum. An annual trip to Staunton provides an opportunity to experience a Shakespeare play in a replica of the Globe Theater. Profits from the Middle School micro-economy help to offset the costs of an annual multi-night field study. Teachers present multidisciplinary lessons beforehand to connect the trip to all academic subjects, and students complete in-depth research to prepare. There are also off-campus community service opportunities during the year.

Whenever possible, RMS school buses or charter buses are used for field trip transportation. At times, parents are needed to help transport students to some locations. Parents are asked to sign a permission slip at the beginning of the school year allowing their children to participate in field trips and to be driven there by Middle School teachers and/or parents.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

Students at RMS have many opportunities to serve others. We believe that service to others is essential to the moral development of the adolescent. By helping others, the student learns his/her role in society and is able to experience 'valorization of the personality.' Maria Montessori describes this as "making him feel capable of succeeding in life by his own efforts and on his own merits, and at the same time it would put him in direct contact with the supreme reality of social life." Community service also

requires physical work, which is another crucial element for the development of the adolescent.

Students participate in an off-campus service project over the course of a semester. RMS faculty will supervise the students at all times. Parents will be notified as to when their child will be participating (fall or spring), where the service will take place, and the nature of the service project.

In addition to off-campus service, Middle School students engage in service to our RMS community. They may volunteer in the younger classes for various projects, assist in the library and office, or garden and provide basic maintenance.

At the end of the year, the students donate a portion of their earnings from the micro-economy to charities they choose.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

### **Evaluation/Grades**

To assist in the transition to traditional high schools, Middle School students are introduced to a percentage-based grading system using a nine-point scale. They receive corresponding letter grades of A (92-100), B (83-91), C (74-82), D (65-73). Should a student fail to obtain a passing grade on an assignment, the teacher conferences with him/her to establish a plan of action. Prompt intervention is the goal.

In addition to tests, Middle School teachers provide students a variety of means for demonstrating mastery. Alternative assessments include projects, research assignments, oral presentations, group work, and creative expressions in the visual and performing arts. Students also earn daily credit for completion of homework, class participation, and following directions.

Grades are averaged and reported to parents via Progress Reports quarterly. Parents should encourage students to share graded work with them as it is returned. Official notification of scores on graded work will be sent home at least four times a year in the student's grade binder.

### **Standardized Testing**

Students at RMS are administered the Stanford (10) Achievement Test each spring to maintain an assessment record across the grade levels. It is an untimed test and is used as one of many ways to observe the development of each individual student. The curriculum at RMS Middle School does not teach to the standardized test.

### **Exams**

Eighth graders will have at least two mid-year and two final exams so that they might experience a lengthy, cumulative test before high school.

## **Parent-Teacher Communication**

Keeping parents abreast of Middle School activities and information is an important goal of the staff. Email is a valuable means for parent/teacher communication. Each RMS teacher's email address is his/her first name initial and surname @richmont.org. Please ensure that we have your correct email address(es). Parents may also use email to request a phone call from a teacher.

Parent-teacher conferences can be scheduled anytime during the year. We will have two scheduled conference dates, at least one of which will be led by the student himself/herself. Sign-up for scheduled conference days is done on the school's website ([www.richmont.org](http://www.richmont.org)). Instructions will be emailed from the administration. Middle School staff may request a conference when students are having trouble keeping up with the work or are dealing with a behavior that requires attention.

Weekly progress reports are sent home every Friday for parents to review and sign. These reports inform parents how each student is doing during the week. Students take the reports with them to each class and teachers make notes on these reports as needed.

Grade binders will be sent home at least four times during the year. Each academic teacher will include a calendar(s) with numerical grades for his/her subject. Parents are asked to indicate that they have seen and discussed all the grades. They are invited to add comments or questions or request contact from a specific teacher. Progress Reports will be sent home quarterly in middle school.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Daily Schedule

The school day officially begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 3:15 p.m. Middle School students should arrive between 7:45 and 7:55 a.m. in order to unpack, get materials for the first class, and socialize. Arrivals after 8:00 a.m. will be marked "Tardy" and recorded on the student's progress report. Tardiness is disconcerting to the child who is late as well as disruptive to the rest of the class. If tardiness is a continuing issue, an action plan will be established. High schools view excessive tardies as problematic.

Community Meeting takes place from 8:00 a.m. to 8:15 a.m., Monday through Thursday (late-morning on Friday) and is a very important part of the school day. Students participate in community discussions and decision-making as well as share information and hear announcements concerning school business, work, or activities.

