

HERMOSA MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL

Middle School Parent's Contract Handbook

Honor, Knowledge, Unity

Hermosa is a school community of lifelong learners that integrates Montessori education with Arizona Academic Standards to foster self-motivated, moral, social, and environmentally responsible individuals.

2026 – 2027 School Year

“Men with hands and no head, and men with head and no hands are equally out of place in the modern community.”

— Dr. Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence

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Welcome to Hermosa Montessori

Welcome to Hermosa Montessori Charter School. At Hermosa Montessori we believe that a learning environment that corresponds to a child's developmental stage best supports intellectual and academic growth. We are also convinced that the family is of utmost importance in providing the love and guidance necessary for a child's natural development. We realize that you, as parents, are especially sensitive to your child's needs, and that you are trusting us to provide a positive school experience. Our goal at Hermosa Montessori is to enhance your relationship with your child by providing an experience that respects them as a whole person: emotionally, physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually.

You can play an important role in this Montessori experience. We hope that the following information and suggestions will help us provide a responsive and supportive environment for your adolescent. Please read this thoroughly and keep it for further reference.

Middle School Hours

- Monday – Friday: 8:30 – 3:00

The Middle School Program

The middle school design integrates current research in human development, trends and issues in education, and the Montessori philosophy. The Hermosa Montessori middle school environment is developmentally responsive, supporting the growth of the whole child — physical, psychosocial, moral, and cognitive. A safe learning environment, both physically and emotionally, where respect and responsibility are modeled and reinforced, is essential for the emerging adolescent.

The School Structure Offers

- A physically and emotionally safe environment
- A developmentally responsive curriculum
- Montessori teachers who know students personally
- A small, stable, supportive, real community
- Parent–teacher–student partnerships
- Large blocks of learning time
- Peer and cross-age teaching

The Early Adolescent Is

- An active, self-directed learner
- A vital member of the class, school, and wider community
- A vital member of the teacher–student–parent team
- Responsible for keeping commitments, being honest, and being respectful

The Curriculum and Instruction Includes

- Transdisciplinary learning themes
- Learning-how-to-learn strategies
- Personal learning plans

- Mastery, coaching, and exploratory activities
- Activities for self-expression, self-knowledge, and self-assessment
- A sense of community and social interaction with peers
- Meaningful and challenging work
- Activities that value multiple intelligences and a variety of learning styles
- Activities that foster interdependence and economic literacy
- School and community service projects
- Activities that allow work on and with the land

The Teachers Are

- Facilitators for learning
- Consultants for the students
- Creators of a positive climate for learning
- Communicators with parents and community
- Role models

General Information

Admission

HMCS provides equal employment and equal participation opportunity to all its employees and students, without regard to ethnicity, national origin, creed, gender, income level, physical ability or disability, age, proficiency in the English language, or athletic ability, to those who submit a timely application based on space or position available.

Health

The health of all children is of prime importance to us. Please safeguard your child and others by keeping them home if signs of illness are present. Children with the following symptoms must remain at home: cough, sore throat, sneezing, green nasal discharge, above-normal temperature, discharge from eyes, rash, or vomiting the day before or the morning before school.

Should a child become ill at school, they will be isolated from other children, and the parent will be notified and expected to make arrangements to pick up the child promptly. A child should be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school. Strep throat, pinworms, conjunctivitis, impetigo, head lice, measles, mumps, chicken pox, and scarlet fever are among the conditions categorized as “highly contagious.” Parents will be notified if any of these conditions arise.

All absences must be reported by calling the school office before 10:00 a.m.. Please notify the office of contagious diseases immediately so notice of exposure can be sent home to the parents of the child's classmates.

Medication

Please notify the school if your child is on medication. Never send medication with your child to keep in a locker or backpack — another child could take it, or the child could take too much. Many antibiotics

and other medications can be prescribed in two daily doses rather than three, eliminating the need for a school dose; please request this from your pediatrician. If a school dose is necessary, a physician's explanation and a completed medication administration form are required, and prescriptions must be in their original containers.

Accidents — Emergency Care

In a life-threatening situation, the school will call 911. It is imperative that parents keep the school up to date on phone numbers where they or other contacts can be reached. If a bump on the head occurs, parents will be called and informed. If any injury occurs and a parent cannot be reached, we will call the names listed on your emergency form in the order of your preference. An injury report will be sent home when appropriate.

Leaving School Early

Parents are asked to inform the office in advance if they plan to pick up their child before the regularly scheduled dismissal time. Parents must sign their child out in the office when picking up at any time other than regular dismissal.

