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Family Handbook

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WELCOME!

Mountain Sun continues to grow and thrive! Over the years, we have put into practice the beliefs, educational principles, methods, and pedagogies that best represent our goals, including a strong emphasis on Montessori education, outdoor education, the arts, and building community. Since the opening of our school in the Fall of 2008, we have grown, adding grades as our students aged, and we graduated our first 8th grade class in May of 2014. We are excited to now be deepening our roots and reaching out beyond the Mountain Sun campus to further fulfill our mission in our community and build our future.

The interaction of students, parents, and educators is a key component to building community, enriching the educational experience, and sustaining relationships. Research shows that students learn more effectively and are more active in their own education when their parents are involved in their school. This handbook contains some of our policies and procedures that will provide guidance on how you can support our community school and your child's educational journey at Mountain Sun Community School. Parents are asked to carefully review its contents. We look forward to working with you towards the whole development of your child and our school community!

VISION STATEMENT

Mountain Sun Community School's vision is to inspire generations of engaged learners and compassionate, responsible citizens.

MISSION STATEMENT

Mountain Sun Community School's mission is to cultivate each student's natural curiosity and love of learning through a challenging academic curriculum grounded in mutual respect and a sense of belonging. We recognize each student's unique potential and nurture their passions and abilities through a balance of direct instruction, collaborative and independent study, hands-on experiences in and out of the classroom, and service learning.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Mountain Sun Community School is a NC incorporated non-profit, 501(c) 3, school, certified by the NC Department of Non-Public Instruction. The school is governed by a Board of Trustees whose members are parents of enrolled children, experienced educators and professionals, and community leaders. The school utilizes a form of consensus decision-making at the board and staff level with ongoing opportunities for input from parents. The school serves children from pre-kindergarten through middle school. This school year will include two primary classes of 3-6 year olds (pre-K and K), a lower elementary class of 1st -3rd graders, an upper elementary class of 4th - 6th graders, and a middle school class of 7th-9th graders. In addition to providing a solid academic and cognitive foundation for our young learners, students will also be actively engaged in community service activities, art projects, music experiences, Spanish lessons, and exploration of the natural world. It is by incorporating these various opportunities in the community learning environment that we believe enables us to best serve our students' minds, bodies, and spirits.

In fulfilling our vital mission, we are guided by our five core actions: Inspire, Discover, Explore, Create, Belong.

Inspire

Our school nurtures each individual child as they awaken their unique passions, and we hold a loving, respectful space for them to fully realize their own identity as a learner and a person. Mountain Sun offers inspired, holistic education that develops each child's mind, body, and spirit and helps them express who they are and want to be in a dynamic world.

Discover

Mountain Sun helps each child discover the wonders of a life of the mind and what it means to truly love learning. Our school believes academic and cognitive development is one of the fundamental responsibilities of any school and of holistic education. Utilizing a Montessori approach, Mountain Sun facilitates the development of the child's sense of self as a student, feeds their innate curiosity, and inspires them to become lifelong learners. We strive to give children a strong foundation in fundamental skills so they can extend beyond academics to become creative, independent thinkers at the same time we introduce practices to help them become more aware of the nature of their own minds.

Academic Skills

Mountain Sun provides a strong academic understanding of fundamental skills in reading, writing, math, critical thinking, and investigation, while honoring each child's unique blend of intelligences. Compelling content in language arts, math, and science engages each child in the discovery of their academic strengths, passions, and interests. We emphasize hands-on materials and experiential lessons that facilitate meaningful experiences that challenge students intellectually.

Montessori

Mountain Sun embraces the Montessori philosophy of education with multi-age classrooms, a carefully prepared environment with developmentally appropriate materials, and independent learning. We believe children thrive in the intellectual and social diversity of multiage classrooms where competition is reduced and collaborative learning is balanced with independent initiative. In this setting, every child can focus on his or her own individual path within a continuum, and this, in turn, fosters responsibility to self and others. Our educators intentionally and skillfully guide each child on their own learning journey by balancing individual and group lessons with self-guided studies.

Mindfulness

Using a variety of mindfulness practices, Mountain Sun helps children discover the nature of their own minds. Daily centering circles and exercises, regular yoga practices, and mindfulness meditation techniques help children slow down and improve concentration. Both in the classroom and in the forests that serve as our campus, children learn the importance of following the breath to reduce the noise of the mind in order to connect more completely with themselves, each other, and the natural world.

Explore

At Mountain Sun, children are encouraged to be children and to actively and freely explore the natural world. Each day, students have the opportunity to get out into the forests and streams on our campus at Brevard Music Center. On field trips and expeditions, children go deeper into the Bracken Preserve, Pisgah National Forest, Dupont State Forest, and beyond. We believe connection to the natural world cultivates learning from within, fosters whole child development, and reinforces care for self and others. This connection is facilitated by practicing environmental responsibility in all aspects of school life, creating hands-on learning opportunities within the natural world, and providing ample unstructured physical exercise and exploration in the outdoors.

Journeys

The mountains and forests of Western North Carolina serve as an important area of learning for our children and our families. For our youngest students, the unstructured play of daily outdoor time on our campus turns into a grand adventure. As children get older, they go out on a variety of expeditions. Lower Elementary students begin with family camping trips, and Upper Elementary and Middle School students go on multi-day backpacking and camping trips in the forest or to outdoor education centers like Buffalo Cove.

Connections

When children understand the connections between the species around them, they begin to have a more complete understanding of their relationship to nature and their place in it. Whether through the simple act of recycling or composting or through the in-depth study of ecosystems and ecology, Mountain Sun students recognize the complex network of relationships and consequences that make up the natural world.

Play

We value the power of play in the outdoors, from the personal and group transformations that are possible in the woods to the understanding of how seeds emerge. We have spaces on campus to introduce students to the fundamentals of gardening, plant care, and the importance of vegetation on the environment. Our students play in the dirt, dig in sandboxes, rake up leaves, and discover the beauty in and around our local streams and rivers. This outdoor play transfers into the classroom as students care for indoor plants, plan outdoor field experiences, discover games as works in the classroom, and more. The benefits of free, unstructured play in the outdoors are endless, from improving cognitive abilities, physical health, self-discipline, and stress management, to supporting creativity, problem-solving skills, and improving academic performance.

Create

Mountain Sun believes that the freedom to create art and express ourselves is a vital part of what makes us fully human. Our school nurtures creative self-expression and individuality through regular dedicated art and music classes and access to creative materials throughout the classrooms. We encourage each child to experiment with a variety of artistic media and draw connections between art and the world.

Expression

Creative expression of identity is fundamental to a child's development. Daily opportunities are provided for children to cultivate creative expression and integrate such expression into the learning of traditional academic material. Often, our art lessons incorporate the natural world through representation, abstraction, or the use of natural materials.

