



Parent/Student Handbook

Fall 2015

The child is truly a miraculous being, and this should be felt deeply by the educator.
—Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind

School Location
1611 Peninsula Drive
Arcata, CA 95521

Mailing Address
P. O. Box 6103
Eureka, CA 95502

707.832.4194
www.redwoodcoastmontessori.org

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Welcome to Redwood Coast Montessori!

We are glad you are here! Your child and family have joined a unique charter school program. There are hundreds of public and private elementary Montessori schools in the United States, and even more throughout the world, but Redwood Coast Montessori (RCM) is currently the only public Montessori school in Humboldt County. RCM's program works on a three-year cycle where children ideally enter as kindergarteners or first graders from a successful Montessori pre-K program. For each child to gain the most from our offerings, our expectation is that our families commit to supporting their child in the Montessori learning approach in the classroom and home. What follows is information you will find helpful in supporting your child through a successful school year at RCM.

Mission Statement

The mission of Redwood Coast Montessori is to serve a diverse population of elementary and middle school children (K-8) in the Humboldt County area by providing children with a high quality educational option based on the Montessori method.

Values and Standards of Community Behavior

Redwood Coast Montessori maintains a commitment to a specific vision that emphasizes the needs of the child, the community, and the earth. Although each of our vision statements are interwoven together to form the foundation of our core philosophy, our vision for each child is based on key educational goals.

For the Child

- Create a positive attitude toward school and learning
- Build habits of concentration and organization for lifelong study skills
- Foster an abiding curiosity and a sense of high self-esteem
- Encourage habits of initiative and persistence
- Instill an inner discipline and sense of order
- Develop sensory motor skills to sharpen the ability to discriminate
- Cultivate peaceful interactions, empathy, and compassion
- Honor the child's natural desire to learn, to be helpful, and to contribute
- Nourish the child's spirit, imagination, creativity, and intellect to achieve their highest level of academic achievement
- Enable students to become self-motivated, competent, lifelong learners.

For the Community

- Build a cohesive school community
- Cultivate an understanding of our connectedness to each other
- Reach out to the outside community to provide opportunities for connection.

For the Earth

- Connect with nature and encourage respect for our environment
- Honor our environment and our place in the global community.

General Information

Staff

All of our teachers at Redwood Coast Montessori are Montessori trained and/or hold a credential in education, and receive continuing education and training throughout the year. We also incorporate a variety of special interest teachers from our community in the fields of science, art, music, and physical education.

Bryan Little, Director

bryan@redwoodcoastmontessori.org

Carla Paliaga, Kindergarten Teacher

carla@redwoodmontessori.org

Claudia Culbertson, Kindergarten Assistant

claudia@redwoodmontessori.org

Elizabeth Mackay, Lower Elementary Teacher

elizabeth@redwoodmontessori.org

Layla Richardson, Lower Elementary Assistant

layla@redwoodmontessori.org

Lauren Carmen, Lower Elementary Teacher

lauren@redwoodmontessori.org

Sandi Schloedrop, Lower Elementary Assistant

sandi@redwoodmontessori.org

Michelle Leonard, Upper Elementary Teacher

michelle@redwoodmontessori.org

Dmitria Sokolow, Upper Elementary Teacher

dmitria@redwoodmontessori.org

Justin Legge, Upper Elementary Assistant/After School Care Director

justin@redwoodmontessori.org

Michelle Dobrowolski, Adolescent Science/Math Teacher

michelled@redwoodmontessori.org

Sheree Shapiro, Adolescent Language Arts/Cultural Studies Teacher

sheree@redwoodmontessori.org

Kim Bergel, Adolescent & Upper Elementary Assistant

kim@redwoodmontessori.org

Jennifer Meyer, Resource Specialist Teacher

jennifer@redwoodmontessori.org

Janine Redwine, Speech Therapist

jennifer@redwoodmontessori.org

Rachel D'Ambra, After School Care Assistant

gformby@ymail.com

Board of Directors

The RCM Board of Directors has oversight responsibilities for Redwood Coast Montessori with respect to hiring of school employees, setting school policy, managing school finances, and promoting the overall mission of RCM. The Board meets one day per month, with board directors serving two-year terms.

School Hours

Our school day begins at 8:30 a.m. The lower elementary students are dismissed at 2:30 p.m., and upper elementary at 3:00 p.m. Afterschool care is available until 5:30 p.m. The last Friday of each month is a minimum day to allow for staff meeting and development. After will be provided until the regular 5:30 p.m. on all minimum days.

