

# 2017-2018 PARENT HANDBOOK



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Montessori Academy**

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Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom

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**Editor’s Note:** Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom is a coeducational school, however, to avoid the use of somewhat awkward expressions, such as he/she or his/her when referring to the children, we will alternate between the masculine and feminine gender or use the plural case.

## **Section 1: Introduction**

### **Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom: On a Quest for Excellence**

Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom's goal is to give its students an education that will prepare them to succeed in a rapidly changing world. Like all Montessori schools, Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom emphasizes hands-on discovery-based learning. The program strives for an exceptional standard of excellence; students are challenged to compete against themselves, rather than each other. Our curriculum includes programs in international studies, as well as some of the strongest programs in mathematics, science, foreign language, and the arts that are being offered in education today.

At Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom, there is a commitment to a close partnership between home and school, academic accountability, and an innovative program that leads students to develop extraordinary levels of personal responsibility and motivation, self-reliance and self-esteem, self-confidence.

A school is nothing but people and beliefs. We do not believe in a method of education that leaves you the parent, as an outsider, and we cannot be successful with a family that has not made that "leap of faith" to invite us into their lives and trust. Parents and teachers working together as partners create an experience of lasting value for our children and the community.

When we talk about our dreams for the school, we believe: "There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots, the other is wings." The roots – the skills considered basic to a fine education - are available to our children. With the support of the school's parents and the community, Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom will have the resources that will allow its children to develop wings of the spirit. In the process, these children, this school, and eventually the world are learning how to soar. In 1876, a famous Native American chief, Sitting Bull, said "Let us put our minds together, and see what kind of future we can build for our children".

### **What values do you and our school share?**

#### **1. Care for your child.**

All of the children here are truly cared about. They spend about three years within the same classroom, so they are known and cared about for who they are. We watch and celebrate their progress over the years as you do. You have gone through an admissions process for our school. We do this to make sure that our values are aligned, and that we can truly benefit your family and child.

#### **2. Keeping your child safe.**

Can you entrust your most precious possession to us? You may have checked our systems, our location, and our personnel, possibly even talked with other parents currently enrolled. You have decided to take that "leap of faith" and entrust your child to our care. On our part, we have a saying, "It doesn't much matter what else we do for your child, unless we return him in about the same condition we got him in, maybe a little smarter and dirtier." The safety of your child is of utmost importance to us, and is monitored continuously throughout the day.

#### **3. Academic standards.**

This value is probably subject to the greatest miscommunication. We all want the very best for our own child, and for future generations. Montessori is taught in a very different way than the vast majority of us experienced in our school years. Some of us decided that what we experienced growing up was exactly right for our child, and some of us want something completely different. In either case, expectations are difficult to communicate. What does it truly mean to receive a superior education in a Montessori fashion? Our belief as an authentic Montessori school is to allow a child to learn and grow at his own pace, no matter how quickly or slowly that may be. Our children test, on average, approximately two years above grade level. That does not mean every child in every area. All of our children are addressed where they are, in the way they learn best, so that they may flourish to the best of their developmental stage and capacity.

#### **4. The development of your child into a good citizen of the world.**

You can receive a good, if not superior education in many schools, both public and private. One of the many reasons to choose Raritan Valley/Cherry Blossom Montessori education is for its emphasis on global citizenship. We teach character, respect for self, one another and our planet, kindness, conflict resolution skills and setting of individual boundaries. Our biggest challenge as adults is to always model those skills we wish our children to acquire. Children learn the most about relationships and how to treat one another from watching the significant adults in their life interact separately and together.

### **Our Partnership Agreement**

The purpose of this agreement is to clarify expectations. What can parents and school expect of each other as we enter into a partnership to aid the development of your children? This document aims to articulate expectations upon which we can agree. It also aims to reduce the inevitable misunderstanding and disappointment that results when unstated expectations go unmet.

#### ***What does the school expect from parents?***

1. *The school expects parents to make continuing efforts both to understand and embrace the Montessori approach and to work in partnership with the school.* The school desires parents who understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we help parents learn about the Montessori approach by providing information and opportunities for parent education as part of the admission process – so that parents can make an informed decision in choosing to enroll their children – and continue to provide more opportunities through a family’s years at the school. Once children are enrolled, the school expects parents to attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences and parent education events, and to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the Parent Handbook and other school publications. Children thrive when home and school work in harmony, with both environments sharing the same educational values and expectations.
2. *Create consistency between home and school by learning as much as you can about Montessori principles as they apply to preparation of your child’s home environment.* This begins with the general principle, “Never do something for your child that he can do for himself”. Allow your child to engage in all of the simple tasks of practical life that a child can do for himself at each stage of development. This may also entail learning a different communication style from the way in which we were parented. Children develop a love of learning and can become responsible, independent and capable when parents’ values and expectation are consistent with those of the school
3. *We need parents to contribute to a positive school community by demonstrating respect for all adults and children, the school, and the school’s programs.* Model respect for your children – for them, their classmates, parents of classmates, teachers and other school staff – in short, for everyone associated with the school. Respect begins with civility and deepens into trust. Our most fundamental behavioral guidelines for the children are, “respect yourself, respect others, and respect the environment”. We expect the same from adults, parents and school staff, at all times and in all relationships within the school community. This includes speech and outward behavior. Support your child by speaking of her/his teachers, classmates, and school in positive terms. Respect and abide by the school’s policies and procedures. Honor your commitments. Look for ways to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Through your behavior, you contribute to your children’s moral development and to the culture and climate of their school, which they experience on a daily basis.
4. *We ask that you maintain active, direct and respectful two-way communication with the school. Read communications that are sent home including letters, newsletters and calendars.* Inform the school in a timely fashion of pertinent changes in your child’s life. Active communication involves parents sharing observations and concerns about their child with the child’s current teacher. In matters large and small, please remember the principle of respect: even when there is disagreement, disagree respectfully.

***What can parents reasonably expect from the school?***

1. *A Montessori School is different than conventional schools. Our first commitment is to the multi-dimensional development of the child.* Montessori children do amass a great deal of factual knowledge in school. However, our aim is for each child to be far more than a repository of information. We guide each child to think for him/herself. Cognitive development and a solid academic foundation are important, yet they represent only one dimension of our aspirations for your child. Equally significant is your child's social, emotional, spiritual and physical development. Children are given choices and a great deal of freedom-within limits-during the school day. The choices a child makes, and the accompanying responsibilities, influence the emerging character of your child. Choosing his own work or shaping it to a considerable degree, following that work through to completion, while working independently or in cooperation with others, the Montessori child identifies his interests and develops his individual gifts. Students motivate each other to be self-motivated.
2. *A very important component of the education at Raritan Valley/Cherry Blossom is the emphasis upon community service.* Younger children learn by serving their small community of classmates, their classroom and their family. As they grow, the larger community is encompassed and they experience the many rewards of helping others both inside and outside of the school environment. The children gain awareness and appreciation of others, of the challenges faced by others, and equally important, of their own strengths and abilities to help others and affect the world around them. Community service is an integral and important part of their lives, and stays with them well beyond their Montessori experience.
3. *Each child is treated with dignity and respect, and we expect that she will treat all others with the same respect. We treat each child as an individual and strive to develop each child's unique gifts and talents.* Each child is expected to learn to balance personal freedom with a clear sense of responsibility to himself, to others, and to the community as a whole.
4. *We aim to maintain open, honest, timely and respectful communication with you about your child and about information affecting the school community.* There are at least two regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences each year. There are also six progress report dates. Progress reports will only be issued on these dates if there is something particularly concerning about a student's work or particularly noteworthy. They are not issued on a routine basis. In the event of special concerns, your child's teacher will contact you by phone, email or in person so that these may be discussed. In addition to all of these communications there are classroom letters and newsletters, curriculum letters, weekly email messages, our Facebook page, texts, etc. There is also the Parent Handbook and the school website which contains our calendar and menus as well as a wealth of other information about the school. The parent section of the website has a password. You are given a new password each year.
5. *Each of our teachers is a well-trained professional and evaluations are always confidential and based on direct observation of your child.* Teachers will always offer their current best understanding of your child's progress, strengths and needs. For all children, this evaluation is based on the teacher's observation which may be augmented by input from the administrator and/or specials teachers. We also report standardized test results for those Elementary students who take them.
6. *Ongoing school-wide communication.* The school publishes a quarterly newsletter "The Pillar" a monthly curriculum letter, a monthly classroom newsletter, as well as weekly email alerts, Hot Pink News, a Parent Handbook, a school calendar and other occasional letters and publications. Most of these are printed, emailed to your individual email addresses for both caregivers, as well as posted on our website under our Parents Portal.

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7. *You can expect of us to strive to ensure that our environment is physically and emotionally safe and supportive, as well as aesthetically beautiful.* Dr. Montessori said that the classroom teacher's first responsibility is to prepare the environment. This means that the learning materials should correspond to the developmental characteristics of the child at each level, and that those materials must be attractive to the child: correct in size, aesthetically pleasing, well maintained, and complete. More broadly, the whole school environment must meet these criteria: to appeal to the child and to inspire his work. We are ever vigilant to ensure that the school building and grounds are physically safe, secure, and well maintained. Our community of children and adults comprise a social culture and environment that impacts every child's experience. This does not mean that there are not and should not be problems. It does mean that we will work together with you and your child in developmentally appropriate ways to deal with problems as they arise, endowing him with the social skills and emotional intelligence which prepares him for a lifetime of working with others in different communities and organizations.
8. *All head teachers have the credentials necessary for their position ranging from Montessori certifications, Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees, and many training and certifications in many areas necessary for leading a school and/or teaching children.* Our teachers have an unusual sense of mission of both the Montessori philosophy as well as the true caring and understanding of the needs of the children under their supervision. They consistently demonstrate high standards for themselves and their students.
9. *From the school's administrators you can expect an absolute sense of integrity, a focus on the needs of the individual child in harmony with the life of the whole school community, a commitment to the peace and well being as well as the growth and success of the children staff and parents in their site.* You can expect mission-driven decisions and responsible management, and an open door to your questions and concerns. Administrative staff interface with all the various constituencies of the school: students, parents, extended family, faculty, alumni, prospective parents, professional visitors, government officials, other schools and educational organizations, as well as the general public. In your interactions with the administration, you can expect professional, courteous, and business-like conduct, as well as mutually respectful communication. The Head of School, Associate Head of School, Site Administrator in Bridgewater, the Assistant Administrator in Cherry Blossom and the Office Manager in Raritan Valley comprise the administration. They often face decisions requiring a balance of competing priorities. Sometimes those factors are mutually exclusive; sometimes equally well-intentioned adults see matters differently. In making decisions, the administration's first priority is to focus on the interest of the individual child in balance with the needs of the school.