### *Monday – Thursday*

8:00-8:15	Community Meeting
8:15-10:15	classes
10:15-10:30	snack (T, Th with Advisory)
10:30-11:30/12:00	classes (including one Art class)
11:30/12:00	lunch
12:00/12:30	PE or recess
1:00-3:00	classes
3:00-3:15	jobs/pack up

### *Friday*

8:00-11:00	classes
11:00-11:15	Community Meeting/pizza preparation
11:30	lunch
12:00-12:45	PE
12:45-1:30	Personal Development
1:30-3:00	Micro-Economy/Community Service
3:00-3:15	jobs/pack up

(see your child's schedule for specific classes and times)

Although formal classes end at 3:00, students will not be dismissed until 3:15. Restoring the classroom environment is the responsibility of each member of the Middle School community. Tasks will be assigned to ensure that all supplies and materials are returned, tables are wiped, chairs are stacked, and the classrooms are neat and orderly for the following day.

## **Parent Participation**

There are many opportunities for parents to be involved in the Middle School community. Guest speakers are welcome to talk with students about their professions or interests. It is a great experience for students to be led by adults in their community. Parents are also needed at times to provide transportation, chaperone field trips, and plan or contribute food for social events. Middle school students are truly pleased and proud when their parents volunteer.

One of the many contradictions of adolescence is the need for independence versus the need for adult support and guidance.

“It’s easy to dismiss [them] as moody, baffling creatures. Yet, these years are perhaps the most critical time in human development, a juncture at which unmatched physical and intellectual growth, expanding creativity, emerging moral sensibilities, awakening sexuality, and maturing emotions converge. Early adolescence is a time when girls and boys may need the help of parents most – yet it’s often a time when they are most reluctant to accept it. And it may be a parent’s greatest opportunity to effect positive changes in a child’s life.”

Our Last Best Shot, Laura Sessions Stepp.

## **School Absences**

Daily school attendance is critical to academic success. Every effort to attend school on a daily basis should be made. Scheduling family trips during the school year is strongly discouraged.

If a student presents a written note from a parent before a planned absence or on the day that he/she returns to school, the absence becomes an excused absence. If no written note is presented by the day that the student returns to school, the absence is unexcused. Work may be made up in the case of excused absences only. When possible, please call the school to notify us of a student’s absence as well.

It is the student’s responsibility to create a list of work that needs to be made up. The list must be reviewed by the teacher. In addition, a plan and schedule for making up work must be agreed upon by teachers and student alike. In the case of a planned absence, a student should give as much advance notice to his/her teachers as possible. This will not excuse the student from creating a list of work upon his/her return, but it may allow teachers to send some work with the student in advance.

## **Carpool**

Students should be dropped off between 7:45 a.m. and 7:55 a.m. and picked up at 3:15 p.m. alongside the middle school building. Drivers who park at Or Atid must walk with their children. *Prompt arrival at the end of the day is extremely important* as teachers have after-school obligations. Any student remaining at carpool at 3:25 p.m. will be walked to Extended Care.

Parents must alert the office when students will be picked up by someone other than themselves or by someone who is not on their approved carpool list.

### **Cell Phone and Electronics**

Cell phones must be turned off and stored in lockers during the entire school day including lunchtime. Cell phones found on a student's person (including in a book bag, pocket, purse etc.) during the school day will be taken and stored in the office. Other personal electronic devices must also be turned off and stored in lockers during the entire school day. They must remain in the student's book bag during carpools.

### **Lockers**

Students are assigned a specific locker for the school year. Students may use only the locker that they have been assigned to store their materials. Students are responsible for the content of their lockers and for maintaining organization in their lockers.

### **Dress Code**

It is important for students to take responsibility for how they look. Within the boundaries of modesty and respect, they have freedom to develop their individual sense of style. The following expectations for student dress have been established to promote a safe and optimal learning environment and apply to all school functions including field trips.

- ✓ All clothing should adequately cover the body and not create distraction from work.
- ✓ Clothing must cover the midriff while sitting, standing, or reaching.
- ✓ Undergarments must be covered at all times. Female tops should be at least 2 inches wide at the shoulder.
- ✓ Ripped, torn, or cut-off clothing is not considered appropriate.
- ✓ Hoods, hats, and sunglasses may not be worn inside the school buildings.
- ✓ Dresses, skirts, and shorts must be no more than 4 inches above the knee (even when worn with leggings or tights).
- ✓ Clothing with printed pictures or messages must be considered tasteful and not offensive.
- ✓ See-through or revealing garments, low necklines, or excessively tight clothing is not appropriate.
- ✓ High heels (more than 2 inches) and flip-flops are not acceptable footwear for school.
- ✓ Tennis shoes are required for PE.
- ✓ It is recommended that shoes have backs as students climb stairs often during the school day.

