



Elementary

Handbook

2023-2024

“Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core.” ~ Maria Montessori

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Welcome to the Elementary Program at RPMS. The information included in this packet reviews some general information regarding our program and routines.

Transitioning to Elementary

We will be sending an email communication prior to our school picnic that will help families with the transition from Children's House to Lower Elementary and Lower Elementary to Upper Elementary. We will discuss the differences in planes of development, changing behaviors and expectations. Please read this and bring any questions to the picnic.

New Student Orientation

In an effort to help your child make a successful transition to the Elementary Program, we offer a new student orientation before the school year begins. The orientation will give your child a chance to become better acquainted with their teachers as well as become familiar with the classroom and routines before the first day of school, thus providing an easier transition. Details about both Upper and Lower Elementary Orientation are contained in the Welcome Packets that are distributed to families in the summer.

Communication

We feel that communication is a vital element of our program. In order to fully support each child and family, we need to communicate regularly and openly. We support both formal, structured communication and informal communication. **Emergency communication is handled through the main office.**

Welcome Packet

Before your child begins, we provide you with numerous documents. Some of these are designed to help us learn a little more about you and your child and for you to learn a little more about us. Included within the paperwork packet is contact information for us to contact you when we need to communicate. It is important to keep this contact information up to date. Any changes should be given to the school office.

Back to School

We will be sending a **Back to School** email communication prior to our school picnic. We will explain our schedule, procedures, policies, field trips, and special events as well as highlight any changes to this handbook. PLEASE read this document. We make changes every year and you and your child/ren want to be informed and prepared. Please bring any questions to the picnic and we will be happy to answer them.

Progress Reporting

Progress Reports are shared four times a year; two of these are **conference reports** (sent in the Fall and Spring) designed to give information about a child's social, emotional and executive function development, the other is an **academic report card** designed to follow a child for three years and represents the three year cycle of the Montessori Elementary curriculum (sent in Jan. and May).

Parent Teacher Conferences

We will hold two scheduled **parent teacher conferences** during the school year. Upper Elementary uses a student lead format and Lower Elementary uses a parent teacher model. We are happy to set up additional conference times at your request.

Routine and Daily Communication

Each educational level at RPMS communicates to families, developmentally appropriate information for that level. We communicate in a variety of ways including web-based tools, a monthly class newsletter, a class calendar, and individual folders that may be used for written notes. Examples:

- Teachers may be contacted any time with a voice mailbox or email.
- Your child's folder has a calendar with important dates for the month.
- Teachers may be available for a minute during pick-up, but be aware that this is not a private time. Any communication requiring more time or privacy should be done via phone, email or in person/virtual scheduled at a mutually convenient time.
- Electronic monthly newsletter will be sent via email.
- Notes or written messages can be sent via your child's folder in lower elementary, these are checked daily.
- **Encourage your child to talk and/or write to us when they are having a concern. We want to create and encourage our students to advocate for themselves.**

Frequent communication gives us the opportunity to work together to create the most positive and nurturing learning environment possible for each child and family.

Elementary Routines

School begins promptly at 8:25 am. Children are expected to arrive on time before classes start to maximize opportunities for learning. Tardiness and irregular attendance creates a disruption to the class as well as limits your child's opportunities to develop social and academic skills. Missing even a half-hour of school a day deprives a child of several days of work a month.

Children who have missed excessive amounts of school may not be eligible to move to the next level. As a private school, we are required by law to provide a sufficient number of annual hours of classroom time as set forth by the laws of the State of Wisconsin. Elementary students are not to be absent in excess of ten days per school year.

Class Work and At Home Work

A goal of the Elementary program at R.P.M.S. is independent, resilient, self directed children. Individual work plans guide and pace students' work in both Lower and Upper Elementary classes. A work plan is essentially a developmentally appropriate list of work that is generated by teachers and students to be completed by a student in a set amount of time. The work is typically to be completed in class. Incomplete or unfinished work will happen. We view this as an opportunity to teach time management, task completion, problem solving and logical consequences. We work with each child individually to address the incomplete work. We may use recess time, working lunch, carry over to the next work plan or at home time to complete work.

Additional practice of any skill may be recommended at home (please see each level below.) We recommend daily out loud or silent reading at home for both upper and lower elementary students. Some benefits to reading daily are: improving both intelligence/emotional IQ, and reducing stress.

Lower Elementary

Students may be asked to do additional reading, spelling or math fact practice work at home. Incomplete work plan work is typically handled within the school day; however, we may send work plan work home if necessary.

Upper Elementary

Students will have a weekly spelling list to practice at home. Your student may be asked to keep a reading log that you will sign and return to school. We recommend a minimum of 30-40+ minutes a day for this age level. Math fact practice may be assigned. Please don't stress 100% memorization, but encourage and support regular practice to gain a deeper level of understanding, confidence and proficiency. Ten minutes a day of fact work would be beneficial. Typing club is also a good option for daily/weekly practice. Students will bring home unfinished work from their monthly/weekly/daily plan, when needed.