Handcraft

Mountain Sun encourages students to enjoy creating a variety of objects. Children may receive lessons in pottery, knitting, crochet, embroidery, felting, and carving. Indoors and out, children learn to take pleasure in the work of their hands.

Music

Through lessons and frequent group singing, Mountain Sun students learn to appreciate the joys of creating music. In the younger grades, children learn the fundamentals of rhythm and melody. Older children are introduced to the basics of music theory, harmony, and learning to play an instrument.

Belong

Above all, our students and their families embrace belonging to a diverse and thriving multi-age community. Mountain Sun celebrates difference and strives to create an inclusive and accepting environment in which we appreciate each person's unique gifts and strengths. In such an atmosphere of compassionate trust, each individual is able to grow and thrive. We believe the school should play an integral role in the development of a child's communication, collaboration and conflict resolution skills as they serve a variety of communities locally and globally.

Collaboration

In addition to the importance of independent, individual work, Mountain Sun students frequently work together on both daily work and larger projects. Our classrooms enjoy the quiet hum of productive collaboration as students turn to each other for advice or assistance on the work. The multi-age classroom creates many opportunities for collaboration and

friendship across the grades, as the older students emerge as mentors and leaders for the younger students learning their way.

Peace

Montessori education is fundamentally an education of peace. This peace begins with the individual child developing an increasingly complex emotional vocabulary and expression. Each child learns how to become focused, calm, and expressive appropriate to their developmental phase. This peace then extends to developing peace with others. In any group, it is natural for conflict to arise, and, in many ways, the productive resolution of this conflict is some of the most important work for children and adolescents. Each of our classrooms has a peace table where children are able to find calm and talk through challenges. Beginning with our youngest students, we teach the language of peaceful conflict resolution utilizing active listening and empathy. As they grow, children expand their natural ability to have healthy, rewarding relationships with other children and adults.

Service

Through active contributions to the school community and service learning projects, Mountain Sun students realize their connections and responsibilities to communities near and far. By tending to their classrooms and each other, our students practice acts of kindness that build a foundation of caring that can extend outward. As they get older, they engage in service projects to understand and help other communities in Brevard and the world at large.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Mountain Sun Community School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national or ethnic origin, sexual identity, gender identity, or religion in its educational, admissions, governance, and hiring policies and practices.

MSCS DAILY SCHEDULES

The Daily Rhythm refers to the schedule of daily activities. The activities are structured in such a way that there is an ebb and flow between group and individual activities, independent work periods, and other enrichment activities. Structuring the day to honor the natural rhythm of the child helps the students move through the day easily because it feels right. As we move through the day, we are mindful of the children's different needs and moods. Also, we are respectful of the children's internal rhythms that they create as a group. Therefore, the times indicated may not always be precise, but provide us with a guideline to facilitate the daily rhythm.

PRIMARY CLASSES (Otters and Owls)

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 8:15-8:30 | Arrival |
| 8:30-10:45 | Independent Work Periods. <i>During this time, children will be able to choose materials to work with, read books, have imaginative play, participate in art activities, etc.</i> |
| 10:45-11:00 | Morning Gathering Circle. <i>During this circle we acknowledge the calendar/season, and may include a group lesson or activity.</i> |
| 11:00-11:45 | Outside time. <i>Children will have access to either play structures or natural areas. They may participate in imaginary play, or projects/activities that are offered.</i> |
| 11:45-12:00 | Second circle time. <i>Children will have the opportunity for sharing. There may be a story or a book read, music, movement, etc.</i> |
| 12:00 | Dismissal for Owls and Otters. Kinders stay for the afternoon. |
| 12:30-1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00-1:30 | Literature Circle. <i>A chapter book will be read aloud, students will be allowed to engage in quiet hand work, such as drawing, knitting while they listen.</i> |

- 1:30 – 2:45pm **Enrichment Classes** such as **Art, Music, and Outdoor Education** or another work period. Depending on the day this will also be additional independent and collaborative work time, lessons, and ecology studies.
- 2:45-3:00pm **Final Circle.** Closing of the day with reflections and class contributions.
- 3:00pm **Dismissal**

LOWER ELEMENTARY CLASS (Acorns)

- 8:15 – 8:30am **Students Arrive**
- 8:30 – 9:00am **Morning Circle and Centering.** *This circle is designed to acknowledge the start of our day together as a group. It begins with a moment of peaceful reflection. We may recognize the calendar or season, have a group lesson or story based on a current topic or one brought up by the children.*
- 9:00 – 11:30am **Individual and Group Lessons** integrated with independent work period where the child can choose from work, materials, and centers that have been introduced.
- 11:30a – 12:15p **Outside Time.** *Children will have access to either play structures, open fields, or natural areas.*
- 12:30 – 1:00p **Lunch**
- 1:00 – 1:30p **Literature Circle** *A chapter book will be read aloud, students will be allowed to engage in quiet hand work, such as drawing, knitting while they listen.*
- 1:30 – 2:40p **Enrichment Classes** such as **Art, Music, and Outdoor Education** or extended afternoon work period.
- 2:45 – 3:00p **Final Circle.** *Closing of the day with reflections, a story, a thought, a recitation, a quiet moment.*
- 3:00pm **Dismissal**

UPPER ELEMENTARY (Monarchs) and MIDDLE SCHOOL (Coyotes) CLASSES

- 8:15-8:30 **Arrivals for Middle School & Upper Elementary**
- 8:30-8:45a **Morning Circle and Centering**– *sometimes followed by a group lesson. To facilitate centering this circle will incorporate one or more of the following: a word, a song of greeting, movement, or breathing exercise.*
- 8:45–11:45am **Individual and Group Lessons** integrated with independent work period where the child can choose from work, materials, and centers that have been introduced.
- 11:45-12:30p **Outside time.** *Children will have access to open fields and natural areas and will engage in individual play or group games.*
- 12:30-1:00pm **Lunch**
- 1pm–1:30pm **Literature Circle.** *A chapter book will be read aloud, students will be allowed to engage in quiet hand work, such as drawing, knitting while they listen.*
- 1:30 – 2:45pm **Afternoon Work Period or Enrichment Classes** including **Art, Music** and **Outdoor Education**
- 2:45pm **Final Circle.** Closing of the Day and Contributions
- 3:00pm **Dismissal**

ARRIVALS

Traffic flow will be one way for drop off and pick up. The entrance will be the “upper” entrance via Music Camp Road and exit will be the “lower” road, Andante Lane. **Please do not enter at Andante Lane.**

The morning routine is important for all students and will help the students set the intention for the day and

direct the children's attention to the classroom community. To facilitate smooth transitions for our younger students, we will be greeting preschoolers at your car and walking them to their classroom. There will be two drop-off and pick-up locations at Stables, our main classroom building. At drop off, the first stop at the pull out past the mailbox will be for Owls (including Kinders with the Owls for the morning) and Acorns. The second stop will be at the base of the stairs at the other end of the building and will be for Otters (including Kinders with the Otters for the morning), Monarchs, and Coyotes. Please maintain a single line up to the stop sign (i.e., **do not go around cars waiting at the stop sign**). If you have children in multiple classes that includes both drop off locations, Monarchs and Coyotes can get out at the first stop, as well.

