

# River Run

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## COMMUNITY MONTESSORI

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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

## 2011-12

UPDATED AUG 31, 2011

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/her confidence and self-esteem
- encouraged to strengthen his or her love of learning
- 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 parents, directress, and students. Please use this handbook to familiarize yourself with our unique program.

We are looking forward to a wonderful year!

*RiverRun* – The first word in James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, the name RiverRun 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 small non-public, non-denominational school in Schenectady, serving elementary-aged children 6 to 12 years in a multi-age learning environment. Administrative leadership of the school is overseen by a working group of co-founders and board of trustees. Educational activities are overseen by the directress and classroom assistant.

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.

## *Mission Statement*

RiverRun strives to be an affordable, community-based elementary school for the residents of the greater Schenectady area 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 directress 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 given the freedom to choose their activities for hands-on exploration (based on their curiosity, imagination, and level of intellect) with a directress providing facilitation, modeling, and guidance. Curricular subjects - including geography, history, language, mathematics, science, music and art - 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 directress, RiverRun students will interact with community members through field trips and school visitors.

*"An interesting piece of work that has been freely chosen, has the virtue of inducing concentration rather than fatigue and adds to children's energies and mental capacities, and leads them to self-mastery." - 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. 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, RiverRun's goal is to help its 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, 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 directress, students' individual academic needs are respected and accommodated. The directress observe the students' interests and abilities and create an environment in which they can flourish. Students are encouraged to learn in ways that best suit them and able to progress at their own individual pace. The directress' 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 directress, students choose their own works based on their curiosity, imagination, and level of intellect. As a result, students become active, self-directed learners; independent thinkers; and self-confident decision-makers.

## *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 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 large, 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 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, using the restroom and eating snack.

*“The child is truly a miraculous being, and this should be felt deeply by the educator.” - Maria Montessori*

## 2011-12 SCHOOL CALENDAR

Sep 1: No School – Staff Report  
Sep 7: First Day of School  
Sep 29: No School – Rosh Hoshana  
Sep 30: No School – Staff Day  
Oct 10: No School – Columbus Day  
Oct 13: No Bussing – Field Trip  
Oct 14: No School – Parent/Teacher Conf  
Oct 20: No Bussing – Field Trip  
Oct 21: No School – Veteran’s Day  
Nov 24-25: No School – Thanksgiving Break  
Dec 26 – Jan 2: No School – Holiday Break  
Jan 16: No School – Martin Luther King Jr Day  
Feb 17: No School - Parent Teacher Conference Day  
Feb 20-24: No School – Winter Recess  
Apr 9-13: No School – Spring Recess  
May 28: No School – Memorial Day  
Jun 21: Last Day of School  
Jun 22: Staff/Board Day

## 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.

### *Ongoing Enrollment*

Once accepted, ongoing enrollment is contingent upon the mutual satisfaction of both the student 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 \$400 deposit by February 1<sup>st</sup> to guarantee continued enrollment. The \$400 deposit will be credited to the upcoming year’s tuition.

### *New Enrollment*

Annually, the first day of February 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 applicants. New enrollment is not secured until an offer of admittance has been made and a non-refundable \$400 deposit has been paid.

### *Tuition*

Tuition covers attendance during scheduled school days from 8:50 AM - 3:05 PM, as per the aforementioned school calendar. Tuition shall be paid in accordance with the terms in your 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 \$20 fee. If your family is experiencing financial hardship, it is important to speak to the board president *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 make an effort to call the school 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 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 health care 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 directress know in advance. **A note explaining absences must be sent to school for each student upon his or her return.**

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

The RiverRun school day starts at 8:50 AM and ends at 3:05 PM.

### *Arrival*

Student arrival at RiverRun Community Montessori is from 8:35 AM to 8:50 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 8:50 AM must accompany the student into the classroom and sign them in on the form outside the classroom. As arriving late can be disruptive, families are asked to commit to arriving on time.

### *Dismissal*

Students will be released to authorized adults and buses when the school day ends at 3:05 PM. Parents are provided with a Pick-Up Authorization Form prior to the start of the school year and must fill out a new form if there are any changes to a previously authorized pick-up procedure. If there is to be 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 indicating such 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.

Students must be picked up between 3:05 PM and 3:15 PM. Recognizing that RiverRun staff members have their own obligations, families will be billed a late fee of \$1/minute for students who are picked up after 3:15 PM. Willful frequent tardiness may affect enrollment eligibility.

If a student must leave RiverRun prior to 3:05 PM, an authorized adult must come up to the classroom to sign him or her out and then back in again upon return (if returning that same day).

### *Bus Transportation*

For families residing within 15 miles of RiverRun, local school districts are required to provide bussing of elementary students upon request if the appropriate form is submitted prior to April 1<sup>st</sup> for the upcoming the school year. It is each family's responsibility to contact their transportation department when 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. 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. It is important to never pass a bus with flashing red lights or a school van that is unloading or loading students.