Release Authorization

Students will not be released to anyone other than a parent, legal guardian, or someone duly authorized to pick them up. Phone authorization is not accepted. When an authorized person not recognized by school personnel arrives, they must go to the office with identification (driver's license or other photo ID) to be verified before the child is released.

Official Custody

If one parent has official custody of the child, the legal documents to this effect must be on file in the office. Without legal documentation, the school cannot refuse to release a child to either parent. Please work out clear visitation arrangements between parents and/or grandparents without putting the school or the child in a difficult position.

Transportation

The student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) assume full responsibility for the manner, safety, and protection of the student in traveling to and from school. Carpools are recommended.

Professional Assistance Outside of School

When a child's behavior indicates the need for outside professional help, parents will be called for a conference, and professional resources and suggestions will be offered. If a therapist is assisting the child, the therapist must consult with the school within the first two weeks of therapy; the school will then work with the family regarding the child's continued enrollment.

Child Find

Hermosa Montessori ensures that all school-age students attending its school who have a disability, and who are in need of special education and related services, will be identified, located, and evaluated. All newly enrolled students, and those transferring in without sufficient records, will be screened for

consideration of academic, cognitive, vision, hearing, communication, emotional, and psychomotor domains within 45 days of enrollment.

FERPA Public Notice

Under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), parents or legal guardians having custody of students shall be informed of their rights regarding student records and shall be permitted to inspect and review educational records as appropriate under the law. Personally identifiable information shall not be disclosed without written consent, and a record of disclosures shall be maintained. Parents, legal guardians, and eligible students shall be provided an opportunity to seek correction of education records where appropriate.

The district superintendent shall develop and maintain procedures necessary to assure compliance with FERPA, including periodic staff instruction and training regarding the privacy rights of students and parents and the confidential handling of student records. Copies of the district's policy and procedures are on file in the superintendent's office, the curriculum office, and the principal's office. Complaints regarding alleged failures to comply with FERPA may be filed in the superintendent's office.

Insurance

Hermosa Montessori carries an insurance policy that complies with the requirements of the State of Arizona.

Hermosa Montessori Family-School Commitment

Student Responsibilities

- Be a contributing member of the class community and help build a peaceful community
- Act with integrity, respect, and responsibility
- Work hard, use time wisely, and complete each learning cycle
- Participate in outdoor education studies with a positive attitude
- Demonstrate mastery of at least 90% in designated areas of study; if mastery is not obtained, seek assistance and arrange an equivalent retest during tutorials or study hall
- Complete daily homework and have necessary materials at school by 8:30
- Prepare for and lead scheduled family conferences and help set educational goals
- Complete a weekly progress report, have it signed by a parent, and return it on Monday
- Complete a progress report and self-assessment at the end of each cycle

Teacher Responsibilities

- Create an atmosphere where learning can occur
- Facilitate students in their learning
- Offer adolescents challenging and meaningful work
- Meet with each student regularly to review progress and discuss concerns
- Be available for students who need to finish work during study hall and immersion week
- Schedule three family conferences each year, plus additional ones as needed

- Serve as liaison with community resource people

Parent Responsibilities

- Read the entire Parent Handbook and familiarize themselves with the basic Montessori philosophy
- Keep abreast of current activities through Hermosa newsletters, notices sent home, and email
- Observe the school calendar
- Provide access to resources and materials for history, science, and other class projects, including transportation to the local library
- Attend scheduled family conferences and participate in establishing the adolescent's educational plan
- Support participation in outdoor education activities and attend scheduled trip meetings
- Review the weekly progress report, sign it, and return it the following Monday; review the cycle summary report and contact teachers with any concerns
- Support their adolescent in completing make-up work during study hall and immersion week, or over the summer if needed
- Meet with the teacher if the student's behavior requires a conference
- Help select and provide transportation for the career-education business internship
- Provide a time and place at home conducive to completing homework daily
- Support their adolescent in developing organizational, decision-making, and time-management skills through feedback

Academic Work

Middle School Curriculum

HMCS Middle School courses of study reflect an integration of Arizona Academic Standards, current research on the developmental needs of early adolescents, the Montessori philosophy, current learning theory, and the skills needed for a productive life in the twenty-first century.

The curriculum is designed as a two-year program. Language, speech, Spanish, physical education, outdoor education, service learning, and fine arts are courses of continuous progress. Science, social studies, geography, health, and math are studied by topic or concept. Because the sequence differs from traditional programs, families should plan on a two-year commitment for optimal learning.