As you arrive, Kinders, Acorns, Monarchs, and Coyotes will get out of vehicles independently and walk to their classrooms. Staff will be present but will not get Kinders, Acorns, Monarchs, and Coyotes out of vehicles. Preschool Owls and Otters will be met by a staff member at their vehicle and escorted to their classrooms. If your child is not ready initially to get out of the car, it will be important to "make a lap" around to keep things moving along. Children should be let out of the car on the passenger side only to avoid them walking through the traffic side of the driveway. Please remind your children regularly that the road coming through the school/camp property is a ROAD and used regularly by people not involved in the school. If for some reason your child is not feeling ready to start his/her day at school after the two opportunities to be escorted to the classroom then you will be encouraged to park and/or come with your child to the office to wait on a staff member. We will work with you on identifying other smooth attempts that might encourage your child into their day at MSCS.

If you bike or walk your children to school, you will walk your child to the base of the stairs at the appropriate entrance for their class. It is important to not go all the way to the classroom or up onto the deck with your child. Philosophically, it is important that children exercise their choice and independence to join the community.

PICK UP DURING THE SCHOOL DAY: If your child needs to be picked up during the course of the school day for appointments or other needs, please notify the office in advance. We will have your child ready and waiting in the office at the designated time.

DEPARTURES: Owl and Otter dismissals will occur at their respective locations. Please park in the lot next to Straus and walk to the base of the stairs at the Owl and Otter arrival spots. This is a great time to connect with other parents! As you arrive, your child will be retrieved from their classroom and brought to you there. Then, you will walk with your child back to your vehicle and depart from there.

Dismissal for all other classes will begin at 3:00. Kinders and Acorns will be walked to their cars at the first stop by the mailbox. Monarchs and Coyotes will be walked to their cars at the second stop at Stables.

To avoid slow moving pick-up lines, please understand that the pick-up line is not the place to connect in depth with your child's teacher. If there is any reason teachers feel the need to connect with you directly at that time about your child's day, she/he may ask you to park to discuss any necessary items or make a plan for how and when a conversation might occur. If parents or guardians are feeling the need for further check-in during pick-up time, they are encouraged to first *try calling ahead to arrange such a moment with the teacher after school or the director during the day*. In the case that calling ahead is not possible, please park and await the teacher or director's availability for that. If you need to park to transfer children from one parent or caregiver to another, please use the parking lot in front of the Straus building.

LATE PICKUP: There is a ten-minute grace period after pick-up time for late arrivals. *A fee of \$5.00 (per child, per occurrence)* may be charged to anyone picking his or her child up after 12:15 pm for the

preschoolers and after 3:15 pm for all other students. Students not picked up by these times will be taken to the school's office to wait for parents.

DROP-OFF/PICK-UP BY SOMEONE OTHER THAN PARENT or LEGAL GUARDIAN

A child will only be released to parents, legal guardians, or another person indicated by you who has permission to pick your child up. If you have made arrangements for someone other than you or your listed authorized persons to pick up your child from school, please notify us of this in writing. This person will need to be added to your authorized persons list before your child will be released. In the event of an emergency, you may call the school to give permission for someone other than those listed on your previously approved list to pick up your child. The driver's license of any new person will be required when they come to pick up for the first time.

ATTENDANCE AND TIMELINESS: Mountain Sun Community School's attendance policy is based on the principle that regular attendance maximizes the student's interaction with teachers and peers, and correlates to feelings of success and improves the whole learning experience. Consistent attendance helps students develop responsible work and study habits. Students who develop a pattern of poor attendance (absences/late to school/early excused) undermine their relationships with their community, their course work, and their ability to participate in the life of the school, and thus they may feel disengaged and out of step with their peers and teachers.

Regular attendance is also important for your child's understanding and appreciation of their class curriculum. Any absence interferes with a child's academic progress, as he or she misses out on the flow of the MSCS and school experiences, which builds from day to day and cannot be replicated. Absences also affect the rest of your child's class as well as the teacher's careful planning, as the activities and the lesson flow of other members of your child's group are often reliant on the presence of every child.

That said, at Mountain Sun we embrace the concept of educating the whole child and understand that special times away with parents/family can provide a unique time of bonding and learning that is essential to a child's development and well-being. We expect, as much as possible, that trips will be planned to occur within the scheduled holiday dates, teacher work days, and early dismissal days, as listed on our school calendar. If you should schedule a trip or a day-off other than during these posted breaks, a written notification, preferably by email, must be submitted to your child's teacher at least two weeks in advance (and copied to the office) along with information about the reason for your child's absence. Your child's teacher may suggest schoolwork appropriate to your travel itinerary and their current studies in the classroom. If a child is absent for an extended period, we cannot provide materials or be responsible for classroom learning that is missed.

NOTE ON TRIP PLANNING ON & NEAR SCHOOL HOLIDAYS: When planning a trip over a school vacation, please try to depart after the last scheduled school day. Often the last day before a vacation is a special day, with important events scheduled. Missing those events can be a great disappointment.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

- 1) Parents are expected to have their child at school every day on time. If a student is going to be absent, the parent is expected to call the school office and/or email your child's teacher to notify the school of the absence and reason for it.
- 2) When students are absent for more than 5 days, without communication or prior arrangements with the teacher, parent(s)/guardian(s) should expect a call from your child's teacher for review.

- 3) When a student is absent for more than 10 days, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to attend a conference with the Executive Director, which may include your child's teacher, to assess your child's progress and any impediments resulting from absences. The focus of the meeting will be to discuss ways to prevent additional disruptions to your child's attendance.
- 4) A student who has missed 20 days or more in a school year has missed a significant amount of their education and learning experience. Once a student has been absent for 20 days, the student may be held back from promotion to the next grade level or next class. This determination will be made on a case-by-case basis, and consideration will be given to whether the absences were excused or unexcused, and how engaged the student was in their learning experience at Mountain Sun when he/she is in attendance.

EXCUSED ABSENCES INCLUDE:

1. Absence due to illness or medical condition when the child needs to stay out of school for the sake of their personal health and the health of the community.
2. Absence due to an emergency medical or dental appointment (when such an appointment is an emergency or it cannot be scheduled after school hours).
3. Absence due to family emergency.
4. Absence due to religious purposes.
5. Absence due to approved travel opportunity, service opportunity, or educational experience. The student will need to obtain prior approval from the Executive Director and/or child's teacher to take advantage of a significant travel opportunity (that cannot be taken during school breaks). To confirm an absence(s) as excused, the student and parent/guardian should work with the teacher when possible to identify an extended learning opportunity that can be integrated into their current studies.
6. Absence resulting from a disciplinary action.
7. Absences may be deemed excused for other exceptional purposes as approved by the Executive Director.

