

THE MONTESSORI MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Public Charter School approved by the
New Mexico State Department of Education PEC School.



TMMS Handbook

(To be used in conjunction with the TMES & TMMS Student/Parent Handbook 2011)

NOTICE

This Handbook states guidelines for school policy as well as student rights and responsibilities. It does not create any contractual rights.

The TMES Collaborative Counsel may, at its sole discretion, modify the provisions of this Handbook at any time.

Adapted August 11

The Montessori Middle School (TMMS) Handbook

Goals of the Program

- To encourage the development of self-reliant, capable people
- To create a challenging academic program at all levels and competencies
- To inspire a love of learning and to help students acquire the tools necessary to continue to learn effectively
- To create a safe, nurturing environment
- To encourage students to celebrate what they have in common, and what makes each of them unique

Philosophy

The Montessori Middle School years involve more rapid growth-physical, emotional and cognitive- than at any time other than infancy. Just as this period is one of rapid growth, it is also one of great variety in physical and mental development. Some students arrive in middle school full-fledged teenagers, while others take more time to enter the first stages of puberty. In order to nurture this growth and support this diversity, we have designed our program around the needs, sensitivities and strengths of adolescents. We have given careful attention to balancing the early adolescent need for activity and movement with the importance of developing attentiveness and concentration. Integrated into the academic areas, or treated as separate entities, we emphasize the following:

- A sense of membership in, and responsibility to, our world
- A responsibility for one's own education
- A responsibility for one's own growth as a moral human being
- An awareness of the contributions of the past and possibilities for the future in:
 - Literature and art
 - Social systems
 - Sciences
 - Our species
 - Our world
 - Our universe
- The importance of physical, emotional and social growth and well-being
- The ability of our students to make healthy and responsible choices

The Academic Program

1. Sixth year students work with their lead teacher/Advisor in main subject areas of Social Studies (Ancient Civilizations), Science and Language Arts/Writing.
2. Seventh and Eighth year students work together in their main subject areas, Social Studies (NM History/US History/Civics), Science and Language Arts/Writing, in a rotating two year curriculum.

3. The eighth year curriculum also prepares students for a rigorous high school education through long-term independent study, leadership responsibilities and increasing involvement in the outside community.
4. Sixth, Seventh and Eighth year students meet together daily in advisor groups. 7,8 stay in the same advisor group throughout their middle school years.
5. Math and Language Arts are taught in small groups, providing an opportunity for students to work at the level of their individual experience and knowledge.
6. In addition to the main subject areas, other classes include:
 - Latin/Greek Roots 6, 7, 8
 - Mapping and Geography 6, 7
 - Life Skills 6, 7, 8
 - Middle school prep 6
 - Technology 6, 7, 8
 - Visual Art 6, 7, 8
 - Orchestra 6, 7, 8
 - Health and Wellness 6, 7, 8
 - Community Outreach 6, 7, 8
 - Independent Study 8

The Day is organized so students have opportunities for:

- Individual work
- Group work
- Daily assignments
- Long-term assignments
- Peer teaching
- Planning time
- Time to review individual progress
- A variety of means to demonstrate mastery...tests, projects, and presentations.

Daily Schedule:

- **8:00- 8:25** Student Tutorial opportunities
- **8:30-8:55** Morning Meeting
- **9:00-11:00** World Rotations (Natural/Science, Social/Social Studies and Personal/Writing)
- **11:15-12:15** Math
- **12:15-1:00** Lunch
- **1:00-2:00** Language Arts/Geography/Independent Studies
- **2:00-2:30** Advisor Group Meetings/Tutorials
- **2:30-3:30** Strings/Art/Health and Wellness
- **3:30** Dismissal

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

Please make sure your child arrives on time. We have advised the students they should arrive no later than 8:25am. Our classes begin promptly at 8:30am. Tardiness is disconcerting to the child who is late and also disruptive to the rest of your class. Remember the "4-H" saying... "If you are early, you are on time...if you are on time, you are late."

