

Methow Valley



Community School  
Celebrating Authentic Learning

# Parent Handbook

## 2016 - 2017

201 Highway 20 South  
PO Box 546  
Twisp, WA 98856  
(509) 996-4447  
methowvalleycommunityschool@gmail.com  
www.mvcommunityschool.org

This parent handbook is not intended to create a contract. The school reserves the right to change at any time any of the policies described or privileges granted.

## ***Welcome from the Director***

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the 2016–2017 school year, and to the current edition of the Parent Handbook. We hope that you will find it both useful and accessible. The handbook opens with the ***Partnership Agreement***. Please take a few minutes to read the document. It responds to two questions: “What is it that you can expect of the MVCS?” and “What will the MVCS expect of you?” Whether this is your first year at the school or your 14th, whether you are a parent, a board member, a teacher, or an administrator, we encourage you to read the Partnership Agreement and, if you have questions about what it says or what it means, inquire.

The intention of the ***Partnership Agreement*** is to communicate as clearly as possible what we can expect of each other, and to eliminate the frustration and disappointment that result when unstated expectations go unmet. Communication is at the heart of the matter. Communication is a constant challenge in a community, large or small. Even as small as the MVCS is, we are a diverse group of independent thinkers, all striving for what we feel is best for our children. Effective communication is essential.

This Parent Handbook is a part of our effort. We invite you to familiarize yourself with its contents and to use it as a reference tool. If you do have questions, please ask. If you have suggestions, we welcome them.

We welcome you and your children to a year of discovery and growth.

Sincerely,

Crystal

Crystal Bacon  
Executive Director

# The Partnership Agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to clarify expectations. What can parents and the school expect of each other as we enter into a partnership to aid your children's development? This document aims to articulate expectations we agree on: what parents can reasonably expect of the school, and what the school will expect of parents.

## ***What can parents expect of the school?***

*Q: What can I expect of the school academically?*

*A: The MVCS aspires to fulfill its mission as modeled on Expeditionary Learning.*

As an EL model school, we are different from conventional schools. Our first commitment is to the multi-dimensional development of the child through inquiry based learning. MVCS students amass a great deal of factual knowledge in school. Our aim is for each child to be far more than a repository of this information: we guide each child to think for him or herself. Cognitive development and a solid academic foundation are important. Equally significant is your child's social, emotional, and physical development. Through play, passion and purpose we challenge children to be independent, inspired learners with a deep sense of responsibility for themselves and their community, locally and globally.

*Q: What can I expect in terms of communication from the school?*

*A: We aim to maintain open, honest, timely and respectful communication with you about your child and about information affecting the school community.*

There are two regularly scheduled student-parent-teacher conferences each year, a mid-year written progress report, and a year-end written evaluation report. In the event of special concerns, your child's teacher will contact you to discuss these concerns. In addition to conference reporting, teachers will communicate with you via weekly or bi-weekly Monday notes, email messages and/or phone calls when necessary. Your phone call or visit to my office is always welcome.

Each MVCS teacher is a well-trained professional, and evaluations are confidential and based on direct observation of your child. Teachers will always offer their current best understanding of your child's progress and her or his strengths and needs. For all children, this evaluation is based on the teacher's observations, which may be augmented by input from the director and/or auxiliary staff.

Regarding ongoing, school-wide communication, the school distributes a Parent Handbook, school calendar and other occasional letters and publications. Email is the primary source for dispensing basic information; notices, schedules, requests for volunteers. Face-to-face meetings or phone calls are requested for other issues.

*Q: What can I expect of the school environment?*

*A: We strive to ensure an environment that is physically and emotionally safe and supportive,*

*as well as aesthetically pleasing and engaging.*

We are ever vigilant to ensure that the school building and grounds are physically safe, secure and well maintained.

Our community of children and adults comprise a social environment and culture that impacts your child's experience. We strive to make this environment emotionally safe and supportive. This does not mean the year goes by problem-free. It does mean that we will work with children in developmentally appropriate ways to deal with problems as they arise, empowering them with social skills and aiding them in the development of emotional intelligence to prepare for a lifetime of working with others in diverse situations.

*Q: What professional standards can I expect of the school and teaching staff?*

*A: The school maintains a Washington State Certificate of Private School Approval and is a member of the Washington Federation of Independent Schools. It holds high standards for training and professional development among its staff.*

At a minimum, all staff hold Bachelors' degrees. Core teachers also hold teaching certificates.

Curriculum is guided by the Common Core and Washington State learning standards to insure that children are best prepared for an academic transition upon graduating from the MVCS.