The faculty reserves the right to make decisions about the appropriateness of an individual's dress in a school context. Students who come to school dressed inappropriately may be asked to call home to request a change of clothing.

## **Hygiene**

Adolescence is a time of intense physical change and can be a sensitive subject. Students are encouraged to be mindful of the changes their bodies are going through and should take care to maintain proper hygiene.

## **Romantic Relationships**

Although it is natural for adolescents to become interested in and explore romantic relationships, we strongly discourage students from developing exclusive relationships with other students in the class. Exclusive romantic relationships interfere with the cohesiveness of the group, much in the same way that 'cliques' do. Our classroom environment encourages students to have healthy and genuine friendships with members of both sexes.

## **Code of Conduct**

Each year the class establishes a code of conduct for themselves. They identify goals and values that are important for promoting academic excellence and a respectful and peaceful community. The most recent example follows:

### **Richmond Montessori School Middle School 2008-2009**

#### **Code of Conduct**

1. When someone is talking, give him or her your full attention. This means no interruptions or side conversations. Look at the person who is speaking.
2. Do not use inappropriate language. Inappropriate language is any word that someone finds offensive.
3. No clowning behavior. Clowning behavior includes laughing too long or too much, trying to make others laugh, and clapping at inappropriate times.
4. Inside voices, or quiet voices, are appropriate whenever indoors. Outside voices are appropriate for outside.
5. Our primary goal while in school is to learn. Any actions that are a distraction to the group, self or teacher are not permitted.
6. Homework needs to be turned in on time; don't forget to bring it to school! Make sure you write down all assignments in your agenda book. Homework is to be done at home, unless a teacher gives permission for it to be done in class or during open work time.
7. Use good judgment when dressing in the morning. Inappropriate language or images are not permitted on clothing.
8. Clean up after yourself. Put things back where you find them.
9. No roughhousing.
10. Lockers are personal and private spaces.
11. Field trip rules are as follows:
  - a. On the bus: no hands or legs in the aisle, quiet voices only, and don't talk to anyone behind you.
  - b. Stay with the group.
  - c. Respect other people's belongings.
  - d. Use a polite and respectful attitude whenever we meet people.

## **Discipline**

When school rules are violated, the first step taken as a disciplinary action will be a conversation between the students involved, faculty, and parents. Often this is a sufficient response. When consequences are to be imposed, they will be determined collectively by the faculty and approved by the Head of School.

Responses to minor misbehaviors are shaped by the nature of the offense, as much as possible. Minor offenses will be reported to parents in a general assessment of the student's work, in weekly progress reports, and at parent conferences. If misbehaviors are repeated and are causing concern among faculty, parents will be notified by a phone call.

For more serious offenses, or repeated minor offenses, a more formal discipline process may be used. Serious misbehavior is defined as actions which are likely to cause physical harm or damage to self (including use of drugs and alcohol), others persons, or school property. Parents will be notified in this case. Consequences will be determined by the Head of School in consultation with faculty, and may include the following:

- ✓ restrictions placed on activities
- ✓ behavioral contract
- ✓ a period of probation
- ✓ off-site suspension
- ✓ dismissal from the school

## **Faculty**

The faculty in the RMS Middle School works as a team to ensure a quality learning experience for its students. All faculty members are committed to supporting the growth of the individual student, with open communication between students, teachers, parents and administration. The faculty will collaborate with one another to make connections across the curriculum and to provide an integrated approach to learning.

- Katie Wood – Language Arts, Humanities, Personal Development, Reading, Vocabulary, CTSS
- David Shin – Science, Personal Development, CTSS
- Karen Lukhard – Algebra, Pre-Algebra, Reading, CTSS
- Cristina Whitaker - Spanish
- Mo Bennett - Art
- Lynnelle Ediger - Music
- Wendy Mazzini - PE
- Laurie Petronis – Media Resource
- Charlotte Davenport – Research/Technology

## **TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL**

In addition to preparing adolescents for adult life, RMS prepares students for life at the high school level. Students learn to adjust to a new school pattern with different teachers for each core subject, percentage-based grades, and an increase in homework, and exams. In order to successfully adjust, students must be organized and develop good time-management skills. RMS helps each student realize their potential in these areas.