Language Arts

Language arts includes vocabulary, literature, grammar, mechanics, and writing. Vocabulary is presented across the curriculum and formally approached through the study of word origins and a structured vocabulary program. Literature includes the study of literary elements and reading across genres. Each cycle, students read an anthology, a novel connected to the cycle's theme, and a personal-choice novel; literature discussions follow a Socratic-seminar format. During each cycle, students attend writing workshops and write in the areas of personal choice, science, social studies, and health. Students write one research paper a year as part of independent study, write daily responses to literature, and publish

at least one piece of writing each cycle. Published writing is evaluated by peers and teachers using a shared rubric.

Speech

Speech includes a daily communications lab focused on grace and courtesy, listening skills, note-taking, active participation in group discussion, articulating ideas, and formal presentation. Students learn communication skills such as acknowledging others, “I” messages, active listening, goal setting, and group decision making, and practice these skills daily in community meetings, class committees, small-group projects, and peer and cross-age teaching. Students give both group and individual presentations each cycle.

Social Studies

This course includes geography and history. The geography curriculum covers location, place, movement, regions, and the interaction of people and their environment. In Social World Year A, the history curriculum explores Forces (Revolutions), Structures (Governments and U.S. Government), Power (Human Rights Movements), and Balance (Peace Education and Future Vision). In Social World Year B, it explores Connections (Native American history), Exploration and Perspective, Identity (Immigration), Systems (Economics), and Interdependence (Ecology and Future Visions). Students complete individual and group projects, with an emphasis on large questions and patterns across history and its integration with other disciplines.

Math

The math curriculum combines curriculum integration with focused practice of basic skills; homework problems provide comprehensive review of material from previous lessons. Students are expected to demonstrate mastery of comprehensive unit tests at 90% accuracy or better.

Algebra

This course teaches foundational algebraic concepts alongside critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. As with Math, students are expected to demonstrate mastery of comprehensive tests at 90% accuracy or better.

Physical Science (Natural World)

The physical science curriculum includes Forces (Motion and the Four Fundamental Forces), Structures (Nature of Science and the Structure of Matter), Power (Energy and Waves), Changes (Work and Machines), and Balance (Chemistry and Future Technology). Students complete individual and group projects with an emphasis on large questions and patterns across science and its integration with other disciplines.

Life Science (Natural World)

The life science curriculum includes Connections (Cells and Living Things), Exploration (Viruses, Monera, Protista, Fungi), Identity (Genetics), Systems (Animal Systems), and Interdependence (Ecosystems and Future Vision). Students complete individual and group projects with an emphasis on large questions and patterns across science. Outdoor-education experiences and appropriate use of tools and equipment are part of this study.

Physical Education and Health

Physical education focuses on team sports, individual sports, and aerobic activity, which may include volleyball, soccer, basketball, swimming, martial arts, and softball, along with cooperative games; all students are included in all activities. Health addresses issues pertinent to the needs of early adolescents, alternating focus between guided-adolescent-development curricula and social-emotional skill building. This program aims to inform students about the transition from childhood to adolescence, connect them with trusted adult mentors, and create meaningful experiences that mark this stage of growth. Students spend time each day in personal reflection to develop intrapersonal skills.

Technology and Digital Literacy

This course builds computer productivity skills — word processing, spreadsheets, databases, and graphics — alongside digital citizenship, online research and information-evaluation skills, and introductory computational thinking. These skills are integrated across all subject areas. Students learn to use technology, including internet research tools, safely, purposefully, and responsibly, consistent with the school's technology-use guidelines described later in this handbook.

Career Education / Service Learning

In February, 7th grade students spend a week as an assistant in a Montessori classroom while the 8th grade students spend the week working with a business of their choice. For both experiences, students prepare a business letter stating their goals and confirming arrangements, along with a resume; supervising adults complete an evaluation form. Students also take part in other service opportunities as they arise.

In economics, students run a class business: selling stock for initial investment, keeping records, managing inventory and supplies, and selling products.

Fine Arts / Electives

Students choose areas of exploration that vary each year based on student interest and the availability of outside instructors. Courses may include computer arts, drawing, painting, sculpture, graphic arts, pottery, cooking, drama, music, hiking, gardening, building, ect.