School Calendar

Redwood Coast Montessori 2015 - 2016 Calendar							
School Months	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Days Taught	Notes
					(27)		Teacher Work Day
August 31 to September 25	(31) 7	1 (Day 1) 8	2 9	3 10	4 11	18	First Day of School 9/1 Labor Day 9/7 Back to School Night Sept. 24 Minimum Day Sept. 25
September 28 to October 23	14 21 (19)	15 22 (20)	16 23 (21)	17 24 (22)	18 (25) (23)	20	Parent Conferences 10/19 - 10/23
October 26 to November 20	26 2 9 16	27 3 10 17	28 4 11 18	29 5 12 19	30 6 13 (20)	19	Veteran's Day 11/11 Minimum Day Nov. 20
November 23 to December 18	23 30 7 14	24 1 8 15	25 2 9 16	26 3 10 17	27 4 11 (18)	15	Thanksgiving Break 11/23 - 11/27 Minimum Day Dec. 18
December 21 to January 29	21 28 4 11 18 25	22 29 5 12 19 26	23 30 6 13 20 27	24 31 7 14 21 28	25 1 8 15 22 (29)	19	Winter Break 12/21 - 1/1 MLK Holiday 1/18 Minimum Day Jan. 29
February 1 to February 26	1 8 15 22	2 9 16 23	3 10 17 24	4 11 18 25	5 12 19 (26)	15	President's Break 2/15 - 2/19 Minimum Day Feb. 26
February 29 to March 25	29 (7) 14 21	1 (8) 15 22	2 (9) 16 23	3 (10) 17 24	4 (11) 18 (25)	20	Parent Conferences 3/7 - 3/11 Minimum Day March 25
March 28 to April 22	28 4 11 18	29 5 12 19	30 6 13 20	31 7 14 21	1 8 15 22	15	Spring Break 4/11 - 4/15
April 25 to May 20	25 2 9 16	26 3 10 17	27 4 11 18	28 5 12 19	(29) 6 13 20	20	Minimum Day April 29
May 23 to June 17	23 30 6 13	24 31 7 14	25 1 8 15	26 2 9 16	(27) 3 10 (17)	19	Minimum Day May 27 Memorial Day 5/30 Last Day of School 6/17 (Min. Day)
						180	Total Student Days

() Minimum Day (12:30 Dismissal)

☐ Holiday

○ Staff Duty Days (No School)

▨ Recess/break

School Policies

Attendance

Being in school every day and arriving on time helps children get the most out of their education and is a life-long habit to establish now. If your child will be late or absent, please call and leave a message on our main line at 707.832.4194. If you plan to be away on vacation, please let us know ahead of time so we can plan school lessons related to your trip and destination.

Drop-off and Pick-up

- Please remember that our school is nestled in a quiet residential community. Our neighbors are noticing how we drive to and from school *everyday!* Please adhere to the posted speed limit of 25 mph on Peninsula Drive. We want Manila residents to welcome us as peaceful members in the community. The safety of your child and our neighbors is more important than the risk of being a few minutes late.
- Please walk younger students to their classroom in the morning to help them get settled in and started on a successful day.

Wellness Policy

If your child is truly sick (bad cough, very runny nose, fever, or vomiting in past 24 hours) she or he *must* stay home to get better and to decrease the likelihood of spreading the illness within our school community. Otherwise, please do all you can to ensure your child is on time and ready to learn each day.

Getting Rest

We have observed that children are at their best when they get a good night's sleep. To feel good and do well during the day, please work with your child to set a regular routine with a bedtime that allows for plenty of sleep. Children of ALL ages need ample sleep and a regular schedule.

Lunch

RCM is a healthy place for learning and growing, which includes our lunchtime. We encourage good nutritional habits and ask that parents pay close attention to the food in their child's lunches. An ideal lunch would contain a healthy, balanced mix from the different food groups. Candy, gum, carbonated drinks, and other sugary items are definitely treats to leave at home. That being said, there may be times where a student, parent, or the school wants to furnish a special treat to celebrate a birthday or holiday. This special occasion may be a time where a small amount of sugar may be appropriate, but please make the snack as nutritious as possible.

Redwood Coast Montessori participates in the National School Lunch Program. Hot lunches are served every school day. All students may purchase hot lunches for \$3.50/meal. Eligible students receive either free or reduced price (\$0.40) lunches. Eligibility for free and reduced price meals is

determined by either direct certification or household income. To apply for free or reduced lunches, interested families should contact the school office for an application.

Snack

Young learners get hungry often! Students in each classroom take turns hosting snack once a month, with a parent volunteer in each class coordinating and assigning snack days. Snacks do not need to be elaborate or expensive, but should be nutritious, wholesome foods—organic is encouraged. By first grade, children are able to and enjoy participating in shopping for and preparing their hosted snacks.

