

Key West Montessori Charter School



1400 United Street, #110
Key West, Florida 33040

2011

Parent/Student Handbook

KWMCS.....Where we encourage respect for self, others and environment,
promote a desire to seek knowledge, and provide an academically challenging program.

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Welcome

It is our goal to work in partnership with parents, children, guides, and support staff to provide the very best education for our students. It is with that purpose in mind that the Parent/Student Handbook outlines our school's policies and procedures. Please keep this handbook in a convenient place for future reference. Should you have questions or need clarification of these policies and procedures, please do not hesitate to contact us. We hope your experience with the Key West Montessori Charter School is an enriching and rewarding one.

Development of Administrative Procedures

The Charter School Board delegates to the Principal the authority to determine what administrative procedures will be needed to implement policies adopted by the Board. Administrative procedures shall be consistent with the adopted policies, and shall describe the manner in which those policies are to be implemented.

The Principal shall recommend appropriate administrative procedures to the Board for adoption.

The Principal may also issue administrative and student handbooks as may be necessary for the effective administration of the school and distribute them to employees and students and/or their parents.

As long as the provisions of these administrative procedures and handbooks are consistent with Board policies, or with Federal/State law, they will be considered to be an extension of the policy manual and binding upon all employees and students.

Administrative procedures shall be available electronically on the School's web site, and printed copies shall be maintained in the School Office.

Adopted: August 2011

Mission Statement

The Key West Montessori Charter School is a public school, open to all children, striving to reflect the diversity of our community. Our innovative academic program, rooted in the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori, challenges the student, individually, in a safe and nurturing environment. Students are guided in the development of self-discipline, self-confidence, cooperation and responsibility; and are instilled with solid foundations in intellectual growth, humanitarianism and peace.

It is not a question of education, not a question of instructing the mind in old or new mathematics, or old and new physics. It is life, pulsating, demanding life that we give to the child.

-Maria Montessori

The Key West Montessori Charter School's educational philosophy is based on the premise that excellence in education requires:

- Ⓢ A close collaboration between parents, guides, and administration; families are ultimately responsible for their child's growth and development.
- Ⓢ Guides (teachers) who keenly observe each student's style of learning to provide a developmentally appropriate, experiential learning program.

- Ⓢ A carefully prepared learning environment that fosters a love for learning and allows students to achieve learning gains through personal motivation.

Philosophy

It is the philosophy of the Key West Montessori Charter School to:

- Ⓢ Implement an individualized, child-centered curriculum that includes movement, manipulation and discovery within a multi-age classroom.
- Ⓢ Facilitate the delivery of that curriculum in a manner that instills a sense of wonder about the universe and the child's place within that universe.
- Ⓢ Engage families in the education of children; Parent support is key to a quality Montessori program. The parent and guide unite in a partnership of school and home that fosters the complete development of the child.
- Ⓢ Extend the classroom out into the community, creating a web of exchange among community members, family, and educational staff.

Educational Program

Our aim therefore is not merely to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his inmost core.

-Maria Montessori

Dr. Maria Montessori placed emphasis on following the child, being aware of the spirit of the individual. To inspire students to pursue knowledge should be the goal of the effective educator. In addition to satisfying the academic needs of the child, the emotional and physical aspects of development should also be addressed. Our Montessori educational program provides a holistic, integrated approach that attempts to meet the needs of the whole child while attending to the curriculum.

Our educational program promotes independence and interdependence – connectedness. With the understanding that all beings are connected in a web of life, educators can proclaim this truth and nurture individuals to become physically, intellectually and spiritually aware of their human potential.

Maria Montessori developed a method of educating children by instilling in them the wonder of our existence. Cosmic Education is the act of presenting an idea of the universe and humanity's place within it. Dr. Montessori felt that nothing could be explained without the knowledge of humanity's relationship to the universe. Dr. Montessori believed in presenting knowledge of the origin of our universe in narrative form. In addition to the academic curriculum, the Key West Montessori Charter School believes in teaching Cosmic Education and Character Education. It is believed that by creating a sense of compassion, global awareness and our connection to nature, we can instill in children sociological and ecological values that will benefit them and all humankind in the future.

The Method

Maria Montessori defined the goal of education as “the development of a complete human being, oriented to the environment and adapted to his or her time, place, and culture.”

Our educational program is rooted in the Montessori philosophy, and maintains a vision toward advances in education. Through close and careful observation, Maria Montessori developed a method of educating children that placed the individual needs of the child as the foundation for learning. Three components of Montessori's discoveries serve as our educational cornerstone: the Four Planes of Development, Cosmic Education, and the Universal Human Tendencies.

The Four Planes of Development

Upon understanding that all humans need to make sense of their environment, Maria Montessori realized the existence of stages in human development that were unique to the individual. Montessori believed that humans developed in a series of four stages, and suggested propensities toward the acquisition of certain knowledge existed within each stage. Maria Montessori created the concept of the *Four Planes of Development* based on her many years of observing children. Within each of these planes, exist periods of time in which the individual is particularly sensitive to acquiring information in a particular manner.

The passage to the second level of education is the passage from sensorial, concrete exploration of the world to abstract exploration of knowledge. The child in the second plane of development (approximately 7 - 12 years old) possesses an abstract mind and seeks to find purpose and reason behind knowledge. It is believed that by creating a sense of compassion, global awareness and our connection to nature, we can instill in children, sociological and ecological values that will benefit them in the future.

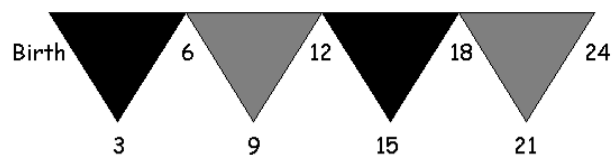


Fig. 3 Maria Montessori's Four Planes of Development

Cosmic Education

Maria Montessori stated that for the elementary child it is “the power of imagination that educates”. She designed a curriculum that presented a vision of the universe to the child in the form of an engaging impressionistic story. This provides a large narrative framework for the children's later knowledge. Studies of all branches of science are integrated into this framework. In addition to the academic curriculum, the Key West Montessori Charter School believes in teaching cosmic education - the knowledge of humanity's relationship to the universe. The goal of Cosmic Education is to develop a global vision within the child along with gratitude for the universe and their lives within it.