*Q: What can I expect of the school administration?*

*A: Integrity; a focus on the needs of individual children in harmony with the life of the community; mission driven decisions embodying good stewardship and responsible management; and an open door to your concerns, questions and suggestions.*

Administrative staff work collaboratively with all the school's various constituencies: students, parents, extended family, teachers, board members, alumni, prospective parents, professional visitors, government officials, other schools and educational organizations, and the general public. In your interactions with administration, you can expect professional, courteous conduct, as well as mutually respectful communication. The director often faces decisions requiring a balance of competing priorities. Sometimes those factors are mutually exclusive; sometimes equally well-intentioned adults see matters differently. In making decisions, the administration will focus on the interest of the individual child in balance with the needs of the school.

***What does the school expect from parents?***

*Q: What is the school's most basic expectation of parents?*

*A: Make continuing efforts both to understand and to embrace the Expeditionary Learning based approach and to work in partnership with the school.*

Your child will have the most success when you understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we help parents learn about the Expeditionary Learning (EL) approach by providing information and opportunities for parent education throughout a family's years at the school. School staff expect parents to attend regularly scheduled student-parent- teacher conferences and parent education events, and to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the Parent Handbook and other school publications. Children thrive when home and school work in harmony, with both environments sharing the same educational values and expectations.

*Q: What contribution can I make to a positive school community?*

*A: Demonstrate respect for all adults and children, the school, and the school's programs.*

*Answer the call to help when you can.*

Model respect – for children, their crewmates, parents of crewmates, teachers and other school staff – in short, for everyone associated with the school. Respect begins with civility and deepens into trust. We ask the children to practice C.A.R.E.S. (cooperation, appreciation, respect and responsibility, empathy and self-control). We expect the same from the adults; parents, school staff, and community volunteers at all times and in all relationships within the school community. This includes speech and behavior. Support your child by speaking of her/his teachers, crewmates and school in positive terms. Respect and abide by the school's policies and procedures. Honor your commitments. Look for ways to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Through your behavior, you contribute to your children's moral development and to the culture and climate of their school, which they experience on a daily basis.

Parent volunteers help keep the MVCS the very special place it is. When the volunteer coordinator calls for help or a teacher has a project – consider how your skills and availability can contribute to the need and respond.

*Q: What are my responsibilities regarding communication between home and school? A:*

*Maintain active, direct and respectful, two-way communication with the school.*

Read all communications that are sent home, including weekly and bi-weekly crew news, letters, calendars, emails. Inform the school in a timely fashion of pertinent changes in your child's life. Active communication involves parents sharing observations and concerns about their child with the child's current teacher. In matters large and small remember the principle of respect: even when there is disagreement, disagree respectfully.

## **Methow Valley Community School Overview**

### **MVCS Facts**

- Founded in 1999
- Non-profit 501 (c) 3 governed by a board of directors

- President: Allison Ciancibelli
- Vice-President: Lawrence Hooper
- Treasurer: Kim Odell
- Secretary: Leigh Ann Robinson
- Washington State Approved Private School
- Member of the Washington Federation of Independent Schools
- 55-75% of students receive tuition assistance in any given year

## **Methow Valley Community School 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 growth and adventure.

**We are ambassadors** into the journey of life-long learning.

## **Methow Valley Community School Guiding Principles**

### **Love of Learning**

Students are self-motivated and proficient in taking advantage of learning opportunities in all areas of life. The MVCS encourages this 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**

The MVCS nurtures a deep exploration of self and others through the C.A.R.E.S. character development model.

### **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. The MVCS is guided by both Common Core and WA State academic standards, with qualitative, bi-annual teacher-student assessments and quantitative tracking of graduate performance.

### **Creating Community**

The MVCS is a community of students, parents, staff and local community members, building dynamic, supportive learning experiences. All participants develop deeper connections to one another and the community at large, by interacting as teachers, learners and helpers. Participants learn by practice what it means to be an engaged

community member.

### **Leadership and Teamwork**

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

### **Arts and Culture**

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

### **Diversity**

The MVCS embraces and honors diversity: economical, social, academic and cultural. We are committed to teaching inclusion so that students learn to value their different histories and talents while acknowledging their common humanity.

### **Nature, Sustainability and Sense of Place**

Using the Methow Valley as a classroom, the 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 the 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.

## **First Weeks of School**

### **2-week prep**

2-week prep for crewleaders and support staff includes time to work in the classrooms, meet as a whole staff, collaborate with crewleaders, craft the shared vision and code of conduct for the staff.

### **First day of school**

The first day of school includes an all-school circle and welcome from all the crewleaders and supporting staff. Also included is a song and get-to-know-you activity, led by crewleaders.

