



**RiverRun**  
montessori

*Peaceful. Positive. Powerful.*

## **Program Handbook**

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***“The secret of good teaching is to regard the child's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination. Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core. We do not want complacent pupils, but eager ones. We seek to sow life in children, rather than theories, to help them in their intellectual, emotional, and physical growth, and for that we must offer them grand and lofty ideas to explore.” - Maria Montessori***

# Program Handbook

## 2022-23

Dear Families, We are excited to welcome you to RiverRun Community Montessori!

While attending RiverRun, your child will:

- be treated with respect
- be appreciated for the unique gifts he or she brings to our learning community
- be supported in growing his or her confidence and self-esteem
- be encouraged to strengthen his or her love of learning
- be given the opportunity to develop social skills, emotional growth, cognitive preparation, and physical coordination

RiverRun families play an important role in the success of our students. The Montessori method is most beneficial when everyone understands the roles played by the parents, lead teachers, school administration, and students. Please use this handbook to familiarize yourself with our unique program.

We are looking forward to a wonderful year!

*RiverRun Community Montessori Staff*

**The origins of our name - *RiverRun*** -the first word in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* The name was chosen as it suggests the actual environment in which the school is located – we live on or near rivers, and our lives are affected by them. At the same time, RiverRun offers a river and its course as a metaphor for the unpredictable, yet powerful and natural course an education – a life – can take when it is allowed to do so.

***Community*** – *The school is not only a community itself, but it is part of the larger community and the world outside its doors as well.*

***Montessori*** – *The educational philosophy of the school.*

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# RiverRun Overview

## *RiverRun Community Montessori*

RiverRun is a non-public, non-denominational school in the Capital District, serving primary, elementary and middle school-aged children three to 14 years old in a multi-age learning environment. Administrative leadership of the school is provided by a working board of trustees, staff, and parent volunteers. Educational activities are overseen by the lead teachers and classroom assistants.

RiverRun has a provisional educational charter from the New York State Board of Regents and reports to the New York State Office of Nonpublic Schools Services.

*Mission Statement* RiverRun strives to be an affordable, community-based school for the residents of the Capital District that provides quality education using the holistic Montessori method of child-directed, hands-on learning experiences within a multi-age environment.

*Philosophy* RiverRun follows the educational practices of Dr. Maria Montessori. Maria Montessori worked with and observed many different children under a variety of circumstances. Over time, she formalized her study of children and sought to design tools to help them learn. As a result of her studies, Maria Montessori concluded:

- All learning is an individual and personal experience. To be effective, education must be flexible to adapt to individuals' differences.
- Certain stages in a child's development make the child receptive to different types of learning. These stages must be identified and incorporated into an effective teaching system.
- Children are naturally both able and eager to learn when provided with the appropriate guidance, tools, and environment.
- The goal of early childhood education must be to develop each child's natural talents and to stimulate a desire to learn.
- Children possess unusual sensitivity and mental powers for absorbing and learning from their environment, which includes people as well as materials.
- Children are to be respected as different from adults and as individuals who are different from one another.

RiverRun offers students a "study of life" education and implements a whole-child approach that considers the intellectual, physical, creative, and spiritual dimensions of each individual. We believe that each student is an individual who can flourish in an environment that respects his or her uniqueness. Education is provided through a carefully prepared, child-centered environment with thoughtful guidance by a Montessori trained teacher focusing on the individual development and progress of each student.

The curriculum fosters student initiative in the learning experience, features a great deal of hands-on learning materials, leads students to immersion in thematic studies, and focuses on the concept of social harmony. Students are encouraged to choose their activities for hands-on exploration (based on their curiosity, imagination, and level of intellect) with the teacher providing facilitation, modeling, and guidance. Curricular subjects include geography, history, language, mathematics, science, music, art, practical life and sensorial activities to foster a global education for students.

As part of a mixed-age group, RiverRun students have the opportunity to gain a variety of perspectives from other students, both younger and older. They are both the recipients and providers of role modeling and information sharing. In addition to their peers and their teacher, RiverRun students will interact with community members through field trips and school visitors.

*“Education is a natural process carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences in the environment.” - Maria Montessori*

## Key Components of the RiverRun Program

### *Montessori Curriculum*

The curriculum is a traditional Montessori one: fostering student initiative in the learning experience, featuring a great deal of hands-on learning materials, leading students to immersion in thematic studies, and focusing on achieving social harmony. **At the primary level**, three to six year olds are immersed in exploring their world. Surrounded by hands-on materials and activities, their learning is an experiential process. Practical life (everyday living skills) and sensorial work form the foundation for children’s discoveries and skill development. Filled with a sense of wonder and love of learning, growing in independence and internalizing a sense of order, primary children are introduced to ideas and knowledge across a similar breadth of curricular areas as the elementary children. **At the elementary/middle school levels**, students work research-style, either independently or in small groups. They move from the concrete to the abstract, motivated by their own interests, efforts, and experiences as they learn about geography, history, language, mathematics, science, music, art, and everyday living. As in a traditional Montessori classroom, students are surrounded by concrete materials that enhance and explain what they are studying. The curricular materials are on display and available for students to choose and explore their interests in depth.

### *Study of Life*

By following the Montessori approach, RiverRun students experience what is commonly referred to as an “education for life”. Going beyond the basic academic skills, the goal of our school is to help students develop character and self-esteem, learn to ask questions rather than only seek “right” answers, and become self-confident, independent thinkers who have a desire to learn because they have a genuine interest in the world and in life.