Some examples of snacks include the following:

- Slices of apple, banana, or other fruit
- nuts or nut/bean/tofu spreads
- cheese sticks or cubes
- pretzels, whole grain crackers or bread sticks
- vegetable slices
- any other food that is nourishing and easy to eat as a snack.

The goal is to be sure each child has enough energy to learn effectively. Please avoid sending sweet pastries or other very sugary treats.

In the event that you forget your snack day, please consider bringing a non-perishable snack—such as pretzels, crackers, nuts, and dried fruit—to replenish our a back-up snack supply.

Learning Atmosphere

Redwood Coast Montessori is a public charter program operating within the Arcata School District. Our school days will be filled with extended academic work time intermixed with physical education, lunch, and free play. Schoolwork is focused in six broad categories:

- Reading/Writing/English
- Life Skills
- Social Studies
- Math
- Science
- Special Interests.

Throughout the year your student will have a variety of school and homework across all areas. There will be weekly home reading practice.

Homework

With all homework, common sense dictates. If your student asks for help with homework and you do not understand the directions, together with your student make your best reasonable guess and go forward. It is always better to make an effort even if it is not exactly right. We encourage you to jot

notes to us on the homework as you go or attach a note. We read over students' work carefully and your feedback is helpful.

Weekly Home Reading Sheet / Spelling List

Home reading is a lifelong habit that we will support by requiring weekly reading. We will provide a weekly reading sheet, which is to be turned in on Fridays. Reading can be recorded onto any kind of paper or you can help your child type and email the reading log to their respective teacher. Spelling will be assigned weekly and tests will be on Fridays.

Other Assignments

Beyond reading and spelling, students will have a blend of homework this year, much of which will be individualized to each learner's needs, likes, and challenges. Some will be traditional curriculum from math, reading, writing, and penmanship, and some project-based science and social studies. We will also incorporate assignments that are individualized to each student's area of interest in geography, botany, biology, geology, astronomy, etc. Teachers will provide directions for research, illustrations, revising drafts, and practice presentations. Most homework, including home reading, will be due on Fridays.

Adolescent Class

Beginning with seventh grade, students will have daily homework assignments in math. Due to the rigorous nature of the curriculum, additional homework will be assigned based on individual projects and the needs of the child.

Computer and Internet Use

RCM's approach to learning integrates the use of technology into curriculum in an innovative way. The use of computers, the Internet as a research tool, presentation software, and other tools are introduced in a developmentally appropriate way as grades progress.

Our school makes every effort to protect students and teachers from misuse or abuse when accessing electronic information services. Students are responsible for their behavior on the computer and for ensuring that they follow established guidelines. Computer and Internet rules at school may differ from those you have at home, so we encouraged you to review RCM's computer/Internet use policies—that are distributed at the beginning of the school year—with your child in order to support the school in its use of technology as a learning tool.

Supporting Your Child's Learning at Home

In the Montessori environment, the children are meant to take charge of their learning as well as the day-to-day functioning of the classroom. The teacher's job is to take charge of coordinating lessons and learning. There are many ways parents can, at home, foster your child's developing sense of independence, learning, and contribution to community.

- If you are not already doing this, **consider teaching your student to do the personal maintenance and chores he or she is capable of doing.** For younger children, these jobs may include making the bed in the morning, making their own nutritious lunch, feeding

pets, helping prepare parts of meals, setting and clearing the table for meals, watering plants, folding laundry, etcetera. Your children will feel proud and satisfied when they know they are contributing to the household. As your child masters skills, add some new ones.

- **Foster your child’s sense of independence by making it easier for them to do their jobs unassisted.** For example, your child needs a stool to reach the sink to help wash dishes, please help to provide one. By supporting your child’s growing sense of independence and responsibility at home, you will be reinforcing what we are creating in the classroom.
- **Help your child practice being organized.** This skill also helps in learning. Their school work and backpacks are truly theirs and we work to help everyone take ownership of paperwork that is going home and coming back.
- When work does come home, **please support your child’s efforts with homework and try to maintain a pleasant working environment during homework.** If you are concerned about homework, please check in with us and we can update you about what your child is working on, whether it is getting turned in, and things you can do at home to support your child’s efforts.

If you have questions about the Montessori method of education, please ask! RCM has an extensive collection of Montessori books and materials you may borrow. We can also point you to some great resources on the Internet.

Conferences

RCM offers two parent/teacher conferences per year—one in the fall, and the other in the spring. Sign-up sheets for conference slots will be available prior to the conference period. Both teachers and parents may request additional conferences on an as-needed basis to discuss your child’s progress or well-being at school.