### **Our Vision**

Our vision is of an educational system that serves a world that lives in peace; a global community based on interdependence and respect for all life and people.

### **Our Mission**

Our school's mission is to cultivate confident and creative builders of the future. We prepare a developmentally appropriate environment that enables individual learning styles as per the philosophy of Maria Montessori. Our diverse community nurtures values that create social responsibility and mutual respect, enhanced by a strong partnership between school and home. Our program rests on four pillars:

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- The cultivation within our students of a passion for excellence in everything they do, both in and outside of school;
- The development a strongly held set of universal values, which include self-respect, respect for others, honesty, integrity, responsibility, empathy, compassion, kindness, peacefulness, a sense of concern for others, warmth, and a love of community;
- The development of a global perspective and sense of international understanding;
- And a lifelong commitment to give something back through service to others who are in need.

## **HISTORY**

Raritan Valley Montessori was founded as a Montessori school in 1967 in the South Branch Reformed Church, South Branch, New Jersey. It is one of the oldest Montessori Schools in New Jersey and one of the older ones in the United States. The original name of the school was The Carroll School. In 1969, the school changed ownership from a private individual to a parent cooperative and was renamed Raritan Valley Montessori School. In June of 1985, the school was sold to Leslie Meldrum, once again becoming a private corporation. In August of 1994 the school moved to Flagtown. In September of 1997, our Elementary program moved to The PeopleCare Center in Bridgewater, and became a non-profit organization, Raritan Valley Montessori Academy. In September of 1998, we opened 2 more classes in that building. In September of 2003, we added a Stepping Stones program and an Elementary Program at our Flagtown campus. In September 2004, the Flagtown School was renamed “The Cherry Blossom, A Montessori School”. In September 2009 we added a Stepping Stones program in Bridgewater. At present, we have a Stepping Stone classroom, Primary classrooms, and a Lower & Upper Elementary program at each site. We are affiliated with the American Montessori Society (AMS).

## **PHILOSOPHY**

Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom provides an environment based on the principles of education constructed by Maria Montessori for children aged 12 months through twelve years. This educational opportunity is offered to all children regardless of race, creed, or color.

The classroom environment provides each child with the opportunity to experience the excitement of learning through his own choices and thus will help to foster in the child a sense of independence, individuality, and a love of learning. The environment is planned to enhance and stimulate the development of the child emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually.

Montessori education is designed to provide a wide variety of learning experiences geared to the developmental needs of the individual child. In this setting, children are helped to protect and expand whatever is within their talents and capacities: to protect their freedom and to respect the rights of others, and are given the opportunity to develop their individual potentials.

Our qualified staff provides a Montessori environment that is clean, healthful and encourages the child to grow mentally and physically. Our school is dedicated to open communication between parents, staff, administration and child. This open communication helps to promote the quality of education to which the school is committed. Our school believes in the 3 R's of Montessori:

1. Respect for Self
2. Respect for others
3. Respect for the Environment

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of the School is to provide a carefully planned environment which will encourage children to develop within themselves the foundational habits, attitudes, skills and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of successful, creative thinking and learning.

The specific goals for the children who attend our school are:

1. To develop a positive attitude toward school and learning.
2. To develop a sense of high self-esteem.
3. To build a habit of concentration for lifelong study skills.
4. To develop and foster an abiding curiosity.
5. To develop habits of initiative and persistence.
6. To foster inner discipline and a sense of order.
7. To develop sensory-motor skills in order to sharpen the ability to discriminate and judge.
8. To develop socially acceptable behavior.
9. To acquire the basic skills necessary for a lifetime of learning.
10. To help develop each child's innate, ultimate potential through high self-expectations.
11. To provide an extraordinary educational opportunity.

## **PROMISES**

We promise:

1. To accept that each child learns at his/her own rate in mind, body, and spirit.
2. To provide a safe and clean environment.
3. To provide the opportunity for two-way communication regarding your child.
4. To relate in a caring professional manner with respect and dignity.
5. To maintain a well-trained staff, committed to continuing education.
6. To provide an extraordinary educational experience.
7. To set an example in educational leadership.

## **A Blueprint of our Fundamental Values and Beliefs**

The Montessori approach to learning is the educational framework at The Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom. Maria Montessori recognized that "the process" itself was paramount in learning. We embrace this idea that learning is dynamic and welcome new ideas as we grow.

This document serves as a reference point for our thinking about learning at this time. We review these ideas annually and as necessary to monitor how our choices reflect these ideals. We fully expect this document to change and we invite you to participate in this rewarding experience of discovering new ways to learn and to live.

We affirm that education begins at birth and continues throughout life. While our emphasis is on our children, we are a center of support for all of us to continue learning and developing toward becoming whole and healthy citizens of the world.

Our goals for students are for them to be open-ended and compassionate, to gain a sense of themselves and others, and to understand and appreciate the diversity of the human spirit. Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom wants students to be well trained in the basic academic disciplines, to fulfill their creative potential, and to gain satisfaction in their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. We want students to love learning and to value knowledge, creativity, and humor. Finally, we hope they will be responsible, critical, and caring members of a pluralistic society and recognize that they have the power and resources to affect change as well as the self-esteem and confidence to pursue their goals.

**STAFF**

Our Head/Lead Teachers will be happy to answer any of your questions regarding your children. They are responsible for instructing your children, preparing the environment, and the overall daily functioning of their classrooms.

Our Assistants/Interns/Co-teachers help in all matters. They are responsible for the care and maintenance of the classroom as well as assisting the Head/Lead in the instruction of your children.

Our Administrators are in charge of the day-to-day activities of the site they are assigned to. They will take care of your concerns, as well as relaying any messages to Leslie Meldrum which require her attention.

The following people are the members of our staff. Each member of our staff plays a very important role in the nurturing, care and education of your children.

Head of Schools -----Donna Fiumara

Admissions Director-----Seleste McDaniel

**Flagtown Campus:**

Director-----Donna Fiumara

Administrative Assistant -----Kerrin Haganey

**Dr. Seuss Room (Stepping Stones)**

Head Teacher -----Stefanie Fedora

Co-Teacher -----Toby Horwitz

Assistant -----Diana Sa

**Mahatma Gandhi Room (Primary)**

Head Teacher -----Anu Krishnan

Co-Teacher -----Cindy Fonzetti

**Jacques Cousteau Room (Primary)**

Lead Teacher and Kindergarten Enrichment -----Stacy Catoggio

Co-Teacher -----Joanna Byra

**Mother Teresa Room (Primary)**

Lead Teacher and Kindergarten Enrichment -----Carol Nittoli

Co-Teacher -----Maneesha Dave

**Albert Einstein Room (Lower Elementary)**

Head of Lower Elementary-----Nancy Tamburello

Co- Teacher -----Lisa Olasz

**Michelangelo Room (Upper Elementary)**

Head of Upper Elementary -----Carol Young

Reading and Writing Specialty Teacher for Elementary -----Lisa Olasz

**After-school Program**

Head of Program -----Renata Bladek

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### **Bridgewater Campus:**

Site Administrator-----Seleste McDaniel  
Administrative Assistant-----Melissa Kang

### **Neil Armstrong Room (Stepping Stones)**

Head Teacher -----Shemi Kalappurakal  
Assistant -----Allison Catoggio

### **Emily Dickinson Room (Primary)**

Head Teacher and Kindergarten Enrichment -----Caroline Peckar  
Co-Teacher -----Sylvia Chen

### **Rosa Parks Room (Primary)**

Head Teacher -----Linda Freitag  
Intern -----Daniella Blardony

### **Martin Luther King Jr. Room (Primary)**

Head Teacher and Kindergarten Enrichment -----Andal Nagarajan  
Intern -----Yi Zhou

### **Maria Montessori Room (Lower Elementary)**

Head Teacher -----Hemani Kathuria  
Assistant Teacher -----Jessica Wajner

### **After-school Program**

Head of Program -----Allison Catoggio  
Assistant Teacher -----Jaida Hawkins

### **Specials**

Physical Education -----Michael Godleski  
Technology -----Michael Godleski  
Spanish -----Sandra Hurtado  
Music-----Nancy Cesta  
Art (RVM)-----Caroline Peckar  
Art (CBM)-----Stefanie Fedora

### **The Board of Trustees**

The Cherry Blossom is a for-profit private corporation owned and operated by Leslie S. Meldrum, President. Raritan Valley Montessori Academy is a non-profit 501(C) (3) Tax Exempt New Jersey educational corporation, governed by a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees. The primary functions of the Board of Trustees are to:

- 1) Support the school's institutional mission and the fundamental objectives and core values.
- 2) Support the policies under which the school will operate.
- 3) Select a Head of School who translates Raritan Valley Montessori's mission and objectives into day-to-day operation.
- 4) Look to the future and plan for long-term institutional growth and development.

