



# Senior School Student Handbook



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

Montessori classrooms are extremely busy places and it can be difficult for families to keep abreast of all the items of interest. We expect a great deal of our students and know that you do as well. Towards this end, it is important that we all maintain timely and open lines of communication. Senior School students are learning to take ownership for their education and we assist them by making them the primary couriers of information. Outside of school, email is the primary medium and information is sent to students individually or as part of a group. Often, parents are care-copied to keep them in the loop. At other times parents may be contacted directly either by email or phone.

In summary, here are the primary ways communication takes place between families and the senior school.

#### **Sigma Class: Grades 7 and 8**

- Each student has a Zip binder which contains their entire study guide for the current cycle (5 weeks) This binder should go home with the student each night and return each morning. Please familiarize yourself with the study guides as they are integral to our program.
- Also contained in the Zip Binder is a graph on which the student records their progress visually. This must be updated each week and presented to a parent. (Friday pm) On the back is a communication form which is signed and returned to school on Monday. I encourage you to create/maintain a schedule were 10-15minutes is spent each week going over the graph (as opposed to signing the form in the parking lot on Monday morning!)
- We often email students and parents either individually or in groups to inform them of upcoming events or concerns.
- The school website is constantly updated to provide up to date information.

- When appropriate directors may choose to place a phone call or schedule a meeting to address concerns.
- When required we create individual communication strategies based on the needs of a student/family.

### **Omega Class: Grades 9-12**

- It is expected that each student will bring a Laptop or Tablet to school each day to facilitate their work and communication.
- All course information is provided online to students, utilizing the Canvas program found at <https://canvas.instructure.com>. This will include cycle and semester outlines, upcoming assignments and lessons, due dates and results for assignments.
- **There will be an information evening to familiarize families with the Canvas program and it is expected that parents will continue to monitor progress throughout the school year.**
- All students will create an Omega email address. This will be used for both Teacher/Student and Student/Student communication. Teachers will also regularly email parents regarding any upcoming events or possible concerns.
- Omega students will also be keeping a log book, listing both daily work completed and upcoming work to be done, either at home or in upcoming days in class.

It is not overly dramatic to say that this is the area that can have the greatest affect on a student's success. When a student knows that parents/guardians and teachers are communicating fluidly they feel supported and respond with stronger work and a more positive experience.

## **Senior school Program**

The secondary design is an integration of the current research in human development, the trends and issues in education, and the Montessori philosophy. The mission of the program is to provide opportunities for adolescents to be self-confident and gain self-knowledge, to belong to a community, to learn to be adaptable, to be academically competent and challenged, and to create a vision for their personal future; thus, to empower early adolescents.

### **The adolescent is:**

- an active, self-directed learner
- a vital member of the class, school, spiritual, city and global community
- a vital member of the teacher-student-parent team
- responsible for keeping commitments, being honest, and respectful

### **The Teachers are:**

- Referred to as Directors/Directresses
- facilitators for learning
- Approachable and Credible
- creators of a positive climate for learning
- communicators with parents and community
- role models

### **The school structure offers:**

- a learner-centered environment
- a developmentally-responsive curriculum and teaching team of Montessori teachers with additional adults as resources
- parents-teachers-student partnerships
- multi-aged groupings of 11-14 year olds and 14 – 18 year olds
- large blocks of uninterrupted learning time
- peer and cross-age teaching

### **The curriculum and instruction includes:**

- Transdisciplinary themes
- learning how to learn strategies
- Emphasis on “real world” experiential learning

personal learning plans  
curriculum to nurture spiritual growth  
mastery, coaching and exploratory activities  
long-term cooperative learning projects  
a strong sense of community and social interaction with peers  
meaningful and challenging work  
activities for self-expression, self-knowledge, and self-  
assessment  
activities that value all nine intelligences and a variety of  
learning styles  
activities to foster interdependence  
activities for learning economic independence  
school and community service projects  
activities that allow work on and with the land

### **Homework**

At the Senior school level there is a great deal of curriculum to be covered in a school year. For this reason, we expect that each student will do 30-90 minutes of homework on school nights. This expectation will increase as the students move into the more rigorous curriculum at the grade 11-12 level.

