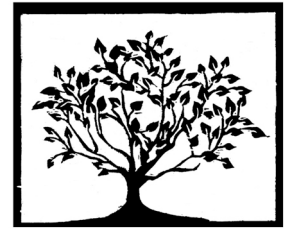


Methow Valley Community School Parent Handbook

Methow Valley



Community School
Celebrating Authentic Learning

Welcome

Welcome to the Methow Valley Community School. You will find, as you peruse the parent handbook, that this is a unique place for children and their parents. At the Methow Valley Community School (MVCS) we make every effort to draw from personal experience and intellectual growth to promote self-discovery and construct practical knowledge. MVCS staff guide students along this journey with care, compassion, and respect for their diverse learning styles, backgrounds, and needs.

Your interest and involvement is an integral part of continuing this tradition. MVCS would simply not exist without the dedicated efforts of parents and community members. As your child goes through the year please refer to this handbook often, it will guide you through our philosophy, curriculum, and basic information. Please help us by offering constructive advice as to what you find works and does not work for you and your child. The board and faculty welcome your comments, questions, suggestions and concerns.

Our Mission

**We Nurture
a child's natural abilities, sense of place and growing wonder.**

**We Practice
in-depth critical thinking and creative expression.**

**We Value
community, character, and adventure.**

**We are Ambassadors
into the journey of life-long learning**

Guiding Principles

Love of Learning

Students are encouraged to be self-motivated and proficient in taking advantage of learning opportunities in all areas of life. MVCS nurtures a love of learning by providing a safe and supportive environment which fosters the natural curiosity, personal interests and learning styles of each student.

Character Development and Sense of Self

MVCS nurtures a deep exploration of self and others through the following character traits:

Cooperation: The ability to accept differences while working together and feeling a sense of community and belonging.

Appreciation: Fostering a sense of gratitude, humility and reverence.

Respect and Responsibility: Demonstrating respect for self, classmates, the community and the environment. Being accountable to others and ourselves for our decisions, works and actions.

Empathy: Caring enough to understand someone else's viewpoint and experiences, and then acting with acceptance and compassion.

Self-control: Trusting and believing that we can take control of ourselves and our choices, and knowing how to use our energies to positively affect ourselves and others.

Social and Communication Skills

Students learn how to communicate their own views effectively, and to acknowledge and appreciate the wisdom, experience, and tradition contained within other generations and cultures.

Academic Excellence

Students achieve academic excellence through in-depth integrated curriculum and experiential learning opportunities. MVCS is guided by WA State academic standards, with qualitative, bi-annual teacher-student assessments and quantitative tracking of graduate performance.

Creating Community

MVCS creates a community within a community of students, parents, staff and community members, building a dynamic, supportive learning experience. All participants develop deeper connections to one another and the community at large, interacting with the community as teachers, learners and supporters. Participants learn by practice what it means to be an engaged community member.

Leadership & Teamwork

Students gain excellent teamwork and leadership skills while learning to become contributing members of their community, whether it be in a leadership role or working in collaboration with others.

Arts & Culture

MVCS places a strong emphasis on self-discovery and exploration through participation in the arts. Integrating music, drama, literature and visual arts into the curriculum, MVCS weaves multi-cultural experiences into the fabric of a child's education.

Diversity

MVCS embraces and honors diversity whether it is economic, social, academic or cultural. MVCS is committed to teaching tolerance so that students learn to value their different histories and talents while acknowledging our common humanity.

Nature, Sustainability and Sense of Place

Using the Methow Valley as a classroom, MVCS explores natural history, principles of ecology, land stewardship, sustainability and community-based organic agriculture. Students grow an appreciation of “home” on many scales, from local community and landscape to planet.

Community and Civic Service

Students develop an ethic and habit of service by working collaboratively with community members and organizations to create projects that meet community needs and deepen classroom learning.

These principles are used to guide MVCS and we are committed to honoring them at all levels: board, staff, families and students.

A BRIEF HISTORY

By: Deb Jones-Schuler (Community School Founder)

The Community School was and continues to be a complete leap of FAITH! It is about creating a community in which children are given the opportunities to become their selves as well as responsible, caring members of a greater good.