The members of the Board of Trustees are as follows:

|                   |                                     |                      |                        |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Leslie Meldrum    | <i>President</i>                    | Jacqueline Patterson | <i>Member at Large</i> |
| Ron Meldrum       | <i>Vice President and Treasurer</i> | Ryan Meldrum         | <i>Member at Large</i> |
| John Fiumara Esq. | <i>Secretary</i>                    | Lee Zulanch          | <i>Member at Large</i> |

## **ADMISSION POLICY**

Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom is a non-discriminatory corporation dedicated to the education of toddlers through 12-year-old children in accordance with the principles of Maria Montessori as interpreted by the American Montessori Society (AMS). Admission is granted based on the decision by the school with regard to its belief in whether it can benefit the family seeking admission and the parents who agree with the philosophy of the school and believe it can benefit their child. We believe that every child has the right to go to a school that is a perfect match for them and we endeavor to carry out this belief by our admissions process as well as that of the child and the family's performance throughout the school year. Submission of an application to the school is not a guarantee of acceptance. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, or ethnic origin, in administration of our educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs and athletic and other school-administered programs. We reserve the right to remove a student from our school should the need arise.

## **School Year**

The school year shall be scheduled for 174 child contact days for pre-school age children and 180 child contact days in Kindergarten and Elementary, less those days in which school is cancelled for emergency closings such as snow days. We allow 3 days for Emergency Closings in our calendar.

## **Classroom Placement**

Our staff puts much thought and time into placing children in classrooms. We want every child to be successful in a supportive and challenging environment. Factors include a balance of class size, age, gender, academic strengths, and learning styles, social skills, learning needs, parental information and separation of students who are unable to work well together in our opinion. We recognize there may be times when parents wish to share specific concerns regarding class placement. Your request will be strongly considered, however, the school retains the right to make the final decision regarding class placement. Every possible effort shall be made to insure that a child is retained within the same group of children and/or the same teaching staff as the child started with.

## **Probationary Period for Children**

All families are subject to a six-week probationary period. The usual probationary period occurs at the beginning of the school term for each child and family. This probationary period is held for the purpose of determining that Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom is able to benefit the child and the family. A child may also be placed on a secondary probationary period at any time throughout the school year at the discretion of the school. This secondary probationary period would be held in the event that there is a change from the child's previous behavior or he is disruptive to the class as a whole. Following this decision, the parent shall be contacted and the problem set forth. The parent will be asked to cooperate in finding a solution to the problem. In the event of a satisfactory solution, no further action will take place. In the event of an unsatisfactory solution in the opinion of the administration of the School, the parent(s) will be advised as to the termination of enrollment.

## **Statement of Discipline**

Discipline in our classrooms is constructed around the precepts of Montessori education. A child that is actively engaged in meaningful work usually has little need of external discipline. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that each child finds work within the classroom that is appropriate for them. If a child becomes disruptive our staff will utilize positive techniques and philosophy as well as other appropriate measures. Under NO circumstances will abusive language or behavior ever be employed to discipline a child. It may sometimes be necessary to physically restrain a student in order to protect the safety of himself, staff, and other students. It is important to note it will only be used for protection in extreme cases and will be discussed with the parents. If the child is continually disruptive and a detriment to himself or the classroom as a whole, the parents will be contacted to determine a possible course of events to remedy that behavior within an acceptable period of time. If this method does not cause a change in behavior, the parents will be informed that we cannot benefit their child, and the child will be removed from enrollment within the school.

## **Inappropriate Behaviors**

Children first learn how to communicate in concrete actions. Words are abstract symbols that occur at a later developmental phase of their life. It is our job together to switch a child from concrete to abstract in their expression. Obviously, a certain amount of physical contact is normal. However, we can not accept children engaging in continuous negative physical contact with the adult members or the children of this school. Children need to be encouraged to speak their ideas rather than act them out. We always take action on children's negative physical interactions. If a child is aggressive toward other children or adults in school, we will utilize different methods including, at our discretion, requiring that the child be excused from school. The return date to school will be discussed with the parents and what actions may be required for the child to return. A child may not return to school until all requirements have been met to the satisfaction of the administration. Please see form 10:122-6.8 recommended by the state of New Jersey. When we are unsuccessful by these methods, we will request that you seek alternative solutions. We may recommend dismissal, if we feel that we are not making progress in this area with our methods. It is our firm belief that every child has the right to be safe in school.

## **Withdrawal & Termination**

### **Withdrawal**

A student may withdraw from our school if his/her family relocates their primary residence more than 10 miles from the school. This relocation has to be proven by documentation in the form of a notarized employer letter or proof of new residence, including such items as a utility bill or mortgage. All requests shall be in writing and be sent to the school via Certified Mail Return Receipt Requested. Parents shall be charged for the non-refundable deposit of \$650 and the balance of the month of withdrawal plus one additional regular month's tuition payment. Refunds will not be issued until all supporting documentation is provided. No refunds will be made if a child's last day of attendance in school is after February 28 of the academic school year. In the event that a parent requests withdrawal from the school due to financial hardship, they will be required to submit a complete financial aid application to FAST, our financial aid determination body. If FAST determines that the parents are eligible for 100% financial aid, we will grant them a financial aid withdrawal from their contract. Parents will be required to pay the non-refundable deposit, the educational materials fee, any outstanding earned tuition, and one additional month's tuition. This practice is enforced for the ability of the school to honor its commitments to the staff, the parents and the children.

### **Termination:**

It is our practice to earnestly work through any problems arising between the student or parents and the school in a way that benefits all parties involved. However, in the case that any of the following occur, we reserve the right to immediately terminate the student's enrollment.

1. The parent is not willing or is unable to follow the school procedures and requirements as outlined in the enrollment contract and the parent handbook, or to earnestly try, in the school's view, to resolve with the school personnel a problem involving their child's enrollment in the school. This includes, but is not limited to behavioral problems of the child, chronic late payment of tuition installments, and the occurrence of any outstanding tuition or enrollment fee which is more than fifteen (15) days delinquent without prior arrangement with the school.
2. The parents or caretakers and the school staff maintain, in the view of the school, significantly opposing views regarding healthy and appropriate child rearing and educational practices, or adult communication practices, which result in continuing disagreements between the school and the parents, caretaker, or the child.
3. The child's behavior poses an ongoing emotional or physical threat to him/her self, to others, or to property, or is so disruptive that, in the view of the school, either the child or others are unable to derive full benefit from the program.

## **Expulsion Policy**

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to exclude a child from our program either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. The following are reasons we may have to terminate or suspend a child from this center:

### **PARENTAL ACTIONS REQUIRING REMOVAL OF THEIR CHILD**

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments
- Failure to complete required forms including the child's immunization records
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child
- Physical or verbal abuse to staff
- Continual disregard of recommendations necessary to a child's school success

### **CHILD'S ACTIONS REQUIRING REMOVAL**

- Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time
- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts
- Physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children
- Frequent Biting

### **PROACTIVE ACTIONS THAT WILL BE TAKEN IN ORDER TO PREVENT EXPULSION**

- Staff will try to redirect child from negative behavior
- Staff will reassess classroom environment, appropriate of activities, supervision
- Staff will use positive methods and language while disciplining children
- Staff will praise appropriate behaviors
- Staff will consistently apply consequences for rules
- Child will be given verbal warnings
- Child may lose certain privileges
- Child's disruptive behavior will be documented and maintained in confidentiality
- Parent/guardian will be notified verbally
- Parent/guardian will be given written copies of the disruptive behaviors that might lead to removal
- The director, classroom staff and parent/guardian will have a conference(s) to discuss how to promote positive behaviors
- The parent will be given literature or other resources regarding methods of improving behavior
- Recommendation of evaluation by professional consultation
- Recommendation of evaluation by local school district child study team

### **SCHEDULE OF REMOVAL**

- If after the remedial actions above not worked, the child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the child's or parent's behavior warranting an expulsion. Removal action is meant to occur over a period of time so that the parent/guardian may work on the child's behavior or to come to an agreement with the school.
  - The parent/guardian will be informed regarding the length of the removal period
  - The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected behavioral changes required in order for the child or parent to return to the school
  - The parent/guardian will be given a specific removal date that allows the parent an adequate amount of time to seek alternate child care (usually one to two weeks notice depending on risk to other children's welfare or safety) and

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- Failure of the child/parent to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion from the center

### **A Child will be not be removed solely because of the following actions**

- If a child's parent(s):
  - Made a complaint to the Office of Licensing regarding a school's alleged violations of the licensing requirements (1-877-667-9845)
  - Reported abuse or neglect occurring at the center (1-877-NJ ABUSE) [1-877-652-2873]
  - Questioned the center regarding policies and procedures

### **EDUCATIONAL SEQUENCE**

It is the belief of this school that a child enrolled within the school gets the maximum benefit that a Montessori education has to offer by being enrolled for the entirety of each three-year cycle. For children to discover themselves and maximize their potential, it is essential that their growth and development not be disrupted and fragmented. As children's advocates, Montessorians believe that it is a disservice to children to interrupt the continuity of their growth and development by constantly changing the people and the environments in their lives. It is within the third year of each cycle of our Montessori program that a child is presented with the opportunity of coalescing the divergent areas of the preschool curriculum into an integrated whole, thus preparing him or her with the concepts Maria Montessori believed essential to the growth of a healthy, mature, ordered mind. Within this year the experiences of the previous years are integrated with further related exploration.

Rosa Packard, a former student of Maria Montessori, and a consultant to the American Montessori Society described the importance and the sequence of the three-year cycle in her book **THE HIDDEN HINGE**. She explains the cycle as within the first school year the majority of the presentations of the Montessori materials of that period occur. The second year sees much more meaningful usage of the materials themselves. In the third year the child is able to use what he or she has previously learned to integrate more than one area of the classroom at a time, and to move from the concrete materials into abstractions and more sophisticated conceptualizations. The child is deprived of the benefits of this cycle without completing all three years. In some cases due to age and/or maturity level we recommend a fourth year of that cycle prior to moving on to another experience or the next Montessori level. We will make this recommendation when the cutoff for entrance into the following school system prevents a child from entering directly into the next level or other related maturity and academic issues. For those children who need it, we find that the fourth year spent in a Montessori classroom cycle can yield even greater benefits than those found within the first three years.