## WEATHER OR EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

In the event of possible weather or emergency closings, please check the following local media for the closing of RiverRun Community Montessori:

<b>RADIO:</b>	FLY 92.3 FM	<b>TV:</b>	CHANNEL 6
	B 95.5 FM		CHANNEL 10
	WRVE 99.5 FM		CHANNEL 13
	WGY 810 AM		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, not to be confused with the Montessori School of Schenectady. 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 the staff will be carefully checked.

The main entrance to the Agudat Achim building is left unlocked and monitored by AA staff with a security camera. Parents dropping off their child during school hours are asked to bring their child to the classroom and enter the arrival time in the “Late Arrival Log” outside of the classroom.

A fire safety inspection is done on a yearly basis. Emergency drills and evacuation procedures will be conducted regularly.

## TEACHING STAFF INFORMATION

### *Classroom Teaching Staff*

A carefully chosen directress and 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.

### *College Student Interns*

In addition, carefully screened local college students may occasionally serve as interns or complete fieldwork at RiverRun. In this case, they will interact and take part in the daily operations of the classroom, and some college students may complete a study program on a student at RiverRun. The purpose of this study program is to provide each student teacher with experiences in observing, assessing, and documenting a student, setting the stage for them to better guide the instruction and development of the student. To maintain privacy rights of the students, any study only uses the first names of the student and student teacher.

Parent/guardians of RiverRun students will be asked to sign a permission form allowing student teachers to work with the student *before* the study process begins and will be able to request in writing a copy of the college student teacher's written assessment. Parent/guardians will be provided with copies of the student teacher's assessment within two weeks of the request date. The original study document will remain the student teacher's property. However, a copy will be made for the student's RiverRun record.

## 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 directress, classroom assistant, and students will cooperatively establish the 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 directress, 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 the staff until able to do so. If a student continually has difficulty making respectful and appropriate decisions, the directress 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 directress will meet with the board president or other assigned RiverRun representative to discuss appropriate procedures, including the possibility of the student's dismissal.

## 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 free to engage in spontaneous and family activities without having the burden of regular homework. For that reason, very little 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.

From time to time, the directress 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 church or synagogue 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.

*"Education represents the most powerful and universal force through which we can redirect humanity from a tendency towards violence to a tendency towards peace. The word education must not be understood as teaching but of assisting the psychological development of the child. It should no longer be thought of as imparting knowledge, but must take a new path that seeks to release the human potential within us all. Education is not something the teacher does. It is a natural process that develops spontaneously. The true role of education is to interest the child profoundly in an external activity to which he will give all of his potential."* – Maria Montessori

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

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 directress. The self-correcting nature of most of the Montessori materials aids students in the process of self-assessment.
- Work portfolios: Students collect selected work into portfolios and record lessons in work journals. These are periodically reviewed and evaluated by the directress, students, and parents.
- 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 directress: The directress observes students' progress and keeps records for each student. Records are kept of lessons given, practiced, and mastered.
- Parent conferences: The directress 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 philosophies, RiverRun does not participate in New York State's assessment testing program.

## STUDENT TRANSITION

At RiverRun, students may be faced with a higher level of freedom and a corresponding increase in responsibility than what they've 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 directress if you have concern 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. 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 directress 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 directress 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).

### *Invitations and Presents*

If you are planning a birthday 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.

*“Avoiding war is the work of politics, establishing peace is the work of education.” – Maria Montessori*

## EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

An extra-curricular program is planned as a future offering for RiverRun students. The goal of this program is to assist parents by providing special interest workshops for the students while eliminating the need for additional chauffeuring. These workshops will be offered on a space-available basis to our students. The workshop topics will vary depending upon interest and availability but may include art, dance, drama, gymnastics, tennis, science club, chess club, Spanish club, and music.

## SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

### *Establishing Good Communication*

Good communication between parents and the directress is extremely important. Students will have a take-home folder to be used for daily communication. Newsletters, announcements, or 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 directress.

Families will receive regular communication highlighting school activities and news. In addition, the directress is available to answer classroom-related questions and to address concerns by phone or appointment. Please note that it is very difficult for staff 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. The directress will send home a note early in the school year giving you a phone number and a time or two during the week she will typically be available for parent calls.

Families are also encouraged to attend the monthly board meetings and to communicate with RiverRun’s co-founders and board members.

### *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 their individualized educational plan. The directress or parent/guardian may request an additional conference at any time as appropriate.

*“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*

## 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 asked to contribute 20 hours of volunteer service to the school 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 directress or a RiverRun representative to discuss it.

In addition to volunteering inside 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), and building or making classroom materials.

### *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 make an attempt to minimize unannounced visits and to instead make an appointment with the directress if a classroom visit or observation is desired and/or take advantage of "Family Fridays" whereby families are invited to drop by the school for lunch and/or recess..

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. We will fundraise to raise money for the school's general operations as well as additional Montessori materials and specific programmatic needs.

