



Student and Family Handbook

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Mission

Lakeland Montessori Middle School provides students with a holistic, developmentally responsive Montessori environment, which allows for individual expression and encourages growth into active, responsible participants in society.

Vision

Lakeland Montessori Middle School will:

- inspire academic success through authentic Montessori and personally relevant education;
- improve adolescent/community interaction through service-learning;
- nurture student curiosity, creativity and efficacy by encouraging self-directed education; and
- focus on the student as a vital participant in his or her learning community.

What is Lakeland Montessori Middle School?

Lakeland Montessori Middle School (LMMS) is a free public charter school. This means that LMMS is under the jurisdiction of Polk County Schools, but is privately run. LMMS is a middle school committed to using the Montessori approach to educate its students. LMMS has an active board of principals involved in many aspects of the school.

What is Montessori?

The Montessori method is based on the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori, a pioneer in education at the turn of the twentieth century. The primary mission of all Montessori education is to educate students to become peacemakers. To that end, our school, like other Montessori schools, has an emphasis on international as well as national perspectives. The Montessori secondary curriculum has evolved over the last thirty years to incorporate a body of researched best practices in the education of adolescents. The program uses multi-aged, multi-grade classrooms that provide students with a non-competitive, developmentally appropriate and inspiring environment. Students work as individual learners as well as learners in community. Such diversity in instruction nurtures students as both independent and collaborative researchers and learners. Students also set their own goals and receive support and feedback from teachers and parents at student-led conferences. The Montessori secondary method has been shown to increase not only student's achievement levels, but also their sense of personal efficacy. For further reading on the features and research supporting Montessori education we recommend reading *Montessori: The Science Behind The Genius* by Lilliard.

Summary of Secondary Program

The secondary design is an integration of the current research in human development, the trends and issues in education, and the Montessori philosophy.

The Adolescent is:

- an active, self-directed learner
- a vital member of the class, school, city and global community
- the central member of the teacher-student-parent team
- responsible for keeping commitments, being honest, and respectful

The Teachers are:

- facilitators for learning
- consultants for the students
- creators of a positive climate for learning
- communicators with parents and community
- role models

The school structure offers:

- a learner-centered environment
- a developmentally-responsive curriculum and teaching team of Montessori teachers with additional adults as resources
- parents-teachers-student partnerships
- multi-aged groupings of 7th and 8th grade students
- large blocks of uninterrupted learning time
- peer and cross-age teaching

The curriculum and instruction includes:

- trans-disciplinary themes
- learning-how-to-learn strategies
- mastery, coaching and exploratory activities
- long-term cooperative learning projects
- a strong sense of community and social interaction with peers
- meaningful and challenging work
- activities for self-expression, self-knowledge, and self-assessment
- activities that value all nine intelligences and a variety of learning styles
- activities to foster interdependence
- activities for learning economic independence
- school and community service projects
- activities that allow work on and with the land

Schedule of a Day

8:15 am - 8:30 am	Students arrive and enter classroom
8:30 am - 8:45 am	Community Meeting
	M - normal*
	T - problem solving
	W - normal*
	Th - business or builders club planning
	F- normal*
8:45 am - 10:30 am	Color Group
10:30 am - 11:30 am	Math
11:30 am- 12:00 pm	Lunch
12:00 pm -12:30 pm	Personal Reflection
12:30 pm - 2:00 pm	Individual Work (On Fridays: special projects)
1:45 pm - 2:00 pm	End of Day Meeting, Restore the environment
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	PE

* normal means a regular community meeting agenda

After School Study Hall

Wednesday

3:15 pm - 4:00 pm	Study Hall/Tutorial
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Academic Program

Courses of Academic Study

The Lakeland Montessori Middle School courses of study reflect an integration of the Next Generation Sunshine State standards, Common Core Standards, the newest research on the developmental needs of adolescents, Montessori philosophy, current learning theory, and the predictions of the skills needed for a productive life in the twenty-first century.

Students at Lakeland Montessori Middle School will receive instruction in the following subjects: Mathematics, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Research, Speech-Debate, Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving and Learning Strategies, Career Exploration and Decision Making, Service-Learning, Exploratory Wheel and Physical Fitness/Health. FCAT scores and previous academic performance may be used as a general guideline for placement in Advanced courses. Students requesting placement in an Advanced course who do not meet the required FCAT levels may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Mathematics (1 credit each year)

Students will receive math instruction daily using an integrated curriculum that incorporates Montessori materials to introduce concepts concretely before students practice them abstractly. Algebra I Honors for high school credit through Florida Virtual School is offered to students meeting eligibility requirements including previous Math FCAT scores, achievement on the Orleans-Hanna Algebra Prognosis Test and demonstrated mastery of Pre-Algebra.