### **Kindergarten Enrichment Program**

Our school offers a specialized Kindergarten Enrichment program. The Kindergarten aged child is in a traditional Montessori classroom in the morning, and in the afternoon the Kindergarten students are gathered into one group and given lessons in Junior Great Books, Science, Physical Education and Cultural subjects. We also observe our local public schools age cutoff date of five by October 1 of that current school year. We carefully track and insure that each child leaves at the end of each of our 3 year cycles with all of the skills and knowledge necessary for them to succeed and integrate into which ever school environment they enter into next. A child who has not completed the entire three years for the particular cycle he is in may or may not have acquired the necessary skills for his grade as Montessori does not work in one year increments.

### **Elementary Program**

Montessori education begins in early childhood and continues into the child's elementary and adolescent years. It is an extension of their preschool learning, responding to the changing developmental needs of the child.

Maria Montessori wrote: "The successive levels of education must conform to the successive personalities of the child." The elementary child makes an important developmental change by moving into abstract thought and away from concrete learning. Montessori describes this as the "cosmic" expansion into abstract learning. While

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mathematics, reading and writing remain corner stones and continue to be perfected they now act as a vehicle for a more extensive form of education. A child at this stage of development wants to know everything about everything and according to Maria Montessori an elementary education should cater to this need by speaking to the child's imagination.

“Everything invented by man, physical or mental, is the fruit of someone's imagination. In the study of history and geography we are helpless without imagination, and when we propose to introduce the universe to the child, what but imagination can be of use to us”.....*Maria Montessori*

The purpose of an elementary education is to present the child with the whole image. The curriculum is extensive, covering all subject areas. This not only provides the child with knowledge of the universe but also an understanding of their place within the big picture.

Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom follows the Montessori philosophy in both our preschool and elementary programs. We are committed to providing the child with an academically challenging program, as their developmental needs change.

## Section 2: Morning and Afternoon Procedures

### School hours

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 7:00am-8:25am    | Before Care Program RVM campus                                    |
| 7:30am-8:25 am   | Before Care Program CBM campus                                    |
| 8:30am-12:00pm   | Primary Half Day Program (Stepping Stone Half Day 8:45am-11:30am) |
| 8:30am-3:00pm    | Primary Full Day Program (Stepping Stone Half Day 8:45am-3:00pm)  |
| 8:45am- 11:30am  | Stepping Stones half day program                                  |
| 8:45am-3:00pm    | Stepping Stones full day program                                  |
| 8:30am-3:15pm    | Elementary Programs   |
| Dismissal-6:30pm | After Care Program  |

### Morning Arrival

#### Stepping Stones, Primary and Elementary Students Morning Arrival:

The Primary and Elementary School classrooms will be open to students at 8:25am. The Stepping Stones classroom will be open to students at 8:45am. Students who arrive at school earlier will be accepted into the Before School Program and charged for before care.

If you arrive earlier than 8:25am, please park your car in the parking lot and accompany your child into the building. There you will ensure that the child is turned over to the Before Care staff member and your child's arrival time will be written down, and you will be charged for before school care.

For our 8:25am "Drop Off", stay in your car with your child and take your place in the line forming at the front of the building. A staff member will be at this door to meet your car. Have your child(ren)'s seatbelt removed and all their possessions within their grasp. The staff will open the car door on the side closest to the building and assist your child in exiting from the car. Your child will then be seen safely into the building. At the Bridgewater location, please proceed around the back of the building to exit onto Finderne Ave. If you prefer, you may park your car and accompany your child walking to class.

If you arrive later than 8:45am, please park your car in the lot and accompany your child to the main office. There you will sign in your child and be met by a staff member who will bring your child to class. We do not permit you to accompany your late child to class. We highly encourage you to make every effort to be on time for your child's maximum benefit.

If you need to speak with a teacher or get out of your car for any reason, please park in a designated space. For safety reasons, always keep your children by your side. Never allow them to run ahead, especially in the parking lot.

### Dismissal

Unless we receive specific permission from you to do otherwise, we will only release your child to the people that you have specifically indicated on the release form that every family completes annually.

We must receive a note, or in an emergency, a phone call from you in order to release your child to someone not on your list. This rule also applies to students going home with friends. We will require photo identification of anyone whom you've given permission to pick up your child if he or she is not familiar to our staff. Please make sure all of your car-pool drivers are on your release list.

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Half Day dismissal is at 11:30am for Stepping Stones Students and 12:00pm for Primary students. Please make every effort to be prompt at dismissal. If a child is the last one to regularly be picked up, it affects their attitude toward school as they can feel singled out or different. When parents are late, it worries the children. If you are late and ASP is available, your child will be signed into care; if there is no ASP, you will be charged a late pick-up fee. Full Day dismissal is at 3:00pm for all Primary and Stepping Stones students and 3:15pm for all Elementary students. Parents who have not picked up their children within 10 minutes of dismissal time will pick them up from our After School Program. In such cases, the parents will be charged a fee for this after-school care. At this time the school cannot be responsible for students, unless they are enrolled in the After School Program or are participating in one of the Extra-curricular activities.

Picking up your child early: There may be an occasion when you will need to take your child out of school early for a doctor's appointment or other similar obligations. We ask that this be done as little as possible. To ensure that your child will be ready when you get here, please send a note to the teachers that will let them know the time that you will be picking up your child. Upon your arrival, the office will send a staff member to get your child for the early dismissal.

### **Before/After School Program (ASP)**

Our Before/After School Program is available to all of our students between 7:00am-6:30pm apart from their scheduled academic day. You may use this program on an Hourly basis or on a Flat Rate program. If you use it on an Hourly basis, you will be charged an hourly rate of \$9.00. After the first 10 minutes of each hour, you will be billed for the full hour. Billing is done monthly and is due upon receipt. Parents must sign out their child in the ASP attendance book, noting the time. If you neglect to sign your child out, you may be charged until 6:30p.m, regardless of the time of your departure.

Please note that for pickup after 6:30pm, you will be charged for an additional hour plus a late fee of \$25 per occurrence per child. If you pickup late more than 3 times, you may not be able to use the program in the future.

### **Release of Children**

Each child may be released only to the child's custodial parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the custodial parents(s), to take the child from our school and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the custodial parent(s) cannot be reached. In the event a parent fails to pick up a child by our regular closing time, we are required by the Division of Youth and Family Services to institute the following procedures:

1. The child is supervised at all times
2. Staff members attempt to contact the parent or persons authorized by the parent.
3. An hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his/her parents or authorized persons have failed and we cannot continue to supervise the child at the center, the staff member shall call the Division's 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-792-8610) to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parents or persons authorized are able to pick up the child.

If a parent or person authorized by the parent appears to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, the following procedures are mandated by the Division of Youth and Family Services:

1. The child may not be released to such an impaired individual;
2. Staff members attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternate person authorized by the parent.
3. If we are unable to make alternative arrangements, we shall call the Division's 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline to seek assistance in caring for the child.

## **Custodial Parent**

All custodial parent arrangements must be documented in the child's records. We require a copy of the custody papers. We also require written authorization from the custodial parent to allow visits by or releases to the non-custodial parent or a copy of the court order denying access. However, as a school that believes in partnership, we will not accept any child whose parents have not been able to work out their beliefs and roles regarding their child's education in a manner which we can cooperate with. This school will never allow itself to be a pawn in a custody battle for the child. We will not hold separate conferences, mailings, billings, notifications. There is no way for us to teach a child our core beliefs about universal values if their parents cannot demonstrate them at home and who cannot partner with each other in the raising and educating of their child. The school will, at its discretion, dismiss or not accept a family into enrollment within the school who has not worked out these issues.

An exception may be requested by a court order prior to the child's entering school by either or both parents; the request would require full consideration of the legal ramifications and other relevant matters, to the effect that dual communication is not required, desired, or to be pursued. If granted, this exception (documented by a signed court order) would be noted in the child's permanent file and honored as indicated.

- Invitations to school functions are open to both parents.
- When family conferences are scheduled, we need to avoid separate conferences for each parent. It is terribly important to communicate the same thing to both parents at the same time. If either parent is uncomfortable with scheduling joint conferences, he or she should contact the office to discuss the situation.
- Both parents are equally welcomed at all school events.
- Free and open communication among all parties is encouraged so that everyone is fully informed.

## **Attendance**

All Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom students, even our youngest are expected to attend school on a daily basis, arriving by the start of the school day.

Consistent attendance and prompt arrival are still essential. Students in the Primary and Elementary programs are expected to be in class at 8:30 a.m. and to be present in class for the full school day (or for the full morning session in the case of younger students enrolled for the half-day option) and at other required school activities. Students in the Stepping Stones program are expected to be in class by 9:00am on their scheduled days.

Late arrival is disruptive and inconsiderate to the rest of the class, and nothing can be more disruptive to a child's education than irregular attendance. We depend on your family's full support in this area. If we find that your child is arriving late often, we will need to work out a solution.

Every once in a while we all love to take a little vacation from school. While we are fairly understanding and supportive, it is still important that you keep your child's absences from school to a minimum. If your child's absences are excessive, we cannot do our job. Your child may be at risk of not being exposed to important concepts and may then find it difficult to progress at an appropriate pace. We expect a child to be absent no more than a total of 10 days per school year and still be able to be successful.

Although our program is individualized, it still depends upon consistency and continuous progress. Every time a child misses school for whatever reason there is a period of readjustment as she tries to get back into the routine of

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her work. The longer the absence, or when a child consistently misses a day or two of school regularly, the more detrimental it becomes to his educational development.