Cycles of Work

Each year is organized into four 6- week cycles, each followed by an immersion week for outdoor education, internships, and testing. Students have the ability to choose and plan their own immersion week each year as well. The cycle format helps students build organization, decision-making, and time-management skills. Students who are not on target by Friday are expected to catch up over the weekend with parental support. Students complete weekly progress reports for parents to review, sign, and return the following Monday, and there is daily study-hall time to complete work. If mastery is not achieved, a grade reflects the work completed. At the end of each cycle, grades will be sent home.

Classroom Work

The school day includes both personal and group work. Personal work matches each student's skills, abilities, and interests, with a variety of work choices in every academic area to be completed alone or in

small self-chosen groups; it is assessed individually through oral or written mastery checks, with opportunities for modified, standard, and advanced work in most areas.

Group work is done in randomly assigned groups that work together for six weeks on physical tasks — such as the class business and physical education — and on academic tasks within thematic units that integrate all subject areas. Thematic units are assessed through individual written tests, a group presentation and product, and a self-assessment of the group process.

Students are expected to keep up with classwork and, if necessary, complete additional work at home or in tutorials. If a student repeatedly misuses class time or interferes with classmates' work, a conference is held and an action plan is developed, which may include having an adult monitor the student's behavior at school until a pattern of appropriate behavior is established.

Homework

Homework includes bringing home and returning binders and materials, math problems, literature reading, vocabulary, and self-assigned work. For math, students complete a lesson and practice problems, check their own work, and correct errors; if help is needed, students note the problem numbers and ask for assistance the next day. A test follows roughly every eight to ten lessons or at the end of each unit. Math homework should take approximately 30–45 minutes per day, and students should read at least 30 minutes each night and respond in writing, across the anthology, novel, and subject-area reading. Independent-study homework consists of research and writing.

Parents are asked to support their adolescent with a family schedule that allows dedicated time and space each evening for schoolwork, ideally free from the distraction of screens. Homework assignments are given at the start of each cycle so students can plan ahead. A student who does not complete homework or bring necessary materials is not prepared for class, which reduces the value of time spent at school; if this becomes a pattern, a conference will be held. Students record their homework-completion ratio on their weekly progress and cycle summary forms.

Mastery Learning

Mastery learning is a form of personalized learning that gives students the time needed to master a skill before moving to the next level of work, placing responsibility for learning on the student rather than on accepting a low grade without real understanding. The teacher's role is to break learning into manageable steps, offer strategies for internalizing knowledge, and give students the time needed to learn the material. Mastery learning offers clear expectations, fosters genuine mastery, is non-competitive, and builds student responsibility. The general procedure is to present information, provide learning strategies and activities, use a variety of assessments, and re-teach and re-test as necessary.

Quizzes give feedback during the learning process and do not require 90%+ mastery. Tests are given at the close of a body of work — such as math chapters, vocabulary units, or a unit of science or social studies.

Coaching

Coaching, a process articulated by Mortimer Adler and TheodoreSizer, supports continued improvement in reading, writing, thinking, and creative skills. It applies to homework, writing, presentations, literature

work, technology projects, and activities across content areas, following this cycle: information, student product, teacher and/or peer feedback, and revision.

Experiential Learning

As at every level of Montessori education, students have opportunities for discovery and experiential learning where participation is the goal — most notably in career education, outdoor education, electives, and trips.

Multiple Intelligences

Research on the nature of human intelligence indicates that intelligence is a multiple reality expressed across different capacities, and that these capacities can be strengthened over time. Students take a survey to reflect on where they currently stand across Howard Gardner's eight intelligences: verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, naturalist, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Students are asked to design their work to draw on multiple intelligences and to reflect on their growth in each area.

Research and Science Fair

Students choose to either complete an in-depth research paper or participate in SARSEF each year. They are expected to complete this work independently. Meaning, there will not be dictated class time for work on their project. We will provide lessons as appropriate. This work is completed individually. Parents are asked to sign a form agreeing to the selected topic and materials, to support their adolescent by providing transportation to the library, and to offer feedback along the way.

Health and Wellness Education

Health and wellness education is an integral part of the middle school program. The factors that most help students make good choices for themselves include decision-making strategies, goal setting and planning, constructive ways of having fun, stress management, healthy peer relationships, self-confidence, taking responsibility for one's behavior, respect for others, and the ability to defer immediate desires. These are ongoing skills woven throughout classroom life. In addition, the health curriculum includes age-appropriate instruction in sexuality education and substance-use prevention, with follow-up activities and discussion.

As part of this curriculum, eighth-grade students take turns caring for an infant simulator doll for several days at a time. The doll is equipped with sensors that require ongoing feeding, comforting, and diaper changes, and that cry unpredictably, giving students a hands-on sense of the responsibilities of parenting. Family members are welcome to offer parenting advice, but are asked to limit how much of the actual caregiving they take on so students experience the full responsibility themselves.

