

**Renaissance Academy
Charter School**

www.Rschool.net

**Parent & Student
Handbook**

Rights and Responsibilities

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Mission

Mission

Renaissance Academy Charter School will help every child enrolled reach his or her greatest potential with confidence and joy. Kindergarten to eighth grade students will realize this mission in a small school that provides a supportive community atmosphere with a rigorous academic program based in the Montessori philosophy of education and supported by student exposure to a variety of enrichment classes and extracurricular experiences.

The goal of Renaissance Academy Charter School is to give every child who enrolls a superior educational foundation, well-rounded experience, and a lifelong love of learning.

At Renaissance Academy Charter School, we want to provide a thriving school community where children feel safe and welcomed, recognized and fully accepted as the individuals they are. Children have opportunities to progress far beyond the usual expectations, but will not feel out of place at their current level. Students are treated with respect and taught to respect others. Every Renaissance student is exposed to a wide variety of subject areas, learning methods, and enrichment courses so each can grow in his or her own best way to be the best person he or she can be.

We offer Kindergarten through eighth grade in an environment where children are held to high standards for their behavior and learning.

Educational Foundation

At Renaissance Academy Charter School we believe in incorporating hands-on, abstract, traditional, and cutting-edge techniques to personally create each child's work plan focused on the ways that he or she best learns. We believe in an academically focused Montessori philosophy of education.

Montessori schools enable children to learn more with greater ease and joy. This system focuses on educating the whole child - intellectually, socially, and emotionally. It helps children gain confidence and skill while each joyfully learns to his or her greatest potential.

The Montessori Method is based on scientific principles:

Children all learn individually, but do so in a generally predictable sequence that coincides with brain development.

Certain methods and materials work best at particular ages, and if areas of learning are missed at the optimal time they are much more difficult to learn later.

Young children learn best through sensory experience, and higher-level learning is built upon this foundation.

Human beings have certain basic fundamental tendencies - to explore, to communicate, to put in order, to manipulate, to be active, to improve, and to think abstractly. In schools that harness these natural tendencies, rather than denying them, children can learn more - more easily, more permanently, more happily.

This is the basis of the Montessori method - to create an environment in which every child can learn in his or her own best way. At Renaissance Academy Charter School, instead of the entire class being taught as a unit, students will be treated as individuals progressing at their own pace, each at the ideal time for learning some particular skill. Each child will be allowed to explore the

classroom environment and helped to learn in the manner that works best for him or her. The activity will be orderly, yet still permit students to function independently.

To support this growth, Renaissance Academy Charter School has a strong core curriculum that exceeds Indiana Standards at every grade level and the school holds high expectations for each child. Subjects include English and Foreign Language, Mathematics, Reading/Literature, Composition, Science, History, Geography, Art, Music, and varied enrichment classes. While courses and overall curriculum are the same for every student, each child is treated as the individual s/he is. Students are not held back to wait for the group to catch up or placed in levels beyond their ability. Instead, each child is allowed to steadily progress through the curriculum at his or her own best pace in each subject area. In our curriculum you will find the progression for each subject area and listings of the expectations for a typical student at each grade level. Of course some students may progress to levels far beyond the typical expectations while others may need more time to develop. Renaissance Academy Charter School is designed to help all students feel comfortable with themselves, discover their strengths, overcome their weaknesses, and become the best they can be.

It is our goal to keep each child challenged, to constantly raise the bar, to assist in overall social, emotional, and academic development, to immerse students in a rich learning environment, filled with information, varied experiences, and high expectations. We require our students to work, to focus, to learn, practice, repeat, and achieve. We do this, though, with varied expectations and methods for each. We use hands-on learning activities, lectures, textbooks, novels, field trips, guest speakers, stories, discussions, and group interaction to find the best way to reach each student in each area of learning, and also to help each student learn about learning and about himself, to experience joy in learning, to gain confidence, and to find ways to reach for the best.

Admissions:

Applications for enrollment are accepted January through August and names are added to our class waiting lists or lottery group. New students may be admitted until mid-September if there is an opening in the class, and with the consultation of the teacher and director of the school, they will be chosen in the order of the waiting list. After this classes are generally considered full.

THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

We value and celebrate a diverse population. We do not discriminate based on race, color, creed, national or ethnic origin, gender, income or disability.

Any child, of the appropriate age, in the state of Indiana can attend a Renaissance Academy Charter School without paying tuition! We will accept new students throughout the school year if there are available spaces in the grade level sought. When classes are full, new applications will be accepted and placed into a random lottery as detailed below. All new applicants have equal opportunity to attend Renaissance Academy Charter School with two exceptions:

1. Currently enrolled students are reenrolled before new applicants are accepted;
2. Siblings of currently enrolled students are given preference as stated below.

Observation/orientation meetings are held regularly, October – May, and by appointment.
Thank you for your interest!!

Charter School Application Process

- Contact Renaissance Academy Charter School
- Attend an observation/orientation meeting to make sure our program is consistent with your family's beliefs and philosophy concerning education. At the meeting, pick up an application.
- Complete the application in its entirety. The application information is used for planning purposes, all new applications are treated equally.
- Return your completed application by the last weekday in February. (A lottery number will be assigned by grade level to each application in the case of a lottery admission.)
- Applications received after February will be enrolled if spaces are available, or added to the waiting list after the lottery (when applicable) has taken place.
- If your child is identified for enrollment, either if spaces are available or through the lottery process, you will receive an Enrollment Packet by mail prior to enrollment.
- Attend Registration Day

Charter School Lottery Process (when necessary)

Any child who attends Renaissance Academy Charter School, as a charter school student, will not be subject to the lottery.