BEING ON TIME/TARDIES: We ask parents to please be mindful of our start and end times to the day. We have created a rhythm for the classes that facilitate the healthiest start for each age group. For most classes this involves a morning centering that is fundamental to the students ability to focus equally on their personal responsibility for their day ahead, balancing that with respect for their fellow students, and maintaining full ownership over their independent work as well as their collaborative work and group lessons. Any student arriving after the designated periods outlined above are considered tardy. In the event a child is **arriving late, parents are required to park and escort the student** to the stairs near their classroom. **Three (3) unexcused tardies will result in one unexcused absence.** Additionally, parents should expect the same level of communication (as listed under absences) with the Executive Director and your child's teacher when there are accumulated and habitual tardies.

If your child is arriving 1.5 hours or more after their classroom start time and you have not pre-notified the school, please call the school office (885-2555) before bringing your child to school. When students do not arrive at the normal start time, they are assumed absent. We need to verify your child can still be integrated into the school day because plans for the day may have changed based on that morning's attendance.

PLACEMENT POLICY

Placement decisions are made at the discretion of the Executive Director in consultation with faculty. The long-term holistic development of the individual child academically, socially, and emotionally is of utmost importance.

Almost exclusively, Mountain Sun requires children entering the primary classes to be 3 years old as of the start date of the school year. In some instances, a child with a fall birthday (through November 1) who is potty trained will begin the year just before they turn 3. We are very cautious in these instances because we cannot predict whether it will be appropriate for the child to move into the kinder group in the third year of their three-year cycle in the primary class. Sometimes they do or they may spend another year in the pre-school group. Thus, our general approach and recommendation is to ensure a child is age three when entering the class at the beginning of the academic year.

In almost all cases, North Carolina public schools require children to be 5 on or before August 31 to be considered for kindergarten. Mountain Sun also generally follows this guideline because it is developmentally appropriate and because we are interfacing with these larger educational systems. In exceptional circumstances, we may consider kindergarten for children who turn 5 in the fall of an academic year. We must consider the long-term implications of our enrollment processes. If a child moves on to a different environment, particularly a public school, that environment may make their own determination about what grade a child may enter.

Parents who wish to explore placing their child in a grade that is not consistent with the child's age should make a request to the Executive Director in writing detailing the reasons for the request at the time of application or, in the case of currently enrolled students, at re-enrollment. Any additional external evaluation data or expert observations may be provided at this time. This request will initiate a process of conversation and increased observation of the individual child's academic, emotional, social, and physical development in order to make an appropriate and holistic placement decision.

Our educational philosophy rests on the subtle and important work of creating and holding a space in which each child is able to find his or her own intrinsic motivation without the imposition of external rewards. This is vital to the development of each child as an independent, confident, and capable person, and placement decisions are made with this philosophy and development in mind.

SNOW DAYS AND POOR WEATHER CONDITIONS

We will *generally* follow Transylvania County School closings and delays due to weather or other circumstances. The entrance and drive through the school property has several complicating factors and will look different than the other roads. Please understand that there are numerous factors that go into school delays and closing schedules besides the condition of the primary roads near you. We will make the decision that ensures the greatest safety for all parties.

There are several ways of obtaining the most accurate and up-to-date information.

1. **TEXT MESSAGES:** If you have a cell phone and can receive text messages, you should **register with WLOS (wlos.com) for school closings and delays and complete the form that says "sign up for text alerts"** and then be sure you chose Mountain SUN Community School as your alert choice (FYI - there is a Mountain Community School in Hendersonville). **THIS IS THE MOST RELIABLE WAY TO RECEIVE DELAY & CLOSING NOTIFICATIONS.**

2. **TV ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Again, the channel to check school closing and delay status for Mountain Sun will be WLOS-the local ABC affiliate, which for most should be Channel 13.
3. **EMAIL NOTIFICATION:** We will also be sending email announcements about weather delays/closings.
4. **MSCS PARENTS AND TEACHERS FACEBOOK GROUP:** A notification will also be posted on the MSCS Parents & Teachers group.

10:00 AM DELAYS: In the case of approximately 2 hour delays, all students should arrive between 10:00 am-10:15 am. In the event of a delay, please be patient with our longer than normal arrival line. The Primary classes will be dismissed at their normal time of 12:00. The kindergarten, elementary, and middle school classes will also have their regularly scheduled ending times.

THREE HOUR DELAYS (Rare): There will be the rare occasion that we decide to have school but will decide it is not safe in time for the more typical two-hour delay (because we need to provide a little more time for the sun to hit the roads). On these occasions it will be a ***three hour delay with school beginning at 11:15am.*** In this case, Pre-K students will NOT have school that day, but all other full day students (kindergarten, elementary, and middle school students) will again end on the regular schedule.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT and VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

Mountain Sun is very intentional about being a community school. With parents, teachers, and students working together for the betterment of our school, we are modeling the importance of responsibility to self, community, and the natural world. Over the course of our history, our community has been blessed by so many parents enthusiastically volunteering and sharing their gifts and passions in a multitude of ways. Additionally, as a small community school with a commitment to relatively low tuition, the long-term sustainability of our school relies heavily on what our families can contribute to our program, growth process, and enrichment activities. We intend to maintain our commitment to the lowest tuition possible, but we cannot do so without the active involvement of our parents. Besides helping to build and maintain the school and keep our costs down, *parent volunteers are teaching our children the joy and duty of giving our precious time to our community.* We hear nearly every day from a child about how excited they are that “dad made these materials,” or “mom is coming to be outside with us.” We hope parents will be involved in many levels: in the classroom with special projects, coordinating field trips, and supporting physical and organizational development goals.

By enrolling your child in Mountain Sun, parents commit to a minimum of volunteer hours. All MSCS families whose children are enrolled in the middle school, elementary school, kindergarten, or are enrolled five days per week in the Pre-K class, parents/guardians are expected to provide a minimum of twenty hours of volunteer service annually on behalf of the school.

We know there are many parents who put in far more than the minimum requirement of hours. Our minimum volunteer hours are meant to be a guide for what we know our families naturally give freely and generously. Again, the very nature of our school is collaborative and developed on the belief that all stakeholders will be actively involved in the school community. You no doubt have heard the statement that **“the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”** When you consider your contributions to the school, remember that when added to all efforts, it becomes amplified when combined with everyone’s contributions towards the sustainability of our school.