### *Whole-Child Approach*

RiverRun considers the intellectual, physical, creative, social-emotional and spiritual dimensions of each student. Students are encouraged to focus on works they find to be meaningful and fulfilling, and as a result, this helps develop a sense of inner peace and harmony.

### *Individualized Education*

RiverRun recognizes that individuals have varying learning styles and developmental timetables. Under the thoughtful guidance of the teacher, students' individual academic needs are respected and accommodated. The teacher observes the students' interests and abilities and creates an environment in which they can flourish. Students are encouraged to learn in ways that best suit them and enable them to progress at their own pace. The teachers' ability to be effective in this role is enhanced by the extended multi-year relationship.

### *Child-Led Learning*

RiverRun provides thoughtfully prepared environments designed to support the students' development of independence and empowerment. Carefully guided as appropriate by the teacher, students choose their works based on curiosity, imagination, and level of intellect. As a result, students become active, self-directed learners, independent thinkers, self-confident decision-makers and thoughtful problem solvers.

### *A Community Within A Community*

RiverRun is an active community in and of itself where students help each other and care for others, both younger and older; where students work with each other rather than compete against one another; and where students learn, in a safe environment, how to be appropriately assertive rather than aggressive. As cooperation and social responsibility are encouraged, a strong community develops. In addition, the wider community is incorporated into RiverRun's routine operations by way of families volunteering regularly, community service curriculum content, community visitors, and field trips.

### *Respect and Independence*

While there are ground rules based on respect for each other and for the environment, RiverRun students are entrusted with a great deal of freedom and personal choice. The schedule allows uninterrupted blocks of time for problem solving, making connections in knowledge, and forming creative ideas. In addition to moving about the classroom freely and choosing their own work, students can make decisions about whether to work alone or as part of a small group. Moreover, they are allowed the freedom and independence to direct their own personal care such as using the restroom and eating snacks when needed.

# RiverRun Montessori 2022-2023 CALENDAR

**Legend**

- S Staff Day
- X No School
- FD First Day of School
- LD Last Day of School (½ Day)
- No School-Primary Only
- Days To Note

- 29 Primary Staff Day
- 30 Staff Day
- 31 Staff Day
- 1 Meet and Greet (8:30-9:30) Staff Day
- 3 Campout Reservations Open (Lake Taghkanic State Park)
- 6 1st Day (Primary)
- 7 1st Day (Elementary)
- 15 Back to School Night (6:30-7:30)
- 18 Fall Family Breakfast (9:30-11:30)
- 26 No School - Rosh Hashanah

- 5 No School - Yom Kippur
- 10 No School - Indigenous People's Day
- 19 Parent Education Night (6:00-7:30)
- 31 No School - Schoolwide Parent/Teacher Conferences

- 1 Primary Conferences/ No School Primary Only
- 11 No School - Veterans Day
- 22 School-Wide Thanksgiving Feast (Student Event)
- 23-25 Thanksgiving Recess

- 22-3 Holiday Recess

- 2-3 Holiday Recess
- 13 No School - Narrative Writing
- 16 No School - M.L. King Day

AUGUST 2022						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	S	S	S			

FEBRUARY 2023						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	X	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	X	X	X	X	X	25
26	27	28				

- 2 Picture Day
- 3 Primary Conferences/No School Primary Only
- 6 No School - School-Wide Parent/Teacher conferences
- 20-24 Winter Recess

SEPTEMBER 2022						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				S	2	3
4	5	FDp	FD	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	X	27	28	29	30	

MARCH 2023						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	X	X	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

- 7 Parent Education Night (6:00-7:30)
- 16-17 No School - Professional Days (AMS Conference March 16-19)
- 31 School-Wide Event (Parent Participation) 3:30

OCTOBER 2022						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	X	6	7	8
9	X	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	X					

APRIL 2023						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	X	8
9	X	X	X	X	X	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

- 7-14 Spring Recess

NOVEMBER 2022						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	X	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	X	X	X	26
27	28	29	30			

MAY 2023						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	X	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	X	27
28	X	30	31			

- 15 No School - Professional Day
- 26 No School - Narrative Writing
- 29 No School - Memorial Day

DECEMBER 2022						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	X	X	24
25	X	X	X	X	X	31

JUNE 2023						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	LD	17
18	S	S	S	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

- 2-4 Campout!
- 16 Last day of School (½ Day)
- 19-21 Staff Days

JANUARY 2023						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	X	X	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	X	14
15	X	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JULY 2023						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

# Enrollment

## *Nondiscrimination Policy*

RiverRun does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, or national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies.

## *Enrollment*

Once accepted, the next year's enrollment is contingent upon the mutual satisfaction of both the student, the parents and the school. Parents of enrolled students who wish to have their children continue in the program for the upcoming school year must complete and return the Program Continuation Form with a yearly deposit to guarantee continued enrollment. This deposit will be credited to the last payment of the following enrolled year's tuition.

## *New Enrollment*

Annually, the beginning of the February Winter Break signifies the time when applicants from the community at large are invited to fill any remaining open spots. Siblings of current RiverRun students are given priority over other new applicants. New enrollment is not secured until an offer of admittance has been made and the non-refundable yearly deposit has been paid.