“If everything in the universe came about from the same source – the original fireball that many believe preceded the creation of the stars – then we as human beings are related to all other human beings, as well as to the animals, plants, oceans, and heavenly bodies. Therefore if we deliberately destroy nature or harm other living beings we might be ultimately destroying ourselves.”

Aline Wolf, Nurturing the Human Spirit

Universal Human Tendencies

Maria Montessori was not only an educator, but a keen anthropological observer as well. Montessori's studies in anthropology enabled her to reflect on the behaviors of early humans, correlate similar behaviors with those of the humans of her time, and realize universal human tendencies toward certain behaviors. These tendencies are: exploration, orientation, order, imagination, manipulation, repetition, precision, control of error leading to perfection, and communication.

Maria Montessori also observed and studied human tendencies; the way we learn. Dr. Montessori believed education should correspond to the child's developmental periods, and guides should apply their knowledge of human tendencies when working with children. The Key West Montessori Charter School operates on the understanding of the universal human tendencies. In the Montessori classroom the child learns through exploration of the prepared environment. The role of the guide is to continue to adapt the environment and facilitate exploration while observing and assessing the child's individual needs.

The Key West Montessori Charter School acknowledges the importance of the environment for the child in the second plane of development and offers:

- Ⓢ An integration of the arts, sciences, geography, history, and language that inspires the elementary-age child to seek knowledge for personal desires.
- Ⓢ The presentation of knowledge as part of a large scale narrative in which the origins of the earth, life, human communities (agricultural and urban), empires, and modern history unfolds, always in the context of the wholeness of life.
- Ⓢ The presentation of formal scientific language of zoology, botany, anthropology, geography, geology, etc. that exposes the child to accurate, organized information while respecting the child's intelligence and interests.
- Ⓢ The use of time lines, pictures, charts, and other visual aids, to provide a linguistic and visual overview of the first principles of each discipline.
- Ⓢ A mathematics curriculum presented with concrete materials that simultaneously reveal arithmetic, geometric and algebraic correlations.
- Ⓢ An emphasis on open-ended research and in-depth study that uses primary and secondary sources, such as books, as well as other materials.
- Ⓢ “Going-out” which entails the ongoing use of community resources beyond the four walls of the classroom.

The Materials

Montessori materials make up a large portion of the prepared environment. These manipulative materials have been scientifically designed and tested. In each classroom, you will find a visual representation of the knowledge to be explored. There is a variety of materials within the scope of learning any concept. Each child is able to have many varied experiences manipulating materials, enabling exploration and discovery of concepts. Individual children may work with the materials to different extents, thus accommodating different learning styles.

In a Montessori classroom there is an emphasis placed on research for even the youngest elementary school students. Research builds a framework for creative thinking and exploration. Through research, students learn the varied means of gaining and evaluating information and how to use reference materials.

The Guide

The guide is a catalyst for learning and observes as the child chooses his/her activities. Maria Montessori valued the role of the prepared educator in the learning environment. In the Montessori classroom, the role of the guide is to continue to adapt the environment and facilitate exploration while observing and assessing the child's individual needs; the guide is the link between the child and the environment. By implementing observation techniques, the guide is able to meet the individual needs and interests of each child. The guide is dedicated to the development of students who are self-disciplined, cooperative, responsible, creative thinkers of the community and world. Along with preparing students to be productive members of society, the guide strives to provide solid foundations in intellectual growth, humanitarianism and peace.

Outline of Instructional Methods

We believe learning environments should accommodate the sensitive periods Maria Montessori realized in order to meet the universal human tendencies. Dr. Montessori believed that human development was an internal process that manifested outwardly over time. It is important to relate the context of Montessori's universal human tendencies to the creation of learning environments to facilitate an environment that is rich in educational possibilities. It is for this reason that an understanding of the Montessori curriculum is needed.

Small Group Presentations

The guide generally presents lessons in brief, small group presentations. The lessons utilize Montessori materials, hand-made materials, nomenclature booklets and cards, and more traditional education tools (such as microscopes and thermometers). The plan for the composition of small groups involves consideration of student abilities, interest, and prior experience with the content to be presented. Students who are familiar with the lesson may serve as peer guides. After each lesson is presented there are a variety of follow-up activities, which enable the child to gain mastery of the concept presented. There are also extension activities, games, and other materials that can be introduced to revitalize interest and which engender mastery of the concept. Nomenclature is an integral component of many lessons. The traditional style of presenting nomenclature follows the Montessori Three-Part Lesson. Each lesson teaches approximately 3-5 terms. The first part of the lesson requires the instructor to

present the nomenclature (e.g., "This is the isosceles triangle"). The second part asks the child for comprehension of the nomenclature while naming it (e.g., "Show me the isosceles triangle"). The third part asks the child to show comprehension of the nomenclature without assistance (e.g., "What is this triangle called?"), thus checking for mastery of the nomenclature. This type of lesson is used to give vocabulary in any subject as well as for learning non-phonetic words.

The Three-Part Lesson allows the guide to quickly assess individual student comprehension, and the student is directly involved in the learning process. The brevity of the lesson allows the child to explore and manipulate the material, which leads toward mastery of the subject. The Three-Part Lesson follows the natural progression of learning, asking for information only when the child has demonstrated that he/she understands, thus ensuring more confidence and a sense of accomplishment.

Freedom and Responsibility

Freedom and responsibility are an integral part of the Montessori environment. Students are active participants in their academic success. The adult is responsible for setting limits in a firm, fair, and consistent manner. Students are free to make choices within those limits. They are responsible for accepting the consequences of their choices, which leads to the development of self-discipline. This freedom develops the ability of the child to make reasoned choices based on a framework of self-discipline that has been developed over time.