Language Arts (1 credit each year)

The language curriculum follows the reading and writing workshop model established by the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project of Columbia University. It encompasses an integrated study of vocabulary, literature, grammar and mechanics, and writing. The curriculum seeks to teach students to value reading and writing well, to self-initiate reading and writing in their own lives, and to see reading and writing as tools to change themselves and the world around them. Students read and write in a wide range of genres for a variety of authentic purposes and learn to communicate with a variety of audiences. Vocabulary and etymology is presented across the curriculum and is tested each cycle. Grammar is studied daily within the context of literature and writing. There is a grammar test every cycle. With special emphasis on critical analysis, students practice daily a variety of types of writing in response to literature and informational texts.

Comprehensive Science/Natural World (1 credit each year)

Each year of instruction in science includes elements of life science, physical science and earth science. Year A primarily focuses on physical and earth science with some elements of life science. Year B primarily focuses on life science with some elements of physical science and earth science. The goal of the science program is to provide students the opportunity to become proficient critical thinkers while mastering the core understandings in that focus area. Science instruction is based on the latest research in science education and includes guided, structured and open inquiry, peer teaching and direct instruction in the form of overview lessons. We focus on the reading skills necessary for technical and non-fiction texts. Students will engage in all the aspects of “doing” science including collaboration, peer review, experimental design, reporting results and analysis in a variety of forms, maintaining a reflective science journal and publishing reports.

Social Studies/Social World (1 credit each year)

The goal of the social world curriculum is to provide the students with a holistic understanding of the world. Students use primary and secondary sources from a variety of opposing viewpoints, experiential activities, socratic dialogues, and current technology to investigate the past, and to connect history to current events. Students read a variety of non-fiction texts including, but not limited to, biographies, timelines, graphs, maps and charts. Sources such as “Teaching Tolerance”, United Nations Peace Education and History Alive offer students the opportunity to explore other cultures and viewpoints. Participation in online communications with schools from other parts of the world contributes to the overall mission of the social world curriculum which is to prepare students to participate as citizens of the global community.

Physical Education/Health/Personal Reflection (1/2 credit each year)

Students will participate in a structured physical education class on a daily basis. The physical education curriculum incorporates the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. The curriculum will offer the opportunity for all students to enhance motor, cognitive and interpersonal skills along with an individualized assessment of fitness aptitude. The attainment of these skills and abilities will enable the students to become lifelong learners and lead healthy, active lives. Physical education waivers may be obtained if students meet specific eligibility requirements. Students with physical education restrictions must submit a [Physical Education Restriction Form](#) signed by a physician.

Health is the study of issues pertinent to the needs of early adolescents. State law requires a unit of instruction on Comprehensive Health F.S. 233.061(2)(m), Substance Abuse F.S. 233.061(2)(i), Violence Prevention (Federal Law, Improvement of American Schools 994, Title IV, Section 4116) in 6th, 7th and 8th grade year. Students at LMMS alternate focusing on The Heroic Journey and The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. This program has several purposes. One is to provide information about the transition from childhood to adolescence and the journey to adulthood. Another is to provide links between generation to help your people make the journey safely. A third is to create challenging and meaningful experiences, similar to those in the initiation or rites of passage ceremonies. Students explore topics such as belonging, friendships, adolescent development, stress management, self-esteem, peer pressure, drug education, sexuality, nutrition, and balanced-living. There is a time each day which students spend in Personal Reflection for development of their intrapersonal skills, values assessment, goal setting, and life choices skills.

Research/Service-Learning (1 credit each year)

Students will complete several long-term independent research assignments over the course of their time at Lakeland Montessori Middle School. Some of those assignments have a focus on Service-Learning and solving community problems; other independent research topics are broader and allow students to choose their own focus. Products of independent research projects include participation in expert conferences, poster boards, research papers, presentations, movies and posters.