Punctuality is one of the most important practical life skills that students can obtain. In most cases, the business world demands it. Being punctual for the beginning of the school day, as well as, the beginning of each class is important for several reasons.

First, when someone comes into the classroom late, no matter how quiet he or she tries to be, it will be a distraction for those focusing on their work. A student's uninterrupted work-time is highly valued in Montessori education. Second, the community of learners is also something that is important to our philosophy. When everyone begins work at the same time, the ability to learn and share with others is facilitated. Students weave their ideas together creating an understanding where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And thirdly, as the oldest members of our Montessori student community, it is every Middle Schoolers' responsibility to be a good role model for the younger students.

Classes and Extracurricular Activities:

Curriculum:

The year is divided into four units, each of these focusing on a different theme. Science...The Natural World, Social Studies...The Social World, and Writing...The Personal world are taught in rotations. Each theme lasts seven weeks, culminating during the seventh week with finals and land lab. Each "World" will use guiding questions to encourage student involvement and to create an integrated curriculum. It is important to remember the driving question in the adolescent plane of development is:

**How does this help me understand the world
and my place in it?**

Social Studies/Social World

The Social Studies curriculum focuses on the study of Ancient Civilizations, New Mexico History, and United States Government. History is taught through impressionistic lessons, traditional textbook work, and independent research. Literature and writing exercises are carefully woven into everything the student studies. Our study of literature complements our work in history while exploring different literary genres.

Science/Natural World

The science curriculum concentrates on life sciences with a focus on human biology and includes topics in earth and physical science. Students are encouraged to investigate their own questions in labs and research projects. Throughout the science curriculum, the emphasis is on scientific method and discovery through labs, activities and research. Students learn to conduct and report on controlled experiments, with the appropriate use of laboratory apparatus and methods of measurement.

Language Arts and Writing/Personal World

Students are given lessons in effective writing and have lots of opportunities to practice these skills: writing essays, stories, poetry and reports during each personal world block. The students will complete each writing block with a formal presentation of their work. Vocabulary and grammar are also a regular part of the writing curriculum.

Mathematics:

Math is taught with small ability based group lessons. Sixth and seventh year students begin in two places: some students are ready for a transition to algebra and other students do best with a focus on more concrete arithmetic, cementing their competency with fractions, decimals, and percents. The goal for the eighth year student is to have completed either an introduction to Algebra course or a complete Algebra 1 course. Programs are matched with the individual developmental needs.

Health and Wellness

Understanding that physical health and fitness is important to overall well-being, we have initiated a three day fitness requirement. This requirement can be satisfied by activities both inside and outside of school. TMMS will offer two days a week of physical education. The third day will need to be fulfilled outside of school, either at a sport practice or an activity of choice

Electives:

Every theme/unit the students will choose an elective. Friday afternoon the students will be a part of a group. The students themselves will pick their activity and rotate through the four electives for the year. Some examples are art, rock climbing, bowling, outdoor experience, and gardening.

Outdoor Education:

Maria Montessori believed that it was through physical work and a connection to the land that adolescents would discover their inner strength. Early adolescents love being outside and learn important lessons in the experience they have there. In the fall, students and teachers participate in a two night, overnight trip. This trip allows us to enjoy the beauty of the outdoors and facilitates a wonderful feeling of community spirit. Throughout the school year, field studies are an integral part of our science and humanities curriculum. Land Labs will take place at the end of each unit.

Technology:

The middle school classrooms have computers. Students may bring lap-tops to school, but they may only be used for writing and word documents. Internet access is available through our school computers only. Any student who uses a computer inappropriately at school will lose their privilege to use them.

Community Service:

Knowing that each of us has the power to be of service is an important lesson for middle school students. Every TMMS student has a classroom job in his/her advisor group. TMMS students also have the opportunity to contribute in other areas of the school. Students help in upper and lower elementary classrooms and assist with school cleaning, recycling, and beautifying their environment.