Senior school students are welcome to attend daily homework sessions from 3:00 – 4:00 for the duration of the year. These are quiet, supervised times which can be very conducive to getting work completed. They will be held Monday - Thursday in the Sigma and Omega classrooms.

### **Mastery Learning**

Mastery learning is a form of personalized learning that gives students the necessary time to master particular skills before progressing to the next level of work. The student takes on the responsibility of learning a skill versus merely accepting a low grade and never really learning the information. The teacher's job is to break down the learning steps, to offer suggestions for internalizing the knowledge, and to give the time necessary to learn the information. According to research, the advantage of mastery learning is that it offers clear expectations, fosters mastery of a unit of study, is not competitive, and encourages student responsibility. Quizzes are distinguished from tests.

Quizzes are to give feedback during the learning process and do not require a 90+%. Tests are given at the closure of a body of work such as math chapters, vocabulary units, and after the completion of an area of study in health, science, and math.

### **Experiential Learning**

As in all levels of Montessori education, there are opportunities for discovery and experiential learning in which participation is the goal. The areas in the secondary program where experiential learning is the goal are: career education, outdoor education, Gateway projects, Leadership classes, and out trips.

### **Multiple Intelligences**

Recent discoveries about the nature of human intelligences have indicated that we have the ability to enhance and amplify our intelligences, and that intelligence is a multiple reality that occurs in different parts of the brain/mind system. Students will take a survey of where they are on the continuum of each of the eight intelligences as identified by Howard Gardner in his book, Frames of Mind. The eight intelligences are verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and natural. Students are asked to design their work to include each of the intelligences and reflect upon their growth in each area. Gardner has recently added an additional intelligence, which is visionary (spiritual). Information on this new intelligence will be published in the near future.

### **Drug and Sexuality Education**

Drug and sexuality education are an integral part of the secondary program. The significant factors in helping students make good choices for themselves are: decision-making strategies, goal setting and planning, constructive ways of having fun, stress management, good peer relations, self confidence, responsibility for their behavior, respect for others, and the deference of immediate desires. These elements are on-going skills and activities in the classroom. We will be visited by several experts including our Saanich Police Liaison and Health Nurse.

### **Physical Education and Personal Reflection**

Physical education is an important part of a holistic education. At the senior school level each student is expected to participate in a yearlong PE/Outdoor Education/Active Living course involving regular classes, morning activities and three multi-day outdoor ed trips. Students will need to have appropriate gym strip for all classes. Students will be asked to actively participate in all physical activities in order to receive a credit in physical education. If a student is unable to participate for medical reasons, this needs to be documented by a note from the parents.

As part of the health curriculum, students spend thirty minutes each day after lunch in personal reflection. Dr. Montessori felt that early adolescents have a quest for self-knowledge, which in turn helps adolescents develop their identity. In our hurried society, we want the students to learn to spend time reflecting on goals, reducing stress, and creating a personal vision. During this time, students will work by themselves on guided self-knowledge activities that are recorded in a journal as relaxing music is played, take a power nap, stretch / light exercise, do creative arts, or participate in other suitable activities.

### **Field trips / Outdoor ed. Trips**

Because of our commitment to reality based experiential learning both Sigma and Omega classes will be leaving the school grounds often. Some of the field trips have already been entered into the calendar while others can only be finalized closer to the actual date. They will be entered as soon as possible. We do not send out a permission form for each trip but will send verbal and electronic reminders to ensure there are no conflicts with appointments.

Outdoor Education experiences occur 3 times per year, in the fall, winter and spring. These trips are an integral part of both the student's personal growth and their curriculum. Attendance is mandatory on all three trips.