Connection to the Community

Through the multi-age classroom, freedom of movement inside and outside, and the use of research and real-life materials, the Montessori classroom has great relevancy to the world beyond the school. Within the Montessori environment the child develops humanitarian values – a foundation of courtesy, respect and purpose – through experience and guidance.

Non-discriminatory Policy

The Key West Montessori Charter School, Inc. shall admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to all members of the student body. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admission policies, athletic or other school-administered programs.

Cultural Diversity

We celebrate the diversity of all ethnic and religious backgrounds of the children in our community. We do not subscribe to any specific religious organizations or practices. We invite all families to share with us their ethnic observances and celebrations.

What is a Charter School?

Charter schools are public schools that operate under a performance contract, also known as "the charter", which frees them from most rules and regulations created for traditional public schools. An individual, a group of parents or classroom guides, a business, a municipality, or a legal entity creates charter schools. As part of the contract, charter schools are held strictly

accountable for academic and financial results. They have the independence and autonomy to make their own decisions. Financial control allows for the ability to implement and pay for the decisions made by charter school founders.

Charter School Employees

Administration

Lynn Marie Barras, Principal – Lynn.Barras@KeysSchools.com

Pam Niles, Assistant to Principal – Pam.Niles@KeysSchools.com

Support Staff

Margaret DiMonte, Guidance Counselor – Margie.DiMonte@KeysSchools.com

Renee Makimaa, Health Care Coordinator – Renee.Makimaa@KeysSchools.com

Instructional Team

Michelle Anthony, LE Guide – Michelle.Anthony@KeysSchools.com

Jennifer Catalano, Academic Coach – Jennifer.Catalano@KeysSchools.com

Fran Crucet, – LE Guide – Fran.Crucet@KeysSchools.com

Emmylou Pecor, LE Guide – Emmylou.Pecor@KeysSchools.com

Mendy Hyatt-Hensley, UE Guide – Mendy.Hyatt-Hensley@KeysSchools.com

Penny Maun, UE Guide – Penny.Maun@KeysSchools.com

Sonia Rdissi, Pre-Adolescent Guide – Sonia.Rdissi@KeysSchools.com

Ashlie Hood, Art & Science Benchmark Instruction – Ashlie.Hood@KeysSchools.com

Tanya Moss, PE Instructor – Tanya.Moss@KeysSchools.com

Charter Board of Directors

The Key West Montessori Charter School is a not-for-profit corporation, managed by a nine-member Board of Directors: five (5) parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school, and four (4) representative members of the community. The election, terms of office and duties shall be as contained in the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws. There are four officers of the Charter Board of Directors: the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary.

Board of Directors

Rob Wilcox, President - Parent Member rgwilcox75@msn.com

Markham McGill, Vice-President - Parent Member markhammcgill@me.com

Kevin Madok, Treasurer - Community Member kmadok@yahoo.com

Doreen Eppy, Secretary - Parent Member dozye@bellsouth.net

Craig Reynolds, Community Member

Shawn Smith, Community Member

Jamie Strunk, Community Member

Matt Zintsmaster, Parent Member

Board Procedures

These procedures have been designed to keep discussion orderly and to provide an opportunity for you to participate in a KWMCS Board of Directors' meeting.

KWMCS encourages family participation in our school community. For complaints about school-related issues, the board asks families to talk first to the employee closest to the problem - usually a classroom guide or principal. Should a satisfactory solution still not be achieved, please submit your concern to the Board.

How to get on the Agenda

The Board can only act on items included in the formal agenda (which is posted at least 72 hours prior to the meeting during which action is sought). If you want the Board to formally discuss or act on an item, your item must be placed on the official meeting agenda. To do so, follow these steps:

1. Notify the Board Secretary a minimum of 5 work days before the board meeting when the item is to be considered. Requests must reach the board secretary by 4:00 p.m. the previous Monday (meetings are usually on a Monday).
2. Identify yourself and/or all individuals who will speak on the agenda item.
3. Provide summary information so that the Board can be prepared to address the item. Written documentation is preferred because it reduces the chance of error or misinterpretation. The board packet, which will contain the agenda, narratives, recommendations, and supporting documentation, is usually, prepared 5 days prior to regular meetings. Packets are sent to Board members at least three days before the meeting.

When you submit items for the agenda, you and other speakers will be invited to sit at the board table and address the Board members. Discussion limit is 10 minutes, unless the Board agrees to extend the time.

The Board generally deals with an agenda item as a discussion item at one meeting and as an action item at a subsequent meeting. This allows time for reflection and further staff and community input. If agenda items, questions or problems relate to legal issues, state law permits the Board to go into closed session to receive such presentations.

How to comment on Agenda Items

You may also present information, ask questions, or comment on topics already on the agenda. With agenda items, usually the Board hears recommendations and data by the administrative staff and then discusses the topic before taking action. Your time to speak will be after the Board members' discussion and before their action on that item.

The Board Secretary will invite speakers to the board table. To address the Board about an agenda item, you should take these steps:

1. Sign your name the "sign-in sheet" found on the board table.

2. Identify the agenda item you wish to address. The Board secretary will invite you to speak when your item is being discussed.

In the interest of time and to avoid duplication, it is suggested that groups wishing to speak should select a representative to speak for all. Representative speakers will be given extra time accordingly by the Chairman.

Late Additions to the Agenda

Due to the importance of a posted agenda for public access to Montessori meetings, last minute additions are to be discouraged. When it is necessary for an item to be added, it must be sponsored at the beginning of the meeting by a Board Member. Once sponsored, all late additions must pass by a two thirds vote of the Board to be accepted as an addition. If passed, the item will be officially added to the agenda by the Chairperson.