MVCS was founded on the belief that the education process can be something different than the status quo, if we truly want it to be. Education means many things to many people. Good, holistic education means, to me, creating an environment of emotional safety and support in which children and adults come together to learn from and teach to each other. I believe that to truly educate anyone we must first recognize what is valued and valuable. We must provide experiences and opportunities that build on a foundation of trust and compassion. We must recognize the value of our community and create teaching opportunities that provide our children with a real sense of place in, not only the school community, but the larger community as well. Most importantly, we must believe in the innate abilities of our children to gain from any experience what they most need, trusting in ourselves that there is more to life's lessons than reading, writing and arithmetic. We must trust that without emotional and physical safety true learning cannot take place.

In the fall of 1998, after deciding that my voice alone would not determine the change I desired at the public school I challenged myself to either shut up and stop complaining or put my convictions to work creating something new. I believe with my heart and soul that "school" can and should be something more than what I experienced as a child. I believe things can be different for those who desire change. That a variety of options be available to learners of all ages can be challenging, positive and vitally important to the health of a community. Boxes don't work for me, having the freedom to experience life's lessons in a format that works for the individual, that works for me.....I believed it might just work for others as well.

My vision, a program that closely resembles the community in which we reside, where children of all ages come together to learn about each other while learning about life, one that offers children and adults the opportunity to experience not only basic academics, but the fundamentals of life – social skills, the value of community service and volunteerism, compassion for one another, a love of learning. To foster a sense of place and a genuine appreciation for this magnificent valley we call home. We are surrounded by an abundance of talented people willing to offer their expertise, enthusiasm and life lessons and I wanted to weave those community members into the fabric of the school, enrich the process and provide real-life experiences to compliment the classroom.

Recognizing the limited diversity of the valley I wished to create a place where any family, no matter their means, could not only participate, but feel true ownership of the education process, a simple, affordable program that brought people from all walks of life together to celebrate learning, celebrate life and ultimately celebrate community.

After a number of inspirational meetings with Rayma Hayes I drafted an invitation to anyone wishing to join in the process of creating a school. The first meeting brought about 20 parents together, in November of 1998.

On a wing and a prayer, with \$5000 padding our pockets, and a very generous rental agreement with Little Star we hired Marga and Kim Odell to start teaching in September 1999. To say we knew what we were doing would be a stretch..... we believed in our teachers and ourselves. We also knew our kids and what we felt in our hearts to be important for their souls! Tuition for the first year was \$100/month per student – we had 10 students. Board members did absolutely everything, including teaching, cleaning, and fundraising, during the first year.

As we grow we face more challenges, different challenges than we may have ever imagined possible. The roles of board members and staff shift and change with the growth and all of us wonder from time to time the value of our efforts.....or where, perhaps we even fit into the process.....As I reflect on the foundation of this school, look at where we are and what tomorrow has to offer I am inspired. We are here to determine our role in tending to the needs of a growing school.....in doing so, we are here to remember the children, what a quality day means to them, what a community means to them, and what tomorrow will be for them when given the opportunities to realize their true selves, not simply how they do or do not fit in the box.

Growing the Community School has taken an unimaginable level of commitment and involvement of every board member, parent and teacher these past three years. This school is not a business like any other I've ever known. It is a passion that grows from within the souls of parents, teachers and students alike. It is not a simple machine that can be tinkered with, filled with gasoline, plied with cash. It is a work in progress, a leap of faith, it is sweat and tears and it is real life, every day. Without the passion we would not need to be here today.

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that:

- Each child is a unique being who develops at an individual pace and has distinct interests,
- Curiosity and creativity are innate in all children, and a school can enhance the child's natural drive to explore and experiment in the real world,
- Thought and expression develop out of experience.

OVERVIEW

The activities both in and out of the classroom will reflect the interests and abilities of the students, and the curriculum goals will be in line with their developmental levels. With this approach, students do not fall behind or move ahead of each other, because they are not judged against anyone but themselves. They learn successfully at their developmental level and continue to grow and learn in a natural progression.