### *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 and encouraged to make suggestions about topics they would like to have considered. Dates and topics for specific parent-education sessions will be announced via email and on the website. 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 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, in particular interactions with individuals different from themselves, are necessary, and in this regard RiverRun will operate as a community within a community. Whenever possible, RiverRun students will be actively involved with the Schenectady-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 cleaning up an area of Central Park). 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 you to do so 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 child care 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 parents may be required to pay part of the cost per child attending. (If paying for these field trips is a financial hardship, please contact the board president.) On trips where a parent is chaperoning, the parent will be required to pay for his or her own attendance, if applicable. On trips where siblings are permitted, the parent will be required to pay the full cost of attendance for the additional child(ren), 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 will 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.

*"It is self-evident that the possession of and contact with real things bring with them, above all, a real quantity of knowledge. Instruction becomes a living thing. Instead of being illustrated, it is brought to life. In a word, the outing is a new key for the intensification of instruction ordinarily given in the school." – Maria Montessori*

## SNACKS AND LUNCH

### *Purpose*

Besides nourishment for the body, the 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 the sharing of news, thoughts, dreams, and ideas.

### *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 fruits, vegetables, crackers and cheeses, and we ask that you choose organic and minimally processed foods whenever possible. As students will be encouraged to have water with their snacks, families should not send in drinks. Mugs and drinking water are available at all times in the classroom.

A refrigerator is available for the keeping of perishable food items.

### *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 mug for water. **Please note that candy, gum, 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. Students should bring utensils from home in their packed lunch box.

Students will have access to both a refrigerator and a microwave for storing and heating up their lunches, respectively. Please send items for heating in microwave-safe dishes (i.e. glass, no plastic).

#### *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 ordered pizza Chinese food, and sub sandwiches.

#### **SPECIAL FOOD GUIDELINES**

**Because our school is now located in a synagogue we must not bring MEAT or SHELL FISH onto the premises. Eggs and fish (for example tuna and salmon) are fine, as well as fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and dairy products. Please work with your child in packing their lunch and snack so that these guidelines are carefully followed.**

## 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. Conversely, if you would like to donate any extra school supplies, you are welcome to do so.

#### *School Bag*

Each 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 always 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. Please do not send in anything that your child is uncomfortable having classmates handle.

Please note RiverRun cannot be 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.

## 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 midriffs, chests, and undergarments. Students arriving to school in inappropriate clothing will be asked to return home to change.

### *Outerwear*

The students will go outdoors daily, weather permitting. In the wintertime, 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*

**Each student must have a pair of indoor/school shoes with rubber soles** to be worn daily in the classroom environment and **to be left at school**. If the chosen classroom shoes are not appropriate for physical education, the student should also bring a pair of sneakers to school daily in his or her school bag. (For example, shoes for PE should have good gripping soles and stay snugly on the foot. Crocs 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. No record of immunizations is required if the school is provided with one of the following: a) certificate of religious exemption or b) a physician's statement that immunizations may be detrimental to the student's health.

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 directress 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 directress 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 directress or classroom assistant will then call the student's emergency contacts so an authorized person can pick up the student. The following is an inconclusive list of illnesses that will warrant a student's having to leave school: 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. A student may return to school after taking medication for a treatable illness for 24 hours or after being symptom-free for untreatable illness for at least 12 hours.

In the event a student contracts a contagious or communicable disease other than ordinary colds and stomach bugs, the directress or classroom assistant will write up and send home a notice of possible exposure. The ill student can return to school when no longer contagious. At RiverRun's discretion, a signed statement from the child's doctor stating that the student is free of contagious and communicable diseases and 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 along with a note from the physician and a signed parental consent form. The student will be responsible for administering it to him/herself

with staff observance. The directress bears responsibility for the safekeeping of any and all such prescription. This medicine should be kept at school until picked up by the parent. If a special circumstance arises, a written request for staff administration of medicine can be submitted for consideration.

#### *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 attained. In the event of an accident or illness requiring emergency medical attention, RiverRun staff will call 911 and immediately afterward 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, computer software loans, and homebound instruction.

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

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.

*“When interested, a child becomes self-motivated. Self-motivation leads to becoming self-disciplined. When self-disciplined, a child engages in a process of mastery learning and develops his or her potential.” - Maria Montessori*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

This statement is to confirm that I have read and understand the policies contained within the RiverRun Community Montessori Program Handbook. Any questions or concerns I had were presented to a RiverRun representative and have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to abide by these policies for the 2011-2012 school year.

**and**

In consideration of the acceptance of my child as a student in this program, and having satisfied myself that supervision and attention to safety are prudent and reasonable, I agree to indemnify and hold harmless the school and its staff against all claims and demands made by or on behalf of my child, including through or by me, my spouse, or the legal guardian of the child.

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Student's Name

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Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

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Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

*Please save this copy of the Acknowledgement of Receipt for your records. The loose acknowledgement form accompanying this document must be signed and dated and returned to RiverRun prior to or on the first day of the 2011-2012 school year.*