**Sigma Students:**

In the fall (September or October) we go to Strathcona Park Lodge to participate in their outstanding outdoor ed program. <http://www.strathcona.bc.ca>.

During this week long trip, the focus is on building strong relationships through physical and mental challenges. We stay in Cabins on the lake and enjoy the amazing buffet meals. Please find attached a copy of the waiver and medical release form for that trip. There is also a packing list.

**Omega Students:**

All Omega students will participate in three major trips each year. The first trip and last trip of each year may vary in destination, but will each have their own ultimate goal; the first trip of the year will focus on teambuilding and fostering a strong sense of community, while the last trip of the year will work to challenge students, both physically and mentally, and build upon their safety zones.

These trips comprise part of both Leadership and PE marks, and are a mandatory part of Omega Curriculum.

In addition to the trips that all students take, Grade 11 students will also participate in a multi-day University tour. This will occur during the same week that the Grade 9s and 10s of Omega are completing work experience. The campuses toured will include both local and provincial Universities and Colleges and will vary year by year.

## **F.S.A.**

In October the grade seven students will be writing the Foundation Skills assessment. This yearly battery of tests provides the ministry of education with a snapshot of how well B.C. students are learning foundation skills in Reading Comprehension, Writing, and Numeracy. Families who wish to abstain from these tests may do so by informing the school in writing.

### **Completing work when away.**

Students are expected to keep up with work when they are away. Please help them with this responsibility by encouraging them to contact other students or directors to find out what was missed. In most cases the student will have all the relevant materials in their binder and can keep up from outside the classroom.

Omega students can also check their Canvas account for any upcoming assignments or support materials.

If a student knows that they will be absent for a family holiday or other commitment, please inform the classroom directors as soon as possible so they can help the student prepare for the missed time. This is also helpful in organizing group work so that the student can participate fully and not compromise the group's success.

### **Lockers**

Each student chooses a locker for their use during the year. This is where the student will store personal items such as clothing, lunch and gym strip in addition to school supplies. We encourage the students to leave valuables at home as the lockers do not lock and are not monitored.

### **Electronics**

Handheld electronics such as cell phones, iPhones, Cameras, MP3 players or other similar devices can be brought to school but must remain in the locker during the school day. (8:30 – 3:00) Students will not be able to answer phone calls during this time and will only be able to check messages at lunch time or afterschool. Please use the school phone if you need to contact your son or daughter.

### **Arriving and leaving the MMA campus**

The senior school rooms are supervised and open to students from 8:00am to 4:00 pm Monday to Friday. Before and after school the room is dedicated to quiet work. During this time the students may ask for assistance from students or directors. It is understood that many students at the senior school level are able to navigate their way to and from school. In September, directors assume that students are being picked up by a family member until they receive notice otherwise. If your son/daughter will be taking the bus home or walking, we ask that you let us know. Once a student has left the classroom after 3:00 it is assumed that they are on their way home and are no longer under the supervision of the directors. They are not able to return to the classroom until the following morning. On the evenings when there is a school function like a potluck or coffeehouse we ask that students either remain on the school property or are picked up. Any exceptions to this policy can be facilitated by a note /email from home.

Omega Students have the additional privilege to leave the school grounds during lunch hour without supervision. In addition to handing in the attached permission form, students will need to sign in and out at the office. Misuse of this privilege can lead to having permission revoked at the request of the school. Once a student leaves school ground, they are considered to have left the care of Maria Montessori Academy, until they have signed back in at the office.

### **Reports and assessments.**

#### **Sigma Students:**

In addition to the weekly progress summary, each student participates in the creation of a summary report at the end of each cycle (a total of 6 for the year) These reports cover all progress made in the previous cycle in all subject areas and the results of the most recent Theme test. These summaries are included in the report cards which come out 3 times a year.