Sharing

After the first few weeks of school, children will be assigned a specific day of the week as their sharing day. Students can only bring items to share on their specific day unless we pre-arrange a special date. Throughout the year we will keep the focus on **educational items only**. If your child wants to share something that seems questionable, ask yourself, “How is our share item educational or academic?” If it seems to truly be of educational value and is not too valuable or irreplaceable, then send it in a protective wrapping or container. If something does get broken, we will be sad but cannot be held responsible.

Volunteering

Field Trips

Students at RCM participate in many field trips. It is important for elementary and adolescent age students to get out into their community and learn about transportation, local history, how businesses function, and what people do for work. These trips help inspire children to begin considering where they will fit in as adults in the future.

Student Field Trip Coordinators

Our students have the opportunity to plan field trips for the class. Planning a field trip is an honor and a huge responsibility that older students are strongly encouraged to undertake as the leaders in our school. If you are an upper-grade parent, please begin having conversations with your student about where they might want the class to go and what is involved in getting us there. If you are a first or second grade parent, encourage your student to coordinate with an older student to put together a field trip. We always welcome great field trip ideas, so if you have one, please let us know!

Parent Chaperones

We generally need responsible adult chaperones willing to supervise students on each field trip. We also need enough drivers to carry all the children safely to their destination as well as chaperones to accompany us on the field trips to ensure the children have adequate supervision. Drivers must have insurance coverage at the rate the district requires, and a field trip driver form and a copy of your license need to be on file in the office before you drive.

Cost of Field Trips

Some field trips have a small fee associated with them and for those we ask for voluntary donations. If you are unable to donate, please don't worry. All students will go on field trips regardless of their ability to donate to the cost. Some of our fundraising proceeds cover these costs, but if you are able and would like to help out one or more classmates, we welcome the additional monetary support.

Field Trip Behavior

Only students who have shown that they can follow directions, maintain self-control, and interact in a polite, respectful manner will be joining us on field trips. These expectations also include walking quietly with our group or in line, keeping hands to oneself, and waiting, listening to and then following directions from the group leader. Please help reinforce these behavior expectations at home to be sure that your child is ready for each and every field trip. If a student is having trouble meeting these expectations during a field trip, his or her parent/guardian must come and pick the child up immediately. If a child has shown that he or she is not yet able to follow field trip behavior expectations, then a parent or other responsible adult must come along on the field trip or we will regretfully insist that you make other arrangements for the child that day.

Birthdays in the Classroom

Birthdays are a significant milestone for children and we acknowledge them in the Montessori tradition. We generally celebrate birthdays in the week they occur, and will send a request to families ahead of time asking for some photos of the birthday child (that will be returned) and some notes about each year. For those students who have birthdays in the summer, we will have a celebration at their half-birthday (so a child born in June will celebrate with us in December). Parents are welcome to join us in our birthday celebration. If you wish not to have your child's birthday acknowledged, please let us know.

Birthday Celebrations Outside of School

To support our classroom's sense of community and to model polite manners, any party invitations handed out at school must include the entire class. If you are planning a smaller party, please contact individual families to deliver invitations outside of school.

Tea

RCM will host educational and fun teas on several occasions throughout the year. The main goal is to practice gracious manners in preparing, serving, receiving, and enjoying a meal. We will serve a variety of mild herbal teas (no caffeine) and will eat a simple snack such as crackers, muffins, or fruit.

After School Care

Redwood Coast Montessori offers afterschool care until 5:30 p.m. on all regularly scheduled school days. The afterschool care program provides children with a selection of recreational, creative, artistic, and learning activities. You are welcome to enroll your child in afterschool care at any time during the school year.

- At the beginning of the year, parents complete an afterschool care form accompanied by a \$100 deposit per child that will be refunded at the end of the school year. Once your child is enrolled, he/she is welcome to participate in afterschool care as needed.
- The rate for afterschool care is \$4.00 per hour, rounded to the quarter hour. The late pick-up fee is \$1.00 per minute for every minute after 5:30 p.m.
- Monthly invoices will be placed in your parent cubby at the end of each month. Invoices will reflect all afterschool care charges and any other expenses incurred during the month. To avoid late fees, payments are due within 30 days from the date listed on the invoice.
- Families wishing to use RCM's afterschool care must agree to support their child in following the behavior expectations of the program. Children who are not able to follow the behavior expectations, or who are otherwise not successful during afterschool care, will not be allowed to attend the program.
- If parents wish to stay after school and allow your child to play, you must be present and responsible for your own child at all times. Please become familiar with our guidelines for respectful and safe behavior on the playground.