Children with a sibling already enrolled will be automatically enrolled, unless there are more siblings than spaces available. In that event, siblings will be lotteried as a separate group.

- The Lottery, if needed, will be conducted on or before March 15th at Renaissance Academy Charter School or another designated location.
- The lottery will be conducted by an independent third party.
- The lottery is a public meeting, and you are welcome to attend.
- Application numbers for each grade level shall be placed in separate containers.
- If there are more applicants than spaces available in a given class, a lottery will be held for that class.
- Numbers will be drawn one at a time with drawings rotating from the oldest to the youngest classrooms, when applicable.
- If a child with siblings is chosen for admission, all sisters and brothers who have applied will be admitted if spaces are available, or placed next in the sibling group of the waiting list for classes without space. We cannot guarantee enrollment for all siblings.
- After all available spaces have been filled, names will continue to be drawn in order to form a priority-ranked, enrollment waiting list for each grade level.
- After the deadline and lottery, additional applicants will be placed on the waiting list in the order received.

Once selected for admission, families must complete all enrollment forms, pay fees, and attend an enrollment meeting in order to remain on the class list. We ask families to inform us as soon as possible if their students will not be attending, so we can select students to fill their spaces.

New students will be added to available spaces in classes until October 1. After this, classes are generally considered full.

If your child is chosen for enrollment, be sure to complete all paperwork by its due date to have him or her registered for the correct class. If your child is placed on the waiting list, you will be notified of this placement and your number. Children will be chosen from the waiting list when spaces become available. We look forward to having your family as part of the Renaissance

Academy Charter School community.

Renaissance Academy does not discriminate against any person in our admissions, programs, or policies on the basis of race, creed, national or ethnic origin.

Schedules and Procedures

Calendar:

The Renaissance Academy Charter School calendar closely resembles the one set by the Michigan City public schools with similar vacation times and major holidays. There are some differences including fewer teacher in-service days, teacher convention dates, and our starting date following Labor Day. A tentative school calendar is ready by the end of the previous school year and is given out at registration time.

Transportation:

Transportation to and from school is the responsibility of the parent. Each year at enrollment, the school will offer a sign-up sheet for parents interested in carpooling. This will be mailed in July to each family that signs up and those families may contact one another to make carpooling arrangements. A copy of this list will be on file in the office should you become interested in carpooling at a later date.

Drop-Off:

Cars should enter the main gate and line up so that the passenger doors are closest to the school entrance. To avoid back up on the highway second and third lines may be formed to the left of the first as necessary. Assistants will begin helping children out of cars at 8:15am. They will approach the right side of each vehicle so please have your school child seated on the right when possible. Elementary students arriving may enter the building independently if you pull up near the main entrance door but if you arrive at a busy time and the child will have to cross the other lanes, please wait for an assistant to help your child to the door.

*****NEVER LEAVE YOUR CAR UNATTENDED IN THE DROP OFF LANE. ****

Late Arrival:

It is important to have your child at school on time. Classroom Assistants will remain by the door until approximately 10 minutes after class starting time. If you arrive late and there is no one at the door, please park your car and walk your child through the front office making the staff aware of your child's presence without interrupting lessons in progress.

Breakfast-Time:

For your convenience, a fee based Breakfast-Time program is available beginning at 7:00am for children with reservations. Please park your car and walk your child to the Playroom.

Separation Concerns:

Occasionally, young children may experience some separation anxiety. Please know that we are very sympathetic to you and your child's feelings in this matter. The staff is quite experienced with this and has some suggestions to help ease the transition.

- Prepare your child the night before for school in the morning. Discuss some of the people he/she will see, and the things he/she may do. Your child will pick up on your enthusiasm, positive attitude, and especially on your confidence in his/her ability. In your discussion, remind your child that he/she will be picked up at a particular time when school is over.
- If your child continues to express anxiety, acknowledge the feelings, but leave the discussion with a happy, positive attitude. This school experience for your child is your decision and not

one the child should control.

- If your child has difficulty leaving the car, please remain in your seat and the assistant will help him/her from the seat to the school. Giving a hug and kiss, reminding him/her of pick up time, and allowing the staff member to help you, is the best way to show your child you have every confidence in his/her ability to handle this new experience.
- Please feel free to call school to check on your child, or to come back and sneak a peek on the video monitor or through a one-way mirror.

Pick-Up:

The pick up procedure is similar to drop-off. Drive up in order of arrival. Please make sure your name card is visible in the front right window or park and walk into the office. Teachers will begin dismissing students in the same order as cars in line. Please make sure your child's seat belt is fastened before you pull out. Indiana State law requires children under the age of 4 to be in an approved safety seat and all others to be in safety belts. If your child is not ready for some reason, we will ask you to park out of the line of traffic. *Please exit with extreme caution.*

Late Pick-ups:

If it is necessary to be more than 10 minutes late for any reason, please call the school so that we can explain the delay to your child. He/she will be brought to the playroom to join the After School Camp. When you arrive, make the After School Director aware and she will assist you and your child in getting ready to leave. Please sign your child out on the clipboard near the door. If you are more than 15 minutes late After School Camp charges apply. The School closes at 5:30pm, along with After School Camp.

Please be sure to pick up your child before 5:30pm when the school closes. After 5:30pm the charge increases tremendously to pay the staff overtime and prevent later pick-ups.