- **We believe that learning, by its nature, is an organic and interdisciplinary process.** Therefore, reading, writing, and arithmetic will be presented within the framework of a holistic program. The classroom will reflect the potpourri of life; reading is how one finds out about that in which one is interested; math is what one uses in conducting the business of one's life; and writing is one form of communication. These skills are necessary within the framework of a complete life—at least in our society. These are not isolated subjects to be pored over for prescribed amounts of time. Rather, they are integrated into the pursuit of understanding.
- **Adults will be role models, facilitators, assistants, resources, and guides.** Children will develop skills in self-control, responsibility, and decision-making and can thereby enhance their life skills. The classroom provides a developmentally based curriculum that takes children from where they are “in total” and gives them opportunities and equipment to move forward at their own rates, enabling them to progress with confidence and enthusiasm towards academic excellence.

GOALS

Children will be guided to achieve their full potential. They will:

- Discover their abilities, values, and responsibilities through tasks that require perseverance, imagination, self-discipline, and significant achievement.
- Set their learning goals and make commitments toward achieving those goals.
- Initiate learning by projects based on their special interests.
- Be motivated by their innate curiosity, desire for competence, interest in finding solutions to problems, and the joy of working with people.
- Be encouraged to compete, not against each other, but with their own personal best.

Children will learn in an atmosphere of mutual respect and support. They will:

- Learn from each other as well as from adults,
- Interact with a variety of supportive adults who will provide diverse role models and be vital mentors,
- Be encouraged to ask questions and express opinions, feelings, and information in appropriate ways.

Children will discover that what happens at school, at home, and in the community is all part of the learning process. They will:

- Be a part of a team with parents and teachers to develop their individual goals and programs,
- See parents and community members involved in the day-to-day operations of the program and share an excitement for learning,
- Have a direct exposure to the natural world through excursions that refresh the human spirit and reveal important lessons of recurring cycles and cause and effect.
- Be prepared to be of service to others through community activities.

Multi-age Classrooms:

- Allow children to progress through the curriculum at their individual developmental rates,
- Eliminate the need of retention, thereby removing any stigma of not advancing to the next grade level with peers,
- Provide a model in which children are valued for where they are in their developmental level of learning, not their grade level,
- Allow children to remain in the program for 6-7 years depending on their academic or social needs,
- Break down grade divisions within a classroom,
- Permit children to be exposed to skill areas when they are developmentally ready,
- Eliminate terms such as “above grade level” and “below grade level” which give a child a sense of being better than peers, or a sense of inadequacy,
- Reduce competition with peers, but validate competition with oneself.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum will include a wide variety of student, teacher and parent initiated experiences. It will involve integration of activities that will lead to social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth. Curriculum materials are chosen by the core teachers and integrated into a yearly expedition (or theme).

Daily interaction will foster:

- Mutual trust and caring between all,
- Cooperative, rather than competitive, interaction with others,
- Respect for others’ feelings, persons, property, and uniqueness.
- Interpersonal problem-solving through talking and reasoning,
- Group problem solving,
- Movement from the child’s natural egocentricity toward greater sensitivity to others,
- The ability to sometimes compromise individual needs for group goals,
- Self-directed and independent learning,
- Being realistic in accepting one’s own limitations and abilities,
- Trust

In recognition of the child’s physical needs, the environment will provide for:

- Large and small motor activities,
- The use of concrete, manipulative learning materials,
- Study of nutrition and health,
- Freedom of movement in the classroom.

Intellectual experiences will foster concepts, problem-solving, decision-making, predicting, and creating. These experiences will include work in the following subjects:

- Arts
- Language Arts (reading, writing, language)
- Mathematics
- Social Studies
- Science
- Physical education and health
- Music (Violin)
- Environmental education
- Community Building

Expedition/Theme-based Curriculum

Instructional practices include opening readings, circles, and team-building/character development activities. Staff take responsibility for all the students, not just those in their immediate classroom – reinforcing school wide expectation and ensuring physical and emotional safety. Curriculum is inquiry-based. Students learn subjects (math, science, etc) for various purposes and audiences and across all areas of curriculum. **Students do their best work when they care about the topic, purpose, and audience.**