Before Care

7:20 - 8:10 am: Families participating in Before Care bring their child to the Before Care classroom and initial the sign-in sheet.

Arrival

8:10 am: *Drop off begins at the front of school.* Staff members will be outside to greet students. Teachers will be waiting for students in their classroom.

School Day

8:20 am: Arrival time ends and the classroom door closes. If your child arrives after 8:25, **they must be signed in at the office.** Your child may quietly enter our environment and join the community.

8:25-8:50 am: Class meeting/group lessons/classroom jobs

8:50-11:45 am: Work time

11:45-11:55 am: Clean-up

12:00-12:30 pm: Lunch Lower El. (Recess Upper El.)

12:30-1:00 pm: Recess Lower El. (Lunch Upper El.)

1:00 - 3:15 pm : Work time

3:15 pm: Dismissal begins

3:30 pm: Dismissal ends. Children who have not been picked up will go to After Care.

After Care

3:30 - 5:30 pm Children are provided a snack. Time is spent indoors and outside.

What To Bring Daily:

- **Backpack:** Your child will need a manageable backpack. Backpacks should be large enough for a lunch, folders and books.
- **Water bottle:** A spill proof water bottle for water only should be brought daily. Children keep their water bottles at their workplace, so PLEASE water only.
- **Snack:** Please send an easy to eat, nutritious snack that your child can store in their cubby and eat at their rug.
- **Lunch:** Students will need to bring a healthy, cold lunch daily.

Student Dress Code

Lower Elementary: Children need to be free to move and work with success, indoors and out. Children spend much of the school day working on the floor. We are a multi-age classroom, modesty and comfort is very important. Tights, shorts or leggings should be worn under skirts and dresses for ease of movement. Longer shirts and belts also help to keep pants up when working on the floor. We work with materials such as paint, markers, clay, etc. and we want children to get messy without worrying about ruining a favorite or special article of clothing. Children should wear supportive, rubber-soled shoes with coverings for toes and also with a back to school each day. Shoes should not have heels. If sandals are worn, they too should have rubber soles, toe coverings and a strap in the back that holds the foot securely. If a child comes to school wearing improper school shoes for their safety they will not be able to participate in any gross motor activities like Physical Education and recess. Students are welcome to keep gym shoes at school for Physical Education.

Please be sure to send snow boots, snow pants, a warm coat, mittens and a hat during the winter months. We go outside for recess as often as possible. Some exceptions to this are when the temperature, including wind chill is below 10 degrees and/or if there is a wind advisory.

Upper Elementary: A student's appearance is primarily a parental responsibility, which should reflect concern for health and safety of the student and others, and to school property. When students are on school property or attending a school sanctioned event, they are required to adhere to the school's dress code policy.

Apparel worn at school should be opaque and cover the chest, stomach, genitalia, buttocks and upper thigh of the student.

School administration will prohibit:

- Apparel that has very thin straps, is strapless or does not cover the chest, stomach and abdomen unless the midsection is covered by another undergarment.
- Apparel that is very short and does not cover the buttocks or upper thigh sufficiently.
- Apparel that includes offensive language or pictures.
- Apparel that promotes, advertises or depicts illegal activity , drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or clothing that mimics the logos of such items.

- Any article of clothing that presents a hazard to the health and safety of the student or to the school , including by way of communicating threats of harm or depictions of harmful conduct to self or others.
- Clothing or shoes with spikes, hobnails, cleats or chains.
- Shoes or boots that mark the floors or have wheels.
- Shoes or clothing that cause excessive wear to school property.
- Any clothing resembling pajamas.

Students who violate this policy will be given an opportunity to correct the situation by changing, turning a shirt inside-out, covering up, or being sent home to change. Students refusing to follow this policy may face suspension from school. The suspension could be in-school and/or out-of school. Students who repeatedly violate this policy will be required to attend a parent conference with administrator(s) attending and may face suspension and/or expulsion from school.

Expressive Dress and Protected Speech

Prior to taking action to enforce dress code requirements, administration will determine whether the items constitute protected student speech. Expressive dress may not be protected speech if it involves obscenity or language depictions intended to incite violence or foment hatred of others. Dress that is speech may still be prohibited if it is likely to cause a substantial disruption to the educational environment. This may include dress that includes the use of vulgarity, discriminatory language including racial or ethnic slurs, negative stereotypes, violence, or other communication when the clear intent is to invoke strong reactions in observers so as to impair the ability of teachers and/or students to engage in educational pursuit.

In the event of an apparent dress code violation:

- Only the school administrators will be the arbiters of the dress code policy.
- Teachers will not engage students about dress code.
- Teachers will bring any questions regarding a student's dress to the attention of the school administrators.

Please be sure to send snow boots, snow pants, a warm coat, mittens and a hat during the winter months. We go outside for recess as often as possible. Some exceptions to this are when the temperature, including wind chill is below 10 degrees and/or if there is a wind advisory.