Substitute Drivers:

On your Driver form you are asked to list people authorized to pick up your child. If anyone other than the regular drivers needs to pick up your child, please notify us by a note or phone call giving specific details so we may prepare your child. If a driver does not have the Renaissance card in the window they will need to park and come into the school office with identification. If your child shows signs of fear or anxiety we may need to contact you. *Please communicate these routines to anyone who may be picking up or dropping off.*

Dress Code

Uniforms:

All students are required to wear school uniforms each day, starting on the first day of school. The Every Day Uniform consists of: Renaissance Academy Charter School shirts (white, navy, burgundy, light blue) and solid color khaki or navy pants, skirts, skorts, or jumpers by French Toast uniforms. Renaissance Academy Charter School sweaters or sweatshirts may be worn over other collared uniform shirts if desired. All students must wear shoes suitable for outdoor play every day – no open toed shoes, flip-flops, high-heeled shoes, or clogs are allowed.

A Special Occasion Uniform is required for announced special days (usually monthly). This uniform consists of: For Boys: gray dress slacks or shorts, a white dress shirt, navy or maroon tie, navy school blazer (grades 4-8) or navy or maroon school cardigan or long sleeve v-neck for grades K-3. (K-3 may opt for blazer) gray or black socks and black dress shoes. A navy or maroon vest may be worn with the blazer if desired. For Girls: gray skirt, white dress shirt, navy or maroon blazer (grades 4-8) navy or maroon school cardigan or long sleeve v-neck for grades K-3 (K-3 may opt for blazer), white or gray tights or knee socks, black or gray flat or low heeled

dress shoes (less than 1" heel). Girls may wear optional navy or maroon vest, tie or cross tie if desired.

The gym uniform consisting of Renaissance t-shirt, gym shorts, and Renaissance warm up suit may be worn the full day of the student's gym class so they do not need to change. Team sports may require additional specialized uniforms.

Athletic uniforms must be purchased through Renaissance Academy Charter School using the appropriate order form. All other clothing items must be French Toast brand purchased online at Frenchtoast.com by typing 'renais' under school name or typing in our source code - . Socks, shoes, and navy blazers may be purchased anywhere

On announced "Dress Down" or "Jeans" Days, students may wear jeans and any Renaissance shirt, including Renaissance t-shirts

Do not allow your child to wear expensive jewelry to school, bring valuable personal objects from home, dye their hair, or wear make-up. Girls may wear one earring in each ear. No other body piercing is permitted. Hair must be kept neat and off the face; radical styles, unusual colors, spikes, shaves, boys long hair or tails, are not allowed.

***PLEASE HELP US BY PURCHASING THE CORRECT CLOTHING AND SUPERVISE WHAT YOUR CHILD WEARS TO SCHOOL.** All clothing must be in good taste and not be revealing. No low cut or hanging pants or short shorts are allowed. Help us not become the uniform police by doing your part to make sure your child is dressed appropriately for school. Children move about, sit on the floor, climb play equipment, run, and play soccer. We do not wish for children to become embarrassed if clothing does not fit properly. *

These policies will be strictly enforced. Students who arrive out of uniform will not be allowed in class. The parents will be called to bring the proper attire and/or the student will be provided with uniform clothing and the family will be charged.

We want our students to concentrate on their studies rather than personal attire. Thank you for your partnership to make sure clothing does not become an issue for your child or our staff.

What to bring:

We ask all children to bring a pair of labeled slippers with rubber soles or "slip-on" tennis shoes that remain at school. Children are welcome to wear slippers during their inside work time and are given a place in the room to store them when they are not using them. Slippers should be functional and non-distracting (no lights or characters, please).

At registration time, each child will be given a supply list that includes individual items along with many supplies for classroom use. This is a suggested list of materials that students use very quickly. We appreciate your help in this area and donations throughout the year are encouraged and welcomed.

In the interest of health, safety, and convenience **backpacks, duffel bags, etc. are not permitted on campus.** The school will provide a workbag/folder that can be carried from school to home everyday. An extra copy of any heavy textbooks students need at home will also be provided. All papers and belongings should be kept neatly in your child's workbag/folder.

In order to avoid lost items, ***please label your child's clothing as well as boots, hats, mittens, lunch boxes and items brought for show and tell.*** Periodically, we will use an indelible marker to label unmarked items. Please check the lost and found area frequently to claim any lost items.

Toys should be kept at home. No items for barter or bribe should be brought to school. Assure your young child that he/she has many different materials to work with at school. Students are not allowed to bring in toys and games from home unless they are educational in nature and the

teacher has given permission. Recognizing the important link between home and school, we do encourage students to bring in objects of interest with an educational value related to ongoing projects in the classroom. Toys and other non-educational objects brought in will be held and returned at the end of the day. Trading cards, pocket computers, compact disc players, and portable radios are also prohibited on campus. We believe that the use of a translucent folder instead of a backpack will make it easier for us to enforce this policy.

Weapons, play or real, are not permitted. We will follow state law regarding expulsion from school if drugs or weapons are brought onto school property.

Outdoor time:

The children love going outside and we try to allow this as much as possible. The teachers will use their own judgment about outdoor time but generally, Elementary, Full Day, and Lunchtime students have outdoor recess every day that it is not raining and the temperature is above 17F. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather. During cold and snowy weather children must bring a hat, mittens, boots, and snow pants to school. Please make sure all items are labeled. Thank you.