### **First 2 weeks of school**

The focus for the first two weeks of school is to establish a foundation for a cooperative, respectful, student-centered school culture through the use of EL strategies and guidelines.

- Crewleaders are dedicated to team building, shared vision and code of conduct processes that each crew goes through to establish a foundation for the year.
- Classroom routines are established; snack and lunch schedules, free play protocol, cubby, bathroom, “back and forth folders”, etc.
- All crews participate in adventure outings – see below for more details.
- The goal is to have shared vision and code of conduct ready to post in crew rooms and share school wide by end of 2-weeks when possible.

### **Definitions**

- Shared Vision = common goals
- Code of Conduct = how the group will function to obtain common goals

### **Mandatory Crew Meetings for Parents**

Held during the first month school, the meetings are intended to provide an overview of the year’s learning theme, or expedition, and question and answer time with their student’s crewleader and supporting staff. This is also the time for parents to determine their shared vision and code of conduct, as facilitated by their crewleader. At least one parent from each family is expected to attend.

**First Mandatory Crew Meeting for Parents will be held:  
Wednesday, September 28, at 5:00 pm.**

### **Classroom Schedule**

- The Community School operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 3:00.
- Crewmembers in primary grades are released at 1:00 pm every Wednesday.

Special evening events include, but are not limited to, the annual holiday performance, crew specific Expedition nights and other events that highlight student work and invite parents and the larger community to learn and acknowledge student work.

Families are discouraged from scheduling other activities (for example, private music lessons, tutoring, and the like) during regular school hours.

## **Expeditionary Learning and C.A.R.E.S.**

**Expeditionary Learning Design Principles:** These design principles, coupled with the Guiding Principles, are to be used as a guide and compass when planning and implementing learning at the MVCS.

### **The Primacy of Self-Discovery**

Learning happens best with emotion, challenge and the requisite support. People discover their abilities, values, "grand passions," and responsibilities in situations that offer adventure and the unexpected. They must have tasks that require perseverance, fitness, craftsmanship, imagination, self-discipline and significant achievement. A primary job of the educator is to help students overcome their fear and discover they have more in them than they think.

### **The Having of Wonderful Ideas**

Teach so as to build on children's curiosity about the world by creating learning situations that provide matter to think about, time to experiment, and time to make sense of what is observed. Foster a community where students' and adults' ideas are respected.

### **The Responsibility for Learning**

Learning is both a personal, individually specific process of discovery and a social activity. Each of us learns within and for ourselves and as a part of a group. Every aspect of a school must encourage children, young people, and adults to become increasingly responsible for directing their own personal and collective learning.

### **Empathy and Caring**

Learning is fostered best in small groups where there is trust, sustained caring and mutual respect among all members of the learning community. Learning groups are kept small with a caring adult looking after the progress of each child. Older students mentor the younger ones.

### **Success and Failure**

All students must be assured a fair measure of success in learning in order to nurture the confidence and capacity to take risks and rise to increasingly difficult challenges. But it is also important to experience failure, to overcome negative inclinations, to prevail against adversity and to learn to turn disabilities into opportunities.

### **Collaboration and Competition**

Teach so as to join individual and group development so that the value of friendship, trust, and group endeavor is made manifest. Encourage students to compete, not against each other, but with their own personal best and with rigorous standards of excellence.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

Diversity and inclusion in all groups dramatically increases richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving ability, and acceptance of others. Adults encourage students to investigate, value and draw upon their own different histories, talents and resources together with those of other communities and cultures. Learning groups are kept heterogeneous.

### **The Natural World**

A direct and respectful relationship with the natural world refreshes the human spirit and reveals the important lessons of recurring cycles and cause and effect. Students learn to become stewards of the earth and of the generations to come.

### **Solitude and Reflection**

Solitude, reflection, and silence replenish our energies and open our minds. Students have time alone to explore their own thoughts, make their own connections and create their own ideas. There are opportunities to exchange their reflections with each other and with adults.

### **Service and Compassion**

We are crew, not passengers, and are strengthened by acts of consequential service to others. One of the school's primary functions is to prepare its students with the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service to others.

## **C.A.R.E.S.**

The goal of the C.A.R.E.S. program is to help crewmembers develop strong character in an authentic way that reinforces positivity and community ownership/responsibility.