## *Tuition*

Tuition covers attendance during scheduled school days from 8:35 AM - 3:00 PM, as per the aforementioned school [calendar](#). Tuition shall be paid in accordance with the terms of each individual enrollment contract. Prompt tuition payments are critical for successful operations of the school. Therefore, payments made after the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month are subject to a \$30 late fee. Returned checks are subject to a \$35 fee. If your family is experiencing financial hardship, it is important to communicate that to RiverRun staff *before* a payment is late or missed.

Because the school's expenses continue regardless of the absences of a student, there are no credits, refunds, or make-up days for absences.



# Attendance

Parents should call the school at (518) 937-9338 prior to 8:30 AM and leave a message if a student is unable to attend school that day. Keep in mind that consistent attendance is vital for the student's development. In addition, all elementary and middle school students fall under New York State school attendance regulations. New York State includes in its definition of legal absences student illness, sickness, or death in the family, impassable roads, religious observances or attendance at healthcare facilities. Other absences are considered illegal or as truancy. If you know that your child will be away from school for more than one day and for reasons other than illness, please let the teacher know in advance. **A note from parents explaining absences must be sent to school for each student upon his or her return.**

## Arrival and Departure

### *Arrival*

Student arrival is from 8:35 AM to 8:45 AM. The RiverRun school day starts at **8:45 AM**. A RiverRun Staff member will greet students at the front entrance of the school. Students who arrive before 8:35 AM should wait in their vehicle or bus until that time. Families dropping off after 8:45 AM must accompany the student into the office and **sign them in**. Late arrivals can be disruptive for the students as well as the classroom, therefore, families are asked to commit to arriving on time, by **8:45 AM**.

### *Before Care*

Before care will be offered provided there is sufficient enrollment. Before care hours will run from 7:30 AM to 8:35 AM. Students have the opportunity to play games, continue their own work and projects, participate in movement activities or read books. During this time a staff member will provide supervision Monday through Friday on typical days (excluding phase-in week and weather delay days) for approximately 75 minutes before school starts.

### *Dismissal*

Students will be released to authorized adults and busses when the school day ends at 3:00 PM. Parents are provided a Pick-Up Authorization Form prior to the start of the school year and must fill out a new form each year. If there is an occasional or temporary change to pick-up procedure (e.g. going home one day with another student, a family friend picking up your child while you're out of town for a few days, etc.), please send in written notice outlining the change, including the date, name of the person picking the student up, and the signature of the parent/guardian. Adults picking up students are expected to have picture identification available to show to RiverRun staff.

RiverRun offers a ten minute grace period such that students must be picked up between 3:00 PM and 3:10 PM. Recognizing that RiverRun staff members have their own obligations, students will be placed in the after care program at 3:10 PM and the family will be billed the drop-in rate for that day. Families will pay \$1 per minute (per student) for a late pick up of up to 14 minutes, after that they will pay the flat rate of \$14 (per student) until after care ends at 4:15 PM. Willful frequent tardiness may affect enrollment eligibility. If a student must leave RiverRun prior to 3:00 PM, an authorized adult must come into the office to sign him or her out and then back in again upon return (if returning that day).

### *After Care*

After school care will be offered if there is sufficient enrollment. After care hours will run from 3:00 PM to 4:15 PM. Students will have an opportunity to play games, continue their own work and projects, participate in movement activities or read books. A staff member will provide supervision Monday through Friday on typical days (excluding phase-in week and weather closing days) for 75 minutes after school ends. Recognizing that RiverRun staff members have their own obligations, the family will be billed \$1 per minute (per student) for a late pick-up of later than 4:15 PM.

If there is sufficient enrollment, a full after school program will be offered for students from 3:00 PM -5:30 PM. Similarly, families will be billed \$1 per minute(per student) for late pick-ups.

Recognizing that unexpected things happen, each year families will be given two courtesy passes and not have to pay the late fees incurred for those instances.

### *Bus Transportation*

#### Obtaining Bus Transportation

For families residing within 15 miles of RiverRun, local school districts are required to provide bussing of kindergarten, elementary, and middle school students upon receiving the family's request form by the district's deadline. **Please note that the local school district transportation offices adhere to an April 1st deadline for bus transportation request forms; these forms can be downloaded from your local school district's website.**

#### Changes in Daily Bussing Schedule

**It is each family's responsibility to contact their transportation department on days that pick-up and/or drop-off is not needed.** Most school districts will not offer bussing on days when their district is not in session, including snow days and school cancellations. RiverRun families must provide their own transportation in these cases.

**Please Note:** Buses will be dropping students off and picking students up at our school and they take precedence over all other vehicles. Parents dropping off their students are asked to park in the parking lot (behind the busses) and walk their child to the school entrance.

## **Weather or Emergency Closings**

In the event of possible weather or emergency closings, please check for a school email and check the following local media for the closing of RiverRun Community Montessori (posted by 6:30am):

**RADIO:** FLY 92.3 FM

B 95.5 FM

WRVE 99.5 FM

WGY 810 AM

**TV:** CHANNEL 6

CHANNEL 10

CHANNEL 13

Capital News Channel 9

You can also check the websites affiliated with the above radio and TV stations, [www.timesunion.com](http://www.timesunion.com), or [www.dailygazette.com](http://www.dailygazette.com). Please note that we are listed as **RiverRun Community Montessori**. Delaying or closing school is a decision made based on concern for the safety of students, families, and staff. There are no make-up days for school closings.

## Security and Safety

Students will be greeted in the morning at the school entrance. At dismissal, students will only be released to buses and individuals who have been authorized in writing by the parent/guardian ahead of time. Photo identification for individuals unfamiliar to staff may be requested. The doors to RiverRun are locked during school hours. There are doorbells and security cameras at both entrances.