Nutrition Policy:

It is school policy to serve nutritious foods only. **Foods that are high in sugar or caffeine are not allowed during the school day.**

Snacks:

Your child will be invited to bring snacks to share with the entire class for one week, usually twice per year. A snack calendar with assigned days will be sent home, so you will have plenty of time to prepare. You'll be notified as to the number of snacks for your child's class. We are requesting that the snacks be nutritious and as natural as possible. Fresh fruits and vegetables or foods made with these are favored. Fruit, vegetables and dip, low-fat snacks, crackers, pretzels, cheese, yogurt, and muffins are other examples of acceptable foods. Please do not send candy or sweets to school. *Be sure to notify the teacher of any food restrictions for your child.*

Lunches:

When you pack a lunch, please choose healthy foods with proteins and complex carbohydrates. Soft drinks, gum, candy, and other sugary foods are prohibited. We also discourage the use of many prepackaged lunches like "Lunchables" because they lack the necessary nutrition and fiber necessary to maintain good health.

When preparing a lunch, please have foods pre-cut and peeled if necessary. Lunch should be ready to eat. We can warm leftovers on occasion but are not able cook or prepare foods – there is a 30 second maximum on microwave time. Hot foods and soups work well in a thermos; cold packs work well for food that needs to be chilled. An extra napkin in the lunchbox can come in handy. Your child may purchase milk at school. We provide time and a pleasant atmosphere for dining. We will not force or pressure children to eat. Please consider the types of food which best serve your child's healthy eating habits. This is a good opportunity for you and your child to talk about nutrition and allow your child to make some healthy choices and help prepare the food.

Birthday Celebrations:

We will try to schedule your child's snack day on his birthday. If your child's birthday falls in the summer we can celebrate the half-year. If you have a special treat to share that day, please remember our nutrition policy - **no sugary foods** allowed. Some suggestions are muffins, bagels, banana bread, and fruit kabobs. You can be creative and healthy.

Some classes celebrate your child's birthday by discussing the special moments or events in each year of his/her life. It becomes much more meaningful if you can send photographs and explanations that represent these important events. Many parents create special photo albums for this purpose with a page for each year of life.

In honor of their birthdays, children also enjoy giving a special gift to their classroom. Each class has a wish list of materials that the students would appreciate. Some of the materials must be purchased through school supply companies but others, such as hard cover books for the class or the library, are available in area stores. If you'd like to know what's on the list, just call the office. If you want to purchase an item through the school, please call at least two weeks before the birthday.

Discipline:

Student Rights and Responsibilities

The rights of individuals are preserved with the protection and preservation of the rights of others. Rights bring responsibilities. Each person is responsible for the manner in which his/her individual rights are exercised and must accept the consequences of his or her actions. With Renaissance Academy Charter School staff, students, and parents working cooperatively together, we can reach the goal of establishing an optimal learning environment.

Students have the right to a quality education within a safe and supportive environment. To best achieve this, students have a responsibility to follow the school's rules and regulations. It is expected that students at Renaissance Academy Charter School will demonstrate good citizenship, be responsible for their behavior, and will establish positive relationships with the staff, school, and community. In turn, the administration and faculty have the responsibility to show mutual respect to the students. Together, we can establish a community of learning in which students can reach their fullest potential.

Renaissance Academy Charter School Discipline Policy

Freedom Within Limits

The word discipline comes from the Latin word *discere*, meaning "to learn."

Discipline is the positive direction of behavior toward established standards of conduct, fully understood and based upon reason, judgment, and consideration of rights of others. Ideal discipline is self-directed and self-controlled. Schools, community, and parents share the responsibility for helping students develop self-discipline. When self-control falters and self-discipline fails, disciplinary forces from outside the individual must be imposed to protect the rights of others and to assist the development of the individual.

At Renaissance Academy Charter School, discipline will be seen as a learning opportunity, a process, *and* a tool that each student can learn to use independently. Students and staff will be held to the highest standards of conduct. School discipline goals will be the following:

1. To insure a positive learning environment of emotional security and physical safety.
2. To help each child attain the independence and confidence needed to become self-disciplined.
3. To foster the internal controls that are essential to achieving success in all aspects of life

All disciplinary measures will reflect the philosophy and principles of Renaissance Academy Charter School:

- Discipline will preserve the dignity of each individual.
- Appropriate behavior will be modeled by all staff
- Each Individual will take responsibility for his or her actions
- No form of physical punishment will ever be used.
- Discipline will encourage and foster internal controls and student responsibility
- Parents play a primary role in making the system work
- Rules will be clearly stated and consequences applied fairly and consistently
- Staff will employ consistent and appropriate methods of classroom management
- Establishing, maintaining, and restoring relationships is an essential part of the discipline process

At Renaissance Academy Charter School there is one primary rule, Respect; respect for self, respect for others, respect for the environment/community/world. All students will be expected to demonstrate respect. The mission in this regard is to assist students in achieving the solutions and developing the coping skills that will enable them to manage their own behavior through positive intrinsic motivation.

At Renaissance Academy Charter School, teachers interact with children in a clear, positive manner. Teachers and students work together to establish unambiguous rules and guidelines for behavior in each of our classrooms. Few problems occur that cannot be handled through class meetings or with minor disciplinary action by the teacher.

If a behavior problem does arise, the situation is first discussed with the child to ensure clear understanding. Children with special needs are held to the same high standards of behavior as other students, with consequences appropriate to their individual development. We believe that redirecting the child's activities toward more positive behavior and helping him understand and experience the consequences of the behavior are the most effective methods of discipline.