Internships:

Eighth year students have the opportunity to apprentice outside our school for one week. Parents and advisors work together to find placement that is personally meaningful to each student. During their week away, students are asked to work hard and keep journals. When they return, they share their experience with the rest of the TMMS community during a formal presentation time.

Trips, Service, and Field Studies:

The TMMS staff has worked hard to put together a rich program to meet the needs of early adolescents. Community Service, Life Skills, Outdoor Education, trips and field studies are important components of this program. Attendance at the activities is expected. If for some reason, a student is unable to participate, a plan should be made with the student's advisor to fulfill the goals of the activity in another way.

Homework:

Homework is an integral part of the academic program in middle school. Not only does it reinforce information covered during the day; it helps students expand their understanding of topics through more analytic exercises. Questions regarding homework should be addressed in the following way:

1. Students should check their assignment books/syllabus for information regarding the subject in question
2. Students should check their binders for possible notes about the assignments
3. If student have no luck on their own, they should call a classmate for help
4. If students still have questions, they should email their teacher

***Students should arrive at school with their homework complete and printed out.
It is not acceptable to print out work during class time.***

Students who arrive without their homework will be required to write a note home during advisor group to ask parents for extra help. If work is still unfinished at the end of the week, students will not be allowed to participate in their chosen elective. Teachers will do their best to remind students when work is owed, but we consider it the student's responsibility to know if work is missing or incomplete.

When homework is consistently missed, the problem is understandably more complicated. At this point, it is important to arrange a conference to better understand the problem and to come up with a student-parent-school agreement that offers a solution.

Newsletters:

TMMS staff will email short memos home at the beginning of each unit (four this year). There will also be information available on our web site classroom page. These documents will contain information about the subjects your child is studying as well as dates and details specific to the unit. Please watch for this. Quite often, there are changes to the original calendar that are important to notice. There are always updates and changes posted on the school website, so it is wise to check our website and mid school web page frequently.

Conferences:

Parent-Teacher conferences are run differently in the middle school than in our elementary program. Three times per year, TMMS students will prepare for, and conduct their own conferences with parents and advisors (these conference dates are the same as TMES). In addition, middle school students are also asked to participate in a before school conference with their Advisor and family to discuss goals and expectations for the year. Students are asked to review their progress and make plans for improvement in both academic and social areas. This conference takes place the week before school begins.

We conduct conferences in this way to emphasize the student's responsibility in assessing his or her own progress. These conferences offer an opportunity for students to engage in a serious discussion with adults in an atmosphere of mutual respect and support. Conference dates are published. It is the family's responsibility to report to the conference time given to them.

Absences:

When a student must miss school for personal reasons, students and parents should give teachers as much notice as possible.

Students are expected to complete all tests, quizzes, labs, in-class assignments and activities within one week after returning. Students are expected to use the morning tutorial time to help achieve this goal.

Social Expectations

Relationships:

It is important to us that students treat each other with respect and courtesy. This age is one of great sensitivity, social turmoil, and intense focus on acceptance. As adults, we have a responsibility to teach our students the value of treating others, as we would want others to treat us. Healthy growth occurs best in an atmosphere that is physically and emotionally safe. Both verbal and physical abuse is considered serious offenses against the community.

It is important for parents to communicate with the TMMS staff if social situations at school are making their child uncomfortable.

We work hard to create a respectful environment, but rely on the information we receive from families as well as our own observations to monitor the social going-on of this age group. Research supports that a strong school-family partnership works best to help our children understand the joys and responsibilities of social relationships.

Social Celebrations:

We ask that parents be particularly sensitive when planning parties and get-togethers for children during the middle school years.

If you are unable to invite everyone in a group, make sure that invitations get sent outside of school. There is no greater cause of hurt feelings at this age than being left out of social events. Gift giving at school elicits the same hard feelings. Make sure that your children do their gift giving outside of school unless they bring gifts for an entire group. Birthdays may be celebrated with a special treat during advisor group time.