Independent Study

Family vacations and visiting friends and relatives are wonderful opportunities for students to learn more about their extended community. With this in mind, RCM provides students with the ability to complete work during any school absence whether due to illness or family obligations.

RCM maintains the follow conditions for all independent study agreements:

- **Voluntary:** We understand that independent study is an optional educational alternative that students voluntarily select, including students covered under California *Education Code* sections 48915 and 48917. All students who choose independent study must be offered the alternative of classroom instruction, and they must have the continuing option of returning to the classroom.

- **Assignment:** We understand that assignments listed on the back of this form, are to be completed as outlined by the supervising teacher. All assignments will be evaluated by Interview (I), Observation (O), and/or Documentation (D). Attach all completed assignments to this form.
- **Reporting:** We understand that reporting of student progress shall be made to the supervising teacher at least every 3 weeks during regular office hours as scheduled with Redwood Coast Montessori staff. Student work samples will be submitted at each meeting. Other interim contacts will be made via phone, email, visits, mail, fax, or other appropriate methods. According to school policy, the maximum length of time between meetings to evaluate student progress is 3 weeks. Parent and/or Education Coordinator may schedule meetings more frequently.

Running/Walking Club

The purpose of Redwood Coast Montessori's Running/Walking Club is to enable RCM students to participate together in a fun, healthy, aerobic activity that builds strength and endurance. We also hope to foster a lifelong love of running, walking, and being active. Running club takes place on Mondays and Wednesdays after school. Sign-up forms with additional information will be available the first week of school.

Personal Items From Home

Anything your child brings from home is the child's responsibility. Please help remind your student that all toys, trading cards, electronic games, and anything valuable or irreplaceable should be kept safely at home. See the **Sharing** section above for what you can encourage your child to bring to school.

If an item comes in that does not belong at school, we will first ask that it be put away in a jacket pocket or backpack. If it comes out again, the child will put it on a shelf near the backpacks. It will be the student's responsibility to remember to get the item back at the end of the day. If an item becomes a repeated problem, we will create a "June Box." If something goes into the June Box it stays there until the last day of school in June!

Cell phones

If you want your child to have a cell phone at school for emergencies, it must be turned off and put away during the school day. RCM is not responsible for these items if they are lost or damaged.

RCM staff will use the school phone or cell phones during the school day to communicate about school-related issues and will refrain from any personal cell phone use while working with the children. We ask that parents and other visitors refrain from using cell phones while working with the students. If you must make or take a call/text while at school, you are welcome to step outside.

Adult Guests and Visitors

Our class likes to have visitors come in to tell about what they do for a work, offer a special lesson, help with projects, or listen to children read. It is helpful for us to know ahead of time so we can plan our schedule and to be sure there is time for guests to feel welcome. If you simply want to drop by and touch base with your child, you are welcome at any time. ALL visitors should check in with the front office before entering the campus.

Pet Visits

It is great for students to have the opportunity to meet different types of animals. If you have a child-friendly pet, do arrange with us ahead of time to bring it in for a visit. Small pets that will be content in a cage or tank can come for an all day visit (rodents, reptiles, fish, etcetera). Larger animals, like dogs and cats (goats, horses, pigs, etcetera) should be cleared first, come with a parent/guardian for a shorter visit, and then go home again. All dogs visiting the campus must be on a leash at ALL times.

A Caution For Our Younger Visitors

We love your families and want everyone to feel welcome and safe in our school. With this in mind, our classrooms are filled with specialized materials with small, hard to replace parts, and “works in progress” that our students often spend a great deal of time to create. Our classrooms are neither set up nor safe for younger, curious learners to explore freely. Please help keep your younger children safe and our materials in good condition by closely supervising your little ones and steering them away from delicate work. We will keep a few young, child-friendly things on hand for your little ones to explore, and if you have something to donate to our supply, please do.

School Clothing

Children should wear clean and comfortable clothes suitable for sitting, movement, and play. Please do not send your child to school in clothing that could be damaged easily or cause accidents on the playground.