The following themes have been used as starting points for in-depth exploration and discovery:

1999-2000: COMMUNITY

Water Issues Play, "Let's Talk About Water"
 Blue Bell Cafe
 CS Circus

2000-2001: Fall - WORLD EXPLORERS- Incas, Mayans & Inuits

Fall Harvest Festival
 Holiday Show "The Polar Express"

Spring -WESTWARD HO- Pioneers

Oregon Trail
 Blue Bell Cafe

2001-2002: MIDDLE EAST (due to 9/11)

Science Fair
 Egyptians
 Holiday Show "Scrooge Learns the Golden Rule"
 "Holes" - Seattle expedition

2002-2003: Fall - COMMUNITY

Holiday Show "A Sleigh Ride Through the Methow"

Spring - REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Blue Bell Cafe

2003-2004: Fall - IMMIGRATION

Holiday Show "The Polar Express"
 Science Fair

Spring: MIGRATION

Centrum Camp
 Blue Bell Cafe

2004-2005: COMMUNITY

Holiday Show "The Magical Land of Oz"
 Science Fair
 International Children's Festival

2005-2006: THE ANCIENT PEOPLES OF THE AMERICAS: INCAS, MAYANS & AZTECS

Holiday Show "The Great Kapok Tree"

Science Fair

4-6 Crew Backpacking Trips

Blue Bell Cafe

Port Townsend Marine Science Center

2006-2007: NATIVE PEOPLES OF NORTH AMERICA

4-6 Crew Canoe Trip on Ross Lake

1-3 Crew Camp Out on Twisp River

Holiday Show "Totem Tales"

Science Fair

Coupeville Native American Festival

Sunflower Festival

2007-2008: EUROPE AND THE AGE OF EXPLORATION

2008-2009: COMMUNITY; the history of the Methow Valley & the Lookout Wolf Pack

Older Crew 3 day camping trip – head of the Methow

Younger Crew 2 day trip – Twisp River

Holiday Performance – "Sleigh Ride through the Methow"

Expedition Night – Wolf Awareness

Young Authors' Night

Red Shed Service Learning Project

Older Crew Service Learning

Older Crew – Wooden Boat trip

Program Details

Outdoor Education, Community Service & Service Learning

Mission: to provide integrated, interdisciplinary education in a multi-age learning environment that utilizes community, classroom, and the natural world as a medium to learn.

Program Goal: To maintain a comprehensive and diverse outdoor education program that includes: a human component in the exploration of environmental problems and solutions, a foundation of knowledge about social and ecological systems, cultivating attitudes, values and commitments necessary to build a sustainable society, and to prepare students with attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service to others.

Program Objectives:

- Offer experiences of outdoor experiences in the natural world that reflect ecological and sociological diversity
- Weave historical, political, economic, and cultural perspectives in the exploration of environmental problems and solutions.
- Address and clarify the affective domain in all activities and discussions.
- Incorporate communication (listening, conveying an idea, writing, art), investigation (hands on interaction, information analysis, reading) and group process (individual contributions, decision making, and cooperating) into all activities.

**This program takes a considerable amount of planning and organizing time. We expect all children to be prepared for outdoor adventures and willing to participate. Please make sure your child is aware of this aspect of our school.*

Strings Program

The Community School strings program was adopted not because we want to turn out concert violinists, but rather to use the violin to help each child explore and develop many varied skills. **All children in Middle and Older Crews are required to rent or own a violin for the school year.** Please contact the school office for rental information in our area.

The violin, in particular, is ideal for a multi-age setting because there are graded sizes to make it accessible to all children. Also, it challenges both sides of the brain because the two hands are performing different functions. It is excellent for small motor skills, balance, and coordination. Because there are no frets or keys on the violin, students will be developing their auditory sense, at first just matching pitches, and then, playing whole pieces by ear. . We will challenge students to read music, at their own level.