A child who repeatedly interferes with the work of others or does not follow his/her "classroom commitments" may be subject to minor disciplinary action. Minor disciplinary action may include: redirection, private conversations, removal from a particular activity, remaining with a teacher, or visiting another classroom. For significant or repeated problems, students may also be kept in from recess, asked to write a note, assigned extra work or helping jobs, or other such consequences. Continuing problems with student work completion or behavior may result in after school or Saturday school detention. In extreme situations, a child may be removed to the office until they are ready to rejoin their group or until the adult feels it is safe for them to return. Parents receive written notes or, when necessary, are contacted directly. For extreme misbehavior including any behavior resulting in physical injury to others, parents will be called and immediate suspension may occur. Indiana State Law in regards to expulsion, suspension, and due process will be followed.

The success of children is best ensured by parents and school working together. We will communicate and work with parents in the best interest of their children at all times. In turn, we expect parents to support the school in its policies and procedures including homework, dress, and student behavior. We do not use parents or family as a threat, but rather as an invaluable partner in the growth process of our students. We strongly encourage families to support our philosophy and support their child in his/her total growth. (Reference Commitment Forms and Homework Policy)

Some Renaissance Academy Charter School Basics

Renaissance Academy Charter School students are required to:

Wear a uniform every day

Wear the more formal uniform on special occasion days

Complete homework nightly

Read nightly

Uphold a high standard of good conduct

Participate fully and productively in class each day

Be respectful of the teachers, staff, other students, and the school.

Approach new activities positively and with best effort

Join in a minimum of three seasons of after school Team Activities (i.e. Cross Country Running, Basketball, Chess, Science Olympiad,...) including at least one sport.

Renaissance Academy Charter School parents are required to:

Support their children in all of the above, including:

Make sure the uniform is correct each day

Check homework completion nightly

Listen to or ensure reading nightly

Support the school in behavioral expectations, follow up on behavioral concerns, speak respectfully about the school and staff to the children.

Help your family be full and active members of the school community by coming to special events, school parties, etc.

Volunteer regularly, giving a minimum of ten hours per year.

Make arrangements for your child to get to after school activities consistently

Renaissance Academy Charter School teachers and staff will:

Check the uniform every day

Assign and check homework completion daily

Check students reading, give assignments to improve students reading

Uphold a high standard of good conduct

Participate fully and productively in class each day

Be respectful of the students, parents, other teachers, staff, and the school.

Provide a variety of enriching after school Team Activities (i.e. Cross Country Running, Basketball, Chess, Science Olympiad, ...).

Help build a positive community atmosphere by offering special events, school parties, etc.

Parent Involvement:

Parents are an important part of Renaissance Academy Charter School. Your involvement with your child is fundamental to his or her success. Every Renaissance Family is required to be

involved with their child's education on a daily basis by asking and communicating positively about school, checking homework, and reading together.

All parents are also automatically members of the Parent Association upon admission to the school. Our Parent Association's main goal is to provide a home/school connection for our families, using social and educational opportunities. Parent education and volunteer opportunities are both offered regularly at Renaissance. We'd like every family to be as involved as they are able, and we truly appreciate any help families can give. Every family is required to volunteer, giving a minimum of ten hours per year. We'll happily give you plenty of opportunities. Please return the volunteer request form given out at registration time. Parent volunteers give wonderful assistance in everything from listening to children read to organizing our yearly dinner auction.

School Day Volunteers

There are many tasks where volunteers are needed in school. Our arrival and dismissal time can always use an extra adult. Teachers appreciate having a volunteer in the classroom to check papers or assist students with a special project. Children also enjoy having a parent join them for lunch and the lunchtime staff enjoys having an extra adult at this hectic time of day. If a parent would like to be actively involved in the classroom or school building, there are many opportunities but first you must fill out an application for a background check. A fee is charged for this process. To enable volunteers to work with students successfully, the school will provide training in the Montessori philosophy and classroom methods.

Special Days

Two Clean Up / Work Days are scheduled each year.

Family Fun Nights offering wholesome activities like Bingo, Crafts, and Game Night are held throughout the year.

All School Parties are held in the fall and winter each year.

We'd like all families to enjoy these events and it takes volunteers to help organize and run them.

Fundraising

The school uses several different methods to raise funds for the classroom and facilities. The American Montessori Society notes that it takes \$20,000 - \$30,000 to equip one Montessori classroom. The state tuition payments only cover basic expenses. We have to be very creative to raise the funds to fully supply the necessary materials in the classrooms, as well as provide for playground improvements and the Building Fund. It takes many volunteers to make this happen.

Members of the Renaissance Academy Charter School Board of Directors oversee all of these areas. Please fill out the volunteer form you let them know how you would like to be involved. Also, let them know if you may be interested in becoming a member of the Board of Directors.

Class Observation:

Each of the classrooms has an observation window and you are welcome to view the class any time. We have found that you will see a more typical day if your child does not know that you are coming, and does not see you observing. Please remember to be quiet while observing.

Parent Communication:

It is very important to us that your concerns about your child's experience and progress, or, the functioning of the school are expressed to us. Please feel free to send a note with your child or to call school so we may call you back after class is over. The school phone number is 219-878-8711 and school telephone calls will be answered by staff or the school's answering system. Voicemail will be checked frequently, and messages responded to promptly whenever necessary. Any concerns or worries about your child's school experience should be directed to the teacher,

Principal, or Assistant Principal, not the assistants. Please understand that the teachers do not have time before class to discuss any complicated issues but will be happy to call you when class is over.