Volunteer ideas include, but are not limited to the following:

- ❖ Presenting a special class or activity in an area that you have a level of expertise or interest. (*Classroom and program activity ideas should be discussed and approved by the teacher(s) and/or the director.*)
- ❖ Providing supervision during recess and dismissal.
- ❖ Facilities support such as cleaning, landscaping, grounds maintenance, etc.
- ❖ Coordinate a class or school-wide community service project.
- ❖ Volunteer at a festival or event to promote MSCS or our mission.
- ❖ Volunteer at fundraising events or assist with our annual appeal letter.
- ❖ Spend a day or two taking quality pictures and videos for publications.
- ❖ Field trip coordination or support in the form of driving and child supervision.
- ❖ Handcrafting requested items for the classroom.
- ❖ Repairing or painting classroom materials.
- ❖ Administrative support.
- ❖ See a need, meet a need. If you see something that needs to be done, share your observation with the appropriate staff and coordinate the support accordingly.

VISITATIONS & OBSERVATIONS

In order to ensure your child's confidence in the consistency of the classroom, we hope to minimize daily interruptions in their routines and schedules. Frequent unannounced visits from adults can create disruptions and breaks in their concentration. However, we want parents to feel welcome and to contribute to the learning experience or have the opportunity to observe the joy and wonder of what the children are engaged in on a day-to-day level. *The most important time to minimize in-classroom visitation is during the first two weeks of school as the children are getting used to the rhythm of the day and their new school.* For observations, we have what is called an "invisible chair" approach to visitation in the classroom. The invisible chair will be a part of the established culture in the classroom where a visitor will sit out of the main flow of the activities. Children will be introduced to this concept and encouraged not to call attention to the visitor, though many enjoy welcoming visitors and may come to introduce themselves, which we encourage! Most children quickly adapt to the presence of visitors in this manner and soon go about their business without being distracted. We ask that you notify us in advance if you would like to observe in the classroom and again ask that you wait until after the first two weeks. If and when we need to use the observation chair during the first couple weeks, we put priority on its use for children who need a more gradual physical separation from their parent. This is a tried and true method used in many school settings.

Please understand that our teachers may need to redirect a child's attention away from parents or other familiar visitors during any type of visit or observation only to help refocus that child's energy on the classroom activities and to ensure minimal disruption for this community of young "explorers."

COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

In order to avoid minimal disruption to the faculty's primary duty, attending to our students, we ask that you **contact the office directly if you need to get a message to your child's teacher throughout the school day.** *Please AVOID contacting them on their cell phones.* Together, parents and office staff will determine whether a message needs to be delivered immediately to teachers during class time or whether it can wait until the end of the day. If you would like to schedule a meeting time with your child's teacher, we will get that request to them during the school day if urgent, or you are free to email them when not urgent. Please note that given the many modes of communication these days, we expect teachers to check email at least once a day but ask that you give them 24 hours to respond to your communication. We are striving to assist staff in establishing balance between their professional lives and personal lives. Again, if an issue is urgent, the office staff will work with you to relay messages to the teachers and facilitate a response in a timely manner.

COMMUNICATION IN GENERAL WITH MSCS STAFF

Technological changes have resulted in an increasing number of ways to communicate. While MSCS always encourages face-to-face and telephone communication, we also welcome the use of e-mail as an effective means of contacting a teacher or administrator. Individual teachers and administrators have the option of using other means of communication with students and parents and will advise of their preferences. Thus texting, Facebook messaging and other means of communication not listed above should not be used without obtaining the prior approval of the teacher or administrator with whom you wish to communicate. A faculty member may choose to discontinue one of these forms of communication at any time and will notify both student and parent if the he or she chooses to discontinue a particular means of communication.

The communication on Facebook and other social media sites is not confidential in nature and thus all parties to said communication should act cautiously and responsibly. Social media should not be used to conduct school business. It is MSCS's policy that a teacher should not request or initiate an online relationship, such as Facebook "friending" with a former student or parent, but may, in his or her discretion, accept requests initiated by a former student or parent.

SNACK AND FOOD GUIDELINES

We strongly encourage whole and natural food as much as possible. A small snack of fruits and vegetables will be available for children in the primary classes. Children in the 1st grade and above should bring a healthy snack for the morning. We ask that parents **minimize the sugar content, especially packaged candy, in individual lunches and snacks** provided to students during school hours. Our nutrition policy is important to us because we feel strongly that good food benefits the children's health and positively influences their energy while at school. We prefer that students just drink water and milk throughout their school day, including at lunch. Packaged candy should NOT be sent to school, both to encourage healthy eating habits and to reduce the tension that arises between students when some students have such and others don't. Candy has an intense effect on meal and snack times.

SNACK SUGGESTIONS: The following are a few healthy suggestions that are enjoyed by most children. Suggested snack items include BUT are NOT LIMITED to the following:

- ❖ Fresh fruits, in season and local when possible, to reinforce children's connection to food and their sources.
- ❖ Dried fruits, such as apricots, raisins/cranberries, mangos, pineapples, papaya, banana chips, etc, can be a great alternative when most fruits are not in season; 100% fruit leathers and fruit salads can also be good.
- ❖ Fresh, raw vegetables such as carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, snap peas, cucumbers, etc.
- ❖ Edamame (soybeans) are also a favorite for many children.
- ❖ Nuts and seeds such as pumpkin and sunflower.
- ❖ Nut butters. (Peanut butter, almond butter, or hazelnut butters such as Nutella usually are favorites).
- ❖ Whole grain crackers, pita chips, rice cakes, pretzels, popcorn and even pita bread squares are great.
- ❖ Granola bars and nut & fruit bars. (preferably with no high fructose corn syrup or hydrogenated oils.)
- ❖ "Trail mixes" with dried fruits and nuts.
- ❖ Cheese.

IMPORTANT: Please be sure children bring a water bottle to school with them EVERY DAY. They can fill their water bottles via the cold water fountains throughout the day. Consistent hydration is a MAJOR priority for us at school.

BIRTHDAYS

At Mountain Sun, we celebrate your child's birthday with a simple yet meaningful ceremony that is a wonderful way to recognize a child's birthday by honoring their life and accomplishments. There is a candle lighting ceremony and a walk around the "sun" (candle) for the number of years since your child's birth. Parents are invited to that celebration at school and are encouraged to bring a picture and stories from each year of your child's life. This celebration of your child's life is also a great curricular moment as children experience in a tangible way what we mean when we talk about a year and the process of the earth travelling around the sun. In addition, learning to celebrate and appreciate their peers as unique individuals and feel recognized in a most authentic way is an experience in developing empathy and understanding of others. This celebration is usually done at circle time and takes about 10-15 minutes. **Please talk to your child's teacher prior to his/her birthday to make appropriate arrangements and schedule a time for you to join us for their celebration**

FIELD TRIPS

We believe that many important educational experiences occur outside of the physical boundaries of the school. To this end, we encourage teachers to support their classroom curriculum with a variety of field trips that enhance the physical, cultural, artistic, and community service aspects of education.