The program is based on Suzuki method. There are several components to this method that you should all understand:

- First, **listening to music** is essential to learning music. Suzuki based his method on the way children learn their native tongue: by hearing it for a certain period before they even try to reproduce it. The students will hear their pieces at school, and it is suggested that parents purchase the Suzuki violin school CD, volume I, to play at home
- **Repetition** is also essential to learning music, just as it was with speech. Students will be repeating exercises and pieces until they become habit.
- **Group study** has always been a component of the Suzuki method. Children learn so much from each other, and enjoy "showing off" what they know. Ideally, students should have private lessons as well, but this is not required for our school program.
- It is a key element in Suzuki study that **parents be involved** in your child's violin study. At least encourage your child, and ask to hear what they are learning. Encourage them to bring the violin home and practice over the weekend. At most, you are welcome to come to class and learn with us, to share this wonderful tool to self-discovery.
- And most important of all is the **philosophy** that we must try to keep in mind during this class. Suzuki saw that each child learns at a different rate, and with their own unique approach. The teacher is the guide who patiently repeats the exercises and pieces until the child discovers them for themselves. We cannot push them beyond what comes naturally. (When our child said, "Da, da" countless times, we didn't say, "OK, let's move on to the next word!") It will be difficult in a class for me to be aware of each child progress at all times, but that is my goal. The goal is for everyone to use their violin to help discover and challenge themselves. Music is almost the by-product!

Title I Reading & Math Support

Students who need assistance in reading may qualify for Title I reading and math support. Daily, the Community School has a reading and math specialist work with children who are in need of supplemental help. *Teach Your Children to Read Well* is the primary curriculum used for the reading program.

World Language

SPANISH is taught, formally, and includes song, dance, reading, and games integrated into a fiesta of learning. Each crew leader also integrates world language into their daily curriculum, reinforcing language lessons and encouraging student learning and engagement.

Academic Details

Essential Learning Requirements

Parents who are not familiar with our philosophy and curriculum may have concern that their child will academically fall behind their peer group in the public school system. This fear is often connected with the question “are the essential learning requirements being met at the Community School?”

MVCS uses a Standards Based System to insure each developmental level is being adequately mastered in each subject area. These standards are determined by the Washington State educational standards and expanded upon by MVCS faculty to include the unique curriculum offered at the school.

Because of our multiage environment and philosophy, the Community School focuses on individual achievements and successes rather than Washington State’s recommendation of placement. More often than not we have found that our student’s academic achievements are well beyond the standard learning requirements for their age group. If you have concerns with this topic we encourage you meet with the staff to review your concerns.

Standardized Testing

CS does not participate in standardized testing. If you would like your child to participate in standardized testing (i.e., WASL) it is your responsibility to make arrangements with the public school, independent of MVCS.

Student/Parent/Teacher Conferences & Student Report

Conferences are held twice a year: Fall and Spring.

The fall conference focuses on goal setting. The purpose of this meeting is to help each student individually set goals for her/himself. This meeting is set after the student has spent time getting acclimated to the classroom and teachers, getting comfortable with classroom design and realizing teacher expectations as well as their own abilities. Students work with teachers and parents to construct academic, social, behavioral, and motivational goals. Teachers act as facilitators during these conferences.

Spring conferences are a time for sharing student work, achievements, and concerns. We look back to previously set goals and establish new goals for the future. The teachers facilitate the meetings, while the students show their work and discuss how they have progressed and where they have struggled. Parents are encouraged to join in the discussion and ask questions of the students and teachers.

Academic Evaluation

At the end of each year parents will receive an academic evaluation. The student report consists of five categories: language arts, math, science, and social studies, social & emotional development. The teacher who is most familiar with your child’s subject will fill out the appropriate category. The evaluation form has 3 primary objectives: 1) to articulate skills developed 2) to articulate skills to work on and 3) to narrate the emotional and social developments.

Student Relations

Rules and Logical Consequences

Every student has a right to learn in an atmosphere of mutual respect and kindness. If an individual interferes with this right, the faculty use logical consequences to help the child fix their mistakes and regain self-control.