Charter School Committees

Charter School Committees are appointed by the Charter Board President, with the approval of the Charter Board of Directors, and are responsible for carrying on the functions of the Corporation. The Charter Board President and the Principal are standing members of all committees. Corporation members (parents & guardians of Charter School students) choose a committee on which to serve.

Parent Organizations

Each volunteer organization shall work with the School in cooperation with the Principal and other School employees, and shall abide by the policies of the School.

Parent volunteer organizations will purchase liability insurance (riders - self-insured) to protect the entity against claims resulting from damage or injury resulting from any act or omission of any school-support entity.

The Principal shall develop, and update as needed, administrative procedures so that each group's fundraising activities are in compliance with School policies, that the funds are used for school-related projects.

Student Life

Kindergarten and First Grade Entry

Entering kindergarten students must attain the age of 5 on or before September 1 of the school year for which entry is sought. [Florida Statute §1003.21]

Entering first grade students must attain the age of 6 on or before September 1 of the school year for which entry is sought. [Florida Statute §1003.21]

Starting School

Many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another and are in an unfamiliar situation. At the beginning of the school year, it is not uncommon for parents to escort their child into the classroom. Please do not linger or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about separating from you; reassure your child about where you will be during the day, and about what time you will pick him or her up in the afternoon. Some children may be sad for a little while during the first few days, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. Our instructional team is adept in helping children feel comfortable in their new learning environment.

Arrival and Dismissal

Our school day begins at 8:30 and ends at 3:30. **There is no supervision available before 8:00.** For safety purposes, students are not permitted on campus before 8:00. The classrooms open at 8:15; students arriving between 8:00 and 8:15 must wait at the Student Arrival Area. All students must be on campus by 8:30, as we must begin our day on time.

*Late arrivals are very disruptive and affect your child as well as the rest of the class. We appreciate your adherence to our arrival policy. If you arrive after 8:15, please park, obtain a late arrival slip from the office and escort your child to the classroom.

Students are dismissed from 3:30 – 3:45. It is a school policy that children will be released only to their parent/guardian or authorized persons listed on the dismissal record. Please keep this record up to date, including carpool arrangements. Special dismissal arrangements require advance notice in the form of a note or phone call; **last-minute arrangements for play dates are not permitted.**

Student Attendance Policy

The typical school year requires at least 180 student attendance days. It is expected that every student will maintain regular attendance throughout the school year. Families are strongly discouraged from taking vacations during the school year, as continuity with the student's education is paramount to academic success.

Students enrolled in Key West Montessori Charter School are required to attend school unless the absence has been excused. Additionally, each student is required to be on campus by the specified starting time of the school day. The Principal may grant an excused absence for the following reasons:

- Illness or injury (subject to signed documentation by an appropriate licensed health care or mental health professional or public health unit),
- Religious holiday,
- Death in the family, or
- Extreme circumstance (subject to documentation).

An "excused" absence is:

- a) Due to sickness of, or injury to, the student, attested to orally or in writing by the student's parent or guardian, or, in the event the absence is of three days or more, by a written

statement of a licensed practicing physician, chiropractor, dentist, or other appropriate licensed health care or mental health professional;

- b) Due to religious instruction for the student or religious holidays of the student's own faith to be observed by the student, when the absence is requested in writing by a parent or guardian at least three (3) school days in advance of the absence, as delineated in Rule 6A-1.09514, Florida Administrative Code.
- c) Due to a medical, chiropractic, dental, or other appointment with a licensed professional related to the physical or mental health of the student, when the appointment cannot be scheduled outside of school hours and when written documentation is provided by the parent or guardian prior to the scheduled appointment;
- d) Due to attendance at an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meeting at which the student's educational program is the topic;
- e) Due to attendance in an administrative or judicial proceeding which involves the student as a witness or as the subject of the proceeding;
- f) Due to a death in the immediate family of the student and such absence does not exceed seven (7) school days;
- g) Due to placement in The Florida Keys Children's Shelter and such placement transition period does not exceed three (3) school days. (By the fourth day, Shelter personnel are required to enroll the student in the appropriate public school closest in geographic proximity to the Shelter.)
- h) With written permission of the principal or the principal's designee, for good cause shown, including insurmountable conditions as defined by rules of the state board of education in Rule 6A-1.09513, Florida Administrative Code.
- i) Due to participation in an approved special event. The student must receive advance written permission from the school principal or the principal's designee. (Examples of special events include public functions; conferences; and regional, state and national competitions).
- j) Due to having, or being suspected of having, a communicable disease or infestation which can be transmitted to other students or school staff. (Examples include, but are not limited to, fleas, head lice, ringworm, impetigo, and scabies.)

An "unexcused" absence is any absence that does not fall into one of the above excused absence categories.

Each parent or guardian of a student at the Key West Montessori Charter School:

- Is responsible for maintaining his or her child's regular attendance at school, and is required to submit justification for each absence.
- Must report the absence to the school office the day before, the day of, or within two school days following the absence. The absence will be considered unexcused if not reported within the established timeframe.
- Has a responsibility to notify the school and request information on homebound instruction if the student is expected to miss at least 15 consecutive school days due to

illness, medical condition, or social/emotional reasons, or if the student is expected to be absent intermittently throughout the school year for the same reasons.

- Has a right to be notified if the student misses school and the parent or guardian has not reported the absence to the school.
- Is responsible, if the student is to be home schooled, for requesting information concerning home schooling, notifying the school principal or principal's designee that the student will be home schooled, and withdrawing the student from Key West Montessori Charter School in accordance with the school's withdrawal procedures.

1003.21 Florida Statutes provides that all children who have attained the age of six years or who will have attained the age of six years by February 1 of any school year, or who are older than six years of age but who have not yet attained the age of 16 years, except as hereinafter provided, are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term. Students less than 16 years of age may not be withdrawn from school for any reason unless:

- a) The student is expelled through charter school board action;
- b) The student is specifically exempted by Florida law from attending a public school; or
- c) The student is transferring his or her enrollment to another school, home education program, or private tutoring program in accordance with Florida law.