- **C – Cooperation:** The ability to accept differences while working together and feeling a sense of community and belonging.
- **A – Appreciation:** Fostering a sense of gratitude, humility and reverence.
- **R – Respect & Responsibility:** Demonstrating respect for self, crewmates, the community and the environment. Being accountable to others and ourselves for our decisions, works and actions.
- **E – Empathy:** Caring enough to understand someone else's viewpoint and experiences, and then acting with acceptance and compassion.
- **S - 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.
  - o Character traits are to be used in the daily routine of the classroom.
  - o Crewleaders may choose to focus on one trait at a time or incorporate multiple traits in lessons and activities. Examples of re-enforcing traits; having crewmembers create traits letters, posters to put on the walls, have a trait-of-the-week, have table groups named after each trait and learn about it.

## **School-Wide Expectations**

The goal of common building expectations is for crewleaders and supporting staff to give consistent guidance and hold high expectations for appropriate crewmember behavior.

- Crewleaders arrive by 8:00 am. Crewmembers are expected to arrive in time for school to begin at 8:30. Students arriving before 8:00 am are to check in with the School Director if their crewleader is not present.
- Crewmembers are to check into their crew rooms upon arrival in the morning and are expected to remain in their rooms unless directed by a crewleader or other staff member to be somewhere else.
- Food and drink will be consumed in the lunchroom and kept out of classrooms.
- Crewmembers **must wear shoes** in all areas of the building.
- Crewmembers will check in with their crewleader or support staff/parent before leaving the crewroom to use the bathroom or visit other areas of the school.
- Crewmembers will walk, quietly in all school areas and on stairs.
- Crewmembers will respect the school environment and talk softly when in the restrooms or other common areas.

- Crewmembers will be respectful of the wide range of developmental needs of the student body and refrain from public displays of affection in a romantic relationship (for example: hand holding, kissing, hugging).
- Students may use appliances *only* during teaching sessions with adult supervision. Any dishes used during the course of the day are to be washed and stored by crewleaders and their crew at day's end.
- SNACKS & LUNCHES - Students will bring from home ready-made sack lunches every day except Locavores Lunch day(s). **Low or no sugar** meals are strongly encouraged and the absence of soda drinks and candy is expected. Students with sugar snacks in their lunches will be asked to save them until after school.
- Parents will take turns providing a supply of "emergency snacks" for students, to be distributed by an adult.
- Polite manners will be expected, encouraged, modeled, and assessed by all staff and parents (for example, please, thank you, may I, excuse me, etc.).
- Crewmembers will show respect to teachers, parents, fellow students, their environment, and themselves.
- Crewmembers will undertake conflict resolution in concert with the guiding principles and practices of positive discipline.
- Crewmembers will take responsibility for their own messes and clean up accordingly.
- Personal toys or other items from home are to stay safely at home unless requested at school for specific projects or sharing. Cell phones and other electronic devices are to be left off and safely stored during school hours.
- Crewmembers will follow the sharing schedule as determined by their crewleader.
- All visitors will check in at the Director's office upon entering the building.
- Crewmembers will be dismissed at day's end to a parent or carpool driver – all other arrangements must be sent to the office prior to day's end.
- Crewmembers will be supervised by an adult when outdoors.

## **Student Relations**

Every student has a right to learn in an atmosphere of mutual respect and kindness. If an individual interferes with this right, the faculty uses POSITIVE DISCIPLINE and LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES to help the child fix their mistakes, re-focus energy and regain self-control.

### ***"Giving 5"***

This is a standard practice used by all staff to get the attention of a group. The person needing "5" holds their hand in the air (high 5 style) and asks for "5", counting down to "1".

- Eyes on speaker
- Ears listening
- Quiet mouth
- Hands still
- Body still

***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 create.
- **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 crewmember (or group) breaches that trust, for example, by being careless or unsafe, a logical consequence is for the crewleader to take away the related privilege until the crewmember shows a readiness to handle the privilege. The crewleader also provides a process that helps the crewmember learn and demonstrate that she is ready to try again.
- **Time-Out:** A crewmember who is beginning to lose control in a way that is disruptive or that compromises safety is re-directed to a positive “job”. If additional intervention is warranted, the crewmember may be asked to leave the scene. During the time away from the group, the crewmember’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 crewleader or support staff deems it necessary to bring a crewmember to the office because of disruptive or unsafe behavior the Director will contact parent/guardian and ask for a meeting.

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

- **Classroom Contract:** Crewleader, School Director, and crewmember will sit down, during school hours, and create a classroom contract. Parent(s) will be notified and copies of the contract will be put in crewmember’s file and sent home. The **Care Group\*** will also be notified at this point.
- **Parent/child contract:** The **Care Group** will determine a proposed contract. The crewleader and Director will meet with parent(s) and crewmember, in an after school conference, to review contract and develop specific consequences for the inappropriate behaviors. Copies of the contract will be kept in the crewmember’s file and sent home with parent(s).
- **Further recommendations:** In an effort to maintain a quality-learning environment for the crewmember and out of fairness to the school population, further actions may be necessary in order for the child to remain at the MVCS. The Care Group may recommend such things as:
  - 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 MVCS 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** –Crewleader from each crew, school director, and two board members.