Discipline:

As at any age, transgressions of social expectations will occur. We use these transgressions as opportunities to help our students learn the consequences of their actions and to learn appropriate and respectful ways to handle situations in the future. While our fundamental belief is that punishment and threats impede the development of the ethical sense and encourage the belief that power rather than reason prevails, we will not accept student's behavior that is rude, disruptive, or harmful to others. Please see attached Aggressive Behavior and Bullying rubric's.

When misbehavior at school is reported to parents, the best course of action, from the school's point of view, would be a discussion about what happened, a clear parent-to-child message that such behavior is not acceptable, and a talk about what alternative actions might have been taken. TMMS teachers are happy to work with parents to refine home-school effectiveness.

Dress Code:

School dress should allow students to participate comfortably in all physical and outdoor activities. Refrain from tight clothing that will inhibit movement. Clothing must cover the body fully and not create any distraction from work. Students in TMMS need to be reminded that our school dress code applies to after hour school functions, sports, meetings and field trips. Hats worn to school need to be taken off inside the building.

- No spaghetti straps
- Undergarments cannot be visible
- Clothes cannot be distressed: torn, ripped, etc.
- Stomachs must be covered (including when arms are lifted to reach inside lockers)
- T-shirts must not be offensive
- Shorts' and skirts' lengths should reach to the fingertips when the arms are held straight down by the side
- Hats and sunglasses are allowed outside only
- No baggy pants
- We strongly recommend that students wear closed toed shoes and all shoes have a back strap on them. Flip flops are not allowed.

Students who do not meet the dress code requirements will be sent to the office where a staff member will call a parent to bring the student suitable attire.

Cell Phones:

In an effort to support social interaction and community spirit, cell phones are not to be used in the Middle School. **All cell phones must be turned off during school hours (8:00am-3:30pm)**. There are phones for students to use in the school office and if parents need to reach a student during school hours, they are advised to call the office number, 796-0149. If a student uses their cell phone during the school day, the phone will be confiscated and a parent will need to come into the building and retrieve the phone before or after school.

Family Involvement

Study:

One of the ways families can support the middle school student is by providing the space and time needed to complete their work. A study environment should be neat, quiet and free from distractions such as TV or telephone. In recent years, we have become increasingly aware that Instant Messaging is a significant (and usually negative) distraction. FaceBook can be even more harmful! **Please be aware of how computers are being used.** It is our recommendation that computers be kept in a visible location at home and that use of the Internet and texting is limited. Expectations from parents to children should be very clear. As noted, parents can expect 45minutes to an hour of homework each night. Regular activities that make it hard to spend this time on work should be avoided. It is important to teachers that students go home at the end of each week caught up on their work. If your child needs to finish their assignment, we would appreciate your support.

Lunch and Snack:

Healthy eating is an important consideration for early adolescents. At this age, young people are growing by leaps and bounds and expending large doses of physical energy. We have found a mid-morning healthy snack to be helpful to all. We will only accept healthy snacks and lunch items, remember this is habit forming time and we would like our students to develop healthy eating habits during this sensitive period of their lives. Suggestions for a healthy foods can be found on our website. Students are required to bring lunch to school daily. These lunches can include an item that needs a 30 second warm-up, but not something that needs to be cooked in the microwave. All lunchboxes need to include two reusable cloth napkins and the students are required to use one as a placemat and one as a napkin. A reusable water bottle that can be taken home and cleaned needs to be brought to school daily. Practical life is still applicable in Middle School!

Family School Partnership:

Most parents find that the culture of the adolescent is somewhat different than that of the upper elementary child. Because of this, the earlier casual interaction between parents and teachers begins to be replaced by communication that requires more effort from both faculty and parents. As teachers we are committed to keeping in touch with parents. That said, **please e-mail your student's advisor or call the office to contact the advisor whenever you have questions or concerns.** Every middle school teacher has an email at school and checks their messages daily. Because adolescents ride an emotional roller coaster, they can come home with highly dramatized versions of their day. It can be helpful to compare notes with a teacher.