We have parent/teacher conferences twice a year and expect you to attend these; they are an extremely important avenue for parent communication. You may, of course, request a conference at any time and we would enjoy the opportunity to talk with you. We will send any class communications and your child's work in a large envelope once a week on Wednesdays. Please return the envelopes the following school day.

Homework

Homework Policy

Homework is an important part of a top quality education. It can help children learn, improve independence, and develop responsibility.

Elementary students will have assigned homework every day, with longer assignments on Fridays.

Generally, homework assignments are expected to take between ten and thirty minutes each day in the lower elementary, and half-hour to an hour each day in the upper elementary with the longer times for the junior high students. Students also have their weekly spelling / vocabulary words to study and regular reading assignments that should be progressing each day. We realize that this is less homework than many schools give but we believe it is enough to derive the benefits without becoming overwhelming, and we recognize that many children live very active lives in today's world. We expect children to be very responsible about the homework given, completing it with diligence and returning it promptly. Of course we want to help in every way. Students are asked to write down their homework and carry that list home with their homework folder every day. Parents can help by looking for it and reinforcing the importance of this responsibility.

We all understand that circumstances occasionally occur that prevent us from completing our plans so we are allowing for these occasions by giving all students free homework passes at the beginning of the year. Students have also earned more with their completed summer work. During the year students whose work is always well done and timely may earn even more free passes.

Students who come to school without completed homework, or a pass to take its place, will be marked down and the work will be expected, along with any additional work, on the following school day. Any student with missing homework marks on two consecutive days, or five days all together, will be assigned an after school study hall to help them have the quiet time to complete that work. If the work is still not complete by the following day, another study hall will be given and so forth until the student is back on track.

At Renaissance Academy Charter School it is our goal to make sure that every child is making his or her own best progress and we know that this is only possible with effort and responsibility. We hope that this policy will help reinforce these character traits. Working together, we can ensure each student's success.

Health and Safety:

The school office must have updated medical and emergency forms on file at all times. These must be updated before your child's attendance. It is VERY IMPORTANT that you call us with any address or phone number changes throughout the year. We must have a working number for emergency contact at all times.

Absences due to illness:

If your child will not be in attendance for any reason, please call the office. It is especially important for us to be aware of any contagious illnesses so we may inform the other students' families.

We do not provide sick childcare. **PLEASE DO NOT BRING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL IF THEY ARE EXHIBITING SYMPTOMS THAT ARE CONTAGIOUS TO OTHERS.** Your cooperation in this matter will help us keep absences of other students and staff members to a minimum.

Do not send your child to school if he/she has:

- A. A cold that involves continuous coughing, sneezing, or discolored mucus discharge.
- B. Sore and inflamed throat
- C. Any unrelieved or continuous coughing
- D. Fever
 - a. A temperature of 100 degrees or higher within the last 24 hours
 - b. Temperatures lower than 100 that have symptoms of headache, stomachache, earache, etc.
- E. Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- F. Any inflammatory eye condition
- G. Head Lice
- H. Contagious skin rashes or illnesses

If your child becomes sick during the day you will be notified to pick him/her up immediately. We will bring your child to the office to wait. Please keep emergency files updated so we can contact you or other authorized individuals quickly.

Returning:

A child with any of the above symptoms should not return until they are clear of symptoms for at least 24 hours **without the use of fever reducing medications**, unless under the communication of a physician. Children sent home with head lice must be rechecked before returning to class.

Both the LaPorte Hospital and St. Anthony's in Michigan City have "sick-child care" available for parents who cannot stay with their child while he/she is sick.

Medicine:

Ill children should be kept home. In special circumstances, staff members will give medicine during the school hours only with the following restrictions:

Prescriptions from doctors can usually be administered outside of the school day, however if your child needs to come to school with a prescription or non-prescription medicine, it will be administered at 12-noon daily. This is to insure the success and consistency of medicine given by staff. We are not able to administer eye or ear medication. Should your child need eye or ear medication during the school day, families are welcome to come in to administer it, or to give any additional medication to your child. The following applies to all medications:

1. Prescription medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name, a date, directions, and physician's name.
2. Staff must administer medication as stated on the label directions, or as per written, signed and dated instructions from the doctor.

3. Parent, legal guardian or doctor must sign the permission form in the school office.
4. No prescription will be administered after its expiration date.
5. Non-prescription medication must be labeled with the child's name and the date. It must be left in the original container, and the teacher must administer it according to label directions.
6. For the safety of all children, NO medications are to be placed in the child's lunch box. All medication must be checked in at the first aid area where it will be stored or refrigerated as applicable.
7. All medication should be taken home daily or approved to be left overnight in the first aid area.
8. Ibuprofen or Acetaminophen may be available in the first aid area for children 12 and older, to be administered with verbal parental consent.

Attendance:

Consistent and prompt attendance is vital for your child's progress in school. Even in kindergarten, new lessons and special classes are scheduled at the beginning of the day. Crucial information may be missed because of tardiness or nonattendance. Please consider our school calendar when scheduling family events that may take your child out of the school routine.

Even with this in mind, remember we do not ever want children to come to school sick.

Reporting Absences

If your child needs to be absent for any reason, it is very important that you call the school before class to report the absence. **If a child will be late or absent, families should report this to 219 878-8711.** Please leave your name, your child's name, your child's classroom or teacher name, and reason for the absence or tardy. Children enrolled in the Charter program, *without exception*, must have absences called in by 8:45 am daily.

Late Arrivals

Children will be marked tardy if they do not arrive by five minutes after their scheduled start time. For consistency in each class, children should arrive on time every day.

