

Mountain Discovery Charter School
Kindergarten Family Handbook
2011-2012

Introduction

I am pleased to welcome you to the MDCS family. Our kindergarten team does an amazing job of providing their students with an age appropriate, creative, and fun educational experience that honors each individual student and lays an excellent foundation for a life time of learning. That's a lot to say, but I've seen it year in and year out for the better part of a decade.

Shepherding twenty five and six year olds through this process requires a lot of structure. This handbook communicates most of Ms. Kristin's classroom management system. Your child's kindergarten experience, especially the first few weeks, will be the best it can possibly be if you take the time to read and understand everything in this handbook. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact the teachers. You're going to have a great year.

Sincerely,

Carter Petty
Director

Parent Involvement & Volunteers

Parent Involvement is a meaningful, on-going, two way conversation between parents and schools. It means that you care about your child's education and find ways to let her/him and the school know that you care. When families send a positive message to their children about the importance of education, children have more success in school. Talk to us early in the year and often throughout the year. Tell us what you know about your child and ask for more ways to help your child at home. Have good conversations with your child about school. Ask him/her to "tell me something good about your day at school."

MDCS families are encouraged to volunteer at least six hours a Quarter (that's 24 hours a school year). There are many opportunities for you to volunteer throughout the year. It is very important for your child to know that you support his or her education. Support can be exhibited in a number of ways in and outside the classrooms. This includes organizing outings, office work, grounds keeping, cleaning classrooms, preparing materials, organizing parties, being involved in MDCS P.E.P. (committee for parent educator partnership), etc. Please let us know if you have a special talent and would like to share your area of expertise with our class.

Please sign up to volunteer at least a few days in advance, so that we are prepared for you to help. We request that all volunteers and/or visitors exit the Kindergarten classroom by 2:30. This makes dismissal a smooth and calm process for all of the children. When visiting MDCS, remember to first sign in at the office, get a visitor's badge, and check out when you leave. It is important for the safety of our students that the office knows who is on the school campus at all times.

In Kindergarten, we ask that you provide teachers with the time we need to get to know your child and establish a productive and trusting relationship and routine. This takes time. To

facilitate this process, we ask that you please do not volunteer inside the classroom for the first month of school.

Field Expeditions

Kindergarteners will take several field expeditions throughout the school year that directly relate to our curriculum. We will have a lot of fun on these outings, but much of the focus will be on age appropriate Field Work. We encourage parents/guardians to attend field expeditions, where they will participate in the activities with all the children. A letter will always be sent home in advance in your child's folder, containing date, details, and a permission slip. Please sign and return permission slips promptly in order to help us be prepared. Last minute permission from parents/guardians via phone the morning of an outing causes a lot undue stress on a Kindergartener. It also directly effects prearranged departure/arrival times for the entire class and other families. Some field expeditions may have a reasonable travel or admission fee. If there is ever a financial hardship, contact us promptly, and we will work to make sure that all of our children go. A child without a permission slip cannot attend the trip. Students are required to wear an orange or blue MDCS T-shirt on the day of an outing. This is an MDCS rule. T-shirts can be purchased in the office for \$10.00. Adherence to these expectations will help our trips run smoothly and allow us to focus on maximizing the educational opportunity.

Rest Time

All Kindergarteners will rest for 30 minutes Monday-Thursday. Children do not have rest time on Fridays due to 1:30 dismissal. They are not expected to sleep, but must remain quiet. This is a great time for mischief and we encourage you to stress that relaxing and clearing your head helps us have a happy and smarter rest of the day. Children are allowed to bring one small and soft something to snuggle (please do not bring a most treasured item, multiple toys, pillows, or blankets). A nap mat is required for rest time. We ask that classroom traffic be held to a minimum during this time.

Share

Share time is always a favorite. Your child holds the floor and even the teachers must raise their hands to ask a question. It is not conducted, merely guided, and once the class grasps the format, they lead it. We know that your child is an expert in many areas and this is his or her time to teach the class, uninterrupted. As we combine inquiry with social interaction, educational items are encouraged. This may include a favorite book, a photograph, artwork, an historical item, a science project, a song, or an instrument. There are absolutely no weapons allowed in Kindergarten for share or at any other time. Please help your child select something engaging.

Lunch and Snack

Lunch begins at 11:15 every day. Exceptions are rare. Please make sure that if you plan to eat with us or to drop off food that you arrive on time. Your child must bring one lunch and one snack every day. As we dismiss early on Fridays (1:30), we will have lunch but not snack on this day. We request that families send healthy food for their child (please no candy, soda, Jungle Juice or Kool-Aid of any kind).