Parents dropping off their child after school starts are asked to bring their child to the RiverRun office and sign their child into the "Late Arrival Log".

A fire safety inspection is performed annually. Emergency drills and evacuation procedures are conducted regularly.

## Teaching Staff Information

### *Classroom Teaching Staff*

A carefully chosen lead teacher and possibly a classroom assistant serve as positive role models for the students, thoughtfully prepare the classroom environment, and guide students to choose their works based on each student's own curiosity, imagination, and intellect.

Carefully selected and/or supervised substitute teaching staff will be employed in the classroom during such times as a regular teaching staff member is ill or otherwise unavailable.

## Child Guidance Techniques

RiverRun supports the Montessori philosophy of encouraging desired, positive behavior to come from within. As such, the use of arbitrary external rewards (e.g. displaying gold stars for achievement) and punishment is discouraged. RiverRun staff will utilize positive child guidance and reinforcement methods to foster the development of each student's self-discipline, self-control, and pro-social behaviors.

At the beginning of each school year, the lead teacher, classroom assistant, and students will cooperatively establish the elementary ground rules of the classroom. Beyond that, students will be entrusted with as much responsibility as feasible and practical and will be given the freedom and opportunity to make their own decisions. These decisions may have positive or negative natural consequences from which the students will learn. Staff members will maintain a supportive environment that allows and encourages students to develop and practice self-discipline, self-control, and pro-social behaviors based on their natural desire to be members of the community.

If a student is having difficulty making respectful and appropriate decisions, she or he will participate in discussion and/or problem solving with the teacher, classroom assistant, and/or school peers. If a student still has difficulty making respectful and appropriate decisions, she or he will stay in close proximity to a staff member until able to do so. If a student continually has difficulty making respectful and appropriate decisions, the teacher may set up a meeting with the student's parents/guardians to discuss the situation and determine an appropriate plan of action. It is important to note that the safety of all students and staff is of utmost importance. If staff have exhausted all efforts to assist a student in making decisions that maintain this safety and the student is still repeatedly unable to do so, the teacher will meet with the board president or other assigned RiverRun representative to discuss appropriate procedures, including the possibility of the student's dismissal. Acts of verbal or physical violence between students or towards staff will necessitate an immediate parent conference.

# Student Support/Remediation/Expulsion

Should a student show signs of struggling behaviorally or academically, standard proactive interventions will be used such as:

- Try to redirect child from negative behavior.
- Use of the Peace area
- Reassess classroom environment, appropriateness of activities, supervision.
- Intentional use positive methods and language while disciplining children to include praise of appropriate behavior.
- Teach de-escalation strategies
- Give the child verbal warnings.
- Give the child time to regain control.
- Document the child's disruptive behavior and maintain confidentiality.

The lead teacher may ask to employ the Student Support Team, which is made up of teachers, assistants and the administrator.

## **STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM**

The Student Support Team (SST) process is an in-house multi-step approach using set goals and strategies to provide guidance and support to students who struggle with learning and/or behavior. The SST process is not a referral to Early Intervention, nor will it take the child out of the classroom. It is a commitment on the part of the professionals working with the children of RiverRun Montessori to find/use the best supportive tools that will help the child succeed in the classroom.

## **Parent Involvement**

Parents will be notified of significant or persistent disciplinary problems at school in a timely manner . If it is necessary to involve parents in the resolution of a problem at school, it will be done with a spirit of cooperation and with the aim of helping the child. Parental support during that time is very much appreciated. Through conferences, goals will be mutually agreed upon. If the goals are not able to be met within an allotted time, further professional help or other school placement will be considered for the child. Parents or faculty may call upon the administrator to act as facilitator at any time.

## **DISMISSAL/EXPULSION**

At times, there are circumstances when we have to remove a child from our program either on a short term or permanent basis.

RiverRun Montessori will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. Should it become apparent that a family cannot be supportive of the school's missions or goals, it may be necessary for the administrator to consider whether it is in the best interest of the school to keep the child enrolled at RiverRun Montessori. In order to provide an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for all children, suspension or expulsion procedures may be executed in the event of serious and/or persistent behavior problems. This kind of disciplinary

action will be determined by The Board of Directors and administrator upon consultation with the faculty. will be notified in the event that such disciplinary action is taken.

The following are reasons we may have to remove or suspend a child from RiverRun Montessori.

**Causes for Immediate Removal:**

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or themself
- Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions towards staff members
- Parent exhibits verbal abuse to staff
- Parent fails to comply with health and safety protocols
- Failure to pay tuition or fees/or habitual lateness in payments
- Failure to complete required forms including the child's immunization records
- Habitual tardiness when picking up a child

**Child's Action for Removal:**

Failure of a child to adjust after a reasonable period of time which may look like:

- On going accidents indicating that they have not completed potty training
- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children
- Excessive biting
- Defacing or damaging property (school or other)
- Profanity (verbal or written)
- Triggering a fire alarm
- Violence or threats of violence
- Blatant disrespect
- Disorderly conduct
- Endangering safety of self or others

**SCHEDULE OF EXPULSION**

If after the remedial actions above have not worked, the child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the child's or parent's behavior warranting an expulsion.

An expulsion action is meant to be a period of time so that the parent/guardian may work on the child's behavior or to come to an agreement with RiverRun Montessori.