### **Specials**

Specials are offered to Primary and Elementary students and include a range of courses and activities in Fine Arts, Music, Drama, Spanish, Physical Education, Sports, and Technology. Parents are invited to share their talents and interests with the children by leading or assisting with Specials during the school year. Children enrolled in the Stepping Stones program are offered Music and Spanish on certain designated days.

After School Enrichment classes are held during the hours of our afterschool program. These enrichment courses may include such activities as art, dance, karate and sports. A schedule of offerings is posted on our website.

### **Unexpected Closings**

School will be closed on occasion for weather uncertainties or other unforeseen circumstances making travel hazardous or other unsafe conditions. You will be notified of these closings as soon as the decision to close is reached. RVM/The Cherry Blossom uses a calling system to notify parents of emergency closings. We will utilize your designated contact numbers of preference. Notification of emergency closings will also be recorded on the school answering machines. In the event of uncertain weather beginning after the official opening of school, we will use this same manner, since we sometimes feel it advisable to close school early. We urge you to use your own discretion regarding driving conditions when school remains open. Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom makes this decision independently of the Public School systems. Early morning closings will be announced about 6:00 am.

## **Section 3: Everyday Life at Raritan Valley/The Cherry Blossom**

### **Starting School**

Many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another in an unfamiliar situation. A few tears may even be expected. If this is your child's first year at Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom, we encourage you to visit our campus before school to allow him or her to become familiar with the new setting. Walk the grounds. Be reassuring as you talk with your child about his or her new school. New parents and students will have an orientation before school starts when children can visit the classroom and meet their new teachers.

On the first day of school, please do not linger too long during drop off in the class or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about the separation. It is very important to reassure him about where you will be during the day, and by what time you will pick him up in the afternoon. Some children may be sad for a little while during the first two weeks, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. The teachers are wonderful in helping children through these situations.

### **Required School Dress**

#### **Stepping Stones & Primary Students**

- > Stepping Stones and Primary students are not required to wear school uniforms. They can purchase school embroidered clothing or other spirit wear from Lands' End if they wish.
- > Students should dress in clothing that they can put on and fasten for themselves: elastic waistbands, Velcro sneakers, etc. In addition, children should not wear clothing to school that should not get soiled. The children do go outside daily in addition to painting, using glue and other art related activities. Although they are required to wear smocks, it is quite possible that your child may get some of these materials on their clothing.
- > **Please label all students' clothing with their name.**
- > Please do not allow your child to come in wearing:
  - Clothing with holes or tears
  - Pocket chains
  - Oversized pants or shorts
  - Clothing that confines them from participating in all activities, or could be destroyed by participating.
- > Please do not allow your child to come to school wearing:
  - Cowboy boots
  - Shoes with cleats
  - Platform shoes or high heels
  - Flip Flops or open-toed sandals

#### **Elementary Students**

- > Raritan Valley Montessori/ The Cherry Blossom have adopted a School Uniform and Dress Code for Elementary daily wear and an athletic outfit for Elementary Physical Education.
  1. Please refer to the school's Uniform and Dress Code description for approved colors/styles.
  2. The school polo shirts are to be worn on all field trips and on regular school days. Clothing monogrammed with the school logo may be purchased from the Land's End school uniform catalogue. Logo patches are for sale in the front office.
  3. Physical Education is held two to three times a week.
  4. Dress should be neat and clean. The uniform should be free of stains and holes/tears.

## **Playground/Outdoors**

Please be aware that our students go outside on a daily basis. Please make sure that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. We will not go outside when the temperature is lower than 30 degrees and/or raining. We believe that the fresh air, exercise and a change of environment are essential for their growth. Unless we have a doctor's note to the contrary, we will be taking your child outside. If you feel that your child is too sick to go outside, he is probably too ill to be at school. Please keep your child at home.

## **What students need at school:**

- > Stepping Stones and Primary students
  - An extra set of clothing, including underwear and socks, are to be kept at school during the year, held in a Ziploc bag labeled with your child's name
  - A nap bag kit for full day children under the age of 5 must be purchased from the school.
  - An insulated plastic lunch box with a thermos (for hot lunches when appropriate) that the child can open, a plastic cup, and utensils that can be sent home nightly. Include a reusable freezer block to keep perishables fresh.
  
- > Elementary students work with a variety of school supplies which parents will need to purchase before school. A detailed list will be posted on our website

**Personal Belongings, Toys, and Money – These items should not be brought to school. They are often lost, fought over or broken. Please check pockets for unfamiliar objects when your child returns home; these are usually part of our school materials and are often very costly to replace.**

## **Textbooks, Phonetic Readers, Library Books, Ipads**

At times, our Montessori curriculum utilizes library and online research, rather than the traditional dependence on textbooks as the primary focus of learning. Much of our students work in school involves the use of hands-on materials that remain in the classroom or readings in a wide range of reference or source books from the school and public libraries. Some subjects do involve the use of texts that will remain with the children throughout the year.

Naturally, it is essential that the children respect and take care of all books, materials and electronic devices. Students are responsible for lost or damaged texts, phonetic readers, library books, Ipads or other school materials. Students' families are also responsible for the cost of repair or replacement of materials that have been misused resulting in their damage or loss.

## **Lunch**

If your child is staying for lunch at school, you may either send in a lunch box from home or order a meal through our Hot Lunch Program. Raritan Valley Montessori & Cherry Blossom encourage healthy eating habits. Please pack a well-balanced, nutritional meal, excluding candy, soda, sugary cakes, yogurt with sprinkles, and other highly sugared foods. Lunch is a very important part of not only your child's school day. We count on you to work with us to teach her about health and nutrition. With younger children, it is a good idea to prepare food in small, easy-to-handle servings, such as cutting sandwiches into quarters, slicing up fresh fruit, and preparing bite sized slices of cheese.

Please do not send any glass bottles. Make sure the children's names are clearly marked on their lunch boxes. Please provide a clearly labeled lunch-box when you are not ordering hot lunch. Please also assure this lunch box goes home every night, as we do not want a child eating food that has been left over from the night before.

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We obtain our hot lunches from a local restaurant. Lunch orders are placed on a monthly basis. Typically, on the 11th of every month a form will be available online to fill out for hot lunches and milk for the upcoming month. You will be able to submit the form electronically up until the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month. We will be placing our lunch and milk orders based on the information provided by the returned lunch forms. If your child will not be attending school on a date that you have already ordered lunch for, please call the school, no later than 8:45am of that date and cancel his/her lunch, even if it is a class wide field trip. If you do not call, we will not cancel your child's lunch. If no call is received, or is received after 8:45am, no credit will be forthcoming, as we have already ordered and paid for that lunch. Whole milk or low fat chocolate milk may be ordered on a daily basis for a month at a time. No credits can be given for milk when your child is not present. If your child comes to school without lunch, we will prepare a lunch for them out of whatever products we have on hand. You will be charged a hot lunch fee for this.

### **Bathroom Use**

Please be aware that children in our Primary and Elementary programs are expected to be fully and completely toilet trained. This means no pull-ups will be allowed. Children must have complete independence with clothing and wiping themselves in the bathroom. In order for a child to be considered for these programs, they must be fully toilet trained.

### **Snacks & Food Allergies**

Elementary students will bring their own "brain food" snacks. Stepping Stone and Primary students will be provided a snack in the morning and afternoon sessions. If your child has special dietary requirements, we request that you send in their snack with them daily. We attempt to work with you as closely as possible to fulfill the child's special requirements. It is your responsibility to explain to your child that he is not allowed to eat anything except what you send. You will find that your child is usually very understanding and responsive in this situation. Please do remember that this is a snack and is not intended to replace a main meal. No child is ever forced or coerced into eating either their lunch or snack. Parents are welcome to sign up for a special snack from their home. This parent snack represents a special shared time between you, your child and the school. Children are thrilled to have their class eat a snack that was made by "Mommy and Me!" We also have many food preparation lessons that include fruit, veggies, cheese, etc.

**Please be sure to notify the teachers and the office if your child should avoid certain foods. We are a "nut sensitive" school. While we do not prohibit nuts from being on site, all considerations will be given to protect students with nut allergies (or any other food allergy). Educators will work with families and our administration to develop personalized safety plans for each student with food allergies.**

### **Naptime**

All full day Stepping Stone students and Primary children not in the Kindergarten Enrichment Program, are required to lie down after lunch. Families are required to purchase a naptime package from the school and use it each year. The naptime package includes a mat, a pillow, a blanket, and a sheet all enclosed in a matching tote bag with the child's name written on it. These will go home every Friday for laundering, and be returned on Monday. If a child falls asleep during this period, they will continue to sleep supervised by an adult. If a child requires a special article of comfort for his nap such as a lovey, we encourage you to send it to school with him where we will keep it solely for naptime.

## **Field Trips**

Our Kindergarten and Elementary classes take trips to various places of interest in coordination with their studies or with special community events during the school year. For any child to go on a field trip, we must have a signed permission slip for that particular field trip from the parent. We cannot accept a verbal permission. We need volunteers for each field trip to drive and help supervise the children. In order to be a driver on a field trip, you must have a "Parent Volunteer Driver Agreement" on file with the main office. A small number of children are assigned to each adult to aid in ease of supervision. We welcome your support and presence on our field trips, as they are impossible without you, the parent. Field trips may involve a fee.

### **Volunteer Field Trip Drivers / Chaperones**

- Volunteer field trip drivers must have a Parent Volunteer Driver Agreement on file with the main office, a valid driver's license and automobile insurance; the school's insurance does cover field trip volunteer drivers and vehicles in addition to their individual insurance.
- If you volunteer to drive, please plan to stay with the group at all times during the field trip unless the teachers confirm that you are not needed to chaperone as well.
- We must insist that you do not bring any younger siblings along when you drive on a field trip.
- In the event that you will be coming along to chaperone but not drive, please ride in the car to which you are assigned. We do not allow students to switch cars to sit with friends and ask you to model the rule.
- The teachers usually have a handout with further specific suggestions for making the field trip a success.