We ask that you send food items which your child can open and prepare themselves. We all eat together. Therefore, we do not have time to heat food, use can openers, peel fruit, cut crust, etc. We encourage children to be as independent as possible during meal times.

All children must have a water bottle every day. Water bottles can stay in the classroom during the week and we will send them home on Fridays to be washed. Please send these back to school on Mondays.

If your child goes to after school, please send a little snack for this as well. No lunch, late lunch, or no water bottle causes undue stress on a Kindergartener. Please encourage your child to be a "good eater" at school. Please re-communicate to Ms. Crim and the Kindergarten Team any and all food allergies at the beginning of the year. Practice manipulating lunchboxes and water bottles at home.

Birthdays

Each child will be given the opportunity to celebrate his or her birthday during the school year. All summer birthdays will be celebrated in May. If you wish, you may send a treat for the whole class. Please give us notice (at least 3 days) beforehand if you decide to celebrate your child's birthday during snack time, so it is included in the plans for the day.

Our birthday tradition is for a child to bring in a baby picture on the day we celebrate their birthday. We will be happy to send home party invitations, provided that every child (or at least all of the same gender) is invited. Individual gifts for close friends are better suited for outside of school.

Clothing

Please dress your child comfortably and weather friendly. It can get very hot up here during the Summer/Spring months and very cold in winter. We spend a lot of time outdoors and tend to get a bit messy. In other words, please do not send your child to school in anything you do not want to get dirty.

Please make sure shoes are comfortable and safe for exercise and play (for safety's sake only, no flip flops, heels, or "fancy" shoes please). Your child must have an extra change of clothes that we will keep in the classroom for emergencies. If your child comes home in their emergency clothes (or another child's), please send new ones to school the next day. As the year goes on, we begin to run out of emergency clothes and often children outgrow them.

Please print with permanent marker or label names on all clothing/items which belong to your child (sweatshirts, coats, caps, mittens, snuggles, lunchbox, water bottles, containers, etc.). It is a good idea to label clothing in a concealed place and other items in a less obvious place (the bottom of a lunch box or a water bottle).

Weather

Send a raincoat with your child when it rains. Umbrellas are never allowed in MDCS Kindergarten. On cold winter days, your child must have a coat and/or other protective clothes (hat and gloves) in order to participate outdoors. Please encourage your child to wear their winter items at school.

Folders & Book Bags

Your child will bring his or her folder home each day. Please take the time to check your child's folder for homework, letters, newsletters, permission slips, class work, artwork, citizenship stars, etc., each day. Their work is precious and this will keep it from getting ruined or lost. Please discuss his or her work and daily experiences with your child. Please sign the available space in your child's folder each day.

Please send a regular sized book bag to school with your child every day. Youth backpacks that are too small often run out of room and backpacks that are too large or irregular in shape may become too heavy or difficult to manipulate. Practice manipulating backpacks and folders at home.

Teacher Conferences

You may request to schedule a conference at anytime either with Ms. Kristin, Mr. Jonathan, or both.

Ms. Kristin will schedule conferences with every family several times throughout the school year. This gives us the opportunity to focus on your child's progress without interruptions.

Time is precious as soon as students arrive to school. It is often difficult for the Kindergarten Team to take their attention away from the children or our preparations for the day. Please do not be offended if we cannot have a morning conversation. Your child will be more than happy to show you around the classroom. Your concerns are important to us, so if you need to discuss anything, set up a conference. We would love to talk to you and one of us is always available in the afternoon.

Morning Meeting

Many parents and family members enjoy walking their child to the kindergarten classroom in the morning before our school day begins. This is a great opportunity to meet the other children and to see what we are learning. We are happy to see you and welcome you. If you plan to stay for a morning visit, we ask that you help us maintain a quiet and comforting tone for the whole class.

In kindergarten, we begin each day with a morning meeting. Morning Meeting is a great way to build community, set a positive tone, increase excitement about learning, and improve academic and social skills. This begins, following The Pledge of Allegiance and usually takes between fifteen and thirty minutes. First thing each morning, we gather in a circle to greet each other. Every day, your child hears his/her name from classmates and teachers in a friendly and cheerful manner. Everyone has the opportunity to participate in the conversation, which is often guided by a question and/or prompt. Students also enjoy using this time to share exciting news. This helps students listen carefully, think about what they hear, formulate good questions, and learn about each other. Every day, Morning Meeting lets your child know that school is a safe place where all feelings and ideas are important.