School Conduct and Expectations

- Class starts on time; children are on time
- Students show respect to teachers, parents, fellow students, their environment, and themselves
- Students are expected to use Peace Tables and Class Meetings in an effort to resolve conflict
- Students sit quietly in circle and other lesson times and abide by the “give 5” practice
- Students must be accompanied by an adult or classroom buddy when using the public restroom or working outside the classroom
- Students take responsibility for their own messes and clean up accordingly
- Students help to clean their classroom daily
- Students do not bring toys or other items from home unless for specific projects or sharing
- Students will not litter.
- Students follow the sharing schedule
- Students acknowledge and are respectful of the public spaces (buildings, open spaces, outdoor classroom, etc) in which they attend school

Characteristics of Logical Consequences – 3 R’s – Respectful – Relevant – Realistic

Depending on circumstances the following (in no particular order) are steps that will be used.

“You break it – you fix it.”

Children take responsibility for fixing, as best they can, any problem or mess they created

Apology of Action – a form of “you break it – you fix it” that attempts to fix hurt feelings and damaged relationships. Children go beyond saying “I’m sorry” to making amends for the hurtful behavior.

Loss of privilege

Establishing rules together implies trust among everyone in the group. With this trust come the privileges of the classroom: using materials and work areas, working with friends, choosing a learning activity, joining a reading or math group. When a student (or group of students) breaches that trust, for example, by being careless or unsafe, a logical consequence is for the teacher to take away the related privilege until the child shows a readiness to handle the privilege. The teacher also provides a process that helps the child learn and demonstrate that she is ready to try again.

Time-Out

A child who is beginning to lose control in a way that is disruptive or that compromises safety is asked to leave the scene. During the time away from the group, the child’s job is to regain self-control so she/he can come back to the group and participate in a positive way.

Office Visit

If a teacher deems it necessary to bring a student to the office because of disruptive or unsafe behavior the Director/Assistant Director will hear the issue and ask the student to complete a

“Refocus Form” prior to returning to class.

If a child continues to disrupt learning the following steps will be taken when necessary:

1) Classroom Contract:

Teacher, the Director, and student will sit down and create a classroom contract during school hours. Parent(s) will be notified and copies of the contract will be put in student’s file and sent home. The “Care Group*” will also be notified at this point.

2) Parent/child contract

The “Care Group” will determine a proposed contract. The teacher and director will then meet with parent(s) and student to review contract with the child and develop specific consequences for the inappropriate behaviors in an after school conference. Copies of the contract will be kept in the student’s file and sent home with parent(s).

3) Further recommendations –

In an effort to maintain a quality learning environment for the student and out of fairness to the teachers and all students at the school, further actions may be necessary in order for the student to remain at MVCS. The Care Group may recommend such things as:

- One on one aide
- Testing or formal evaluation
- Counseling

At this time the family is responsible for all expenses incurred for aides, testing, etc.

In the interest of safety and well-being for all children The School reserves the right to ask families to immediately withdraw their child until an appropriate course of action is determined by the family and Care Group.

***Care Group** – One teacher from each classroom, Director, Assistant Director and two board members.

While the Community School strives to meet the needs of all children and families, there are circumstances unique to the program and the Community School’s educational and disciplinary philosophies that are not suited to every child and family.

In such cases a team effort among teachers, parents/care givers and the director is made to assess appropriate action. In most cases a trial period is agreed upon and every reasonable effort is made to meet the needs of the child within the school environment. If, at the end of this trial period, it is still felt by the team that The Community School is unable to meet the child’s needs or the school’s resources are inadequate, the family will be asked to withdraw the child from the school and seek a more appropriate environment.

Any of the following behaviors or incidents may lead to stronger disciplinary actions, including behavioral contract or immediate student dismissal:

- Fighting, bullying (as defined below*) or any behavior that violates the person or possessions of another.

- Physical or verbal sexual harassment.
- Possession of knives or other weapons.

***Bullying can take many forms: physical, emotional, verbal or a combination of these. It may involve one child bullying another, a group of children against a single child or groups against other groups (gangs). It is not unlike other forms of victimization and abuse in that it involves:**

- an imbalance of power
- differing emotional tones, the victim will be upset whereas the bully is cool and in control
- blaming the victim for what has happened
- lack of concern on the part of the bully for the feelings and concerns of the victim
- a lack of compassion

Parent Commitment

The Community School offers a unique educational environment because of participation from CS families and our greater community. Parent involvement is one of the fundamental components of the success. Participation in the education process encourages parents, faculty and staff to create a strong and cohesive group that is able to focus on the needs of the classroom and individual children. Parents enhance the quality of the program by giving of their time and talents while assisting faculty in the everyday logistics of school life. Each family is responsible for scheduling and participating in the program, no matter what their financial tuition commitment is to the School.