The following guidelines are to be followed. Local field trips will be researched and a trip plan outlined prior to departure. Teachers will notify parents at least two days prior to the trip except in special circumstances that may arise and in every case parents or guardians will be contacted. For field trips occurring within a 20-mile radius of the school campus, we will not be requesting an additional field trip permission form unless a parent did not already sign the "Blanket Field Trip Permission Form." Field trips that are farther than a 20-mile radius of the school or that include an overnight will require an additional field trip permission form signed by a parent or legal guardian.

Students will be transported to and from school field trip destinations by legal, registered, and insured motor vehicles. Parent chaperones driving private vehicles must provide proof of insurance and their vehicle must be in safe working order. **All drivers are required to obey North Carolina traffic laws and stay within the speed limit required by state laws.** In cases where more than one vehicle is caravanning, all vehicles should remain within sight. When possible, all drivers/vehicles will carry a cell phone for emergencies and to receive messages. Safety is the most important issue during a field trip. The group must always follow the instructions of the teachers for their own safety as well as others. The school discipline policy will be followed on any field trip. The class teacher on the trip carries the responsibility for the students and any cases of misconduct should be referred to that teacher. The teacher knows each student's temperament and appropriate responses shall be the responsibility of the teachers. However, parent chaperones are asked to be fully present to the needs and safety of the children on field trips and should not volunteer to participate if they do not feel able to support the children's experience. The presence of parents on these field trips in the past at Mountain Sun Community School has proved enriching and rewarding for all.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Our teachers have been trained in First Aid and CPR, and several staff have Wilderness First Responder certification. In the event of an emergency with your child, the school will first try to contact you, the parent, and then if necessary, the back-up contacts you noted on the emergency form. If the emergency requires immediate medical care, we will call for an ambulance or drive the child directly to the hospital while we are contacting you. Throughout the year, please notify the school office of any phone number changes for you or your emergency contacts (including work and cell phone numbers).

HEALTH POLICIES & CONSIDERATIONS

Immunization records are required for all children entering Mountain Sun Community School within thirty calendars of the first day of school. Vaccination records may be obtained from your family physician, pediatrician, or your County Health Department. They must be current and documented. This form should be turned in to the Office. You may file for an exemption from the N.C. State Immunization Law if you meet the requirements of the applicable law. Please consult your local health department for further information.

Children should be kept home from school if they are feverish; have dark, mucousy noses; if they had a fever of 100.5 or higher or vomited during the previous day or night; if they have diarrhea; or if they show signs of becoming sick. **A child who had a fever, was vomiting, or had diarrhea should stay out of school until the child has been fever-free (without medication) or who has not vomited or had diarrhea for at least 24 hours.** We realize that this is difficult for working parents, but sick children do not belong in school. Our teachers are requested to send any child home that arrives at school with signs of illness or develops them during the school day. If your child is absent from school, kindly report to the school as to the cause. If your child is ever diagnosed and verified to have a serious communicable contagious illness or disease including strep or flu, please call the school immediately so that we can inform other parents (while maintaining your child's privacy). We will work very hard to prevent the spread of illness in the classrooms. Therefore, we ask you to play it safe when considering whether or not your child is well enough to go back to school. If in doubt, we would prefer you bring your child late or hold him/her out for another day rather than bring him/her back with a questionable illness.

If fever, vomiting, or other clear signs of illness appears during the school day, we will notify you immediately and your child will need to be picked up *promptly*. **If a child is sent home with a fever, he/she may not return until fever-free for 24 hours (without medication) unless we have a physician's statement** that the illness is not contagious. Please notify us if your child is going to be absent due to a suspected or confirmed illness so that as a school we can monitor illness patterns and keep other parents informed when their child is experiencing similar symptoms.

ADMINISTERING MEDICINE

In general, we prefer not to give out medication to students. However, there are exceptions. Parents must fill out the medications tab in SchoolDoc and complete the medication confirmation form in order for a staff member to give prescription medicine to a child. This form must be signed by the child's physician and uploaded to SchoolDoc. **All medications must be labeled with your child's name and should be handed directly to school personnel.** Under no circumstance is the medicine to be placed in your child's lunchbox, pocket, backpacks, or cubbies.

If your child has chronic pain or discomfort complaints, please let us know. If a child develops a fever while at school or complains of other moderate to severe discomfort, we will call you immediately. We will not administer any over the counter medication unless it is necessary by determination of school personnel and you have indicated in SchoolDoc that the medication is approved.

We may also use other typical first aid solutions such as a topical bite or sting relief and antiseptics. When there has been a minor problem as a simple scraped arm, splinter, etc., we will treat it immediately but not call you and will not complete an *Incident Report*. However, if the incident involves more than a just a simple comforting or "cleaning up," we will notify you right away and fill out an *Incident Report*. Obviously, we will notify you immediately for anything more serious requiring you to come to school.

HEAD LICE

MSCS generally follows the most recent recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics. If a child is identified with lice, the parent will be notified. It is preferred for the child to be picked up from school. Please notify your child's teacher if you are aware of lice on your child or in your household. In concurrence with accepted current protocols, children are not restricted from school attendance due to head lice. However, children should be treated with an effective treatment (e.g., Vamousse and use of a lice comb) before returning to school. We also encourage parents to reach out to their pediatrician for advice on diagnosis and treatment. Parent efforts in this regard will help prevent spreading. If a case of lice is identified in your child's classroom, you will be notified via email by the classroom teacher. For more information, please see: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/135/5/e1355>.

SAFE SCHOOL POLICY

While this policy is not inclusive of all measures we implement at Mountain Sun in the practice of attending to the safety of our students, the following measures should provide you with an overview of such.

We have a VISITOR POLICY whereby all non-parent visitors must check in with the office and obtain a visitor badge prior to entering the classrooms. *If you bring a visitor to campus, please escort (or direct) them to the office for signing in.* If you are visiting your own child's classroom building, you do not need to check in at the office.

In consideration of the nature of our expansive campus, we have also consulted with the Sheriff's Department and Transylvania County 911 services regarding the best technology for **COMMUNICATIONS between the office, classrooms, and outdoor areas on our campus**. They have recommended and we have two-way radios in all classrooms throughout the school day. These radios doubly serve as our PA system as well as a portable mechanism for communication between the office, classrooms, and class groups when they are outside throughout campus. This way whenever an announcement is made to the whole school, teachers will be able to hear those even if they are elsewhere on campus. Afterschool staff will also maintain two radios with them at all times.

As staff, we will regularly review and practice fire drills and emergency procedures and identify safe spaces for each class to retreat to should we become aware of any imminent threats or dangerous intruders.