Speech-Debate/Community Meeting (1 credit each year)

Community meeting is held every day. Students are assigned daily roles and take turns facilitating the meeting. Active daily participation is required. Community Meeting is where community standards are discussed and addressed, where lessons are given, and where concerns and praise for one another is shared. Community meeting is designed to meet the criteria of speech class and includes components of debate, group discussion, public speaking, facilitating meetings,

story-telling and conflict resolution. Assignments in community meeting include setting goals for the whole group, planning events, meals, and trips, determining nutrition, technology, and dress code policies (within guidelines set by the staff), sharing world news events and daily critical thinking challenges. Additional speech assignments occur in science and social studies.

Career Exploration and Decision Making (1/2 credit in 8th grade)

Students will develop and participate in career internships as one of their culminating activities of their 8th grade year. 8th grade students will develop and present a keystone project summarizing the highlights of their learning in their academic career thus far. During intersessions students will be asked to explore how their decisions influence the world around them.

Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Learning Strategies (1 credit each in 7th grade)

Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Learning Strategies instruction is integrated into instruction during the color group time block.

Exploratory Wheel (1/2 credit each year)

Students are offered the opportunity to explore new ideas each cycle.

Cycles of Work

In an academic year, there are six cycles of work. Each cycle is five weeks. The fifth week is for demonstration of mastery, product presentation and a written self-assessment of the thematic project work. Because the fifth week is when the students demonstrate their understanding and mastery of all the subjects in that cycle, it is often referred to as **Synthesis week**. Following each 5 week cycle is an *immersion week* in which students complete hands-on projects and service learning projects, often at a location away from school, in an effort to apply the knowledge they have learned in context. This sixth week is also called the **Intersession week**. The cycle format is designed to help students learn organizational, decision-making, and time-management skills.

Mastery Learning

Mastery learning is a form of personalized learning that gives students the necessary time to master particular skills before progressing to the next level of work. The student takes on the responsibility of learning a skill versus merely accepting a low grade and never really learning the information. The teacher's job is to break down the learning steps, to offer suggestions for internalizing the knowledge, and to give the time necessary to learn the information. According to research, the advantage of mastery learning is that it offers clear expectations, fosters mastery of a unit of study, is not competitive, and encourages student responsibility. The procedure is to offer information, provide learning strategies and activities, provide a variety of assessments - performance assessment with rubrics scale, quizzes, written tests, and self-assessments - and reteach and retest if necessary. Quizzes are distinguished from tests. Quizzes are to give feedback during the learning process and do not required a 80+%.

Tests are given at the closure of a body of work such as after the completion of an area of study in social world, natural world, math, and language and require a minimum score of 80%. Tests are always corrected, no matter what the score, for learning. In the event that a retest has to be taken, all subsequent tests will be more in-depth; therefore, certain criteria must be met before a retest is administered such as: reviewing previous material, completing supplemental work, and receiving

additional instruction from a teacher when necessary. If the student is still not successful in mastering the material after the second test, alternative testing strategies will be utilized. All test grades will be averaged to determine mastery and the students' gradebook will indicate areas where modifications were implemented.

Multiple Intelligences

Recent discoveries about the nature of human intelligences have indicated that we have the ability to enhance and amplify our intelligences, and that intelligence is a multiple reality that occurs in different parts of the brain/mind system. Students will take a survey of where they are on the continuum of each of the nine intelligences as identified by Howard Gardner in his book, Frames of Mind. The nine intelligences are verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, natural and existential. Students are asked to design their work to include each of the intelligences and reflect upon their growth in each area.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is an important component of Montessori education at all levels. LMMS provides many opportunities for discovery and experiential learning in which active participation and reflection is the goal. Through outdoor education, student-run businesses, service-learning and internships our students construct knowledge by direct experience.

Outdoor Education: Land Laboratory/Erdkinder

"Men with hands and no head, and men with head and no hands are equally out of place in the modern community.....Therefore the work on the land is an introduction both to nature and civilization and gives a limitless field for scientific and historic studies.....The rural atmosphere offers students a kind of 'place apart'-- a safe and healthy environment to promote their transition to adulthood. " (From Childhood to Adolescence, Montessori).

Montessori felt that economic independence was as important to the development of the adolescent as personal independence (dressing and feeding themselves) is to the development of the 3 year-old. The land gives them the opportunity to explore the entire economic cycle. The students could be responsible for not only growing and selling the produce grown on the land, but all the billing and accounting as well. The money could be invested back into the land or put towards other projects.