Hermosa Montessori Charter School is a drug-free school. Students who use alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, or other controlled substances during or after school hours are subject to disciplinary action by the school.

Physical Education and Personal World

Physical education is an important part of a holistic education. Students should come dressed for physical activity daily, or be able to change quickly into sneakers and shorts. Students are expected to actively participate in all physical activities to receive credit; if a student cannot participate for medical reasons, this must be documented with a note from a parent. When a student cannot be actively engaged, the P.E. teacher will assign an alternate activity such as walking.

As part of the health curriculum, students spend thirty minutes each day after lunch in personal reflection. Dr. Montessori observed that early adolescents have a strong drive toward self-knowledge, which helps them develop their identity. In our fast-paced world, we want students to practice reflecting on goals, reducing stress, and building a sense of personal purpose. During this time, students will work on guided reflections, silent reading, or take part in guided-adolescent-development activities.

Tutorials

Tutorials run from 3:00–4:00, Monday through Thursday. During this time, teachers are available to help students, monitor homework, and administer retakes of quizzes and tests; all retests must be completed during tutorials. Students who need tutorial time are expected to stay until 4:00, since early departures are disruptive. Tutorials may be canceled during immersion weeks or for monthly staff meetings.

Portfolios

At the end of each cycle, students file completed work into a binder. In December and April, students review their binder and reflect on their growth, selecting representative pieces of work to prepare for their family conference in January and May. At the conference, students present their portfolio to their parents and use it to support their self-assessment.

Achievement Tests

During the spring, students take a combined standardized test and Arizona's statewide assessment. The focus is each student's continual academic growth. Research conducted across multiple Montessori schools shows a positive correlation between years spent in a Montessori program and performance on standardized achievement tests.

Family–School Partnerships

Family Conferences

A family conference is held at the beginning of the school year so students can develop their educational plan for the year. Teachers advise parents and students of grade-level expectations, and together they help the student set realistic goals and follow through on commitments. At this conference, a contract is created and students set a semester goal. Students also complete a series of inventories to identify their personal learning style, which helps them become more efficient learners as they build their personal learning plan.

Additional family conferences are held in October and May. Students prepare for these conferences by evaluating their progress in academic work, personal responsibility, and group responsibility, and by

assembling a portfolio of their work; they then gather their parents' and teacher's perspectives in each area. Students, parents, or teachers may request additional conferences at any time during the year.

Summary for Parents

At the end of each week, students complete a form identifying whether they have completed the appropriate amount of work for the week. This cumulative form must be signed by a parent and returned each Monday. Parents are asked to monitor the plan and help their adolescent keep commitments; students who do not complete weekly work attend Friday study hall to catch up with teacher assistance. This will be held in the afternoon and will cause them to miss their electives.

At the end of each cycle, students summarize their work — recording assessments, activities, and projects, and writing a self-assessment. A teacher reviews this form, and a copy is sent home. Grades will also be sent home at the end of each cycle. We ask that parents sign and return them. Parents are asked to review the report with their adolescent and to contact teachers with any questions or concerns; a meeting with parents, teacher, and student can be scheduled for problem-solving if needed.

Communications Between Family and School

When a teacher has concerns about a student's behavior or activities, the teacher will first discuss the issue with the student. If the teacher determines that a parent needs specific information, the student will be asked to share it with their parents and to confirm with the teacher, within 24 hours, that the information was received; a meeting can then be scheduled if needed. This procedure is designed to encourage students to communicate directly and honestly with their parents.

Classroom Procedures

Integrity, Respect, and Responsibility

Classroom life at Hermosa is built on integrity, respect, and responsibility, values the Montessori classroom offers many opportunities to develop at every level. Integrity means trust and honesty; at the beginning of the school year, Cycle 0, begins each year with activities that help students and teachers build trust in one another, one of the first steps in forming a community of learners. Honesty in personal relationships and academic work is a cornerstone of classroom expectations.

Students are expected to treat themselves, each other, and the classroom materials with respect. Grace-and-courtesy practices are part of everyday classroom learning, and everyone in the environment deserves to feel affirmed. Most textbooks and learning materials belong to the school and must be kept in good condition so other students can use them.