## **Birthdays**

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends. In the Primary Program, we have a special birthday ceremony in which we tell the class the story of the birthday child's life. Please send in a photograph of your child at each year of his life. It is especially nice to send in a special snack in honor of your child's birthday. Small muffins, oatmeal cookies, etc. work well, but please keep sugar to a minimum, keeping in mind that it is usually celebrated during the morning hours. It is also a tradition to present the classroom with a small gift in honor of your child's birthday. Some suggestions are a Montessori material, or a book donated to the library in the child's name.

## **Celebrations**

Celebrations are emphasized by all classes during the course of the year; however, each class adds its own special touch on each celebration. Celebrations are meant to provide a social, cultural or historical experience and not a religious one; the celebration will not include worship such as bowing or genuflecting. The following list is not meant to be exhaustive or an exact description of all of our celebrations. Some of the annual traditions we celebrate will include:

- Fall Picnic: Held shortly after school reopens; it gives all of our families a chance to get together to meet each other, and traditional outdoor games and events.
- Cultural festivals: culminating our on-going international studies units, helps the children pull together everything they have learned.
- Thanksgiving: A celebration for reflection, giving and community service. Classes will prepare for a Thanksgiving feast to enjoy with one another. The story of the first Thanksgiving will be retold and often dramatized.
- Hibernation Day: We prepare for the Winter solstice. We all come to school in our pajamas, study hibernating animals and prepare to hibernate for our winter vacation.
- Christmas, Hanukah & Kwanzaa: The stories of these three holidays are retold, with rich cultural and artistic projects and activities.
- International Children's Day: This is an international celebration for Kindergarten and Elementary that is held in December. Students enjoy food from many nations, and the children may participate in crafts or games.
- Family Day: Parents, Grandparents and special friends are invited to share a morning with students in the classroom.
- Acknowledge Your Friend Day (Valentine's Day): The children share presentations expressing themes of love, family and friends.
- One Hundredth Day of School: Children celebrate the fact that they have been in school for 100 days in fun and creative ways to explore the number 100.
- President's Day: We celebrate a bit of American history through the lives of past presidents, especially George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.
- Passover and Easter: The stories of these two holidays are retold, with rich cultural and artistic projects and activities. Classes may hold a children's Seder to celebrate freedom, peace and the fellowship of all humanity.
- People We Love Week: Each child acknowledges two special people in their lives during this week.
- End of Year Plays and Commencements: Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom celebrates the graduation of Kindergarten and the Elementary Rite of Passage. This is an occasion for students to say good-bye with words and music, as well as a special time for family gatherings to celebrate the passage of a child from one phase of his life to another.

## Section 4: Student Health

### When your child is ill

We know that you want your child protected from illness as much as possible and so we ask your cooperation in helping us to protect all children and staff from undue exposures. All children who have an illness should be kept at home. Determination of your child's health will be based upon the following standards:

*Temperature above 100.4 degrees (normal is 96.6-98 degrees) - taken by the axillary (armpit) method*

*Conjunctivitis (pink eye)*

*Skin rash other than a localized diaper rash*

*Vomiting*

*Diarrhea*

*Any evidence of lice infestation or nits*

*Continuous nasal discharge that is unclear in color*

*Sore Throat*

*Persistent cough*

*Earache*

*Anytime that the child is not feeling well enough to tolerate a normal school day, whether it be due to illness, lack of sleep, or a disruption in the usual family routine*

**If your child exhibits any of these symptoms, please do not return him to school within a 24 hour period without consulting your pediatrician.** In addition, please notify the school if your child has any communicable disease, such as chicken pox, coxsackie, impetigo or head lice, so that we may notify the other parents to be aware if similar symptoms should develop in their child. We also ask that you notify us of any extended absence for any reason.

### **The Sunshine Suite at RWJ Hospital (Somerville)**

The Sunshine Suite at RWJ Hospital (Somerville) is a medically supervised daycare program for sick children. The Sunshine Suite provides a valuable option to working parents. It is open to pre-registered children 6 months-14 years of age weekdays 6:30am-6:30pm. For more information call 908-685-2988.

### **Medication**

Under usual circumstances, we will not administer prescriptions, over-the-counter medication or herbal/homeopathic remedies to the children. **Children are not allowed to bring any medicine/remedies to school.** Most medications can be put on a schedule by your pediatrician that does not involve school hours. Children on life-saving medications that must be given during school hours need to consult with the office for permission to have our staff administer the medication. Medications will only be accepted in its original bottle from the pharmacy with the doctor's dispensing instructions clearly marked on it.

### **Physical Examinations and Immunizations**

Documentation of physical examination and record of immunization must be provided to the school prior to school entrance. Each child is required to have a physical each year. By order of the Board of Health, we are not allowed to retain a child within the school system for whom we do not have these records on file.

## **Emergency Care**

First aid kits are located throughout the school. If an emergency occurs, our first efforts are to assess the extent of the emergency in the child, and to deal with it to the extent of our knowledge. While these actions are taking place, if the situation warrants, we will call 911 immediately. Please enable us to do our job by assuring your phone numbers are accurate.

Whenever your child is ill and won't be coming to school, please call the office between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m. to let us know that she will be absent. Upon your child's return, you notify the office in writing detailing the illness, in order for your child to re-enter the classroom.

## **Safety Policy**

Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom stresses safety through very carefully thought-out ground rules established for each environment. We demonstrate the safe use of all equipment, to impart a sense of safety to each child and to carefully supervise each environment.

1. **NO CHILD IS EVER LEFT ALONE OR UNSUPERVISED.**
2. Children arriving must be placed in the care of a Staff member before the parent/guardian departs.
3. Children are never to leave any designated environment without appropriate adult supervision.
4. Children are always accompanied to and from the playground.
5. No child is released to anyone except the authorized parent/guardian or his or her designee.
6. No running is allowed anywhere in the school or on its grounds, except in the outdoor playground area itself.
7. For safe evacuation, fire drills are conducted monthly and recorded. Fire Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom and activity area.
9. No child is ever allowed out of an outside door without adult accompaniment.
10. Children on field trips travel in small groups with an adult. Such trips are designed for the safety of the age of our children. At least one staff person will accompany the parents and children on a field trip.
11. We highly recommend the use of school insignia apparel while on a field trip.
12. **We request that you do not provide any of our school door codes to your children.** These codes are meant to be used by adults only and not "repeated" aloud outside of the entrances.
13. Your child should not be told that you are waiting right outside for him. This encourages him to try to escape from the classroom to go look for you.

***We need your help to enforce these rules. Please go over these rules with your child. Child safety is no accident.***

## **Section 5: Parents and the School**

### **An Intentional Community Built on Trust, Friendship and Mutual Respect**

In a time when it is often difficult to establish positive feelings of continuity, unification and stability in our own neighborhoods, Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom has succeeded in re-creating that positive sense of identity, mutual caring and concern among its students, teachers, and parents that truly define Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom as a community.

### **Volunteering the Gift of Time and Talent**

Parents play a crucial role at Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom. This is a community of parents and educators. Ideas and input help to shape the school. Our school is open and responsive to positive suggestions.

Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom strongly encourages families to feel at home and to participate in the broader life of the school through social and educational activities offered by various organizations of the school. Although many parents spend considerable amounts of time as volunteers at Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom, there is no expectation for a set time commitment.

There are some things that even money can't buy, and one of the most valuable contributions that families make to Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom is the gift of their time and expertise. Parents, grandparents, and friends of the school are often found helping out with clerical tasks, assisting in the classrooms, serving as field trip drivers, offering a Special course, planning the next special event, coaching, or serving on school committees.

Parents, guardians and grandparents who give of their time and talent often have special memories of experiences and friendships that endure well beyond their children's graduation.

A few ways in which you can help at Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom:

- Support our fund raising efforts for our Power of 100 Annual Fund and Spring Art Auction
- Volunteer in the library
- Help the teachers organize field trips or create classroom materials
- Help organize special community events
- Volunteer your time in the classroom
- Teach a Specials Course in the afternoon

### **Class Meetings and Community Events**

Class meetings allow for us to take care of some of your needs as parents. They are not a conferencing time. These are group meetings. Any new topic that is raised during a meeting that would properly require time to prepare for will be tabled and scheduled for the next meeting. The focus of Community events is to give us the opportunity to interact as a community. These are events for the whole family to share and participate in. It is a time to socialize with old friends and to make new ones.

Because the purpose of these meetings is to facilitate communication, all views will be heard and discussed. It is perfectly normal for values and perspectives to vary within the group. As members of a school community that teaches children kindness and respect, it is very important for us as parents and teachers to model a high level of consideration and respect for each other. No one can be allowed to dominate a meeting; it is neither appropriate nor fair to the larger group. Everyone present will be encouraged to participate and contribute; however, silence is a legitimate part of any meeting.

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Finally, we all strive to remember that we are on the same side. We share many common values and interests that brought us together at Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom. We need never see ourselves as adversaries, even if we should disagree on a given issue. Concerns and issues that need to be explored and addressed are normal in any institution. There is no such thing as a perfect school, and there will always be a need for new ideas and on-going improvements.

### **Committees**

Committees often work closely with the schools administrative team and professional staff to plan and coordinate specific programs and special events. Committee membership should reflect the particular blend of skills, expertise, perspectives, energy, and enthusiasm best suited to the goals of each committee. Committee Chairmen are appointed and hold office at the discretion of the Head of the School.

### **Communication between home and school**

During the school year, we will post, email, call and send home all sorts of reminders, changes, letters, notes, newsletters, and announcements. Please check your family mail slot in the hallway and your email daily for the latest information & announcements. Changes in the school calendar, along with upcoming events, will always be detailed in the memos and on our websites.