Enforcement of student attendance is the responsibility of the administration and staff of the School; every student's absence shall be recorded and reported. Student attendance records shall be maintained in accordance with Section 1003.26 and in accordance with School policies and administrative procedures. Student attendance reporting for the Key West Montessori Charter School is completed electronically through the use of Monroe County School District's TERMS Student database.

The potential consequences for a student who does not attend school as required by law may include:

- Contacting the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) and to schedule a conference concerning the student's non-attendance.
- Implementing truancy interventions by the Student Service Team as required by law.
- Adverse grades and penalties for course work and class assignments.

Each classroom teacher shall be responsible for checking, accurately documenting and reporting the presence, absence, or tardiness of students assigned to that teacher's class, activity, or event.

The principal or principal's designee shall take appropriate action in a timely manner (by the end of the following school day) for each unexcused absence or absence for which the reason is unknown. As a minimum, the student's parent or guardian shall be contacted to determine the reason for the absence. Initial contact may be made through the following means as available and as applicable to the information specified in the student database for parental contact: personal phone call, written notice sent with student to home, or written notice mailed to parent. The principal or principal's designee will evaluate the reasons given and the circumstances relating to the student's absence to determine if the absence is an excused or unexcused absence. If the absence is excused, the student must be allowed to make up

assigned work. The classroom teacher shall be responsible for providing make-up assignments for excused absences.

If a student has five unexcused absences or absences for which the reason is unknown within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences within a 90-calendar-day period, the primary teacher must report to the principal or the principal's designee that the child may be exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance. The principal or the principal's designee may refer the case to the Student Service Team to determine if there is a developing pattern of nonattendance. The Student Service Team may also review patterns of excessive excused absences or a combination of excused and unexcused absences.

If the Student Service Team determines that early patterns of truancy are developing or if the Student Services Team finds that a pattern of nonattendance is developing, whether the absences are excused or not, a meeting with the parent or guardian must be scheduled to identify interventions to remediate the situation.

A notice will be sent to the parent or guardian. This notice will include information related to the truancy and the date, time, and location of the parent conference to address this student's nonattendance issues.

The parent/guardian conference will focus on remediation of the underlying causes of the student's nonattendance, and parents/guardians will also be provided with information regarding the potential consequences to both the student and the parent/guardian for continued nonattendance.

If the initial meeting with the parent does not resolve the issue, the Student Service Team shall implement interventions which may include, but are not limited to:

- Student counseling;
- Frequent communication between the teacher and the family;
- Changes in the learning environment;
- Attendance contracts;
- Referral to other agencies for family services;
- Mentoring;
- Tutoring;
- Peer tutoring;
- Class or schedule changes, or
- other changes in the learning environment;
- Evaluation for alternative education programs
- Other interventions, including, but not limited to, recommending to the Superintendent, through the school principal, that a truancy petition be filed.

The classroom teacher will be responsible for documenting parent contacts, parent conference and parent/student interventions in the student's cumulative file.

All students are required to attend the first 10 days of school. Failure to report to school on the first day of class, and attend for ten consecutive class days, shall jeopardize the student's enrollment, potentially resulting in withdrawal from the school. Situations involving personal or medical necessity shall be the only exemptions from automatic withdrawal. Any student who is absent from the program over 10 consecutive days during the school year may also be withdrawn from the program. Each parent or guardian will be notified of his/her child's non-attendance status and provided the opportunity to justify the absence within three (3) days. The parent or guardian has the right to appeal to the Charter School Board of Directors if he/she is dissatisfied with the determination made by the Principal.

Adopted August 2011

Student Placement, Progression, Promotion, and Retention

Children should be placed in the educational setting most appropriate to their personal, social, physical, and educational needs. Each student shall be moved forward in a continuous pattern of achievement and growth, consistent with Montessori philosophy.

Appropriate student school and grade level placement as well as completion of required immunization and physical examination shall occur within 30 days of enrollment. A student enrolled in the Key West Montessori Charter School will be promoted to the next grade level when s/he has completed the course(s) and demonstrated satisfactory mastery of the State-mandated requirements in the required subject areas.

A student in grades K-8 may be eligible for a waiver of retention criteria for acceptable good cause as outlined in this policy.

A student may be retained at the same grade level/course(s) when s/he has not demonstrated satisfactory mastery of the State-mandated requirements in the required subject areas. Parents must be informed in advance of the possibility of grade level retention of a student.

Student promotion shall reflect the overall performance of the student; the classroom teacher will make a recommendation for each student's promotion, based on factors that may include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Previous retentions
- ✓ Observations
- ✓ Checklists
- ✓ Student portfolios
- ✓ Classroom and district approved assessments
- ✓ Current grades/marks
- ✓ Level of text at which student is successful

The primary responsibility for determining each student's proficiency and ability to function at the next academic level is that of the classroom teacher and/or a Promotion & Retention Committee. The final determination resides with the school principal.

Fundamental Ground Rules

As a school founded on Montessori ideals, we believe that every person deserves respect. We expect students and adults to demonstrate kindness, respect, and courtesy toward the school and each other. Our goal is to establish a safe, warm, and caring environment where we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle conflicts. Cooperation and collaboration are encouraged rather than competition.

Our approach is based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Our discipline policy uses natural and logical consequences and is never punitive. For example, if something is broken through misuse, it must be repaired or replaced, preferably not by the parents alone, but also by the student whose action led to the damage. Practice in fully experiencing responsibility for the consequences of one's actions is a most effective means toward the development of self-discipline.

Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or who endangers the health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school.

Although each class will develop their own unique set of ground rules, all will follow our basic Student Code of Conduct.

**Have respect for yourself, the environment, and others.
Cultivate self-discipline, self-confidence, cooperation, and responsibility.**

The principal may suspend a student from school for willful disobedience, open defiance of a staff member's authority, use of profane or obscene language, other serious misconduct, or repeated misconduct of a less serious nature. Parents will be notified in writing of the reasons for suspension and shall be provided with an opportunity for a conference within 24 hours of the effective date of the suspension.

