

RiverRun

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

2016-17

UPDATED JUL 30, 2016

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
- 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 parents, directress, and students. Please use this handbook to familiarize yourself with our unique program.

We are looking forward to a wonderful year!

The origins of our name -

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 non-public, non-denominational school in Schenectady County, serving primary, elementary and middle school-aged children three to 14 years 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 directresses 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 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.

"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, 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 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 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 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.

2016-17 SCHOOL CALENDAR

Sep 6-9:	Primary First Day of School and Phase-In
Sep 7:	First Day of School – Elementary & Middle School
Oct 3-4:	No School – Rosh Hashanah
Oct 10:	No School – Indigenous People Day
Oct 11:	No School – Professional Development Day
Oct 12:	No School – Yom Kippur
Oct 17-18:	School – enter through side door
Oct 24-25:	School – enter through side door
Oct 28&31:	No School – Parent Teacher Conferences
Nov 11:	No School – Veteran’s Day
Nov 23-25:	No School – Thanksgiving Break
Dec 23-Jan 2:	No School – Holiday Break
Jan 16:	No School – Martin Luther King Jr Day
Jan 17:	No School – Professional Development Day
Feb 3 & 6:	No School – Parent Teacher Conferences
Feb 20:	No School – President’s Day
Feb 21-24:	No School – Winter Recess
Mar 17:	No School – Professional Development Day
April 11-13:	School – enter through side door
April 14:	No School – Good Friday
Apr 17-21:	No School – Spring Recess
May 29:	No School – Memorial Day
Jun 2:	No Bussing – Annual RiverRun Campout
Jun 9:	No School – Professional Development Day
Jun 21:	Last Day of School
Jun 22-23:	Staff/Board Days

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 15th to guarantee continued enrollment. The \$400 deposit will be credited to the upcoming year’s tuition.

New Enrollment

Annually, the beginning of Winter Recess 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 8:45 AM - 3:00 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 5th 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 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 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

Arrival

The RiverRun school day starts at 8:45 AM. Student arrival is from 8:35 AM to 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 student as well as the classroom, therefore, families are asked to commit to arriving on time.

Before care will be offered provided there is sufficient enrollment. Children have an opportunity to play games, continue their own work and projects, participate in movement activities or look at/read books. A staff member will provide supervision Monday through Friday on typical days (excluding phase in week and weather delay days) for approximately 50 minutes before school starts. Before care hours will run from 7:45 to 8:35 AM.

Dismissal

Students will be released to authorized adults and buses when the school day ends at 3:00 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 each year. 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 to show to RiverRun staff.

Students must be picked up between 3:00 PM and 3:10 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 3:10 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 same day).

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 request if the appropriate form is submitted to the family's school district's transportation office prior to April 1st for the upcoming the school year. 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 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 (not in the circle closest to the door) and walk their child to the school entrance. On days considered holy to Congregation Agudat Achim, drop-off and pick-up will occur at the side entrance to the school. A list of dates will be provided.

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 (posted by 6:30am):

RADIO:	FLY 92.3 FM	TV:	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, or 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 will be carefully checked.

The main entrance to the Congregation Agudat Achim building is locked 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 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 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.

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. Acts of verbal or physical violence between students or towards staff will necessitate an immediate parent conference.

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 daily homework. For that reason, 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.

In addition, the directresses 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 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 TRANSITIONS

Primary students start their school year with a phase in schedule that allows a more gently 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 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 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 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).

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 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.

SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

Establishing Good Communication

Good communication between parents and the directresses 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 directress.

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. Each Friday, staff will send home an electronic version of "the Friday letter" which will highlight classroom activities of the week and alert families of upcoming events. Please read these letters thoroughly and in a timely fashion. In addition, the directress 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. 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. Parents are also encouraged to make an appointment with the directress via email.

Families are invited to attend the monthly board meetings which are scheduled for 6:30-8:00 pm on the third Monday 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 directress or parent/guardian may request an additional conference at any time as appropriate.

The first conference of the year is held during the initial six weeks of school. It is an opportunity for teachers to get to know their 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 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 Montessori works for the classroom.

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 opportunities throughout the school year to be in the classroom.

For our primary community, parents are welcome to observe through the classroom door window at any time. This allows parents to see their child at work without disrupting the work flow of the classroom. After phase-in week, our directress respectfully requests parents to contact her directly before visiting the primary classroom. The young children in the primary room need time for their class to come together as a community. These children are working on separating from their parents and entering their classroom feeling more comfortable and ready to start their day.

After the first couple of months, the Primary directress 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 faculty. 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 directress.

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 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 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.) On trips where a parent is chaperoning, the parent will be required 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 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.

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 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 fruits, vegetables, crackers and cheeses, 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. Mugs and drinking water are available at all times in the classroom.

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.

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 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).

Students do not have regular access to a refrigerator so please include an ice pack in their lunch if you wish to keep their meal cool. They will have access to a microwave oven for heating up their lunches. Students may bring meat as well as dairy, fish, fruit, vegetables, etc. into the classroom.

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, or submarine sandwiches.

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

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, rather than 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 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 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 & 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 midriffs, chests, and undergarments. For those students who arrive at school wearing inappropriate clothing, a discussion between student and Directress will focus on finding a solution.

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

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 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 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 a nonconclusive 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, hard, frequent coughing, 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 ordinary colds and stomach bugs, 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. 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 has. 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.