Responsibility has two dimensions. Responsibility I is taking care of one's own needs in the learning environment — time management, completing homework on time, staying focused, keeping materials organized, and problem-solving. Responsibility II is taking care of the needs of others and contributing to the group — supporting classmates, working cooperatively, listening actively, and managing oneself well within a group. Both are essential to a healthy classroom community.

Communication Strategies

One of the early adolescent's key developmental tasks is learning to build appropriate relationships with others. The program teaches four communication strategies: acknowledging others, "I" messages,

structured problem solving (goal setting, decision making, and win/win solutions), and active listening. Students learn to identify which strategy fits a given situation by working through a short set of guiding questions; this same framework, included in the appendix, can be useful for parents helping their adolescent work through social challenges at home.

Committees

Each month, students participate in classroom committees chosen at random each cycle, rotating through leadership, business, and environment roles. The leadership committee leads daily class meetings, greets guests, monitors whole-group behavior, supervises lunch, and guides transitions. The business committee plans, runs, and records the finances of the class business. The environment committee maintains the classroom environment, inside and out, including supplies, cleaning, recycling, and plant care.

Dress Guidelines

Student dress should allow comfortable participation in the many physical and outdoor activities that are part of middle school life, and should not create a distraction from work. Shorts should be at least three inches long at the inseam; shirts should be free of inappropriate words, logos, or images and long enough that the hem overlaps the top of the pants during all activities. Tank-top straps should be at least one inch wide. A student who arrives dressed inappropriately will be asked to call a parent to bring a change of clothes.

Personal Devices and Screen Time

To help students stay focused and present with their classmates, personal electronic devices — including phones, smart watches, and other Wi-Fi-capable devices — are not permitted for personal use on campus during the school day. Students hand in any personal devices to their teacher at arrival, and devices are returned at dismissal. Families needing to reach a student during the day should contact the front office, and students needing to reach a family member may use the office phone. Devices used for approved instructional purposes are addressed separately under Technology and Digital Literacy.

Current research on adolescents and screen use has moved away from a single recommended number of daily hours. Leading pediatric organizations now emphasize the quality and purpose of screen use — schoolwork, creativity, and staying connected with family and friends versus passive or compulsive use — alongside protecting sleep, physical activity, and in-person relationships. At the same time, several recent studies link heavy recreational screen use, particularly two or more hours a day along with late-night use, to poorer sleep and higher rates of anxiety and depressive symptoms in early adolescents. In light of this research, we ask families to partner with us by keeping screens out of bedrooms at night, prioritizing 8–10 hours of sleep and daily physical activity, and building screen-free times into the family routine, such as during meals and the hour before bed.

Snacks

Research indicates that early adolescents benefit from periodic snacks to support their growing bodies, and that adequate hydration supports the ability to concentrate and study. Students may bring healthy snacks from home and must bring a water bottle and drink water throughout the day.

Lunches

Students may bring lunch from home. Lunches should be nutritious and well balanced; students may not bring candy or carbonated beverages for lunch or snacks.

Discipline Policy

For optimal learning to occur, the classroom atmosphere must be physically and psychologically safe. To ensure this safety, a set of baseline ground rules and consequences has been established.

Logical Consequences by Behavior

As part of our commitment to a safe and inclusive learning environment, we use logical consequences to address unexpected behaviors. Logical consequences help students understand the connection between their actions and the outcomes that follow, fostering responsibility, positive behavior, and personal growth.

The table below summarizes consequences for common categories of unexpected behavior. Each consequence is proportional to the behavior and escalates with repeated offenses: a first offense generally begins with a reminder or brief separation from the group; later offenses add family notification and conferences; and the most serious or repeated offenses may result in suspension or referral to the Governing Board for consideration of expulsion, consistent with A.R.S. §§ 15-341, 15-342, and 15-843.

If total suspensions for a student reach 10 school days in a year, the Governing Board must conduct a hearing, with ample notice to parents, to consider expulsion or other measures to prevent future incidents.

Behavior	Consequences by Offense
Disruptive Behavior	1st: Verbal reminder. 2nd: Removed to a quiet space away from the group. 3rd: Same, plus a phone call and written notice home. 4th: Same, plus a parent/teacher conference.
Unprepared for Class (homework, materials, or weekly work not complete)	2nd time in a cycle: Parents notified. 3rd time in a cycle: Student Action Plan, signed by parents. Continued: Conference with parents and a Family Action Plan; incomplete mastery work may be reflected as a lower grade on the transcript.
Disrespectful or Inappropriate Language	1st: Verbal reminder. 2nd: Administration notified; phone call and notice home; meeting with the person affected. 3rd: Same, with possible removal from class or peers at teacher's discretion. 4th: Removed for the remainder of the day and suspended the following day; parent/teacher/student conference. 5th: Suspension extends to two additional days; referred to the Governing Board for consideration of expulsion.