### **Relationships with Employees of this School**

Parents are requested to keep all staff relationships on a professional level. We understand and appreciate how much faith and trust you place in us. Employees are forbidden to accept gifts from parents in return for special treatment of a student. Employees are also forbidden to accept outside employment from you which include such services as tutoring or babysitting. Employees are subject to disciplinary action or up to and including termination if they engage in such activities. Please do not place an employee in the uncomfortable and possibly awkward position of rejecting your request for such services or favors. These behaviors do not further the professional partnerships that we are committed to and this intentional community that we hold so important to furthering our vision and mission in this world.

A teacher is only a teacher in a classroom. That same person is a normal human being outside of the school environment.

### **Electronic Media Representation**

We must respectfully request that parents do not link to our website without our knowledge. Please inform us in writing as to your request to use our site as a link on your page. Our public image and reputation is incredibly important to us, and we request that you inform us as to how you are using our name and our website. If we do allow you to use our name and our website, please be tasteful and appropriate about your reference to us. **To respect the privacy of every child, please do not post any student names, photos or videos taken without other individual parents' consent. Graduation videos are strictly prohibited to be shown publicly on the internet through social media, such as YouTube.**

#### **Facebook:**

Both schools have official Facebook pages. Please be aware that any mention of the school in any type of group, e.g., alumni, does not have any official sanction from us and we have no idea or control of the content therein. Our staff is not permitted to "friend" a parent or any current student. The staff may "friend" a past student if the student is over 18 years of age. This allows us to protect our professionalism.

#### **Email:**

We request that the majority of your communication with our teachers be through their school email address. This allows teachers to give your comments the attention they deserve without taking away attention from the children. Staff will usually respond to your email within 24 to 48 business hours of receipt. If you require a more immediate response, feel free to use any other of the usual communication methods.

**Observing the classes at work**

Parents are invited and even urged to observe the children at work. Contact the office to let them know when you would like to visit. Unless arrangements have been made in advance, the teachers will not have time to speak with you. You will want to see the class at its normal routine and not responding to the novelty of your presence; therefore, when you visit, please sit in the designated visitor's chair in the classroom. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation of your child and his or her classmates at work.

During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially the younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and new environment. For this reason, we ask parents to avoid class observations during this period. All visitors and volunteers need to sign in to the school office upon their arrival.

## **Section 6: Academic Policies**

### **Homework**

Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom begins to assign limited homework in Kindergarten; not page after page of busywork; but meaningful, interesting assignments that expand on the topics that the children are pursuing in class and which invite parents and children to work together.

Homework doesn't need to be boring! We try to challenge children to think, explore and pursue tangible projects that give them a sense of satisfaction. Homework is intended to afford students the opportunity to practice and reinforce skills introduced in the classroom. Moreover, there is a certain degree of self-discipline that can be developed within the growing child through the process of completing assignments independently.

When possible, the teachers build in opportunities for children to choose among several alternative assignments. Sometimes teachers will prepare individually negotiated assignments with each student.

Homework should never become a battleground between adult and child. One of our goals as parents and teachers should be to help the children learn how to get organized, budget time, and follow through until the work is completed. Ideally, home challenges will give parents and children a pleasant opportunity to work together on projects that give both parent and child a sense of accomplishment. They are intended to reinforce and extend the curriculum.

Here are just a few examples of assignments that students and families have found to be both interesting and challenging:

- Perform an act of charity or extraordinary kindness.
- Plan and prepare dinner for your family with little or no help from your folks.
- How many square feet of carpet would it take to cover your entire house? Convert this number into square yards. Call two carpet dealers. What kinds of carpet do they offer and what would it cost to carpet your house?
- Develop a pen pal in a Montessori school across the USA or in another country.
- Prepare a timeline of the Presidents of the United States, along with picture cards, nametags and fact cards. Study until you can complete the timeline on your own.

### **Student Work Sent Home**

At the end of each week, we will send home any school work that the child wants to bring home. Some of the work that may come home will include drawings, art projects, math problems, stories, metal inset work, and the booklets that the children tend to create as they begin to write.

Although young children tend to be much more interested in the process of work than in tangible products, even four and five year-olds tend to produce enough to create an impressive collection as the months go by.

### **Family Conferences**

It is very important for teachers and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress. We ask, however, that you understand that the teacher's responsibility during school is to the students. Morning arrival in particular is a very sensitive period when the teachers are greeting each student and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum. If you must speak with a teacher in the morning, please arrange to meet before school begins. Otherwise you can correspond via a note, email, or on our voice mail system and the teacher will get back to you.

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Three family conferences will be scheduled over the year: Fall, Winter and Spring. Additional conferences will be scheduled upon request.

**Elementary Individual Learning Plans** set forth specific individualized educational goals for each child that teachers and elementary students mutually agree to consciously work toward during the next few months ahead. The student's progress toward fulfilling his or her Individual Learning Plan will be a primary focus of subsequent conferences, progress reports and student self-evaluations.

### **Evaluation of student progress**

Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom's curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced and the teachers maintain careful records of each student's academic progress.

Because Montessori schools do not compare students against an arbitrary standard or the performance of their classmates, we do not use familiar letter grades. We send home reports twice a year for Kindergarten and three times a year for Elementary parents to review the children's development, academics and emotional growth.

### **Standardized Tests**

Annually, our Elementary students sit for a full battery of standardized testing. Although the first year students are given the test to introduce them to this type of testing process, we do not begin scoring the tests until the second grade. We do not place a great deal of emphasis on these tests as a reliable measure of an individual student's progress. The tests are notoriously inaccurate, misleading and stressful for children. After working with the same children for three years and carefully observing their work, our teachers come to know far more about their students' progress than can be revealed on a paper and pencil test.

In our culture, test-taking skills are another practical life lesson that children need to master sooner or later. We summarize the students' scores and report the scores to them and their parents. The teachers will be happy to go over your child's individual scores.

Students will also take tests and quizzes on the concepts and skills that they have been studying. We use them as a feedback loop; at times indicating that a student needs a new lesson or more practice, rather than as a needless competition between children for grades.

### **Promotion from one level to the next**

Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom has established exit skills for the normal baseline achievement that we expect to see in our students. While students may surpass those standards, they represent a normal index of skills and knowledge that we expect our students to display.

Students will normally be promoted from one grade level to the next at the end of the school year if they have accomplished the exit skills and norms that we have established.

Advancement to the next class level (for example from the primary to the lower elementary level) is based on an evaluation of the child's total academic, social, emotional, and physical/motor development. Because the classes can individually tailor the child's academic program to a large degree, regardless of which group he or she is placed in, the most important criteria for advancement to an older group is often the student's social adjustment, independence, work habits, and maturity. We always invite parents to work with us in reaching these decisions, and focus on what will be in the child's best interests.

### **Transcripts and Letters of Recommendation to other Schools**

By written request, the parent/guardian or, upon attaining the age of majority, the student may ask that a photocopy of the student's file, along with completed recommendation forms, be issued to another school. Copies sent directly are marked "Official Transcript" and are noted in the file. Many of our students seek and gain admittance to some of the finest schools in the area. These schools often require both the student's transcripts as well as letters of recommendation from the child's teachers. In order for us to fulfill our obligations in a professional manner, we need a written request from the accepting school, as well as signed release forms, specifying what material the parents would like released. A stamped self-addressed envelope directly to the accepting school needs to accompany this request. These documents are not released directly to parents, or they are stamped "COPY", and not considered an official version by us.

**Report cards, diplomas, transcripts and letters of recommendation will not be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account. They will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.**

### **Privacy of Student Files**

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access. Each student file contains a log (name, date, and purpose) of those persons or agencies that have had access to the student's file.

Parents or guardians may have access to the child's file by written request to the office at least 24 hours in advance. The file must be viewed in the presence of a Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom staff member, and if they disagree with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the permanent file with their comments.

Officials of the State or County Health Department and the State Department of Education may have the right to review student files without the parents' or guardians' permission. However, with a written court order, other government officials may inspect the contents of a student's file without the Permission of the student parent/guardian. The school will inform the student and his family in writing that such an inspection has been requested or made.

A copy of the student's file may be sent to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician, if requested in writing by the parent(s), guardian(s), or student if he/she has attained the age of majority, with notation of pertinent papers to be sent.

## Section 7: Ground Rules

### Fundamental Ground Rules

As a school founded on the Montessori ideals, we believe that every person deserves respect. Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom expects all members of our community to demonstrate kindness, courtesy and respect toward the school and fellow students, parents, teachers, and staff.

The goal of all Montessori education is to establish safe, warm, and caring environments within which we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle situations, to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility and courtesy; to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful studies as well as the growth and development of each and every member of our community.

When anyone at Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom finds it difficult to follow the school's expectations about interpersonal conduct, we will quickly bring the student, family, and staff together to work toward a solution.

We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect and trust. Our disciplinary method is Redirecting Children's Behavior authored by Kathryn Kvals. Neither corporal punishment, nor physical or emotional intimidation, is allowed at Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of their actions. For example, if something is broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the student whose actions led to the damage.

Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules or who on even one occasion endangers the health and safety of others, may be suspended for a period of time or asked to leave the school.

We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent in order to help students maintain the school's values and character. All students are expected to adhere and respect them to protect one another.

Our ground rules are essentially the same at every level of the school, although the language and emphasis changes somewhat for the older student. Please review these rules with your child:

- Be kind and gentle to one another.
- Everyone has a right to privacy and concentration. Please don't disturb anyone who is trying to concentrate on his or her work.
- Everyone has a right to his or her personal belongings. Please do not touch anything that is not yours without the owner's permission. If you accidentally lose or break something, please replace it without a fuss.
- Everyone here, both children and adults has the right to feel safe and secure. Please don't express anger or upset feelings in a way that insults or threatens someone else.
- Everyone here has the right to be physically safe. Please don't do anything that might hurt or endanger anyone.
- At Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom, no one is allowed to fight, push, trip, or use any other aggressive behavior.
- Use the playground equipment as intended. For example, do not try to walk up the slides.