While the MVCS strives to meet the needs of all children and families, there are circumstances unique to the program, its educational and disciplinary philosophies, which are not suited to every child and family.

In such cases a team effort among staff, 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 MVCS 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***

Given the heightened awareness in the popular press about bullying, the MVCS clarifies its stance regarding such misbehavior with the following addition to its student conduct policy.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- Physical bullying – when one engages in physical force against another, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- Verbal bullying – when someone uses his or her words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- Nonverbal or relational bullying – when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, gossip, or intimidating another by using gestures.
- Hazing – an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
- Sexualized bullying – when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.
- Cyberbullying – the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messaging, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
  - o Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images;
  - o Posting sensitive, private information about another person;

- o Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad; and
- o Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all students, school employees, school volunteers, and school visitors.

All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the director. All other members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. Retaliation against individuals who report such alleged violations is expressly prohibited.

The school will accept and review all reports of bullying. The school will consider the ages and maturity of the students involved, the type of behaviors, the frequency and/or pattern of behaviors, the context in which the incident occurred, and other relevant circumstances. Consequences may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or reports to law enforcement officer.

## **Parent Relations**

### **Communications**

Weekly crew news (Monday Notes) are provided to parents by crewleaders and sent from the school's email address. Weekly notes include information about activities in your child's classroom, as well as upcoming events and crewmember needs; it is the expectation that parents or guardians read the correspondence and stay current on information provided. All general group email messages to crew parents are generally sent through the School Director. Basic logistic emails may be sent from crewleader to individual parents as needed.

***We request that all other business relating to student needs, parent feedback, and the like is to be handled in person either before or after school.*** Communication is at the heart of the matter. Communication is a constant challenge in a community, large or small. Even as small as the MVCS is, we are a diverse group of independent thinkers, all striving for what we feel is best for our children. Effective communication is essential.

MVCS staff is dedicated to communicating in a solution-oriented and student focused way, and to assuming best intent in interactions with students, parents, and each other. As issues arise, our goal is to communicate openly with parents to find a solution.

***To support us in maintaining a positive and safe environment for your children, we ask that you schedule a meeting (via phone or email) to ask questions or address concerns.***

Crewleaders are often available before or after school for scheduled meetings. The Director has posted, open, office hours, and is available for scheduled meetings at other times during each school day. Additionally, the Director and Board members are available to facilitate meetings when requested or deemed necessary.

### **Shared Vision/Code of Conduct**

During the first weeks of school, each crew collaborates to create their own Shared Vision (common goals) and Code of Conduct (how the group will function to obtain common goals).

This process helps to establish a foundation for a cooperative, respectful, student-centered school culture.

To support the efforts of the students, parents and staff for each crew also create a Shared Vision and Code of Conduct during the first month of school. This is accomplished through a joint parent and crewleader meeting intended to provide parents an overview of the expedition and question and answer time with their student's crewleader and supporting staff, as well as engage parents in creating a shared vision and code of conduct to support their children.

Appendix A of this document provides a sample Shared Vision and Code of Conduct crafted by 2012/13 Patterson Crew parents during the September parent meeting.

## **Volunteer Expectations**

Volunteers have played, and will continue to play, an important role at the Methow Valley Community School. Students, teachers and the community benefit from the work of individuals like you who freely share their talents and resources.

Parents are asked to volunteer at MVCS for many reasons. So much of the extra-value at the MVCS is a direct result of the tremendous support we get from our parent volunteers. The numbers of volunteers who contribute to our school each day help create a true feeling of "family" in our school, family that supports the rich learning environment in which our children thrive. Studies show that children have more success in school when they know that their parents are connected and involved.

Additionally, our school culture and guiding principles embrace service learning as a core part of our curriculum. Students develop an ethic and habit of service by working collaboratively with community members and organizations to create projects that meet community needs; volunteering your time to support MVCS provides an authentic model of this ethic for our students.

***Volunteers teach their children the joy of giving some of our precious time to worthwhile causes. Children of volunteers will one day be the leaders of tomorrow.***

In August and September of each year, MVCS will publish volunteer opportunities and requirements for the school year, and work with families to identify areas of contribution that are a good fit for the unique skills each family offers. Volunteering requirements each year will generally include time supporting both classroom and fundraising efforts.

Attached to this handbook (Appendix B) is our "Volunteers in the Classroom" guide, intended to outline general ways parents may assist classroom endeavors, and to provide parents with an overview of the approach, language, and protocols that best support interactions with children in our school culture.