Make-up Days

Students with too many days tardy or absences will be required to make up the time through after school study hall, Saturday school, or vacation days.

Absence Waiver for 5+ year olds (Kindergarten and up)

While we stress the value of regular and consistent school attendance, we also understand and respect that there are times as a family that you would like to remove your child/ren for a particular activity, family trip or event. Renaissance Academy feels that learning happens everywhere and at any time. If you would like to home school your child during this time and waive their absence, the following procedure must be met.

1. Copy the Absence Waiver (Appendix 3) or obtain a copy from the office.
2. Obtain assigned work from your child's classroom teacher and work with the teacher to plan an age appropriate project to fulfill the waiver.
3. Within 1 week of the absence, the Absence Waiver must be returned to the teacher and all work including the project/presentation/report must be completed by the child.

4. The Absence Waiver will be signed by a classroom teacher and turned into the office on the day of the presentation.
5. The absence will then be removed from your child's attendance record.

School Closings:

Please be sure to refer to the school calendar for scheduled school closing dates. Ample notification will be sent home in the student folders if we ever need to close school on other days (i.e. one day for staff attendance at the annual Montessori Conference).

In the case of bad weather, the **Renaissance Academy Charter School will follow the same closing/delay pattern as the LaPorte Community Schools and the Michigan City Area Schools**. With Renaissance Academy in the limits of LaPorte and in the Michigan City Area Schools district, we must follow both school systems weather related closing and delays. Please check radio and television stations for school announcements. Weather related announcements are posted on WEFM 95.9fm, WSBT-AM 960, SUNNY 101.5, Oldies 94.3, WHFB 99.9, and television stations WSBT Channel 22, and WNDU Channel 16. If Michigan City Area Schools or LaPorte Community Schools are closed for weather, so is Renaissance Academy.

*** Renaissance Academy Charter School is a non-profit, non-denominational, public school offering the highest quality of education**

Appendices

Appendix I: Renaissance Academy Internet Acceptable Use Policy

A. Acceptable Use Policies

1. The Internet is a global information system that is logically linked together by a globally unique address space based on the Internet Protocol (IP) or its subsequent extensions. There is no limit to the information that can be obtained via the Internet, and we feel it is especially helpful to students for various research and information gathering purposes.

At Renaissance Academy Charter School we encourage our students to find information ‘online’ for many different projects, not only helping them learn a particular subject, but enhancing their knowledge of the different ways to find information when necessary. In today’s world the Internet is a central point of communication and information in both business and home life. We feel our students are gaining important real-life skills by utilizing this technology.

2. Renaissance Academy Charter School understands that there is much questionable and/or inappropriate content available on the Internet, and strive to make it a ‘safe’ place for our children. We make use of both Internet browser parental controls, and the observations of staff members to ensure that the Internet is used in a positive way. Please note that although we use methods of supervision when children are online, these methods are not foolproof, nor are there any foolproof methods for blocking inappropriate material.

3. Should a child be discovered accessing inappropriate information on the Internet, their privileges shall be suspended for a period not to exceed one school year.

4. Renaissance Academy Charter School prohibits the use of its Internet accounts for the following reasons:

- a. access, upload, download or distribution of obscene, hateful, pornographic or sexually explicit material;
- b. the transmission of abusive or sexually explicit language;
- c. the violation of any local, state or federal laws;
- d. the vandalism, damage or disability of the property of another person;
- e. the transmission of offensive, defamatory, or harassing material to other users;
- f. the accessing of another persons files without the permission of that person, unless such files are in a designated ‘shared’ folder;
- g. the use of copyrighted material without prior approval;
- h. downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials, unless this download is covered or permitted under a commercial agreement or other such license;
- i. Undertaking deliberate activities that waste student or staff effort or networked resources;

Parents should note that it is possible for students to purchase goods and services via the Internet, and that these could result in unwanted financial obligations to the family. Should the schools Internet account be used for unauthorized financial transactions, the school shall not be held liable for payment of such transactions.

5. Renaissance Academy Charter School believes it is the responsibility of the staff, student and family, working together, to guide the use of the Internet by the child for educational purposes, and lay the foundation for responsible use of the Internet by the child.

6. Failure to comply with these guidelines will result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary procedures such as verbal and written warnings, through to dismissal.

Renaissance Academy Charter School will provide a copy of this Internet Acceptable Use Policy upon request.

B. Internet Use Guidelines for Students and Staff

1. Should any student or staff member receive unsolicited contact from an individual online, that person should immediately contact the adult in the classroom or notify the school's administrator.

2. Students and staff should also safeguard their personal information, not giving out information such as their name, address, phone number or other information to anyone online. If a student encounters a site or a solicitation that asks for this information, they should, again, immediately contact the adult in the classroom or the school's administrator.

3. Staff members are able to use the school's account for personal use, and the school trusts the judgment of staff members to use the Internet responsibly. All guidelines outlined above for students also apply to staff members.

4. Staff is expected to review this document with their children, as age appropriate, and ask students to commit to these guidelines. This helps children take ownership in their own responsible use of the Internet.

Renaissance Academy Charter School Absence Waiver

Appendix II

PARENTS: The Absence Waiver should be used for any absences in which you or your family conducted a home school project/activity that you feel supported this day of absence. This should be returned with any documentation to your child's classroom teachers.