The parent/guardian will be informed regarding the length of the expulsion period and the expected behavioral changes required in order for the child or parent to return to RiverRun Montessori.

The parent/guardian will be given a specific expulsion date that allows the parent sufficient time to seek alternate childcare (approximately one to two weeks' notice, depending on risk to other children's welfare or safety).

Failure of the child/parent to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion from RiverRun Montessori.

### **A CHILD WILL NOT BE EXPELLED IF A PARENT/GUARDIAN:**

- Made a complaint to the Department of Education
- Reported abuse or neglect occurring at RiverRun
- Questioned RiverRun Montessori regarding policies and procedures.
- Without giving the parent sufficient time to make other childcare arrangements.

## **Homework**

We believe it's important for students to be able to continue to pursue their own interests outside of school hours and to be able to engage in spontaneous and family activities without having the burden of daily homework. For that reason, little supplemental homework will be assigned and students will be encouraged to continue reading and making connections between school and outside of school experiences in an informal way. Larger unit studies or thematic projects may be worked on both at school and at home in order to give students access to a variety of resources and supplies and to encourage family input and teamwork.

In addition, the teacher may suggest various activities to be done at home. These activities may include such things as planning and preparing dinner with little or no help from an adult, visiting a place of worship of a different faith than your own, preparing a list of life dreams (career, places to visit, things to learn), talking to a grandparent or other elder about his or her childhood, and/or performing an act of charity. Upper elementary and middle school students may be asked to work on research or science projects at home as well as other work relevant to current studies.

## **Student Assessments**

Assessment is based on the three primary goals of all Montessori classroom work: 1) to help students learn to work independently and in a manner that contributes to the classroom community 2) to help the students form a conceptual framework that will enable them to organize and analyze all their learning experiences and 3) to stimulate the ability of students to think abstractly and critically about the world.

Assessment in the Montessori classroom takes many forms:

- **Self-assessment:** Students are continuously assessing their own goals and their progress through individual conferencing with the lead teacher. The self-correcting nature of most of the Montessori materials aids students in the process of self-assessment.
- **Peer teaching:** Students who have mastered a unit of study are encouraged to demonstrate that mastery as they teach what they have learned to other students or check the work of younger classmates.
- **Peer review:** At the end of units of study, students create many kinds of projects. These are shared with the class and informally reviewed by peers.
- **Assessment by lead teacher:** The teacher observes students' progress and keeps records for each student. Records are kept of lessons given, practiced, and mastered.
- **Parent conferences:** The teacher meets with parents bi-annually and provides biannual written evaluations of the students which focus on outlining their strengths and weaknesses in order to modify the student's educational plan as appropriate.

Although the current trend in education is to place substantial emphasis on annual standardized assessment test performance, with success being defined by high scores, this emphasis frequently leads to a focus on selected activities

that are identified as being correlated to the types of questions asked on the assessment tests. Unfortunately, this practice limits students' intellectual freedom and exploration. Furthermore, standardized tests by design encourage students to think and respond alike. As this is contrary to Montessori philosophy, RiverRun does not participate in New York State's assessment testing program.

## Student Transitions

Primary students start their school year with a phase-in schedule that allows a more gentle transition from time spent at home with family to time spent at school with less familiar teachers and friends. This common Montessori practice of phase-in allows children to become gradually accustomed to the length of the morning program and supports learning about their classroom and materials in manageable pieces so as not to overwhelm them. It helps to set the tone for the class, guiding everyone as they learn to make choices, become increasingly independent and come together as a community.

At RiverRun, elementary and middle school students may be faced with a higher level of freedom and a corresponding increase in responsibility than what they may have been accustomed to. Students need challenges as they develop new mental, emotional, and social skills. The mistakes and frustrations that come with new experiences may be notable for some students, but they should be regarded as positive signs that growth is taking place. It is an intended aspect of the curriculum that this growth occurs with the assistance of understanding adults and with the support of peers. Please speak with a teacher if you have concerns that your child is experiencing a particularly difficult transition.

## Birthday Celebrations

### *Walk Around the Sun*

In celebrating a student's birthday, the concept that the student has "traveled around the sun" one more time since his or her last birthday is discussed. Astronomical concepts such as revolution around the sun, planet names, and stars will be used at the elementary level. A time-line of a student's life (a poster with pictures and significant dates or a written timeline with narrative about significant events) can be made at home and used by the student to discuss with classmates his or her development over time. Family members are invited to be involved with their child's birthday celebration. As your child's birthday approaches, please communicate with the teacher about your family's wishes for his or her birthday celebration. If your child's birthday falls during a summer month, please feel free to speak with the teacher about possible ways in which to celebrate it (e.g. celebrating his or her half birthday or celebrating at the beginning or end of the school year).

Birthday walks in the primary classroom are a joyous time and an opportunity for primary families to join the class and relay memories from your child's life. Similar to the elementary classes, there is a short introduction to basic astronomical concepts, along with singing of songs and a special snack provided by the family, if they wish. A birthday book may be made for each child including a photo for each year accompanied by a simple statement from the child about their photo.

**Though it is fine to take pictures/videos of classroom birthday celebrations, we ask families to respect the privacy of our community members by not posting group photos or videos on Facebook or other social media venues.**

### *Invitations and Presents*

If you are planning a party for your child, please do not send invitations to school unless all the students in the class are

invited. If your child is attending a party after school, please do not send gifts to school with your child. These situations can be upsetting for those who are not invited or cannot attend.