Behavior	Consequences by Offense
Academic Dishonesty (Cheating, Plagiarism, or Lying)	1st: Work redone; conference with teacher and student; notice home. 2nd: Same, plus parent/teacher/student conference and grade impact on the assignment. 3rd: Same, plus suspension for the remainder of the day; referred to the Governing Board if the pattern continues.
Property Damage or Theft	1st: Administration notified; restriction of privileges at teacher's discretion; notice home if the student is known; restitution equal to the loss. 2nd: Same, plus a parent/admin/teacher/student conference. 3rd: Same, plus suspension for that day and the following day. 4th–5th: Suspension extends progressively; the fifth offense is referred to the Governing Board for consideration of expulsion.
Prohibited Electronic Device Use	1st: Device confiscated; notice home; student retrieves the device from the administration office. 2nd: Same, plus a phone call home; a parent — not the student — must retrieve the device; parent/teacher conference. 3rd: Same, plus suspension for the remainder of the day and the following day. 4th: Suspension extends to two additional days; referred to the Governing Board for consideration of expulsion.
Aggression	1st: Administration notified; separated from others; phone call and notice home; meeting with the person affected. 2nd: Same, with removal to a quiet space away from the community. 3rd: Same, plus a parent/teacher/student conference. 4th: Same, plus suspension for the remainder of the day and one full day. 5th: Suspension extends to two full days; referred to the Governing Board for consideration of expulsion.
Violence or Threat of Violence	1st: Administration notified; immediate removal from class for the remainder of the day; phone call and notice home; loss of privileges for one week. 2nd–4th: Same, with suspension escalating from one to three additional days and a parent/teacher/student conference added. 5th: Suspension continues at three additional days; referred to the Governing Board for consideration of expulsion.
Causing Bodily Harm	1st: Administration notified; removed from class that day and the following day; phone call and notice home. 2nd: Same, plus a parent/teacher/student conference. 3rd: Suspension extends to two additional days; loss of privileges for one week. 4th: Same as 3rd; referred to the Governing Board for consideration of expulsion.
Zero Tolerance: Weapons and Drugs	Any offense: Immediately reported to local law enforcement; immediate removal from class; suspension that day and the following three days; phone call and notice home; parent/student/teacher conference; referred to the Governing Board for consideration of expulsion.

This table summarizes behavior consequences for quick reference. The complete Discipline and Behavior Policy — including full purpose and philosophy, appeal process, and support resources — is available in the school office and on the school's website.

When a child's behavior indicates the need for outside professional help, parents will be called for a conference and offered professional resources and suggestions. If a therapist is assisting the child, the therapist must consult with the school within the first two weeks of therapy.

Excessive Absences and Tardies

Students are expected to be at school by 8:30 every day; tardies are recorded. Each student is expected to attend classes daily except when illness, injury, or conditions beyond the student's control prevent attendance. When a student misses class, it is the student's responsibility to meet with the teacher to arrange a plan for completing missed work. Short absences should be made up within a week, and longer absences by the end of the work cycle. Frequent absences, for any reason, are certain to affect a student's performance in school.

Excessive absence is defined as when the number of absent days exceeds 10% of required days, or 5% by January 1, or more than six consecutive days.

Excessive absenteeism, as defined in A.R.S. § 15-803, may result in penalties including failure in a subject, failure to pass a grade, suspension, or expulsion. These penalties do not apply to students who have completed course requirements and whose absence is solely due to illness, disease, or accident certified by a licensed professional.

Steps to Follow After an Absence

- Call the office by 10:00 a.m. or send a note stating the reason for absence.
- A doctor's statement will be required for an extended or chronic illness.
- Homework and classwork will accumulate over the duration of the absence; students are allowed one day per day absent to complete the work, and group work must be made up in written form.
- Tests missed due to absence must be rescheduled within one week.

This section summarizes our attendance obligations under Arizona law. The complete Discipline and Behavior Handbook and Excessive Absence & Excessive Tardiness policy — including full procedures, appeal rights, and support resources — is available on our website and in the front office.

Non Promotion

Promotion is a team-based assessment that includes the following:

- Portfolio assessment
- Completion of work
- Teacher observation of classroom behavior by the current and prospective teacher
- Social-emotional maturity
- Standardized test scores
- Recommendation of the current teacher, prospective teacher, principal, and parent

The team's decision is made by majority vote. The complete non-promotion policy, as adopted by the Governing Board, is available in the office or on the school's website.