- Children should be adequately prepared for outdoor activity, even in cool and wet weather. On most days, students go outside at least twice a day, and only on the most severe windy, cold, or rainy days will we stay indoors as a group.
- Dressing in layers is appropriate almost year-round here so close to the ocean.
- Wear or have available at school, closed-toe shoes appropriate for P.E. or other outside activities.
- We find that the atmosphere of the classroom is enhanced if children wear clothes that reflect the fact that this is primarily their place of work, just as most adults dress appropriately for their work. For example, clothing that promotes themes such as super heroes, violence, video games, illegal behaviors or clothing otherwise designed to be especially attention getting, offensive, or immodest is not for school. We encourage you to help your child select appropriate school clothing when shopping and when choosing what to wear each day.
- No make up.
- Midriffs, cleavage, and under garments need to be covered. All shorts, skirts, dresses must extend beyond arm length on thighs. All shirts must have shoulder straps that are at least two inches in width.
- Shirts should be free of inappropriate messages.
- Hats and hoods should be removed when indoors.

Lost and Found

Please clearly label all RCM students' clothing, lunch boxes, packs, and bags. A lost and found box is in the common room. Unclaimed clothing will be donated to charity before winter, spring, and summer breaks.

Special Circumstances

Life is full of unexpected surprises both happy and sad. It helps us to support your child when you keep us informed of events such as a new member of the family, death of a loved one (pets too), special adult leaving for an extended trip, moving, or anything else that may impact your student's learning. We do not need to know all your personal details yet we do want to be prepared should your child need extra attention.

Emergency Preparedness

In the case of fire, earthquake, or other natural disaster, RCM has comprehensive procedures in place to ensure the safety of our students and staff. RCM staff regularly review our emergency procedures, and we conduct school-wide safety drills on a monthly basis. If you would like to review our emergency preparedness policies, please feel free to ask the director for a copy.

Parent Guidelines

In the event of an emergency or natural disaster, we will keep the children safe until you are able to pick them up. Please follow these guidelines:

- Please call the school line at 707.832.4194 to receive updates and instructions regarding when it's appropriate and safe to pick up your child.
- Only people designated on your emergency form will be allowed to pick up your child.
- If you are able to stay and help, school personnel will give you instructions as to where your support is needed.
- If it is unsafe to remain at the school, the staff will walk with the children to a safer location. We will leave a sign stating our alternate location.
- Staff will remain with our students until all children have been picked up. We have the resources to feed children and stay overnight if necessary.

Athletics

After school athletic teams provide an opportunity for students to learn more about a specific sport and to participate in a healthy activity to promote fair play and sportsmanship. Participation in RCM sponsored athletics is a privilege. Students interested in participating on a school team will be asked to maintain a good standing with their academic work and to commit to supporting a positive and encouraging attitude with their own team mates and players from other schools. A health physical will be required for participation with all school teams. Please ask the front office for a health physical form.

Parent Participation

Volunteers

RCM appreciates and relies on its parent volunteers. We are a community of people working together to develop a unique and inspiring learning environment for our children. A volunteer form goes out to the parent community at the beginning of the year asking for information about special skills, interests, and availability. It is very important that all RCM parents help support and enhance the school through some volunteer activity.

All enrolled RCM families are encouraged to contribute 30 hours of volunteer service to the school for the development of the school and its academic goals. A parent participation contract is a part of the annual enrollment process.

A variety of service opportunities exist and include the following:

- Working in the classroom with our Montessori staff
- Developing classroom materials / special unit studies
- Providing office help
- Chaperoning field trips
- Organizing or working at fundraising events
- Serving on school committees.

Volunteer hours can be completed at the school or at home. Parent education nights, fundraising, school events, and parent workdays provide enough additional opportunities to assure a comfortable level of participation. RCM is grateful for the contribution volunteers make on behalf of the school and to the lives of all of our students.

In order for parents to participate in certain volunteer activities a clear live scan fingerprinting will be required from the volunteer.

Communication

Parent Directory

A parent/student directory is distributed each year, and lists each child and his/her parents along with email, address, and phone number. This directory is provided so that families can contact others in the RCM community. If you prefer that your contact information be omitted, please contact the Director.

The Redwood Bark Newsletter

The *Redwood Bark* is a weekly parent email that provides important RCM news such as upcoming community and parent events, field trips, special date reminders, and other activities.

Group email Lists

To better foster communication within the RCM community, group email lists for individual classrooms and the entire school will be established so parents and staff can easily reach each other.

Parent Cubbies

Each family has a parent cubby assigned to them in the common room at RCM. Please check the cubby area regularly for important paperwork, communications, and sign-up sheets for various events and activities.

Website

The school maintains the website at www.redwoodcoastmontessori.org as a means of communication for current and prospective families. Enrolled families will find a current calendar, announcements and events on the website.

RCM Facebook Page

Families and friends can also follow events happening at RCM via our Facebook page at Redwood Coast Montessori.

Fundraising

RCM strives to provide a rich and diverse learning experience for every child. To meet this goal, we need to raise money for extra resources beyond what our regular operating budget can provide. With the support of RCM students, parents, and community, we will host several fun, community-focused events throughout the year.