We would love to have you visit a Morning Meeting. In the event that you do, we ask that all visitors exit the classroom before we begin the next activity. This transition usually occurs at about 9:00 and is the perfect time for goodbyes. Please make prior arrangements with Ms.

Kristin and/or Mr. Jonathan at least a few days in advance if you are available to volunteer after 9:00, so that we are prepared for you to help.

Kindergarten Classroom Rules

Every child will receive three citizenship stars upon arrival each morning. We encourage and expect your child to be respectful of themselves, others, their classroom, their school, and nature. When a child has difficulty doing the above, he or she will be asked to have a “time out”. Each time out will cost him or her one star. When a child has no stars left, we will send a letter or call home (depending).

Please understand that an occasional time out is not cause for alarm. It is normal, it is part of the growing process, and it helps some children learn what school behavior looks like. Your child may receive extra stars for going above and beyond. Stars are displayed in your child’s folder daily. When he or she comes home with three or more stars for the day, please compliment him or her on a job very well done. Praise goes a long way and it will reinforce appropriate behavior.

Classroom Rules:

1. Respect yourself, others, your school, and nature.
2. Take turns talking.
3. Take time to listen to others.
4. Use an inside voice.
5. Help each other clean up.
6. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
7. Do your best work.
8. Have fun learning.

Kindergarten Schedule

Our school day officially begins at 8:30 and ends at 3:00. We will send home a daily/weekly schedule during the first week of school. Arriving to school on time is an important part of your child’s routine and helps everyone’s morning start smoothly. **Please don’t forget that MDCS dismisses at 1:30 every Friday.**

After-School Care

The MDCS After School Program runs from 3:15 pm to 5:30 pm Monday through Thursday, and from 1:45 pm to 5:30 pm on Fridays. It is a great opportunity for students from different grades to interact with one another. After school is offered to students for a fee of \$5.00 per day. The cost for additional students in each family is \$2.50. For example, the cost for one day of after school care for a family of 3 students would be \$10.00 (\$5.00 for the first student, \$2.50 for the other two). If you send your child to after school, please don’t forget to pack some extra snacks.

Dismissal/Transportation

There are three options for students at dismissal (bus, car pick-up, or after care). Please tell both the office (Ms. Gwen) and the Kindergarten Team what your child’s regular dismissal routine will be. In the event of any changes to your child’s regular dismissal routine, call the office and Kindergarten to let Ms. Gwen and us know as soon as you can. You should also put a signed letter communicating the day’s dismissal plans in your child’s folder. Please never

forget or wait until the last minute (except in emergency) to inform us of your child's dismissal plans. Dismissal has to be stress free for your child. Never rely on your child to remember any changes to their own dismissal routine (it's a long day) and always put it in writing. You can find bus forms which show bus pick-up and drop-off locations and times in the office.

MDCS Family Handbook

Please refer to your MDCS Family Handbook for school wide policies such as attendance, educational absences, bus schedule, morning care and after school care, medication, and any other questions you may have.

www.mountaindiscovery.org

Please visit our MDCS website weekly. MDCS posts a school wide "Happenings" newsletter each week. Each class has their own page, where you can discover cool things every grade is sharing.

Contacting Ms. Kristin & Mr. Jonathan

There are several ways to communicate with Ms. Kristin and/or Mr. Jonathan. The front pocket of your child's folder is for letters to and from home. We will receive your letter in the morning when we check your child's folder and it is often the quickest way to communicate. You can also contact us via email. If you wish to reach us by phone, we ask that you leave a voicemail or call after the students have been dismissed (except in emergency of course). Please understand, the Kindergarten Team has very little downtime and voicemails and emails are answered when we can.

Ms. Kristin: kschrader@mountaindiscovery.org

Mr. Jonathan: jwertheim@mountaindiscovery.org

MDCS: (828) 488-1222

Kindergarten Extension: 300

Thank You

Thank you for coming to Mountain Discovery and for being part of our Kindergarten community. We look forward to getting to know you and your child and to a successful and happy year ahead. We strongly believe that the cooperative efforts of families and teachers, working as partners, will contribute significantly to the growth and successful achievement of each child. Always communicate any and all of your questions and/or concerns. We are dedicated and committed to providing each child with a positive experience in school and a foundation for a successful future.