ASBESTOS PLAN: The EPA requires us to annually notify you that we are aware of AHERA regulation, and that we are in compliance. Inspections have been performed for our buildings and no ACBMs were identified. The inspection findings are included in an asbestos Management Plan which is on file in the school administration office.

OFF CAMPUS & PRIMARY USE AREAS EVACUATION

In the case of an extreme emergency, an off-site evacuation or evacuation of primary use areas may be deemed appropriate and necessary. Sites will be determined according to the type of emergency arising and parents will be notified of such sites should evacuation come necessary. A reunification plan will be developed in the case of such an emergency. Only parents or pre-approved guardians (those listed on the emergency contact list) will be allowed to pick up students from the off-site evacuation location and a photo ID may be required prior to releasing children to their care. Please follow directions from emergency responders and school personnel.

CLOTHING: FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE & FLEXIBILITY

Dress should allow children freedom to engage in a wide range of activities. Please help your child select clothing and shoes that allow for freedom of movement and the ability to maintain independence in getting them on and off in the bathroom. For the preschool students it is best to avoid overalls, onesie tops, multiple layers (beyond two), and belts. In general, children are not to wear diapers or “pull-ups” during the day. Please let us know if you think this is a concern. Again, we want to promote independence when it comes to self care and dressing.

SHOES: All the children have outdoor playtime every day (weather permitting). When outdoors, children will be required to wear shoes with heel straps as the terrain on campus can be hilly & rocky at times and we want to be able to enjoy all that this campus has to offer. During the warmer months, creek play may be allowed, but again shoes with closed toes and heel straps are required so that they don't slip off while in water. Crocs do NOT work as water shoes. They are hard to keep on the child's feet and things can easily penetrate the soles. For the **K-8th graders Outdoor Education classes**, students will be required to wear athletic shoes for activities as they may be engaged in activities such as soccer, running, hiking, etc.

We hope the **children will learn to appreciate the outdoors in all conditions**. With the proper clothing, play in the cold and rain can be exciting, satisfying and comfortable. Students should be appropriately prepared for most weather conditions. We encourage you to have them join you in checking the weather in the morning before coming to school and gathering the appropriate outerwear. Please be mindful as well of those irregular forecasts that start off warm and then turn cold. For winter wear, we recommend layering so they can be both comfortable indoors and out. Please limit layers on their bottom halves to two to foster independence. We encourage coats or jackets with zippers that are flexible and easy, or snaps for the children to fasten. In more extreme weather, we will choose indoor play.

Clothing should be appropriate for school, with shirts covering the midriff area, shorts and pants fully covering the rear end area and undergarments. Clothing should avoid provocative messages or slurs and should not be disruptive to our respectful, learning environment. In other words, please avoid clothing with offensive images or language or that is advertising products that are not intended for children.

An extra set of clothing should always be available to each child that can be kept in their cubbies or backpacks. In warm weather if your child comes to school with shoes you do not want to get wet, please send them an extra pair. To avoid confusion and prevent the loss of clothing, all outer garments should be marked with the child's name.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

Mountain Sun Community School's student behavioral expectations are designed to support the mental, emotional, creative, spiritual, and physical development of each individual within the learning environment. To that end students will be expected to demonstrate care and **care for self, for others, and for the environment** (both physical property and the natural world). Students will be guided in the development of an understanding and practice of balancing their own individual needs with that of the communities. Each child shall be expected to respect the rights of all to explore and learn in a physically and emotionally safe atmosphere. Grace and courtesy lessons (respect and care for others) are an integral part of the classroom learning and are discussed and practiced. Students will be expected to practice “manner words” with a respectful tone and they should expect the same in turn from their teachers and peers.

When there is divergence from respect for self, others, and the environment, teachers will seek age appropriate interventions, which redirect inappropriate behaviors into more successful behaviors. The character of all behavioral interventions will at all times be congruent with the school's beliefs and values

regarding the respect, nurturance, and care for all facets of the child's being. We also acknowledge that a holistic learning environment allows for social and emotional growth opportunities that may result in conflict from time to time. Finally, please understand that we believe that **peace is not the absence of conflict** but the presence of creative alternatives for responding to conflict.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE POLICY

We believe discipline is an individual process in which children are supported in developing self-control, responsible choice making, and respect. We will be practicing positive discipline techniques based on the theory that children that have a sense of connection to their community and those whose input is regarded as meaningful are less likely to engage in "mis" behavior. The classroom is based on the premise of integrity, respect, and responsibility. Learning to trust oneself, peers, and adults is the first step in establishing a community of learners. This approach helps the child learn that he/she is responsible for what he/she does and that actions have consequences.

Basic class & campus guidelines/rules are explained to students during orientation. Within the first few weeks of school, each class will engage the students in class meetings where as a class they will further develop the expectations they will have of one another's behavior and how they will demonstrate respect for each other and the MSCS staff. Redirection or time to think with natural or imposed consequences accompanied by an explanation will be central to our discipline method. Sometimes discipline problems require a team approach between school and parents. In these cases we will notify and work with parents as needed. Please remember that the safety and best interest of the child is always at the heart of our actions.

Generally, our environment and activities are designed in such a way as to avoid the need for disciplinary measures. Our teachers will be utilizing positive discipline techniques to encourage early intervention and to help shape the classroom atmosphere toward a happy, harmonious, and inspiring one. Children will be given positive feedback when observations are made, and the rhythm of activity during the day will be designed to provide for meaningful experiences. The teachers will seek creative ways to help students discover ways that extra energy can be vented naturally. In cases of discord, children learn to say to each other how they feel *and* to listen carefully to each other's feelings.

Peaceful conflict resolution is an integral part of our curriculum. The "peace table" concept will be introduced to them within the first month of school as a way to facilitate communication of feelings between individuals. This helps the children develop the skills to solve their own problems instead of a teacher solving it for them. Care for each other's feelings will be modeled and reinforced and positive feedback will be given for caring behaviors.

WHEN BEHAVIOR BECOMES UNACCEPTABLE OR UNSAFE

Damage to personal, private, or public property or injury to another student will be addressed immediately and in an age-appropriate manner and will be communicated with parents in a timely manner. If student behavior compromises their personal safety or the safety of others, the student's choice will be addressed immediately and if the situation remains unsafe for the group or the student, the family may be called to pick up the student immediately. Any concern regarding more serious and consistent breaches of behavioral expectations will be communicated with parents in a timely and ongoing manner with the goal of creating opportunities for the child to learn more appropriate ways to express their feelings and support the development of problem-solving skills. In more serious or chronic cases, a student may be asked to take a temporary break from school and if the behavior continues and remains chronic upon return, it may be determined that Mountain Sun Community School is not the appropriate environment at that time for the

child and they may not be able to return to school for the remainder of the school year. In such cases, re-enrollment the following year could be considered on a case-by-case basis.