In-Class Parent Support

- Families with two parents residing in the Methow Valley are to commit **45 hours** in the classroom. Families with one parent residing locally are to commit **22.5 hours** in the classroom.
- Parents are responsible for finding a replacement parent for days missed.

Buy-out Option

A family may choose to buy out of their volunteer commitment by making a donation of \$900 per child per year.

Fundraising

All School families are asked to participate in **25 hours** of fundraising time, **12.5** for single parent families. If you have a particular skill that might benefit this process please consider joining the fundraising committee.

Buy-out Option

A family may choose to buy out of their fundraising commitment by making a donation of \$500 per child per year.

Textbook/Materials Fee

Although MVCS does not have a textbook or material fee we ask parents to be prepared to spend between **\$50.00-\$75.00 dollars** on MVCS related materials/field trips throughout the year.

Tuition

The Community School annual tuition is **\$5,700** for the school year (September through June). If you choose to pay monthly, **tuition is due by the 1st of the month and considered late on the 15th**. Unless prior arrangements have been made, **a \$25 per student fee is charged for tuition paid after the 15th** of the month. Parents have the option of writing ten checks dating them appropriately for upcoming months to be held by MVCS and deposited on a monthly basis.

Enrollment

Maximum enrollment at the Community School is currently 40 students. This number is subject to change based on optimal student/adult ratio. Anyone is invited to apply for admission to the Community School. The following is our official enrollment policy.

1. Children are placed on the Waiting List for the year specified by the parents when the Community School receives a completed application.
2. Children are accepted from the waiting list into the School based on the date the application is received. The Community School does reserve the right to accept students out of sequence in order to maintain age and gender balance or according to other criteria as may be set.
3. Notification of acceptance is made as soon as possible.
4. From time to time, a space becomes available during a school year. The Community School will then notify the next child on the waiting list.
5. There is a four-week trial period for new students to ensure that MVCS can meet the needs of your child. If it's not a good match, your deposit will be refunded.
6. The parent is responsible for notifying the Community School of any address or telephone changes.
7. The Community School reserves the right to change its Enrollment policy as needed without notice.

Classroom Schedule

The Community School operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 3:00, except on **Wednesday school is out at 1:15 for younger students and 3:00 for orchestra students**. Teachers arrange the daily schedule to include fundamental learning components (reading, writing, and arithmetic) art, science, social studies and music. Rarely will children at the Community School be focusing on one component at a time- often a special project will be in the works that embraces several learning components that offer experiential and exploratory learning. Special projects may require time above and beyond in-classroom hours, be prepared to spend some extra hours out at night or on the weekend in the name of "community school".

It is discouraged for students to be scheduled for other activities (i.e. private music lessons, tutoring, etc) during regular school hours. If your situation deems this necessary, please schedule a meeting with the school director to discuss further.

School Communication

Individual and personal concerns, questions or complaints should be directed to the person most directly involved. **Classroom concerns should be immediately brought to the attention of the teacher involved**. If a parent feels he or she has not been heard, or if for any reason a parent is uncomfortable speaking directly

with the teacher, he/she should contact the director who will help facilitate communication between the people involved. Director, Deb Jones-Schuler is available to assist families, students and staff when needed.

- Questions regarding classroom help, fundraising commitments, supply orders, or tuition payments should be directed to Deb.
- Questions regarding the overall function of the school, admissions, or school policy should contact Deb.
- Questions regarding board responsibilities and conduct should be directed to board president, Julie Muyliaert.

Phone Calls and Messages

MVCS has one phone line. If you do not get a hold of someone please leave a message, we check our messages regularly during school hours. If it is an emergency please try again immediately.