Dr. Montessori envisioned an Erdkinder (translated as children of the land) as the best environment for adolescents to study and work. Montessori called it a "school of experience in the elements of social life". The students study the ideas of permaculture and sustainable communities. Students develop a strong sense of community working together on meals, maintaining the environment, working on needed projects, and having time to participate in the change in rhythm of living in harmony with nature. Students also have time for academic pursuits and apply their knowledge of astronomy, geology, biology, ecology, math, and geometry to real-life situations. Projects are done in groups, allowing the students to work with others towards a common goal.

Intersessions (Land Lab and Adventure Trip as Outdoor Education)

During the course of the school year, students will participate in environmental awareness and leadership events. Activities include trust activities, group initiatives, individual challenges, nature

studies, and ecology activities. The purpose of the trips is to develop a cooperative spirit and to build a classroom community for optimal learning the rest of the year.

Ground rules for each event are written by the students and approved by the teachers for each trip. STUDENTS WHO BREAK GROUND RULES ON A TRIP WILL BE SENT HOME AT PARENTS' EXPENSE.

Because Intersessions are planned learning opportunities that are part of the curriculum, attendance during intersessions is required and work during Intersessions, including on trips, contributes to the students' cumulative grade. Sometimes there is a cost to the Intersessions, however the school is committed to making it possible for every student to attend regardless of funding.

Student-Run Businesses

Student-run businesses may include running a weekly food service or creating and managing a community garden and selling the product to local businesses. Funds raised in the class business are used towards the end of year adventure trip.

Service Learning

Service learning goes beyond community service by including preparation, participation, and reflection. It is a method by which young people learn through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet a genuine community need and are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community. The young people participate in the planning and decision-making. It is integrated into the academic curriculum and includes time for thinking, talking or writing about their experiences. It provides opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their community. It extends student learning beyond the classroom and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.

Adolescents are going through immense physical and emotional changes. They are struggling with their sense of identity. They need opportunities for the exploration of self, their emerging interests and the immediate, wider world around them. Service learning provides projects where:

- the student has meaningful contact with adults
- they can develop a sense of responsibility
- their participation makes a clear difference and they feel valued and gain self confidence
- they develop decision-making skills dealing with real problems
- they have to deal with the consequences of their decisions
- they can see the connections between the classroom and the community and apply their learning to reinforce concepts, information, processes, and skills taught in the classroom
- the students experience a variety of roles
- students cooperate with others to realize a goal and they can see the concrete outcome of their efforts
- they develop the ability to interact and work with people different than themselves
- they prepare to become contributing citizens by learning habits and skills of active citizenship that fosters an ethic of service
- they become aware of community needs
- they gain a sense of belonging and community membership
- they develop empathy and a sense of caring

In summary, service learning has great potential for both young people and society now and in the future.

8th Grade Internships

We believe each 8th grade student should have the opportunity to explore his or her skills through an Internship experience. Students commit to spending two school days (a **minimum of 12 hours**) at an internship site. This is a special opportunity for our students to connect with adults in the world of work in order to sample their own interests and to possibly see firsthand where their educational pursuits can take them. These skills will be showcased through a three-phase process to include:

- the actual internship
- a portfolio, and
- a final presentation.

The Internship is based on the student's chosen career interests and provides growth through a new learning experience. The Internship program involves parental and teacher support as well as student initiative and self-discipline. *We do not recommend that a student complete their internship at a present place of employment or with an immediate family member. Only one student can intern at a site at one time.*

Rationale for Internships

Internships help students:

- Gain hands-on experience at a local business to build upon skills learned in the classroom.
- Establish a clear connection between education and work.
- Develop an understanding of the workplace under the guidance of an adult mentor.
- Explore and research a variety of careers.
- Develop workplace responsibility and learn about workplace realities.
- Establish positive work habits and attitudes.
- Learn technical skills that will be invaluable for future jobs.
- Understand what education opportunities are available that will lead to a career in their chosen career pathway.

Portfolios

At the end of each cycle, students select work that highlights their learning, and place it in their electronic portfolio. Families attend a required conference in the middle of the year. At the conference, students present the portfolio to their parents and use it to support their assessment of themselves.

Standardized Testing

LMMS has taken the steps to make sure our students are prepared for the required standardized testing, which tests students on their annual progress.

Discovery Education

A Discovery Education assessment is administered to all students in math, reading and science three times per year. This indicates whether the student is on level for knowledge and skills. Interventions are put in place for students who are not performing at grade level.