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- Stop chasing or playing scary games when asked. Violent games are prohibited.
- Please don't tackle or trip one another in any games.
- Do not throw mulch.
- Do not leave your teacher's supervision without permission.
- Do not enter the parking lot or ever leave campus without an adult.
- Please do not roughhouse or play carelessly.
- Keep sticks and stones on the ground. Don't pick them up and never throw them.
- Please put all balls, ropes and other outdoor equipment away when you are finished playing with them.

Parents/guardian's must carefully monitor children when playing on the school grounds after school. They must follow all of the rules above.

### **Bullying**

Bullying can occur outside of the physical school grounds yet these actions still impact the safety of our students as if they have occurred on school grounds. Any bullying behavior demonstrated at school or outside of school that impacts our school community will be addressed by the school. Both boys and girls can be bullies and bullying can be directed at adults as well as students. Examples of bullying outside the school can be (but are not limited to) the following:

- Electronic communications that include physical threats and/or malicious gossip and slander.
- "Hit lists" via e-mail or other methods of communication naming specific students and/or teachers.
- Changing other people's e-mail personal profiles.
- Hazing or any ritual that degrades, humiliates, threatens, or physically hurts another person as a pretext for joining an athletic team or other formal or informal group.

As a school we take seriously any report of bullying. The school will notify parents whose children have been identified as bullies. Bullying will be responded to through a continuum of consequences and interventions up to and including suspension and/or social probation (such as suspension from extracurricular activities or school functions) depending on the frequency and severity of the behavior. Any student who is suspended will not be permitted to return to school without a re-entry meeting with an administrator. Some situations, including less severe first offenses, may be handled by the school through student conferences, mediation or other interventions without a phone call home.

While we recognize that disagreements/conflicts between students occur and can resemble "bullying" behavior as defined here in our policy, the school makes a distinction between the two: Most students will experience some degree of age-appropriate peer conflict during their school years. We consider whether the issues of aggression, power, domination, humiliation and control play a role in the situation in question. The school will investigate the situation thoroughly, using their understanding of developmental level, age and relationship between the students to determine whether a behavior fits the characteristics of bullying.

Given the heightened awareness in the popular press about bullying, we wish to clarify our stance regarding such misbehavior with the following addition to our student conduct policy.

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Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is *repeated over time*, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms including:

- Physical bullying – when one engages in physical force against another, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching or restraining another.
- Verbal bullying – when someone uses words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- Nonverbal or relational bullying – when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, gossip or intimidating another by using gestures.
- Cyberbullying – the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person bny way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messaging, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings including blogs. Cyberbullying can involve:
  1. Sending mean, vulgar or threatening messages or images
  2. Posting sensitive, private information about another person
  3. Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad
  4. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group
- Hazing – an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers that person regardless of that person’s willingness to participate.
- Sexualized bullying – when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all students, school employees, school volunteers and school visitors. All members of the school community including students, parents, staff, volunteers and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. Retaliation against individuals who report such alleged violations is expressly prohibited.

The school will accept and review all reports of bullying. The school will consider the ages and maturity of the students involved, the type of behaviors, the frequency and/or pattern of behaviors, the context in which the incident occurred and other relevant circumstances. Consequences may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or reports to law enforcement officials.

**Ground rules for Elementary students:**

- Respect one another: We expect everyone at Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom to treat everyone else in the school community-faculty, staff, students, and parents-with kindness and respect both in words and actions.
- Respect authority: We expect students to comply with teacher's directions. We further expect students to seek appropriate methods of appeal should they ever believe it to be necessary.
- Attendance at school: Students must attend each and every class daily (from beginning to end). They may not skip school, nor skip any class. "Excused" absences will be verified with the family.
- Please arrive at school promptly every day.
- Dress: We expect students to dress appropriately, and in good taste, within the dress code guidelines. On field trips and special events, please wear one of the Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom uniforms.
- Skate Boards and Roller Blades: Skate boards and roller blades are not allowed at school.
- Drugs and alcohol: This is defined to include the use, possession or sale of any controlled substance (drugs) or alcoholic beverage. The possession, or sale of any alcohol or controlled substance, either during the school day or during any school-sponsored trip, party or function, may be immediate grounds for expulsion.
- Violence and Harassment: Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom cannot tolerate any irresponsible and dangerous behavior, acts of violence, threats of violence, emotional or sexual harassment, or verbal abuse directed toward anyone. It is absolutely illegal and forbidden to bring or carry a weapon to school or to use any common object as a weapon.
- Smoking: Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom is a smoke-free environment. Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom will do everything in its power to discourage students from ever starting.
- Respect for the property of others: Any theft, vandalism or damages to property whether deliberate or accidental must be repaired or repaid.
- Care of the environment: The entire school community (teachers, students and administrators) is responsible for helping to maintain the order and cleanliness of the school environment.
- If something is spilled, please clean it up right away.
- Everyone is expected to help keep the school litter free by picking up any trash or belongings that you find strewn around. Do not throw trash on the ground, indoors or out.
- Students are expected to help with the daily clean up in their class areas.

Infractions of these ground rules will result in further disciplinary action.

## **Rules for Safety on Field Trips**

Please be sure that you understand and can support the following basic safety rules. Safety is our prime concern, and we must insist that every student follow certain rules of safe and courteous conduct while being transported to our destination. Remember that all of the normal school rules apply on any field trip.

- Passengers must wear their seat belts at all times.
- Stay in your seat at all times while the vehicle is moving.
- Don't leave your seat until the vehicle has come to a complete stop.
- For everyone's safety, do not shout; engage in horseplay or switch seats during the trip.
- Never stick your hand (or anything else) out of the vehicle window.
- Never throw anything out of the vehicle.
- Do not play with sharp objects, such as pens or pencils, on the vehicle.
- Do not eat or drink in the vehicle.
- Every student is expected to set a good example with language and behavior for the younger children.

## **Fire drills**

The office will conduct random fire drills monthly.

- The alarm will be a special bell, which will ring continuously in the event of a fire or drill.
- While the bell rings continuously, all classes will dismiss into designated areas and remain in their groups.
- The teachers will make certain the room is empty and close the doors.
- The teachers will escort the class outside the building, take role and notify the office of attendance.
- Students and teachers are expected to remain grouped in the designated area until informed that they may return to class.

## **Section 8: Financial Policies**

### **Tuition Policies**

Our school is completely dependent on tuition as its principal source of income. Student accounts must be kept up-to-date. The school will be forced to withhold all services to students whose accounts have fallen behind unless written arrangements have been made for deferred payment. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated. Parents are responsible for prompt payment of all outstanding tuition and fees. Report cards and transcripts will not be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account. They will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.

Tuition payments are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. If you are mailing the payment, we ask that it be mailed so that it is received by the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. If you are dropping payment off in person, please hand it into our front office at either site. If your tuition payment has not been received by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, you will be assessed a \$35 late charge which is due with your tuition payment immediately. If you are unable to make the due date, please communicate with our front office. Any check returned as unpaid for any reason shall incur a \$35 fee. Raritan Valley/Cherry Blossom reserves the right to dismiss your child from school if your payments are continually late.

### **Financial Aid**

Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom provides limited aid to those parents who might need some temporary assistance for no more than one school year. Visit our website and proceed with the instructions on the financial aid program, FAST. *Please note that if you receive financial aid, you may not be late on payments or the aid will be revoked.*

### **Re-enrollment**

Invitations to continue at Raritan Valley Montessori/The Cherry Blossom are made by the administration and faculty, based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents. As always, our goal is to help each child and family find the perfect match between the student, home, and school.

Re-enrollment material will be handed out approximately in February and is due back at the school within two weeks along with the annual registration deposit. If the school has not received a student's re-enrollment materials by the date in the calendar, his space will be made available to new students who have applied for admission to the school. *No student may re-enroll if there is an outstanding balance remaining on her account.*

### **Reimbursement for Domestic Legal Issues**

Parents understand and agree that the school's primary purpose is to provide educational opportunities to the students within its institution. Parents also understand that it is disruptive to the School for a parent to involve the School (or any of its employees) in domestic legal disputes between the parents and that the School often must pay for legal fees and costs associated with such issues. Therefore, parents agree to promptly reimburse the School for all expenditures incurred by the School as a result of parent's domestic legal disputes, including, but not limited to: parental disagreements about student's education or placement; divorce proceedings; custody proceedings; and/or modifications of custody proceedings. Costs incurred may involve reasonable attorney's fees/costs to prepare for and/or attend depositions, trials, or hearings; communication with parent or parent's counsel, guardians ad litem or attorneys ad litem; respond to subpoenas; draft letters or motions; and perform research. Costs include the cost of copying documents, providing records, engaging substitute teachers or temporary employees, computerized research, and travel expense. Parents agree to reimburse the School for such fees/costs within thirty (30) days of School billing the parents for such expenses. Any dispute between the parents regarding which parent may owe

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which portion of the bill should be resolved between the parents so that the bills for reimbursement to the School can be paid on a timely basis. Parent's failure to pay such fees/costs promptly will result in dismissal of the family from the School.

### **Fundraising**

Raritan Valley Montessori Academy is a non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization, holding approval as a 501-C3 corporation from the Federal Government. Voluntary contributions to Raritan Valley Montessori, where no goods or services are received in turn, are tax deductible as defined in the IRS guidelines. The Cherry Blossom is a for profit organization. Despite the superior education and care students receive at Raritan Valley Montessori & Cherry Blossom and the cost to families of that education, tuition alone is insufficient to fund all expenses aimed at such excellence. Additional support, in time and money, is necessary to offer this quality of education. We ask that every family participate in volunteer service and fundraisers for the school. We need on-going support from the entire community for new development and projects throughout the school.