RCM Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

The RCM PTO is a parent-led organization that works in cooperation with the RCM Board of Directors, faculty and staff to support the mission of the school. All RCM parents are encouraged to participate at any level. Joining the PTO is a great way to meet other parents, get involved with the RCM community, and have fun.

Conflict Resolution and Student Behavior

The Peace Table

The Peace Table components are kept in a basket that children can take and set up in any available space. When conflicts arise between children in our classroom, the following procedures are followed:

1. Tell or ask the friend what is wrong and ask for a change.
2. If that does not work, invite the friend to the Peace Table.
3. At the Peace Table, the inviter speaks first. The right hand is placed over the heart to symbolize speaking from the heart, the left hand is placed palm up on the table to symbolize coming in peace (unarmed). The inviter tells what he or she thinks happened, how he or she feels about it and what could be done to fix the problem (phrased in positive terms).
4. The invitee speaks next and repeats the process of what happened, how he or she feels about it, and what can be done.
5. If both parties agree on a solution, they can declare to the class, "We solved our problem!" They shake hands and get on with their work.
6. If the problem cannot be solved, 2 helpers can be requested and if that does not work, the teacher or another adult who knows the Peace Table process can be asked.

The children are usually able to solve their problem using this process, but in the rare event that a problem is so big that it requires parent intervention, the teacher will consult with parents of the children to help resolve the conflict. This does not necessarily mean anyone is in trouble, but we work to solve our problems inside the classroom among the children involved and want the children to know that sometimes it takes more input than one has on hand at the moment.

Discipline

Freedom Within Limits is a basic tenant of the Montessori approach to teaching and learning. In general, students are free to choose from an array of challenging work, to work undisturbed, and to care for themselves and the classroom environment. Ground rules are established early in the year, and the children are allowed to work freely so long as they do not disturb others.

We strive to resolve all conflicts and behavior issues within the classroom setting. Should a problem, conflict, or behavior develop into an ongoing distraction to student learning, parents will be contacted the same day. If the behavior is so serious as to cause injury to anyone or damage to things in the classroom, then parents will be called right away. The teacher or staff member will decide whether the behavior warrants that the child be sent home. If the situation can be discussed in a conference, then a meeting will be arranged to discuss and implement an action plan to help the student change the behavior. It is up to the teacher or staff to decide whether the student can continue to attend school until the conference is held and a plan put into place. If the teacher and staff decide that the student will not attend regular classes, home study work will be assigned and the student and family will be responsible to work with the student.

If the discipline problem continues after a plan has been established, the school director may be brought in to meet with the family to assess the student, the action plan, and decide on next steps. Examples of immediate, go-home behaviors include causing serious injury to another student or self, causing serious damage to school materials or building, refusing to comply with basic safety procedures such as coming inside with the class when recess or outside activities, or behaving in such a way that the rest of the class cannot continue with the regular school day.

Bullying

RCM believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. The schools and community have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance. Each incident of bullying should be reported to a teacher or to the director, and be promptly investigated.

What is Bullying?

- Bullying may consist of hitting, teasing, taunting, spreading rumors and gossip, stealing, or excluding someone from a group
- It is carried out with the intent to harm someone and is often a repeated activity. However, it can also be a one-time event
- Bullying always involves a power imbalance. The person bullying has more power due to such factors as age, size, strength, support of friends, or access to resources (things like toys and other belongings), and uses this power in a deliberate way.

Boys and girls tend to bully others in different ways, though they may both use face-to-face and behind-the-back methods. Boys are more likely to use methods such as hitting, fighting, and threatening. These face-to-face behaviors are easy to observe. Girls often bully using physical and verbal attacks, but they also engage in behind-the-back methods that are harder to observe. These behaviors include getting peers to exclude others and spreading rumors and gossip.

Because bullying jeopardizes children's safety and potentially creates both short and long-term problems for all children involved, we take it very seriously at RCM. It is important to know that bullying IS NOT just a normal part of growing up. Conflict is normal, but bullying is not.

Often children don't tell adults (parents, teachers, school staff) that they are being bullied because they think they won't be helped, they are afraid the bullying will get worse, they think they should be able to solve their own problems, or they don't even realize they are being bullied.

If You Think Your Child Is Being Bullied ...

- Listen to him/her and explain that people who bully are trying to get certain reactions (make the child feel angry, sad, jealous) and that they need to respond assertively with "Stop! That's bullying!"
- Assure your child that they are not to blame
- Advise your child to report all bullying incidents to an adult at school or a parent
- Contact your student's teacher and let them know.