Student Dress Code

Students may dress casually and in a manner that is not distracting, extreme, or disruptive to the educational process. The following standards are established to assist students in selecting appropriate apparel for school:

- Ⓢ Students shall wear shoes appropriate for running, walking and playing on the playground; sneakers are preferred. Platform soles and high heels increase a child's chance of tripping and falling.
- Ⓢ Sneakers **are required** for PE and off campus activities.
- Ⓢ Bathing suits are inappropriate for school except for physical education swimming activities.
- Ⓢ Hats and sunglasses shall not be worn in classrooms.
- Ⓢ Extreme hairstyles, such as Mohawks, or colors (pink, green) are not appropriate for school.
- Ⓢ Clothing or accessories imprinted with alcoholic or tobacco product endorsements or rude statements are not permitted.

- Ⓢ The length of shorts and skirts shall be at least as long as the natural, extended reach of one's arm to the fingertips.

The Principal is authorized to act on specific cases, which disrupt good order and school discipline.

Lunch

Our school community places great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition as the first step to a lifelong wellness program. We count on your support to help us teach the students about health and nutrition.

Packing a healthy lunch your child will enjoy shouldn't be a challenge; natural and minimally processed foods are relatively easy to pack. Prepackaged "kid's meals" contain an overabundance of sodium and preservatives and very little nutrition. We strongly discourage their use. We also ask that you keep sugary desserts such as cookies & cupcakes out of your child's school lunch. **Gum, candy, soda, and caffeinated beverages are not permitted.** We encourage the purchase of organic fruits whenever possible, as they are not contaminated with harmful pesticides. Please also read food & drink labels; avoid corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, partially hydrogenated or hydrogenated oils, the food preservative BHT, and any artificial food colorings.

KWMCS students should bring lunch to school in a labeled lunch box. Pizza is available for purchase one day a week, and a prepared lunch is available from the MARC Rainbow Café. We encourage you to place foods in reusable or recyclable containers. All uneaten food that can be contained will be sent home. You will want to monitor your child's lunchbox to determine the correct amount and type of food to pack. We appreciate your care in preparing a healthy lunch.

Please do not send food that requires heating to school. Many foods can be heated at home and packed in thermos, which will keep warm until lunchtime.

Birthdays

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their school friends. Montessori classes have a special birthday celebration in which we tell the class the story of the birthday child's life. You are welcome to send in a special snack in honor of your child's birthday. We ask that you save the cupcakes and cake for your home celebration and provide a healthier snack for school. Some suggestions are fruit salad or fruit kabobs, frozen juice pops, mini bagels and cream cheese, or muffins. Your child's guide will discuss birthday celebrations at the first class meeting.

It is our preference that you do not send birthday party invitations to school to be distributed; rather invitations should be sent through the mail. The only exception to this rule would be if every child in the class is invited.

Field Trips & Outings

Instructors will plan educational field trips or outings throughout the school year to enrich the curriculum as well as the students' overall educational experience. Trips are planned to coordinate with subjects being studied by the class or to take advantage of special community

events. Notice of upcoming field trips will be sent home in advance. Permission slips and any required fees must be returned to school in advance of the trip, in order for your child to be able to participate.

We may use a local transportation system, or parents may be asked to assist with transportation. All field trip drivers must have completed a school district background screening, have a valid driver's license, and must possess automobile insurance. Our school insurance does not cover field trip volunteer drivers. Instructors will assign students to each car; students may not switch cars to sit with particular friends. **Please do not make any stops to or from a trip.** If you volunteer to chaperone on a trip, please stay with the group of children assigned to you.

Any private vehicle used to transport students under this policy shall be:

1. currently registered in the State of Florida,
2. insured for personal injury protection and property damage liability in at least the minimum amounts required by law, and
3. in good working order.

An employee, parent, or other adult wishing to transport students in a private vehicle will request approval by submitting his/her driver's license, vehicle registration, and insurance ID card along with the completed **Private Vehicle Request** form to the principal within five (5) business days before the planned travel. The principal will follow the established procedure to determine whether approval of the request to transport students in a private vehicle is appropriate.

Student transportation in private vehicles may only be authorized for trips within the State of Florida. When transportation is authorized in a private vehicle, students may only be required to use the occupant crash protection system provided by the vehicle manufacturer. A student who is transported to an activity in a private vehicle approved under this policy shall return from the activity in the same vehicle, unless the student is released to his/her parent.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this policy, in an emergency situation which constitutes an imminent threat to student health or safety, school personnel may take whatever action is necessary under the circumstances to protect students.

Adopted: August 2011

Occasionally, small groups of children will participate in **"going out"** activities. These are different from field trips, which are planned by the instructor for the entire class. Going out activities are stimulated by students' interest in a particular subject. The goal is for the children to use the local library or other community resources to find answers to their questions and complete their research projects. These outings do not involve the entire class. Students will be carefully prepared and chaperoned for these experiences.

Student Cell Phone Policy

It is our recommendation that students do not bring cell phones to school. Students who do bring them must adhere to the following procedures:

- Cell phone use by students is prohibited during school hours including after school care.

- Cell phones must be silenced upon entering the campus.
- Instructors will provide a receptacle in their classrooms for cell phones.
- All phones will be placed in this receptacle upon entering the classroom.
- Phones will be returned at the end of the day.

Student Health

Children are expected to be in good health when attending school. Colds, flu, and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed. Students with infectious conditions, such as chicken pox, strep throat, head lice, or ringworm must stay home until the infectious stage has passed. Please inform the office of your child's diagnosis as soon as possible.

Students with a fever, sore throat, eye infection, persistent cough, or severe nasal excretions should remain at home. Students with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, or undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home as well.