While the following behaviors are infrequent at Mountain Sun Community School, we acknowledge the possibility of their occurrence and are prepared to address them accordingly.

Biting: By the time a child reaches the age of 2.5 years he/she should be aware that biting is never appropriate and is not tolerated. Our policy is to notify a parent immediately if a child bites another child and possibly send him/her home for that day. The second incident is handled the same, and the third incident may result in the child taking “time away” from school for a period as determined in communication with the Director and Teacher.

Physical Aggression: Physical aggression on the part of the child will be reported to the parents on the day that such aggression occurs and may require parents to come and pick up their child immediately. Parents and teachers will confer with each other to develop avenues to guide the child to appropriate and acceptable behavior. School personnel will use their discretion to determine if the aggression was willful and intended to cause harm and will respond accordingly. We acknowledge that the children of the younger ages are still learning to communicate and deal with their frustrations, disappointments, and stress and some are more physically inclined with their reactions to the world around them. In cases where the aggression was directed towards another student versus physical property, our response will be to remove the aggressive child from the situation, then respond and provide care to the student injured, third to communicate to the child who caused the injury the inappropriate nature of their actions, and lastly to assist them in developing appropriate avenues to dealing with such frustration and disappointments. The parents of the child with whom the injury or threat of injury was inflicted will also be notified of the occurrence. If physical aggression is chronic, a child could be dismissed from school temporarily or permanently depending on their response to resolving the behavior.

Other Unacceptable Behaviors: Other student behaviors that will require immediate attention and support from families include verbal threats to others, blatant disrespect of all authority figures, insulting language or cursing, unresponsiveness to the teachers or MSCS staff’s directives, moving about campus without express permission of the adult in charge. In order to maintain a physically and emotionally safe environment for the all children you may be called to come and pick up your student immediately.

CHANGES IN THE HOME

Changes in the home can have a profound impact on your child’s attitude, interaction with others, and behavior at school. Please inform your child’s teacher of changes such as the birth of a sibling, a death in the family, divorce or separation, the absence of a parent, your child’s inability to sleep for several consecutive nights, the death of a pet, alteration of a regular medicine (or its dosage) or any other matters which might affect the child’s sense of well-being. We encourage parents to inform the teachers of such matters promptly. The teachers should know of such changes in order to meet your child’s needs in the best way possible. As professionals, we may be able to make helpful suggestions and offer support to you as parents when these special situations arise. Conversely, any incident during school reported to you by your child that has upset them should be reported to the teacher.

PROTOCOL FOR PARENTS for ADDRESSING ISSUES or CONCERNS

We want to hear from you if you have needs or concerns regarding your child or our school community. Please take a minute to read these recommendations regarding the paths of communication open to you. We are committed to making MSCS a community where needs are addressed in a clear and respectful way. We

practice active listening in our environment and acknowledge that we all see things differently and insights from others can only help us further our educational mission and vision as an organization, help us further our professional and personal growth, as well as ensure that we continue to expand our ability and attention to the individual needs of all students.

The following represents the understanding we ask all parties to enter into when addressing any concerns for our students and community, as well as the channels available to you should any concerns arise regarding your child's or the community interests.

- ❖ All individuals involved in governing, managing, and teaching in the School, and MSCS parents have the best interest of the students in mind.
- ❖ The school's mission, vision and beliefs further reflect our commitment to keeping the best interest of the students in mind as well as maintaining an active learning environment for all stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators' board members, and students).
- ❖ The teacher, director, and parents will best be able to meet the child's needs when **working together**.
- ❖ The best way to affect change or voice any concern for your child's well-being is through **direct communication with your child's teacher** and such communication should happen in a timely manner in relation to the concern or question.
- ❖ If you don't feel resolved after communication with the teacher, **then a meeting can be requested with the Director or with the Director and the teacher**.
- ❖ **After all channels of communication with School personnel have been exhausted, communication with the Board Chair can be initiated.**
- ❖ If your concern involves MSCS as a community or in regards to a school-wide policy, we encourage you to make an appointment with the Director.
- ❖ We encourage you to be as clear and concise as possible in communicating your concern and inform us of what possible solutions you have considered.
- ❖ You may be requested to record your concerns in writing so there is thorough understanding of them by all appropriate parties and to ensure that responses address your primary concerns.

We have found **direct communication** (in person or by phone) is the most effective form versus email communication. You are welcome to initiate contact with school personnel via email expressing your desire for further contact on a concern, but dialogue can remain most respectful when there is opportunity to clarify what someone means in person. This also avoids the lag time in email responses that may leave one party or both parties misinterpreting something that was written. Body language, tone, as well as words play into the overall communication. Effective resolutions are much more attainable when the dialogue is happening in person and when the parties involved are engaged in active listening and being pro-active about maintaining focus on mutual respect.

TUITION AND PAYMENT

We know that sending your child to Mountain Sun constitutes a significant financial commitment on the part of your family. We encourage you to discuss any financial concerns with the Director before you sign the enrollment agreement. We have some financial aid available, and—in some cases—your child may be eligible to apply for an Opportunity Scholarship or Disabilities Grant through the state of North Carolina to help offset tuition costs. We want to work with you to make Mountain Sun possible for your child.

Mountain Sun relies on tuition income to fund our operating expenses, and therefore, it is critical that enrollment agreements be honored in their entirety. When an enrollment agreement is signed, you are committing to a full year of tuition for your child; no reduction or remission of tuition can be allowed by Mountain Sun for absence, withdrawal, or dismissal.

Payment Plans

When you sign the enrollment agreement, you may choose from four payment plans:

1. Full Payment due on July 1st
2. Two payments due on July 1 and January 1
3. Quarterly payments due July 1, October 1, January 1 and April 1
4. Eleven payments due on the first of the month from July through May.

Payment can be made by check, money order or bank draft.

Overdue Tuition

Because Mountain Sun's operations rely so heavily on tuition it is very important that tuition be paid on time, no matter what payment plan you may choose. If a tuition payment is overdue for 30 days, the school will remind the family. A late fee of \$50 will be charged for any payment received after the 10th of the month. There will be consideration given to waiving this late fee, in the school's sole discretion, in extenuating circumstances that are communicated to the Director before the end of the grace period.

Children may not enroll in the next school year until any previous year's past due tuition is paid in full.

Student records will not be forwarded to parents or to other parties until all financial obligations are paid in full.

Returned Checks or Insufficient Funds

Parents whose payments are returned for insufficient funds more than once a year will be required to make subsequent payments by certified check or money order. There is a \$10.00 charge for any payment returned for insufficient funds.

OTHER FEES: Field trip and snack fees will be required, and the teacher may request parents buy particular materials or gear. Additional fees are calculated as much as possible before the school year, and parents will be notified of the total amount. This may be paid in a single payment or included in the selected tuition payment plan.