Parent Help at School:

Parents are encouraged to get involved in many aspects of our program. Time attending TMMS parent education classes, classroom presentation nights, chaperoning field trips, community service trips, helping with drama productions, coordinating middle school functions, and making copies is always appreciated. Please check with the front office about the volunteer procedure at our school. There is an ongoing sign-up sheet for the school year. Please take the time to sign up to help for an event this year. We welcome you in the classroom.

Middle School Staff:

Kari Schein/Middle School Coordinator/Social Studies Lead Teacher/: K-8th Grade NM License, Montessori AMS Certification

Susie Mazarr-Proo/ Science Lead Teacher : K-8th Grade NM License, Masters in Elementary Education, Highly Qualified in Science, Montessori NAMC Certification

Sherry Hayworth/Sixth Grade Lead Teacher K-8th Grade NM License, Masters in Elementary Education, Highly Qualified Science and Language Arts, Montessori NAMC Certification

Kit Hartman/Educational Assistant: NM Secondary 7-12th Grade License, Highly Qualified in History

- Other guest instructors will join us for specific curriculum.

The Montessori Middle School Student Agreement

The Montessori Middle School is a community that believes respect and responsibility are essential to an environment conducive for learning and growth. Parents, teachers and students are part of this community, where recognition of the individual, acceptance of differences, and compassion for others are the basis of all relationships.

The teacher's goals are to generate an interest in learning, to provide necessary information and skills, and to encourage creativity. Students are expected to learn to manage and schedule their time and assignments and to practice good work habits. Student participation in establishing goals and recording progress is an important part of the curriculum.

I would like to be a member of The Montessori Middle School program. As a Middle School student, I agree:

1. To build and maintain a spirit of community by:

- *cooperating* with and respecting other students and adults through words and actions
- *respecting* each individual's unique qualities
- *participating* constructively in all Middle School activities
- *welcoming* new families and visitors to TMMS
- *acting* as a role model student for the younger grades

2. To assume responsibility for my personal academic growth by:

- *establishing* goals
- *managing* my time
- *using* my Binder to the best of my ability
- *taking care* of my belongings
- *working* to the best of my ability
- *agreeing* to attend tutorials to finish my work when necessary

3. To make a commitment to academic excellence

- completing my work on time
- always being thorough and neat
- working independently on individual assignments and tests
- seeking help when necessary
- working cooperatively on group assignments
- coming prepared to class, with printed work and necessary supplies
- setting aside, for school work, an average of 1 to 1 ½ hours a night for homework.

4. To take responsibility for the Middle School environment by:

- maintaining good care of all materials, books, furniture, and equipment
- participating in daily upkeep of the classrooms, halls, bathrooms, and outside spaces
- using materials wisely in an effort to protect our natural resources



The Montessori Middle School Student Agreement

***This portion of the document to be signed by both parent and student after the first overnight trip.*

I have read the content of this TMMS Handbook and the TMES & TMMS Student/Parent Handbook. By signing below I agree to abide by the rules and policies stated in the both Handbooks. Any infraction of the above policies will result in a family meeting with staff and administration.

TMMS Student Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Student Advisor Signature _____ Date _____



The Montessori Middle School

Defining Aggressive Behaviors

Teasing: Name calling, Insulting, or other behaviors that would hurt others' feelings or make them feel badly about themselves.

Exclusion: Starting rumors, telling others not to be friends with someone, or other actions that would cause someone to be without friends.

Interfering with Another's Belonging: Hiding, damaging, invading privacy, petty theft.

Bullying: Repeated acts over time that involve a real or perceived imbalance of power with the more powerful child or group attacking those who are perceived to be less powerful. It can be both verbal and nonverbal or take the form of **physical bullying** (harm to someone's body or property), **emotional bullying** (harm to someone's self-esteem or feeling of safety), or **social bullying** (harm to someone's group acceptance). For further information, refer to the *Bullying Behavior Chart*.