Theme tests are written assessments of a student's progress in Personal World, Social World and Natural World. They take place in week 5 of each cycle.

Assessments are based on student's progress in group and individual work, their participation in group and individual presentations and in the case of math, the results of periodic testing.

#### **Omega Students:**

Omega report cards will occur 4 times a year. These report cards will include the marks of the most recent cycle or semester completed by the student. Parents are welcome at any point to check student's marks on the Canvas program, as earlier mentioned. This program will allow review of the most current marks possible, as teachers are regularly updating it.

## **Senior School Family-School Commitment**

### **Student's Responsibilities**

1. To be a contributing member of the class and work to build a peaceful community.
2. To act with integrity, respect, and responsibility.
3. To work hard, use time wisely, and complete each learning cycle.
4. To participate in field studies with positive attitude and vigor.
5. To demonstrate required level of competence in the designated areas of study. If competency is not obtained, it is the student's responsibility to get assistance and to arrange to take an equivalent retest during tutorials or study hall.
6. To complete daily homework by 8:30 a.m. and bring all necessary materials.
7. To prepare and lead your scheduled family conferences and plan your educational goals.
8. To complete a weekly progress report to be signed by a parent and returned on Monday.
9. To complete progress report and self-assessment at the end of each cycle

### **Teachers' Responsibilities**

1. To create an atmosphere for learning to occur.
2. To facilitate the students in their learning.
3. To offer adolescents opportunities for challenging and meaningful work.
4. To meet with each student regularly to review progress and discuss any concerns.
5. To be available for students who need to finish work during study hall and the immersion week.

6. To schedule three family conferences each year and any additional ones as needed.
7. To serve as the liaison with community resources people.
8. To serve as a guide in the student's spiritual growth.

### **Parents' Responsibilities**

1. To provide access to the necessary resources and materials for history, science, and other class projects
2. To attend scheduled family conferences and to participate in establishing the adolescent's educational plan.
3. To allow their adolescent to attend tutorials for retests or make-up work.
4. To support the participation in the outdoor education activities and attend scheduled trip meetings.
5. To review the weekly progress report, sign, and have their adolescent return it the following Monday. To review the summary report at the end of each cycle and contact the teachers if there are concerns.
6. To encourage their adolescent to finish make-up work during study hall and immersion week. If all work is not completed during this extra time, alternative arrangements must be made with Mr. Patrick
7. To meet with teacher if student's behaviour requires a conference.
8. To facilitate the selection of and provide the transportation for the business internship.
9. To provide a time and place at home conducive to completing homework daily.
10. To allow their adolescent to experience feedback in learning organizational, decision making, and time management skills.

## **Student Code of Conduct**

We are a small community gathered by a common interest in learning and a desire to explore our environment in a creative and effective manner. As with any close relationship, there are times of stress and our goal is to learn how to understand our part in a conflict, make reparations for any damage affected and finally, to seek out ways to avoid similar conflicts in the future.

It is expected that each student will:

Enter the classroom each morning prepared to engage with their work.

Help to maintain a positive learning atmosphere at all times.

Bring to the attention of a director any action or negligence which makes it difficult for others to work.

### **Consequences:**

Most Disciplinary challenges are dealt with by the directors. Minor misbehaviours that would warrant these actions might include:

- Interrupting a peer/director
- Talking loudly/rudely
- Disrupting a community meeting or presentation
- Neglecting or failing to complete a classroom duty
- Not wearing uniform respectfully or in accordance with expectations

### **The consequences for minor misbehaviours are as follows.**

1. A verbal warning/reminder
2. Parents are notified
3. Another parent notification, reminding parents that this is not the first time this behaviour has occurred. Situation dependent, a meeting with parents might be called.
4. If the behavior continues, the Vice Principal or Principal will be involved.