If your child becomes ill at school or exhibits any of the above symptoms, we will contact you to arrange for an early dismissal. We understand how difficult this can be for working parents, yet all of our children become ill from time to time. Please make arrangements in advance for a friend or relative to come when you cannot.

Weather permitting; students go outside to play every day. If you feel your child is too sick to go out to play, he or she is probably too sick to be at school. If your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call our office by 8:30 to let us know he or she will be absent.

Emergency Care

In the event of a medical situation that requires immediate attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your emergency contact information up to date. We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

Medication Protocol

Only under extraordinary conditions do we administer medication at school. Please do not send in any medication with your child, including: Tylenol, topical creams, cough medicine, or other over the counter drugs, except under a doctor's instructions. Our instructional and administrative teams are prohibited from providing or administering any over the counter medication except as authorized in writing by your child's physician.

When in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary to administer medication during school hours, please adhere to the following procedure:

- Ⓢ Complete an **Authorization to Administer Medication** form for each medication to be administered. This form is available on our school's website and in the office.
- Ⓢ A parent/guardian must present any prescription medication in its original bottle - clearly labeled with the student's name, medication contained, time and amount of dosage - to the school office or Health Care Coordinator.

- Ⓢ As parent or guardian, you are responsible for administering the first dosage of any new medication at home.
- Ⓢ Collect all unused/discontinued medication within five (5) school days from our school office.

Student Assessment & Progression

The Key West Montessori Charter School is committed to providing its students with a nurturing and academically challenging program. Each student's strengths and needs will be identified, utilizing evaluative and diagnostic instruments as well as classroom guide observations. As a public school of choice, the Key West Montessori Charter School's achievement standards are aligned with Florida's Next Generation Standards and are consistent with those of the Monroe County School District.

All students of the Key West Montessori Charter School will participate in all required state assessment tests. In addition, each Montessori instructor assesses each student's performance in the core academic areas through observations and diagnostic use of the materials.

Regular parent/classroom guide conferences will also be scheduled to further assess student progress. Students are expected to show mastery of the elements of the curriculum within the three year cycle. Each student will be required to show mastery of the grade level skills as designed by the Monroe County School District.

Standardized Assessments

The instructional staff of the Key West Montessori Charter School will administer the Stanford Test of Achievement to all first and second grade students every year, and will administer the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) to all third through sixth grade students every year.

Exceptional Student Education

For eligible students with learning differences, the Key West Montessori Charter School will develop and implement appropriate Individual Education Plans in accordance with federal and state law and regulations. KWMCS will:

- Ⓢ Review the student's current Individual Education Plan (IEP) and the level and extent of services provided by the student's previous educational institution in the context of the educational program provided by that institution.
- Ⓢ Review the student's existing evaluation data available in the student's cumulative records folder.
- Ⓢ Contact the School Board's Director of Exceptional Student Education to arrange for appropriate meetings with the School Board's representative, the student's classroom guide, and the student's parent(s).
- Ⓢ All programs developed under a student's IEP shall be provided and implemented in accordance with all appropriate federal and state laws and regulations, including but not limited to, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Florida's Equity in Education Act.

Elementary Exceptional Students will be required to demonstrate mastery in the same general areas of study as regular education students unless otherwise specified on the Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Contract for Services

The Key West Montessori Charter School currently contracts with specialists to ensure that federal, state and county guidelines for exceptional student education are followed.

Least Restrictive Environment

Students with exceptionalities will be educated in the least restrictive environment. For those students whose special needs are so severe that the needs cannot be adequately addressed at KWMCS, the child will be appropriately referred to another educational setting.

A continuum of alternative exceptional education placements shall be available. Each student with exceptional education needs shall be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with students who are assigned in regular classrooms.

Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of exceptional education students from regular classes shall occur only when the nature or severity of the disability cannot be satisfactorily accommodated with supplementary aids and services in the regular classroom.

Referrals and Evaluations

Parents or lead classroom instructors may refer a student for formal evaluations. The Monroe County School District is responsible for providing qualified individuals to perform evaluations for students referred for speech, academic or behavioral difficulties. Specific procedures for referrals and evaluations are contained in the Monroe County School District's Manual for the Admissions and Placement of Exceptional Students.

English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL)

Limited English Proficient (LEP) students will be under the supervision of an ESOL-certified staff member, and will follow or exceed the curriculum guidelines and accommodations outlined by the district.

Gifted

The Montessori program is inherently suited for the gifted learner. The curriculum is open-ended and presents many opportunities for problem solving and critical thinking. Learning is self-paced, which allows students to advance independently of their peers. Long uninterrupted blocks of time allow for in-depth study of topics of choice.

KWMCS serves gifted students using a consultant model. A Gifted Education specialist works with classroom guides to plan, implement, and monitor instructional alternatives for each individual student. Goals are accomplished in the regular classroom.

Speech

Students who are suspected to have a speech difference will be formally evaluated by the school district's speech therapist. If it is determined that speech therapy is necessary, services will be provided on campus by a private speech therapist contracted by the school.

Academic Referrals

KWMCS contracts with a special education instructor to deliver services to students who have been determined to have a specific learning disability. KWMCS supports a tutor model for students with a specific learning disability.

Behavior Referrals

Students whose behavior in the classroom or other learning environment is disruptive, disrespectful or uncooperative shall be subject to disciplinary and corrective action by the instructor or by the Principal, if necessary. Repeated disruptive, disrespectful or uncooperative behavior will require close observation and, if determined necessary, formal evaluation.

Modifications

Regular education courses may be modified for exceptional students, including but not limited to:

- Ⓢ An increase or decrease in the instructional time;
- Ⓢ Variations in instructional methodology;
- Ⓢ Classroom guide instruction or student response through special communication systems;
- Ⓢ Modification of test administration procedures and other evaluation systems to accommodate the student's disabilities.