If a parent needs to contact their student –we strongly encourage calls to be made during MVCS breaks- morning recess (9:50-10:25 am) or lunch (12:00 pm- 1:00 pm). It can be extremely disruptive to the classroom to remove a child from their activity.

School Newsletter

The students and parent volunteers publish a newsletter. Students, parents and board members participate by writing articles about school-related activities, units, field trips, policies, special occasions, etc. Please contact volunteer coordinator if you would like to participate in the development of the school newsletter.

Student Folders

Each student will be assigned a "back and forth folder". **This folder is our main communication source with parents for day to day details.** Please make an effort to check your child/children's folder **daily**.

Health & Safety

Immunizations & Emergency Information

As required by law, all school children must be immunized (or properly exempted) in order to attend school. Immunization records and Emergency information must be on file at the school by the first day of school.

Illness

The health of all the children at CS depends on each family acting responsibly. Please consider these general guidelines.

- Since colds and childhood disease are most infectious before symptoms appear, it is wise to keep a child home if he/she is extremely irritable or if you notice unusual lassitude.
- Vomiting is frequently a symptom of oncoming illness; therefore, do not send your child to school for 24 hours after such an upset.
- Keep your child home if he/she is experiencing diarrhea.
- A child should remain at home 24 hours after a fever.
- An extra day at home is good protection against a relapse and/or re-infection.

Please notify us immediately if your child contracts anything that is contagious and also act promptly with medical care. We will provide information for dealing with contagious situations as the need arises.

Snacks and Lunches

Good nutrition is essential to your child getting the most out of school. Foods high in sugar, monosodium glutamate, or empty calories (Lunchables, Doritos, pop, gummy bears, to name but a few) are highly discouraged. Please be mindful as to what you put in your child's lunch. Foods like: fruits, nuts, granola bars, sandwiches, cut vegetables, hot soups, are encouraged.

Clothing

Children at MVCS are encouraged to play. They are expected to be able to run, jump, climb, and move to their fullest potential safely and freely. Choose clothing that allows for this type of movement and wear. You may want to send a special shirt specifically for art projects that your child can keep in his/her cubby.

Appropriate clothing during outdoor education day is critical. Please please prepare your child for all weather! Your child should always have in his/her backpack: raincoat, warm shirt or sweater, hat, gloves, long pants, water bottle, sunscreen, shorts (in the summer), snow pants (in winter).

Supervision

During school hours, the school is responsible for your child. Parents are responsible for their children at all after school functions

Arrival

School starts at 8:30am. Please be punctual. Habitual tardiness is difficult for children and teachers.

BUS

Students have the option of riding the public school bus to school from upper valley. The public school charges \$1.00 per ride and parents are billed every 3 months. **Parents are responsible for keeping track of the number of rides.** Riding the bus is a service provided by the public school district and is not required by law.

Departure

Dismissal time is 3:00 p.m. sharp, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Dismissal is at 1:15pm every Wednesday for YOUNGER Crew only, 3:00pm for Middle and Older students. MVCS Students will wait for you in the classroom. Please pick your child up in the classroom. If someone other than the parent or guardian is picking up your child, you must leave your consent or call the school prior to pick up – sending a note with your student is OK.

School Absence

Please communicate with the school if your child is not able to attend school **on the day of the absence.** If your child misses more that two days we ask that you communicate with our teaching staff to gather information and materials that the child may have missed during their absence.

Injury or Illness at School

If a child becomes ill or is injured at school, every effort will be made to contact parents or your emergency contact. If, in our opinion, the child is too ill to be at school, it is the parent's responsibility to pick up the child as soon as possible. In the event of an injury or illness too severe to warrant waiting for the parent, we

will call for an aid car to take the child to the nearest emergency room. Please be sure that all current emergency and work contact information is on file in the school office.

Medication

Whenever possible, medications should be scheduled so that they can be given by a parent. However, pursuant to state government legislation, The Community School is authorized to administer oral medication to students during school hours. We define medication to mean all drugs, whether prescription **or over the counter**. A signed and dated request from the parent or guardian and **physician** must be on file. The label must include the child's name, physician's name, the drug name and dosage. Students may not carry medication themselves.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Community School admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and financial assistance programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.