## School Communications

### *Establishing Good Communication*

Good communication between parents and teachers is extremely important. Elementary and middle school students will have a take-home folder to be used for daily communication. Field trip announcements and other notes to parents will come home in this folder, which **should be checked each night and returned the next day**. Notes sent from home to the school should be put in a well-marked envelope in this folder. Each morning upon their arrival, students are expected to take care of the folder as instructed by the teacher.

In the primary classroom, a folder will go home at the end of each week with school and class announcements as well as your child's work. Please check your child's folder promptly and return it each week. Young children in the Montessori classrooms often have a very limited number of creations in their weekly folder. Please remember there is an emphasis on exploration and understanding of the processes involved, rather than creating a product to take home. A metal clip with fold down wings attached to your child's bag can be used to hold any daily notes as needed.

Families will receive regular communication highlighting school activities and news. Staff will send home an electronic version of "The Classroom Letter" which will highlight classroom activities and alert families of upcoming events. Please read these letters thoroughly and in a timely fashion. In addition, the teacher is available to answer classroom-related questions and to address concerns by phone or appointment. Please note that staff are unable to give parents/guardians their undivided attention during drop off and pick up times since they need to be available for the students at those times.. Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the teacher via email.

Families are invited to attend the monthly board meetings which are currently scheduled for 6:30-7:30 PM on the third Thursday of each month and are held at the school. RiverRun families will be notified if the day, time or location of the meetings are changed.

### *Conferences*

Parent conferences are offered twice during the school year in order to facilitate communication between RiverRun staff and families. These conferences provide an opportunity to discuss the student's strengths and weaknesses as well as to review their progress. The teacher or parent/guardian may request an additional conference at any time as appropriate.

The first conference of the year is held during the initial eight weeks of school. It is an opportunity for teachers to get to know the families and to learn their hopes and goals for their child/student. At the second conference in the winter months, teachers have an opportunity to review with families a written assessment that summarizes the student's progress in the Montessori classroom. At the end of the school year, parents receive a second written assessment.



# Family Involvement

## *Support*

Family support is crucial to the successful operation of RiverRun. We highly value and appreciate your cooperation, input, and active involvement in our school. There will be many opportunities for you to volunteer your time and talents, and we ask families to participate in school operations and support the school in general whenever possible. Both parents and students are greatly enriched by parents' involvement with the school.

## *Volunteering*

Each family is expected to contribute 20 hours of volunteer service to the school for each student for each school year in order to reinforce the community environment and to help keep tuition costs down. In addition, volunteering at the school provides opportunities to strengthen the connection with your child's educational experience and to share in an area of your expertise or interest. RiverRun welcomes parents and grandparents to schedule a classroom visit to share cultural experiences, professional skills/information, special interests, objects of art, and/or musical abilities. We are also looking for community members interested in sharing their expertise in an *ongoing relationship* with students in the areas of art, music, physical education/sports, and languages (foreign or American Sign). If you have a special talent, skill, or hobby that you would like to share with the students, please contact either the teacher or another staff member to discuss it.

In addition to volunteering in the classroom, we depend on our families to help with behind-the-scenes support functions. We can regularly use help with such things as cleaning (both on-going and special clean-up projects), building or making Montessori works for the classroom and school events (plays, olympics etc.).

## *School Visits*

While families are an integral component of RiverRun, it can be disruptive to the classroom's operation to have frequent unannounced visitors. With that in mind, it is requested that parents/guardians minimize unannounced visits and instead make an appointment with the teacher if a classroom visit or observation is desired and/or take advantage of opportunities throughout the school year to be in the classroom. After the first couple of months, the Primary teacher will begin inviting parents into the classroom to read a book to the class, sing songs, or perhaps share a special part of their culture or background. These opportunities for visits will present themselves over the course of the year and will be coordinated by the Primary staff. We welcome family visits and know the importance of strong ties between family and school. The richness of the students' classroom experience is greatly enhanced by the experiences, talents and gifts of our families. Parents interested in being involved in this way should contact the Primary teacher.

Please keep in mind that the classroom is the "children's house", and visitors, including parents/guardians, are their guests.

## *Fundraising*

Participation in our fundraising events is optional but strongly encouraged. Monies from fundraisers are used toward the school's general operations as well as additional Montessori materials and specific programmatic needs.

## *Parent Education*

RiverRun believes that parent education is an important component of a student's successful integration of Montessori concepts both at school and at home. Accordingly, RiverRun will make every effort to offer parent education sessions/discussions throughout the year, led by RiverRun staff, parents, or community members. Parents are expected to attend these sessions and encouraged to make suggestions about topics they would like to have considered. Dates

and topics for specific parent-education sessions will be announced to all RiverRun families via email. Topics such as child development, Montessori materials and methodology, and the classroom philosophy are chosen to help parents better understand the students' work and better appreciate their children's educational path.

## Community Involvement

### *General Philosophy*

As we are all members of the larger community and of society in general, RiverRun will incorporate this truth into the routine operations of the school. In order to foster social harmony, students must feel that they are part of a community. Positive interactions with others are necessary, and in this regard RiverRun will operate as a community within a community. Whenever possible, RiverRun students will be actively involved with our area community as well as with the larger Capital District community.

### *Field Trips*

Students will participate in field trips to learn more about a subject the class is studying or a subject of personal interest to a small group of students. These field trips may include information gathering, meeting/networking with community members, and/or participation in hands-on activities (such as meeting a city official or planting for the food bank). Other field trips may be intended to expose students to new ideas or to expand cultural awareness (such as going to a theatrical performance or museum).