Trips

At the start of the school year, students take part in a Mount Lemmon camping trip featuring trust activities, group initiatives, and individual challenges, designed to build a cooperative spirit and a strong classroom community for the year ahead. In the spring, each class goes on an adventure trip. Ground rules are written by students and approved by chaperones for each trip. Students who break ground rules on a trip will be sent home at the family's expense. Parents are encouraged to help their young person earn a portion of trip costs. Please note - these trips are a part of our curriculum and are not optional. If your student does not attend it will result in absences.

Suggested Reading for Middle School Students

The list below reflects a core of enduring, widely taught titles for early adolescents. Teachers supplement and periodically refresh this list each year with current, award-winning, and diverse titles to reflect students' interests and a broad range of voices and experiences; ask your child's teacher for the current year's full reading list.

Across Five Aprils — Irene Hunt	Little Women — Louisa May Alcott
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn — Mark Twain	Lord of the Flies — William Golding
All Creatures Great and Small — James Herriot	The Martian Chronicles — Ray Bradbury
Animal Farm — George Orwell	My Brother Sam Is Dead — James & Christopher Collier
Anne of Green Gables — L. M. Montgomery	My Side of the Mountain — Jean Craighead George
April Morning — Howard Fast	1984 — George Orwell
Bridge to Terabithia — Katherine Paterson	Night — Elie Wiesel
The Call of the Wild — Jack London	Of Mice and Men — John Steinbeck
The Cay — Theodore Taylor	The Old Man and the Sea — Ernest Hemingway
The Chocolate War — Robert Cormier	Old Yeller — Fred Gipson
The Diary of Anne Frank — Anne Frank	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest — Ken Kesey
A Day No Pigs Would Die — Robert Newton Peck	The Outsiders — S. E. Hinton
Dragonwings — Laurence Yep	The Pearl — John Steinbeck
Fahrenheit 451 — Ray Bradbury	Red Badge of Courage — Stephen Crane

Farewell to Manzanar — Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston	Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry — Mildred D. Taylor
Flowers for Algernon — Daniel Keyes	The Scarlet Letter — Nathaniel Hawthorne
The Giver — Lois Lowry	A Separate Peace — John Knowles
The Great Gilly Hopkins — Katherine Paterson	Souder — William H. Armstrong
The Hobbit — J. R. R. Tolkien	To Kill a Mockingbird — Harper Lee
Hiroshima — John Hersey	Treasure Island — Robert Louis Stevenson
I Am Fifteen — And I Don't Want to Die — Christine Arnothy	Uncle Tom's Cabin — Harriet Beecher Stowe
I Heard the Owl Call My Name — Margaret Craven	Watership Down — Richard Adams
Island of the Blue Dolphins — Scott O'Dell	The Westing Game — Ellen Raskin
Jacob Have I Loved — Katherine Paterson	Where the Red Fern Grows — Wilson Rawls
Johnny Tremain — Esther Forbes	The Witch of Blackbird Pond — Elizabeth George Speare
Julie of the Wolves — Jean Craighead George	A Wrinkle in Time — Madeleine L'Engle
Light in the Forest — Conrad Richter	

Appendix: Communication Strategies

This framework, introduced earlier in this handbook, may also help parents work through their adolescent's social dilemmas at home.

Acknowledging

Purpose: express appreciation. How to: use the person's name and focus on the specific behavior. Pitfall: the behavior isn't fully "owned" unless the person acknowledges it themselves.

Active Listening

Purpose: empower others to solve their own problem, show caring, and reflect the real message being communicated. How to: paraphrase, attend verbally and nonverbally, listen for word choice, and use solution-focused language. Pitfalls: solving the problem for the other person, judging, or avoiding the conversation.

"I" Messages

Purpose: express a point of view without blaming, and take responsibility for one's own feelings. How to: "When [situation/behavior], I feel [feeling] because [effect/consequence]." Pitfall: slipping into "you" language.

Goal Setting, Decision Making, and Conflict Resolution

Purpose: reach a resolution. How to: define the problem, brainstorm options, evaluate them, choose one, implement it, and reflect on the outcome. Pitfall: not including everyone who is affected in the process.

Brainstorming

Purpose: generate as many ideas as possible. How to: select a recorder, set a time limit, record every idea mentioned, build on others' ideas, and use imagination freely. Pitfall: judging ideas before the brainstorming is complete.