We ask that parents volunteer in areas *other than their own student's classroom*, unless specifically asked by a school staff member. At the MVCS children are given opportunities to become independent learners and collaborative community members. It is a place for them to explore, discover and begin to define who they are as individuals, apart from their connections to family. For these reasons we ask that parents honor their children's processes and give them space for expression. Parents who wish to spend direct time with their students during the

school day are invited to attend lunch and lunch recess. We ask that you notify the school beforehand.

## Health & Safety

### Immunizations & Emergency Information

As required by law, all school children must be immunized (or properly exempted) in order to attend school. The following forms must be completed and signed prior to the start of school.

- Immunization records
- Student information/Emergency release
- Concussion information sheet
- Handbook signature page

### Illness

The health of all the children at the MVCS depends on each family and staff member acting responsibly. Here are some 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 showing unusual lassitude.
- Vomiting is frequently a symptom of oncoming illness; therefore, do not send a child to school for 24 hours after such an upset.
- Keep children home if they are 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.

Parents/guardians are asked to notify the School immediately if their child contracts anything that is contagious and also act promptly with medical care. The School will provide information for dealing with contagious situations as the need arises.

### School Absence

Parents/guardians are expected to communicate with the school when their child is not able to attend school **on the day of the absence**. If the child misses more than two days parents/guardians are asked to coordinate with teaching staff to gather information and materials that the child may have missed during his/her absence.

### Medication

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

- All medications are to be stored in the Director's office unless needed on adventure outings, in which case they will be transported in the travel first aid kit and managed by the crewleader.

## **Injury or Illness at School**

If a child becomes ill or is injured at school, every effort will be made to contact parents or their 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.

## **Typical School Routines**

### ***Monday all-school circle***

- The goal of all-school circle is to come together as a whole school to celebrate each other and share learning from each crew.
- Circle begins *promptly at 8:30 am* Monday mornings with mentor/mentee pairs coming together.
- Each crew rotates being the host crew for the week. Host crew leads the circle with pledge, moment of silence, greeting, a song and any announcements from the school community.
- A master calendar lists the crew rotation.
- Host crew has 15 minutes to share learning from their crewroom. They present in front of the audience and practice presentation skills while the audience practices good listening skills.

### ***Morning circle***

The purpose of morning circle is to provide a common starting point for the day, one in which each crewmember is acknowledged and welcomed.

- **Pledge** "We come together as a group of learners. We recognize our feelings. We recognize our differences. We celebrate our work and the work of others."
- Moment of silence
- **Greeting** – greeting is passed around the circle, we practice shaking hands, looking the other in the eye and speaking clearly and kindly. We use greetings from around the world.
- **Song** – either suggested or taken from the school's song book
- **Free form** – depending on teacher interests this time is used for a group bldg. activity, fun game, brain game, announcements, sharing, etc. to set the tone for the day

### ***Closing circle***

The goal of closing circle is to bring positive closure and acknowledgment to the day, whether with a crewleader or specialist facilitating.

- An example closing circle: crewmembers sit silently, a candle is lit in center of circle, the crewleader makes a few short announcements then asks a reflection question (example: name your rose and your thorn for the day). Crewmembers take turns quickly answering. Candle blown out by Yelmihom. Crew is then excused in small groups to their cubbies.
- Friday circles includes appreciations for the Yelmihom – each student takes a moment to share an appreciation for that week’s leader (this is an opportunity for the Yelmihom to practice being gracious by using eye contact, saying “thank you”, etc).

### ***Afternoon clean up***

The goal of afternoon clean up is to provide crewmembers with opportunities to show responsibility and ownership of their learning space. In addition, keeping crew rooms and common areas tidy and organized throughout the week.

- Crewleaders schedule a block of time mid-week that allows for crewmembers to do jobs (ie: vacuum, sweep, wash tables, tidy library, sort and recycle, etc)

### ***Yelmihom***

(Methow for “leader”) The goal of the Yelmihom program is to model good leadership skills in our crewmembers and help guide them to become proficient participants in a social group.

- Each week’s Yelmihom is chosen by drawing a crewmember’s name from the hat at the end of the week prior.
- Every member has a Yelmihom week before the rotation begins again.
- The crewleader establishes what responsibilities will be given the Yelmihom. Examples include; drumming crew into circle, leading greeting, announcements, song, sharing. Additional may include being line leader, crewleader’s assistant, feeding crewroom pets, etc.

### ***Mentors***

The goal of the mentor program is to provide multi-age partnerships that give older students opportunities to role model, provide friendship, guidance, and support as younger students navigate new and challenging circumstances.