Harassment: To disturb persistently, to trouble by repeated attacks.

Intimidation: To force into or deter someone from some action by inducing fear.

Theft: Taking or attempting to take money or property belonging to another person or the school with the intent to permanently deprive the victim of his or her possessions.

Vandalism: Willful destruction or defacement of personal or school property.

Fighting: Mutual participation in an incident involving physical violence, where there is no major injury.

The Montessori Middle School Aggressive Behavior Rubric

Behavior	First Time	Second Time	Third Time	Fourth Time
Level One: Minor aggressive acts such as teasing, insults, put-downs, rough housing, exclusion, gossiping or spreading rumors; Level one bullying	Redbook: Student calls parent; one hour community service during Friday electives.	Redbook: Student calls parent; one hour community service during Friday electives.	Redbook: Student calls parent and a meeting is set up with Advisor teacher, student, parent and admin to develop individual behavior plan and possible suspension.	SAT Intervention
Behavior	First Time	Second Time	Third Time	Fourth Time
Level Two: Behavior that is intentionally hurtful such as obscene gestures, swearing deliberately at a person; Interfering with another's belongings; Aggressive rough housing; Ganging up; Acts that result in mild to moderate physical harm; Level 2 Bullying	Redbook: Student calls parent; one hour community service during Friday electives.	Redbook: Student calls parent; one hour community service during Friday electives.	Redbook: Student calls parent and a meeting is set up with Advisor teacher, student, parent and admin to develop individual behavior plan and possible suspension.	SAT Intervention
Behavior	First Time	Second Time	Third Time	Fourth Time
Level Three: Aggressive acts that result or could have resulted in significant physical harm; Extreme disrespect of staff or adult in charge; Serious threats of violence and intimidation, Severe harassment, Sexual harassment; Theft; Retaliation for being reported; Fighting; Vandalism; Level 3 Bullying	Redbook: Student calls parent; one day in-school suspension and one hour community service during the next Friday elective.	Redbook: Student calls parent; possible out-of-school suspension	Redbook: Student calls parent and a meeting is set up with Advisor teacher, student, parent and admin to develop individual behavior plan and out-of-school suspension is possible.	SAT Intervention

The Montessori Middle School Classroom/Playground Behavior Rubric

Behavior	First Time	Second Time	Third Time	Fourth Time
Level One: Blatant non-compliance with procedures; disrespect of the environment; inappropriate words and expressions not directed at a person.	Redbook: Student writes a note home to parents explaining instance. Note is to be signed and returned to Advisor teacher	Redbook: Student calls parent; one hour community service during Friday electives	Redbook: Student calls parent and a meeting is set up with Advisor teacher, student, parent and admin to develop individual behavior plan and possible in-school school suspension	SAT Intervention
Level Two: Rudeness or disrespect of staff or adult in charge; Disruptive of class; Leaving class without permission; Not being in designated class, activity, or area; Inappropriate display of affection; Vulgar words and expressions/ swearing not directed at a person.	Redbook: Student calls parent; and possible in-school suspension, with Friday elective time used for community service.	Redbook: Student calls parent; and possible in-school suspension, with Friday elective time used for community service.	Redbook: Student calls parent and a meeting is set up with Advisor teacher, student, parent and admin to develop individual behavior plan and possible out of school suspension	SAT Intervention
Level Three: Unsafe behavior which puts self or others at risk; Leaving campus without permission; Serious disruptive behavior	Redbook: Student calls parent; one day in-school suspension, with Friday elective time to be used toward community service.	Redbook: Student calls parent; out-of-school suspension. Behavior plan will be implemented at a meeting with Advisor, parents and admin.	Redbook: Student calls parent and a meeting is set up with Advisor teacher, student, parent and admin to further develop individual behavior plan and possible out-of-school suspension	SAT Intervention