Adopted: April 2004

Privacy of Student Files

Student files are confidential and protected from unauthorized access. Parents have a right to inspect and review a student's educational records. Parents/guardians may have access to their child's files by submitting a written request to the Principal identifying the records they wish to inspect. The Principal will make arrangements for access to records. The parents have a right to request an amendment of an educational record they believe is inaccurate or misleading.

Home-to-School Connection

Communication

The Key West Montessori Charter School recognizes the importance of communication. The Principal and all classroom guides are available by appointment to address parent needs.

Please address all classroom and curriculum questions to your child's instructor. The most effective way to communicate with the instructors is by electronic message or by leaving a voice message at the instructor's extension. Messages will usually be addressed within the day. During school hours, it is the priority of the instructors to attend to students' needs; instructors are not available to discuss issues during the hours of 7:45 and 2:45.

Telephone messages concerning absences or late arrivals should be made to the main office extension (113) between 7:45 and 8:30 a.m.

During the school year, we will send home newsletters, announcements, notes and flyers. Students will bring them home in their folders every afternoon. Check and remove all papers from your child's folder and return it promptly to school. Parents may elect to receive information via email. In addition, class meetings are scheduled throughout the year to provide parents with pertinent information regarding curriculum, philosophy and other important topics relating to education.

Emergency Communication

KWMCS is part of the Monroe County School District Connect-Ed system. In case of school closures or emergency situations, you will receive a phone notification via a recorded message.

Office Hours

The Charter School office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on school days.

School Telephone Number
294.4910

School Fax Number
294.1404

Conferences

Formal Parent/Guide conferences are held at least twice a year – October, and April. Student progress in our program is discussed at these conferences. Parents are required to attend these two formal conferences.

Progress Reports

Formal progress reports are presented three times a year. The Guides base these reports on student observations and student work. Emphasis is not placed on achieving a "grade", rather, students' progress toward understanding of concepts. Additionally, each student will create a portfolio collection of his or her best and favorite work from the school year into a permanent portfolio binder.

Observations

A parent may make an appointment with the Administrative Team for observation in the classroom. The best time to observe is during the morning Work Cycle. You will want to see the class in its normal routine and not responding to the novelty of your presence. Therefore when you visit, please sit in the designated *Visitor's Chair* in the classroom. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation of the children at work. A follow-up conference should be scheduled after an observation.

During the first sensitive month of the school year, students are establishing their routines and familiarizing themselves with the learning environment. The Guide and students are building their community of learners. For this reason, we ask that parents avoid class observations during the first month of school.

All visitors and volunteers need to sign in and obtain a visitor nametag from the office upon arrival.

Thank you for remembering to silence your cell phone before entering any classroom.

Responsibilities of a Key West Montessori Charter School Parent/Legal Guardian

Agree to honor the Parent Contract of Commitment, by:

- Ⓢ Attending all scheduled parent/classroom guide conferences per year.
- Ⓢ Attending at least two of the three scheduled all-school community meetings.
- Ⓢ Checking your child's Communication folder every week.
- Ⓢ Accepting and abiding by the rules and regulations set by the board of directors which are designed for smooth operation.
- Ⓢ Giving 25 hours of volunteer service, per school year. Such service may include classroom time, field-trips, grounds maintenance, prep for parties, and/or participation in any of the following committees:
 - Fundraising
 - House & Grounds
 - Hospitality/Social
 - Development & Planning
 - Public Relations/Publicity
 - Facilities

It is possible to convert service hours into a monetary donation at the rate of \$20/hour. It is understood that all such donations of cash or gift cards are to be made through the school office and not to individual classrooms.

Contract of Commitment

This contract is an agreement between the school and the family stating the terms of the family's commitment to be fully involved in their child's education at the school. Such involvement will include, but not be limited to, volunteer hours, parent education, etc.

Families of eligible children must be willing to make an extraordinary commitment to their child's education. Commitment to the Key West Montessori Charter School mission and educational philosophy manifests itself in the signing of the KWMCS Contract of Commitment.

-Charter of the Key West Montessori Charter School, Attachment B

It is necessary for parents and educators to unite together to create a healthy, enriching and stimulating environment for children. Without this drive to promote the child's development and to encourage him/her to reach his/her full potential, alternative public schools such as the Key

West Montessori Charter School and other special school programs would not exist; nor would the genius of the work of Dr. Montessori herself. When schools and families work together in this endeavor, goals are manifested and reached. It is the joint ambition of Key West Montessori Charter School and of the parents to give each child the best education possible. Education of this caliber takes true dedication on the part of the school as well as the family. Because of this ambition, we must make our expectations and promises clear and understood. Upon application, the school asks the families of our children to read and accept the terms of our Contract of Commitment.

Enforceability

Consistent with F.S. 1002.33(10)(e)5, the parent volunteer contract is enforceable under Florida law, and failure of a parent or legal guardian to uphold or fulfill their responsibilities under said contract would be sufficient grounds for denial of admission to the school the following year. As a public school of choice, the Key West Montessori Charter School relies on a strong home-to-school connection for the success of its program. Failure on the part of the family to uphold the contract of commitment jeopardizes not only the school's overall performance, but may affect the child's educational potential as well. Families will be notified in writing of the consequence for non-fulfillment of the Contract of Commitment, which is placement of his/her child/children in the lottery drawing, to determine enrollment for the coming school year. A parent or legal guardian may request benevolence from the Charter Board of Directors, who will address cases of hardship on a case-by-case basis.

Parent/Guardian & Student Acknowledgement

Please sign this form and return it to school. Your signature(s) indicate that you have received the handbook for the Key West Montessori Charter School and have read & understand its policies and procedures.

This handbook contains the policies and procedures of the Key West Montessori Charter School, Inc. It is only meant to serve as a reference guide. The Charter Board and Principal reserve the unilateral right to add, delete, or amend these policies and benefits provided for in this handbook. Families of students enrolled in the Key West Montessori Charter School should feel free to contact the Principal with questions concerning the contents of this handbook.

Parent/Guardian Name: (Please Print)

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____