For many Montessori students, Middle School is their first exposure to percentage-based grades. Allowing them to experience this system prepares them for the expectations of high school. In addition, high schools use these grades to make acceptance decisions during the application process.

In the fall, eighth grade students and their parents meet with the Admissions Director, to share information crucial to planning for their application to high school. Students apply to one or more area high schools, and Middle School teachers write recommendations as requested. The entire process is coordinated through the Office of Admissions. Guest speakers from area high schools are invited to provide opportunities for Middle School students to obtain information and ask questions.

## **HIGH SCHOOL APPLICATION INFORMATION**

Parents of eighth graders will find enclosed many tips to make the high school application process easier. We will also have a chance to meet together with your student to discuss thoughts about high school options to support your student's educational journey. I encourage you and your student to attend high school open houses and high school fairs – there is no other way to truly get a sense of a school unless you have been on their campus and met members of their school community.

I encourage parents of seventh graders to begin the high school investigation and research process now. If you start this fall, it will be a much more pleasant, thoughtful and stress-free process next year. Also, many programs have requirements that must be met in order to be eligible for admission. Starting the evaluation process now allows more time to address those requirements.

I have made a note of the counties/cities you reside. Throughout the year, I will send county/city specific information that may be helpful in your high school research.

I am excited to help you and your middle schooler explore your high school options! Do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or ways that I can be of assistance.

Amy Humphreys  
Director of Admissions  
741-0040, ext. 11  
ahumphreys@richmont.org

## Application to High School - Policy and Procedure

1. All applications and teacher/guidance counselor recommendations must be submitted to the Director of Admissions and distributed through the Admissions Office.
2. Provide teachers/guidance counselor *a minimum of three weeks* to complete recommendations. Note application due date and plan accordingly.
3. Provide the Admissions Office *a minimum of two weeks* to process applications, attach transcripts and mail.
4. Provide the Admissions Office the school address and to whose attention the application goes.
5. RMS cannot guarantee that applications will be received by the due date if school addresses, applications, transcript requests, teacher/guidance counselor recommendations, and essays are not submitted to the Admissions Office and faculty by the deadlines stated above.
6. Teacher recommendations are **confidential**.
7. Records are not considered "official" if the records are not sent directly from RMS.
8. When applying to The Governor's School/s, *allow ample time for mailing. Deadlines are crucial.* An application **will not** be considered if it is not completed correctly or received by the due date.
9. When applying to The Governor's School/s, include in writing your child's LOCAL PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL'S name, address and the Guidance Counselor's name.
10. When applying to Chesterfield County Specialty Centers, include in writing your child's LOCAL PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL'S name, address and the Guidance Counselor's name. *Note application deadlines. Also note that different Specialty Centers require recommendations from specific faculty; recommendations are not interchangeable.*
11. When applying to Henrico County Specialty Centers, include in writing the Center's address, recommendation requirements and to whose attention the application should be directed. *Note application deadlines. Also note that different Specialty Centers require recommendations from specific faculty; recommendations are not interchangeable.*
12. Note that the Governor's School/s and County Specialty Centers require *all components of a child's application to be submitted together.* It is essential that the application, essays, transcripts and recommendations are ready ten days before the due date. One missing piece can prevent the application from being mailed from RMS.
13. RMS will cover the expenses of processing five applications. For every application over five, there will be a \$25 fee to be made payable to RMS.
14. If you have any questions, contact Amy Humphreys, Director of Admissions, 741-0040, ext. 11.

## High School Application Checklist

- ✓ Contact High School/County Middle School – inquire about the process, school/program requirements
- ✓ Parents and 8<sup>th</sup> grader schedule an appointment and meet with Amy Humphreys to discuss school preferences and high school admissions goals
- ✓ Request High School applications and recommendation forms
- ✓ Note deadlines for applications – allow ample time for teachers to complete recommendations and for applications to be compiled and mailed
- ✓ Approach teachers and administrators to verbally ask their willingness to write recommendations
- ✓ Pass all paperwork to be completed (recommendations, transcript requests, etc.) through Amy Humphreys' office
- ✓ Attend the High School Fair – October 13, 2009 at 7 pm, St. Mary's Catholic School
- ✓ Attend High School Open Houses/Info Sessions (see attached VAIS school Open House schedule)
- ✓ Register for testing – SSAT or individual school testing
- ✓ Schedule individual school visits/interviews – Put your BEST FOOT FORWARD during visits; remember your actions are not only a reflection on you but also on your parents, teachers and Richmond Montessori School.
- ✓ Keep your academics up – the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> progress reports are considered heavily