In the event of a more serious problem the school principal is immediately involved, and parents are notified. A conference must be immediately scheduled, and it is at the discretion of the Principal or Vice Principal as to whether the student be allowed back to the classroom until this conference can be held. Some of the behaviours meriting this level of disciplinary action would be:

- Verbal or physical violence
- Bullying either physical and/or emotional
- Vandalism
- Cyber bullying
- Theft
- Misuse of school property/grounds
- Substance use/abuse

At this time a plan will be put in place involving one or more of the following consequences enacted by the Principal or Vice Principal in conference with the Directors.

- Loss of privileges
- In-house suspension
- Referral to counseling
- Mandatory completion of assignment directly related to behaviour
- Suspension from school activities
- Expulsion
- Communication with appropriate law enforcement agency

### **Cyber bullying**

Defined as bullying behavior involving technology this misbehavior most commonly takes the form of inappropriate emails, text messages or messages posted on social networking sites such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. Any material created on school computers during school hours is the property of Maria Montessori Academy and will be used to facilitate disciplinary action. In addition, any material created



outside of Maria Montessori Academy deemed to be cyber bullying towards a fellow student or staff member will be dealt with similarly using the full range of consequences listed above.

### **Substance Use**

Maria Montessori Academy believes that all students have a right to attend school in a safe environment conducive to learning. Alcohol and/or drug possession, supply, sale, or consumption is both illegal and interferes with effective learning and healthy development. Maria Montessori Academy is committed to preventing drug and / or alcohol use and maintaining a drug and / or alcohol-free environment during school hours and at any school function that takes place on or off campus.

Students who go against this expectation, will be subject to the full range of consequences listed above, including immediate removal from their peers as well as meeting with a drug and alcohol counsellor and completing a substance abuse education assignment.

### **Dress code**

Enforcing a dress code must be seen as a shared responsibility between the parents, students, and staff. Parents are responsible for ensuring that the student has the correct pieces of uniform and that they arrive at school prepared for the day. It is the shared responsibility of the staff and student to ensure that the uniform is maintained throughout the day. We take great pride in our school and expect that this will be reflected by the students in their uniforms.

Senior school uniforms

Casual dress uniform: Tuesday and Thursday

- Golf shirt, rugby shirt
- Grey pants/Kilt/grey shirt

- Black Dress shoes
- Dress socks
- MMA hoodie (optional)

Formal Dress Uniform: Monday, Wednesday and Friday, Field trips or upon request.

- White collared uniform shirt
- Vest or sweater
- Blazer for Omega students
- Tie
- Grey pants, Tartan Kilt or Grey Skirt

Gym Strip

- Navy T-shirt with MMA Logo
- Black running shorts or black running tights
- Running shoes
- Sport socks (not dress socks)

It should be noted that students are expected to maintain proper uniform at all times while on the Maria Montessori Academy campus. If a student is required to change into alternate clothing for an afterschool activity (dance recital, baseball game, cadets, etc.), the student may change at school but then must directly leave school grounds. Under no circumstance are students permitted to change into casual clothing and then remain on campus.

Students who are not in accordance with the above uniform policies will follow the same procedure as for a behaviour infraction.

### **Accessories**

While respecting the needs of the students to individualize we reserve the right to ask any student to remove items such as jewellery, hair bands, makeup or any other accessory that impedes the concentration of a student. Parents will be included in this process.

### **Late or overdue assignments**

It is expected that each student will complete assignments within a given time frame. When a due date is missed a plan will be implemented with the student's input to complete the given work. If a student is not demonstrating a desire to work with that plan than they will be asked to work independently until the needed work is completed. This may mean missing a community meeting.

Due to the increasing level of responsibility expected of Omega students, a 'punctuality' mark is programmed into each assignment. Extensions are possible to avoid any penalty but must be pre-arranged by students with teachers.

It is our hope that this document will help you understand and connect you more fully to the vibrant community here at MMA. If you have any questions or concerns regarding school policy, please do not hesitate to be in contact.

Student

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Parent

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