Crewleaders match mentors with mentees for three terms

- Fall
- Winter
- Spring

Mentors are with their mentees during the following, at least:

- Walk together to Monday all-school circle and stand with them, help them stay focused and participate appropriately.
- During Locavores set-up and at their Locavores lunch table.
- Escort during public outings (ie: performances, all-school events...).

- Other mentor moments include, but are not limited to:
  - Reading time
  - Adventure outings
  - Crewroom tours

## **Locavores Farm-to-Table Program**

The purpose of the Locavores Program is to provide healthy, locally produced lunches, hands on experience raising food, preparing and serving food as well as to build community through a shared meal, the practice of good manners and conversation.

Typically, one Friday per month, October – April volunteers will work with students to prepare or preserve locally produced food to be shared with the school community.

## **Outdoor Education/Adventure Outings Program**

*Embrace the challenge. Go beyond the expected. Learn through experience. Realize the potential... for yourself and a better world. Challenge yourself. Change your world. Outward Bound.*

As part of the adventure culture of the MVCS each crew participates in weekly outings. These outings are tied to the expedition, adventure, service and physical education. In addition to integrated curriculum, the adventure days are to be active – promoting outdoor skills such as hiking, biking, camping.

- Weekly outings are half to full days in valley.
- Two adults are required at all times.
- Liability release forms for each crewmember, as well as first aid kits, accompany the crewleader each day. The school cell phone is also required for emergency contact.
- Transportation is in personal vehicles. Driver must hold a current driver license with appropriate endorsements.
- Whenever possible, crewleaders involve community-based specialists, volunteers, experts to enhance student learning and promote pedagogy of place.
- Crews also participate in overnight adventures, at least one time during the school year. Coordination among crews for parent help and other logistics are addressed during the pre-school prep time.

***Examples of weekly adventures include, but are not limited to:***

- Day hikes, combined with art or writing projects
- Red Shed service projects – harvesting food for food bank
- Twisp Ponds/Salmon Recovery service projects
- Recycling Center service projects
- Farm visits
- Park clean-up
- Snow shoeing and shelter construction
- Skiing
- Cooking projects
- Ice skating
- Biking

***Example overnight adventures might include, but are not limited to:***

- Camping at Klipchuck Campground, hiking Driveway Butte, exploring the Methow River, rock climbing with Outward Bound.
- Backpacking into Ross Lake, canoeing with Outward Bound to a campsite, hiking from campsite, exploring area, canoeing home.
- Camping at Pearygin Lake State Park, exploring the local trails, learning to cook together, doing a service project for the Park.

Adventure outings require careful budgeting. Parents are expected to contribute \$10-\$20 per adventure, as well as food and loaned gear such as tents, bags, cooking gear.

Crewleaders determine how, when and where to use parent volunteers during the camp outs and may choose to do the outings without parents if other support staff are on hand. A minimum of two adults is required for any outing.

***Each crewmember is expected to bring and wear appropriate clothing and gear for any outdoor adventure. Please see mandatory gear list provided in "Preparedness" section below.***

## **Preparedness**

### **Clothing and Footwear**

Children at the MVCS are encouraged to play. They are expected to be able to run, jump, climb, and move to their fullest potential safely and freely. Families are expected to choose clothing that allows for this type of movement and is weather appropriate. Seasonally, children will be expected to bring and wear weather-appropriate coats, hats, gloves, and footwear on the school playgrounds and for outdoor adventure days.

### **Outdoor Education Gear**

Appropriate clothing and footwear during outdoor education day is critical, both for the comfort of individual crewmembers as well as to support the success of the entire crew. Outdoor Education days happen weekly and weather can shift quickly; children are expected to be prepared for all weather! Mandatory Outdoor Ed. gear for all crewmembers includes:

- Day pack
- Water bottle
- Sturdy walking/hiking shoes (closed toe)
- Non-cotton socks
- Hat and gloves
- Warm, non-cotton long underwear top and bottom
- Weatherproof outerwear
  - Spring/fall – rain coat and rain pants, shoes that keep feet dry
  - Winter – snow pants, snow boots, winter weight coat

***In the event that a child arrives to school unprepared for the day's outing, they will either be assigned to another crew or parents will be asked to take them home for the day.***

## **Student Progress**

## Goal Setting and Conferences

MVCS conferences are student-led, guided by crewleaders. Through engagement in the conference process, students develop goal-setting skills and a sense of purpose in their learning, linking academic and personal goals to their own interests and sense of self. With time for self-discovery and reflection throughout the year, crewmembers are encouraged to become increasingly responsible for their own learning.