Smart Watch and Cell Phone Policy for Students

Lower Elementary. Smart watches/devices and phones of any kind are not allowed at RPMS. We value the privacy of all students and adults. Unsupervised technology use by children in a school setting can lead to distractions, unintended consequences and are not necessary. A student can ask an adult any time if they need to communicate with home. Typical watches that do not have communication access, or potty watches that remind young students to use the bathroom are allowed within reason and practical limits. If a student inadvertently wears a smartwatch or brings any communication device they will be asked to give it to their teacher to hold until the end of the day when it will be returned.

Upper Elementary. Student smart watches/devices and phones if brought into the classroom must be placed in a designated basket on the teacher's counter and remain there during the school day. If a student needs to communicate with home, notify the teacher and they will help facilitate the communication. Devices will be available at the end of the day to take home.

Illness

Please refer to the School Handbook for information regarding RPMS health and illness policies.

Lunch and Snack

Rock Prairie Montessori School encourages and models healthy eating to promote good health. **Research clearly shows that too much sugar affects learning.** Several "healthy lunch option" websites are available online. Candy, sugary drinks, etc. should not be part of a child's lunch and we will ask a child to put it in their backpack for after school. We provide milk and water so no drink is needed. If your child forgets to bring lunch, we will provide some packaged healthy food items for them to have that day.

Snack time is an opportunity for students to enjoy a variety of healthy food choices. It is a time to refuel for a better learning experience. Milk and water are included with snack in each classroom.

Families provide their own snacks for their children. We have found that children appear to eat better and are less hungry throughout the day when they have food provided by their family which is familiar and satisfying. Please send a healthy, easy to open snack. Students only need 1 snack, for those staying for after care they will need 2 snacks (1 morning / 1 afternoon) in addition to their lunch. We will continue to provide milk and water during snack and lunchtimes.

Possessions and Classroom Treasures

Each classroom is filled with beautiful Montessori materials that are available to all. We ask that no toys, jewelry, candy, or gum be brought to school, as these items often distract children from activities that are helpful to their development.

Note:

Occasionally a school object or a part of a classroom work may inadvertently be brought home. Please assist the child (if needed) with returning the object to school. This does not need to become an issue about stealing. If you say something like, “I believe that belongs to the classroom. You and your friends need that material to do the work at school. Let’s return it to where it belongs.” This should suffice in having the child return the object or material back to the classroom.

Show & Share (Lower Elementary Only)

Children are welcome to bring items to share. Our show and share days will be determined after the first month of school. We ask that the child write at least two sentences about their item. This writing is to be done at home. Having something in writing helps children feel more comfortable with what they will say. They are not limited to saying what they have written, but having something prepared helps a child to organize what they want to say. Practicing at home is recommended either to a sibling, a parent or a mirror.

Celebrations

We honor a variety of cultures and traditions as part of our educational philosophy. We discuss the origins of customs, show artifacts relating to celebrations, share a meal or songs routinely as part of our culture studies. We invite your child and/or family to come and present traditions from their families and backgrounds to the children. Please make arrangements with your child's teacher.

Birthdays are celebrated at lunch at the Elementary level. The class will sing, “Happy Birthday,” and a treat may be shared. We ask that treats be healthy and allergen free. If your child’s birthday falls on a day when school is not in session, please contact their teacher to make other arrangements. If your child’s birthday is during summer vacation, we suggest celebrating their “half birthday.” If your child wishes to celebrate a birthday at school, please notify your child's Lead Teacher.

Field Trips

All field trips are educational and appropriate for Elementary students. Field trips are considered part of the educational curriculum. Consequently, if you choose for your child not to attend, you will need to make other arrangements for them for that school day(s).

- Field trips are a separate fee and are not covered under tuition costs.
- Transportation will be by school bus or parent drivers
- While on a field trip, if an injury occurs RPMS will use the nearest available hospital for emergency medical care.

Assessment and Standardized testing

We use progression through materials, observations, goal setting, and mastery as ways to assess your child. Our goal for children at R.P.M.S. is a well-rounded education with academic rigor, social and emotional competence, a work ethic that will guide them into the future, and human flourishing.

R.P.M.S. offers standardized benchmark assessment through Scantron's Performance Series twice a year. This assessment is a research-based, criterion-referenced computer-adaptive test that lets teachers pinpoint the instructional level of students across a range of subjects, capture immediate results, and produce standards-based reports including suggested learning objectives, on a scaled score. It is administered to all 3rd graders and above in the Fall and Spring. It is an adaptive assessment that allows a child to start at a very comfortable level and continues to become more challenging as the child answers questions correctly.

We view this kind of testing as a "practical life" skill that we begin in third grade. As children gain experience with this assessment tool, they gain competency and confidence. We view this as an opportunity for our students to become familiar with computer-based standardized assessments that they will be expected to use in future education.

This assessment represents your child's ability to answer questions in math and language on one particular day in a particular unfamiliar format. This sample of academics is only a part of your child's potential. It is not a representation of your child in full, as a learner.

Please contact lead teachers or Head of School if you have any questions.