All field trips requiring vehicular transportation will be announced to families in advance. Permission slips must be signed and returned in order for a student to participate. Parents have the choice of having their child participate or keeping him or her at home for the day. Often, a call will go out for parents to drive and chaperone, and we encourage this when possible as it is very exciting for the students to have their parents participate. RiverRun reserves the right to ask parents to find alternate childcare for siblings should a trip require a limited group size or the program is unsuitable for the sibling's age. The cost of these trips varies, and primary parents will be asked to pay the cost of each child attending. (If paying for these field trips is a financial hardship, please contact the board president.) Elementary student families pay an annual activity fee to cover field trips. On trips where a parent is chaperoning, the parent will be asked to pay for his or her own attendance, and that of siblings, if applicable.

Field trips not requiring vehicular transportation (i.e. visiting an area of interest within easy walking distance of the school) may occur spontaneously. A standing permission form for such outings is collected when a student begins enrollment at RiverRun and is kept on file at the school.

### *Community Relationships*

Community members will be invited to school to share in their area of expertise, to share their culture, or for special events. In addition, RiverRun plans to establish on-going relationships between students and community members in organizations such as an area senior center or food pantry. In these relationships, students may participate together with community members in a shared activity (like reading together or learning to knit or whittle together). In addition to exposing the students to different populations within the community (like the elderly in a nursing home or people with lower income at a food kitchen), these activities will help demonstrate the importance of giving back to others in the community.

## Snacks and Lunch

### *Purpose*

Besides nourishment for the body, the snack and lunch program at RiverRun provides students additional experience in practical life skills (food preparation, serving, and clean-up) as well as a special time for community-building and socializing.

### *Snacks*

All RiverRun students should bring a healthy snack with them to school each day and they may eat this snack during the morning. Snack suggestions include healthy foods such as nuts, beans, sunflower butter, fruits, vegetables, crackers and cheese, and we ask that you choose healthy and minimally processed foods whenever possible. As students will be encouraged to have water with their snacks, families should not send in drinks. Cups and drinking water are available at school.

The children in our Primary classroom are typically very oriented toward food. Many are still in patterns of eating small amounts of food several times a day. A snack will be available for children to serve themselves each day if they choose. There will also be opportunities for children to prepare food for themselves and others and to do food tastings. In order to support these culinary opportunities, Primary families will rotate responsibility for bringing in food items designated by the teaching staff for the class to use for snack.

Families with children with significant allergies will coordinate with teachers to determine if specific foods will be eliminated from the classroom. Such food restrictions may require cleaning children's hands upon arrival and when entering "safe for all" spaces.

### *Packed Lunch*

Unless otherwise notified for special occasions (*see "Special Lunch" below as an example*), students should bring a healthy lunch to school each day. In addition to food, lunches can include a healthy beverage or students can use a classroom cup for water. **Please note that candy, gum, chocolate, and soda should not be sent in a student's lunch.** Please include a napkin and placemat (a small kitchen or bath towel works great) in the lunch box each day as well as a cooler pack to keep food cool. Students should bring utensils from home in their packed lunch box. Students will have access to a microwave for heating up their lunches. Please send items for heating in microwave-safe dishes (i.e. glass, no plastic) and make use of small reusable containers for food items and water bottles.

### *Special Lunch*

RiverRun will periodically offer a special lunch alternative. A notice will be sent home whenever this lunch option is planned. In the past, RiverRun students have occasionally held "Taco Tuesday" and "Pizza Friday"

## School Supplies, et al

### *School Supplies*

At the beginning of and throughout the school year, families may be asked to provide school supplies. The vast majority of these will be community supplies used by the entire class. We do not want this to be a burden, so supply what you can from the list and we will trust that between all of the families, the community school supplies need will be met. If purchasing school supplies will create a hardship for your family, please speak privately to the board president or a staff member. Conversely, if you would like to donate any extra school supplies, you are welcome to do so.

### *School Bag*

Primary students are asked to bring in an open top canvas bag (approximately 14" x 16" in size) that they can carry independently. Their ability to independently and safely enter the classroom and manage their belongings (carrying their bag, taking off and putting on shoes and coats) is important to their growth and self esteem and is a large part of the learning that happens in our Primary classroom. The tote bag, not a back-pack, facilitates independence for the Primary students.

Each elementary and middle school student should bring a satchel, tote, or backpack (large enough to fit a standard two-pocket folder) back and forth to school daily.

### *Miscellaneous*

Books and other items that are educational in nature and may be of interest to other students are welcome in the classroom. Be sure to clearly label each item with your child's name. Students are welcome to bring in items that come directly from nature (rocks, leaves, flowers, or insects, etc.) to share with the class. Sharing these items with classmates will become part of the classroom learning experience. In the Primary classroom, such items will be part of Nature Sharing. Please do not send in anything that your child is uncomfortable having classmates handle.

Please note that RiverRun is not responsible for lost, stolen, misplaced, or broken possessions, money, or clothing that students may choose to bring to school. We suggest leaving highly valuable or sentimental items at home. Additionally, we discourage students from bringing electronic devices and cell phones to school. However, if the family chooses to send these items along for use on the bus ride to/from school; they must be turned off and remain in the student's bag throughout the entire school day, including lunch and recess.