Child's Name: _____ Date(s) of absence: _____

Reason for absence: _____

Home school assignments and activity/project/report: _____

Please explain why you feel your child's learning work makes up for this absence period:

Parent(s) responsible for home school project: _____

Teacher viewing project/presentation: _____

Date of presentation/documentation returned: _____

Teacher notes: _____

Was the waiver turned within one weeks of absence:

YES

NO

Appendix III: Anti-Harassment Policy

Renaissance Academy is committed to providing all students and employees with a safe and supportive school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with respect. Teachers and other staff members are expected to teach and demonstrate by example that all members of the community are entitled to respect.

It is hereby the policy of Renaissance Academy to prohibit harassment based on real or perceived race, color, religion (creed), national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or on the basis of association with others identified by these categories.

This policy is intended to comply with state as well as federal requirements.

Renaissance Academy shall act to investigate all complaints of harassment, formal or informal, verbal or written, and to discipline or take other appropriate action against any member of the school community who is found to have violated this policy.

Definitions

Harassment: Harassment means verbal or physical conduct based on the student's real or perceived race, religion (creed), color, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or on the basis of association with others identified by these categories, that (1) substantially interferes with or will substantially interfere with a student's educational benefits, opportunities, or performance; or a student's physical or psychological well-being; or (2) creates an intimidating or hostile environment.

School Community: Includes but is not limited to all students, school employees, contractors, unpaid volunteers, work study students, interns, student teachers, and visitors.

Sexual Harassment: A form of harassment which means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature

Retaliation: Any adverse action taken against a person for reporting a complaint of harassment when the complainant honestly believes harassment has occurred or is occurring, or for participating in or cooperating with an investigation.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND HANDLING COMPLAINTS OF HARASSMENT OF STUDENTS

A. REPORTING

1. **Students** It is the policy of Renaissance Academy to encourage student targets of harassment and students who have first-hand knowledge of such harassment to report such claims. Students should report incident(s) to any teacher or school administrator.
2. **Employees** Any adult school employee who witnesses, overhears, or receives a report, formal or informal, written or oral, of harassment at school or during school-sponsored activities shall report it to the school administration. Under certain circumstances, alleged harassment may constitute child abuse under state law. The statutory obligation to report suspected abuse, therefore, may be applicable.
3. **Privacy:** Complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible given the need to investigate and act on investigative results.

B. RESPONSE

1. **Executive Director's Duty.** The Executive Director or the Executive Director designee is the person responsible for receiving oral or written reports of harassment. Upon receipt of a report, the Executive Director must notify another member of the administrative team

immediately, without screening or investigating the report. The Executive Director may request, but may not insist upon, a written complaint.

C. INVESTIGATION

1. Who. The Executive Director or designee shall conduct an investigation upon receipt of a report or complaint alleging student harassment.
2. How. The investigator shall interview individuals involved and any other persons who may have knowledge of the circumstances giving rise to the complaint and may use other methods and documentation. In determining whether the alleged conduct constitutes a violation of this policy, the investigator shall consider, among other things: the nature of the behavior; how often the conduct occurred; whether there were past incidents or past continuing patterns of behavior; and the relationship of the parties involved.
3. When. The investigator shall complete the investigation as soon as practicable, but in no event later than fourteen (14) calendar days following receipt of the complaint.
4. Result. Upon completion of the investigation, the investigator shall decide if a violation of this policy has occurred and report that decision, along with the evidence supporting it, to the principal or directly to the school board, for appropriate action in accordance with disciplinary policy.

D. ACTION

Renaissance Academy shall take disciplinary or remedial action as appropriate in order to ensure that further harassment does not occur. Such action may include, but is not limited to: counseling, awareness training, parent-teacher conferences, warning, transfer, suspension and/or expulsion of a student, and counseling, awareness training, transfer, suspension and/or termination of an employee.

Action taken for violation of this policy will be consistent with the requirements of applicable collective bargaining agreements, state and federal law, and Renaissance Academy policies.

E. APPEAL

A person judged to be in violation of the policy on student harassment and subjected to action under it may appeal the determination and/or the action taken as follows:

1. Student. If the person filing the appeal is a student, the appeal shall proceed in accordance with policy governing discipline of students and with legal due process requirements.
2. Employee. If the person filing the appeal is an employee, the appeal shall proceed in accordance with policy governing employee discipline and with legal due process requirements.

F. RETALIATION

Any individual who retaliates against any employee or student who reports, testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation or hearing relating to a harassment complaint will be subject to appropriate action and/or discipline. Retaliation for reporting harassment or cooperating in an investigation of harassment is unlawful under state law.

G. RECORD KEEPING AND NOTIFICATION

1. Record keeping. The Executive Director shall assure that a record of any complaint and investigation of harassment as well as the disposition of the complaint and any disciplinary or remedial action taken is maintained by Renaissance Academy in a confidential file.

2. Notification. The Executive Director shall assure that the complainant is notified whether allegations of harassment were found to be valid, whether a violation of the policy occurred, and whether action was taken as a result.

H. NOTICE

The Executive Director shall use all reasonable means to inform students, employees, and parents or guardians that the school will not tolerate harassment. Copies of the policy and procedures shall appear in the student and employee handbooks (or other similar publications) as well as publications distributed to parents and community members.

I. TRAINING

Age-appropriate methods of discussing the meaning and substance of this policy will be used with staff and students in order to help prevent harassment. In addition to informing staff and students about the policy, these programs, implemented within the context of professional development and school curriculum, also raise awareness about the different types of harassment; how the harassment manifests itself; and the devastating emotion and educational consequences of harassment.

SEVERABILITY

The provisions of this policy shall be severable. If any provision or portion of this policy or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the policy or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.