## Application "How To's" and Etiquette

Listed below are several suggestions to assist you during the process of applying to High School:

### Application "How To's":

- Make a copy of the application before you begin to work on it. Work on the copy and keep the original clean until you are ready to fill it out.
- Write clearly and neatly.
- If you do write in pencil first; make sure that you have erased all pencil marks before submitting the application.
- Use the same ink color throughout the application.
- Read every question carefully before answering and follow all instructions to the letter. The way you complete an application speaks volume about you; if it is untidy or incomplete you will be judged accordingly.
- Complete all the blanks on the application.
- Save a copy of the application, essay and other requested information for your records.
- Sign your name if requested.
- Have your parents sign their names!

### Application Etiquette:

Completing recommendation forms and writing recommendation letters is hard work, and can take over an hour for each form/letter. Everything that you can do to make the process easier and quicker will result in a better recommendation.

- Determine how many recommendations you need for each school/program.
- Consider whom you ask to write a recommendation. Ask yourself – who will read the letter? Request letters from those who know you and your work the best.
- Request the recommendations in person. Do not have your parents ask...asking yourself will emphasize your independence and responsibility.
- Ask each potential person if they would feel comfortable providing a recommendation.
- Provide all the necessary information needed to write the recommendation, i.e. name of school, name of person receiving the letter, type of specialty program.
- Ask sooner than later! Provide each person writing a recommendation three weeks lead time to write the recommendation.
- Letters of recommendation are confidential! Do not expect to read them.
- Check in with each person writing a recommendation ten days before the application due date to offer a friendly reminder that your application is due.
- Say thank you to the person writing a recommendation – a written note is best!
- Let the person writing a recommendation know the results of your application once you begin hearing back from schools!
- Respond to telephone calls or email messages from the schools that you have applied to.
- Inform the school directly if you will not be accepting and attending their program.

## Putting Your Best Foot Forward! High School Visitation "How To's" and Etiquette

First impressions are long lasting and can make a positive or negative difference in the final admissions decisions and to those you meet during your visit.

### Plan ahead and:

- Be presentable – Make sure that your hair and clothing are neat and clean.
- Where appropriate clothing – follow the RMS dress code and wear shoes that fit your visitation activities.
- Make sure that you are clean. Take a shower, wash your hair, use deodorant and brush your teeth before you visit a prospective high school.
- Do not wear too much make-up.
- Speak with correct grammar. Do not use slang.
- Be polite. Always remember your manners and say "please" and "thank you".
- Be respectful to your parents and to everyone you meet.
- Arrive on time.
- Be sensible. Never do anything silly, crazy or dangerous.
- Be respectful of the high school's classrooms and facilities – cause no damage.
- Be calm and serious. This is not the time to make jokes or to be the class clown. If you do not take the visit seriously, the perception will be that you will not take being a student at that high school seriously.
- Eat properly at any meals provided.
- Do not chew gum.
- Never swear or use crude language.
- Prepare a list of good, open-ended questions to ask about the high school.
- Remember that you are being observed. The host teachers, administrators and current students provide feedback to the admissions office. Be on your BEST behavior at ALL TIMES.
- We recommend that you do not schedule a visitation at the same time as a classmate. Let the high school staff focus on you exclusively.
- Finally, remember this is your time to SHINE. This visit will help the Admission Officers at that high school see what makes you unique and what special gifts you offer their school.

There will be many high school Open Houses this fall. Richmond Montessori School teachers and administration understand if you must miss school to attend an Open House that is scheduled during school hours. However, when you schedule any interviews or school visitations, please try to plan for days when RMS is already closed whenever possible. Remember, the high schools will put a lot of weight on your 8<sup>th</sup> grade progress reports – it is essential that you keep your academics up!

**VAIS High School Open Houses  
Fall 2009**

High School Fair – October 13<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm hosted by St. Mary's Catholic School

Benedictine – Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>

Collegiate – Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>

St. Catherine's – Tuesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>

St. Christopher's – Tuesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>

Saint Gertrude's Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup>

Steward – Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>

Trinity – Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>

*(Visitations begin in November on Monday and Thursdays)*

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## High School Admissions Worksheet

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Admissions Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Admissions Office Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Admissions Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Application Deadline: \_\_\_\_\_

Requirements for Admissions: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendations Needed:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendations due to Mrs. Humphreys' Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Testing Required: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates for Testing: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Open House: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of School Visit/Interview: \_\_\_\_\_