## **Clothing**

### *Everyday Wear*

We believe students learn and develop creativity through active application and interaction with material. Students will be using many kinds of materials and some might be considered "messy". Liquids for science exploration and cooking, as well as sand and soil for science and gardening, are examples of "messy" activities that are an integral part of the curriculum. Therefore, please ensure that your child's clothing is appropriate for these types of works. Also, please encourage your child to select clothing that allows freedom of movement. Clothing should be free of violent or vulgar images or sayings and must cover midriiffs, chests, and undergarments. For those students who arrive at school wearing inappropriate clothing, a discussion between student and teacher will focus on finding a solution.

### *Outerwear*

The students will go outdoors daily, weather permitting. Outdoor activities may be scheduled for winter temperatures of 20 degrees or warmer. Please ensure that your child comes to school with the appropriate attire, to include winter boots, hats/gloves, snow pants, and warm jackets.

### *Classroom Shoes*

For our Primary students, foot-wear should be well fitting with hard soles that they can put on and take off themselves.

**Each student must have a pair of well-fitting indoor/school shoes with rubber soles** to be worn daily in the classroom environment and **to be left at school**. In the elementary and middle school classrooms, if the chosen classroom shoes are not appropriate for physical education (PE), the student should also bring a pair of sneakers to school daily in his or her school bag. Shoes for PE should have good gripping soles and stay snugly on the foot. Crocs, flip flops, heels and most slide-on shoes are not acceptable for PE.

# Health Policies

## *Health Care Summary*

Each student is required to have on file a Physician's Summary Report that includes an up-to-date record of immunizations. This report needs to have an original signature of the child's medical doctor authorizing the reported information.

If a student's Physician's Summary Report is not submitted within 30 days after school begins, the student may be excluded from the program until it is submitted. Each student who has not had a physical examination within the year prior to enrollment must have a physical examination before entrance into the program. Physicals are then required as specified by NYS Education Law.

## *Sick Children*

If a student arrives and is observed to be ill (rash, fever, severe cold, etc.), the teacher or classroom assistant may inform the parent/guardian that the child cannot participate in school that day. If a student becomes ill during the school day, the teacher or classroom assistant will notify a parent/guardian and ask that the student be picked up within 30 minutes. In the event that a parent/guardian cannot be reached, the teacher or classroom assistant will then call the student's emergency contacts so an authorized person can pick up the student. A student will need to leave school if they are significantly ill and/or display the following: vomiting, diarrhea, unexplainable or contagious skin rash, abdominal pains, a severe cold, an earache, a fever over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, abscess drainage, skin lesions, head lice, red irritated eyes, and eye drainage, hard, frequent coughing, or colored nasal discharge. A student may return to school after taking medication for a treatable illness for 24 hours or after being symptom-free for at least 24 hours.

In the event a student contracts a contagious or communicable disease other than an ordinary cold and stomach bug, parents should inform us and the office staff will distribute a notice of possible exposure to all RiverRun families. The ill student can return to school after a full 24 hours of being symptom free without medications. At RiverRun's discretion, a signed statement from the child's doctor stating that the student is free of contagious and communicable diseases and is able to participate in the program may be requested.

## *Coordination of Nursing Services*

RiverRun does not employ a school nurse. Local school districts are required by NYS Education Law to provide nursing services for routine health screenings and prevention instruction. Appropriate nursing services will be coordinated with the public school district(s) on an annual basis to include vision, hearing, and scoliosis screenings.

## *Medication*

RiverRun staff members generally do not administer medicines to students. If a student receives a short-term doctor's prescription, the medication should be brought to school by the parent and given to a staff member along with a note from the physician and a signed parental consent form. For Primary students, the School Administrator or Primary faculty will administer medications that are prescribed by a doctor and approved by a parental consent form. Elementary students will self-administer, with staff observance, medications that are prescribed by a doctor and approved by a parental consent form. The teacher bears responsibility for the safekeeping of any and all such prescriptions. This medicine will be kept in a locked designated spot until picked up by the parent.

## *Allergies*

Many individuals have allergies of one kind or another – food, medicine, insect, and/or environmental. **It is extremely important that parents/guardians notify the staff of all known allergies their child have.** Please complete this section of the Medical Information and Authorization Form thoroughly and update as appropriate. RiverRun does not currently have a blanket prohibition of any foods. However, if a student enrolled in the school has a severe or life-threatening allergy, RiverRun policies may be updated accordingly, and families will be notified.

### *Medical Attention and Emergencies*

If it is believed that a student needs medical attention but it is not a life-threatening situation, every effort will be made to contact a parent/guardian or emergency contact before medical attention is obtained. In the event of an accident or illness requiring emergency medical attention, RiverRun staff will call 911 first and then immediately afterward will call a parent/guardian or emergency contact.

## **Coordination With Local School Districts**

RiverRun recognizes the importance of having a positive relationship with the school districts in which its students reside. RiverRun works closely and collegially with the districts to coordinate the following services, as needed, for its students: health services, transportation, special needs services, and computer software loans.

We encourage parents to foster a good relationship with their bus department by consistently alerting them of changes to their child(ren)'s usual pick-up/drop-off routine.

## **Child Abuse and Neglect**

Educators are mandated by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect. If there is sound suspicion that a student is being abused or neglected, RiverRun is under obligation to call the Child Abuse and Maltreatment Hotline for Mandated Reporters. If there is sound suspicion that a student is in immediate danger, RiverRun is under obligation to call 911.