The International Montessori Council Code of Ethics

Terri Vroman Little has been an active member of the International Montessori Council (IMC) since the council was founded in 1998. In 2009, RCM's Parent Advisory Board voted to adopt the IMC's Code of Ethics as a framework from which to operate as a school.

For more information on IMC, please visit www.montessori.org/imc.

As a member of the International Montessori Council, we pledge to represent our school truthfully and accurately to the general public and internally to our parent community.

We further pledge ourselves to respect the diversity of the community of Montessori schools. We will not engage in negative public relations nor make any negative statements about another Montessori school.

Our school honors its financial commitments to parents, staff, vendors, and others.

Core Values

- Our primary focus will always be the well-being and best interests of our students.
- We recognize that a Montessori school is more than a place of learning; it is a community of children and adults that have a significant impact on our students' capacity to learn, grow, create, develop, assimilate values, and relate peacefully and respectfully to other people and to the natural world.
- We treat all students, families, teachers, and staff members with kindness, warmth, and respect.
- Our school will never permit the use of corporal punishment.
- We consciously teach our students values fundamental to Montessori education, which include: respect for oneself, others, and their property; peacefulness, empathy and kindness; truthfulness; a search for the solution fairest to all; the pursuit of independence and self-mastery; and a love of work and a passion for excellence.
- We endeavor to provide a school environment that will promote and protect the physical and emotional well being of our students and staff.
- We seek to instill in our students, parents, and staff not only a reverence for the earth, its waters, and all living things, but also a sense of stewardship for the environment based on a conviction of our individual responsibility for the beauty of the land and the health of our ecosystems.
- Our school does not discriminate in matters of admission or employment on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic background. We consciously teach children to accept, respect, and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the global community.
- We consciously work to build a constructive partnership between the family and school in support of each child's educational development.
- Within reasonable guidelines established to ensure the integrity of our educational program and the privacy of other students' records, parents are welcome to visit the school to observe their child in class or to review his/her academic progress.

- We will promptly consult with parents should it ever become clear that a student is not benefiting from the school's program, or if the school is not the best program to meet his/her needs.

Transfer and Enrollment of Students

- Our school recognizes each family's right to visit and consider other schools and to hold preliminary discussions regarding admission without feeling compelled to notify the school, which their children presently attend.
- While we welcome inquiries and interest in our school, we strongly encourage all students that are presently enrolled in or committed to attend another Montessori program to give this first priority. Before considering a change, parents should thoroughly discuss the potential consequences of this decision with teachers and administrators from both programs.
- Before filing an application for admission, we ask that families advise their children's present schools and authorize in writing the release to us of their children's academic records and student recommendations upon our request.

Employment

- We consciously follow fair and equal employment practices in hiring, assigning, promoting, and compensating both teaching and non-teaching staff members.
- We endeavor to employ persons solely on the basis of the factors necessary in the performance of the job and the operation of our school without discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation (unless our school is operated either by or on behalf of an established church for the purpose of religious education), race, national origin, gender, and any other factor on which discrimination is prohibited by the laws of the jurisdiction within which our school is located.
- No official of our school will seek to induce a teacher who is under contract at another school to break that contract. [There is nothing deemed improper if a member of the teaching or administrative staff of one school independently approaches another school about possible employment.]
- Our school will not offer employment to a member of the faculty or staff of another school without communicating with the Head of the school at which he or she is presently employed or committed for the upcoming school year to request a frank evaluation of a candidate's qualifications. This information will be considered absolutely confidential.
- Our school will take all reasonable and lawful precautions to maintain the confidentiality of records and information concerning teachers and other staff members who are applying for employment at another school, in accordance with the rights of the individual.

Montessori Resources

Michael Olaf Company

www.michaelolaf.com

A warehouse and mail-order Montessori supplemental supply company located in Arcata, CA. Visit and shop the warehouse and SALE shelves.

Montessori Services

www.montessoriservices.com

A warehouse and mail order supply company in Santa Rosa, CA.

The Montessori Foundation

www.montessori.org

A broad resource for information about Montessori teaching and learning including conferences, books and teacher training.

Montessori World Educational Institute

www.montessoriworld.org

A training institute with many helpful resources and videos available online.

Redwood Coast Montessori

www.redwoodcoastmontessori.org

RCM has a lending library of books on Montessori and parenting. Just ask.

An interesting piece of work, freely chosen, which has the virtue of inducing concentration rather than fatigue, adds to the child's energies and mental capacities, and leads him to self-mastery.

–Maria Montessori, [The Absorbent Mind](#)