**Fall conferences:** The goal of fall conferences is to introduce new crewmembers to the student-led conference model, check in with crewmembers and parents regarding academic and social goals, address any questions or concerns of the crewleader or parents. Prior to fall conference week crew leaders spend time with their crewmembers setting academic and social goals for the year. These goals, along with some sample work to date are shared in student-led conferences with parent, crewleader and crewmember.

**Spring conferences:** Spring conferences are a time for reflection and celebration of the work and accomplishments of the school year. Spring conferences include age-appropriate guidelines for reflection; crewleaders guide crewmembers in choosing work to be shared, and in presenting their work to parents and peers.

During conference weeks, crewmembers are in school until 12:30pm each day and conferences are scheduled from 1:00pm on, in ½ hour blocks.

## Portfolios

The portfolio is the primary place where student work is collected and kept throughout the year. It is used by crewleaders to assess their growth and is showcased during conferences and passages.

Crewmembers have individual 3-ring binders for keeping their work, and are guided by crewleaders in choosing best work to collect. Portfolios have multiple drafts of work, and will include rubrics, assessments and other tools, in addition to the final product.

At conference and passage times students, guided by crewleaders, organize their portfolio to support their conference, demonstrate progress, show best work and examples of growth.

## Passages

A Passage marks the movement from one level of school to the next and gives students the opportunity to present their portfolios and specific self-chosen works to an authentic audience of people who represent our community.

- Crewmembers participate in passages after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. All other students will have regular student-led conferences.
- Passages are held during conference week at the end of the school year.
- Crewmembers present their portfolio work, along with a passion or talent, to a panel of community members. Prior to passages, crewmembers work closely with their crewleaders and other crewmembers to compile their portfolios, write reflections, organize their presentation and practice. Peer feedback is an important piece of this process.

- Passages are 45 minutes long. Passage panels consist of 3 community representatives. The crewleader is also present to support the presenting crewmember.

## **Student Evaluation**

Crewleaders complete written mid-year and year end progress reports for each crewmember. MVCS evaluation templates are age appropriate and linked to Common Core Standards for each grade level. Assessment areas include academic progress in core and specialist subjects as well as crewmember development in personal character traits (connected to C.A.R.E.S.).

## **Homework**

The MVCS has developed a homework continuum based on research of the developmental and social needs of students in concert with the philosophy of the school. Families wishing to have additional at-home work are encouraged to purchase workbooks from other sources and may solicit recommendations from crewleaders.

These times are *per day*. Specialists will not assign at-home work, unless previously arranged with crewleader. The Title I Specialist will coordinate with crewleaders.

- 1<sup>st</sup> grade – Up to 5 minutes through January. A maximum of 10 minutes by year’s end.
- 2/3 grades – 10 minutes at beginning of year. A maximum of 20 minutes by year’s end.
- 4/5 grades – 20 minutes at beginning of year. A maximum of 30 minutes by year’s end.

Each crewmember has a “back and forth” folder to be used for transporting assignments, homework and any written communications for parents/guardians. Back and forth folders include a weekly homework checklist, to be reviewed and signed by the parent/guardian and returned to school.

## **Staff and Administration**

**Bi-weekly Staff Meetings and General Staff Business:** Staff meetings and communications are intended to provide overall support for the daily operations of the school.

- General staff business is conducted via email. It is the expectation that each staff person have an email account and checks it daily for school related messages.
- Bi-weekly staff meetings are used to touch base in person and address current issues, celebrate successes, and plan. Attendance is mandatory.

**Board of Directors:** Board meetings are held monthly and are open to the public. The board oversees the non-profit organization, including hiring and supervising the school director.

## 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.

---

Parent/Guardian, please sign and return this portion of the document to the School.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understand the Methow Valley Community School *Parent Handbook for 2016-17*

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Checklist of items to return to MVCS:

- Student Information Sheet
- Immunization Records (or signed exemption)
- Concussion Information Sheet
- Volunteer Registration Form

# **Appendix A – Sample Shared Vision and Code of Conduct**

## **PATTERSON CREW PARENTS**

### **SHARED VISION (adopted from the students)**

- \* To READ, WRITE, EXPLORE, and LEARN together.
- \* To be KIND and HELP each other.
- \* To go on OUTDOOR ADVENTURES.
- \* To HAVE FUN TOGETHER.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

We will listen and ask questions.

We will prepare our children and ourselves for success each day.

We will seek to understand instead of making judgments.

We will stay involved with the whole school community.

We will make space for play.

We will model communication and learning skills to connect from school to home.

We will TRY OUR BEST and SUPPORT EACH OTHER!