FCAT 2.0

During the spring, all students take some portion of the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT). The FCAT 2.0 Writing assessment is administered to Eighth grade students only at the end of February. The Reading, Math and Science portions of the FCAT 2.0 are administered in April. All students take the Reading and Math portions, while Science is only administered to the Eighth grade students. The focus is the continual academic growth of each student. Research done in five Montessori schools in five different states shows a high positive correlation between the number of years in Montessori schools and high scores on standardized achievement tests. Over the last three years, our school has consistently had outstanding scores in math, reading and science. More information about our current FCAT 2.0 scores on our [website](#).

Family School Partnership

Goal-Setting/Family Conferences

A goal-setting conference is held at the beginning of school in August for individual students to develop their educational plan and understand behavioral expectations. The teachers will advise parents and student of the grade level requirements. The teachers' and parents' role is to guide the student in setting realistic goals and then to support the student to meet his/her commitments. At the conference, students develop personal goals.

Other scheduled family conferences are held throughout the year. Students are asked to prepare for their conferences. They are asked to evaluate their progress in academic work, personal responsibility and group responsibility, and to prepare a portfolio of their work. Students then request their parents' and teachers' points of view in each area. Students, parents, or the teachers may request additional conferences throughout the year. These conferences are held on Tuesday afternoons and parents can sign up for a conference on our website. Please note that the student increasingly facilitates this conference as their maturity and skills develop. It is the responsibility of the teacher and family to allow them the opportunity to do so.

Summary Reports for Parents

Our school utilizes an online record keeping program, JupiterGrades. Parents are requested to notify the school of a valid email address to which weekly reports can be sent. (Text messaging is also an option.)

At the end of each week, students review their study guides and online grade book, meet with small group peers and self-evaluate how they have kept their commitments. After weekly grades have been entered, an assignment summary is sent to parents. Parents have the additional option of having an automatic notice sent when a missing assignment is entered into the grade book. Parents are asked to monitor the plan and help their adolescent keep his/her commitments. If students do not complete expected weekly work, then they must attend study hall to have the opportunity to get caught up - with teacher assistance.

Grade reports are issued at the end of each cycle (six weeks). Semester grades (at the end of cycles 3 and 6) are reported to the Polk County School Board. Parents will receive a formal report card from the Polk County School Board indicating these semester grades, number of credits earned, grade point average and promotion requirements.

Communications between Family and School

When a teacher has concerns regarding a student's behavior or activities, the teacher will discuss the issues with the student. If the teacher feels it necessary for the parent to have specific information, they will ask the student to complete a [Parent Communication Form](#) and email to both the teacher and parent explaining the issue. Parents are required to respond back to the teacher within 24 hours to verify that the information was received. At that time, a meeting time can be set if necessary. The purpose of this procedure is to encourage the student to communicate with their parents.

Communication with Teachers

Emails and phone calls sent to teachers during the work week (Monday-Friday) will be returned within 24 hours. Teachers can be reached via their school email account. Please call the Lakeland Montessori Schoolhouse phone number at 863-413-0003 to leave phone messages for the teachers or your child.

Official Family Communication Email Group

Our school utilizes an group email system to notify families via email of official news and information. The emails will come from the address familycommunication@lakelandmontessori.com. This is our only official communication tool, therefore, it is important that all parents update school administration immediately with any change in email address and that all parents check this email account regularly for important school communication. All parents should have received an invitation to join this group upon student enrollment. Please notify administration immediately if you are not receiving emails from this group.

Lakeland Montessori Schools Website

Lakeland Montessori Schools is very proud of our informative and interactive website. Please visit our website at www.lakelandmontessori.com often. The “[Parents](#)” page contains important information for parents, such as our board-approved and interactive school calendars, volunteer guidelines, and bus transportation and will be updated regularly. Parents will be notified by email through the Official School Communication Group as new information is added to this page.

There is also a [password-protected](#) portion of the “Parents” page. The password is available upon request. This page contains necessary parent/school communications including important forms, Paypal links, conference sign-up links. Parents will be notified by email through the official Family Communication Group as new information is added to this page.

Newsletters

The teachers will take turns sending out a weekly email newsletter related to the events in the classroom both current and upcoming. Because we recognize that families are busy and time is limited, the email newsletter will be brief. As a result families can expect to receive only one whole group email a week from the teachers.

After school/Pick-up Arrangements

In an effort to make the school day more predictable and manageable for students and to increase their personal responsibility, arrangements for picking up your child must be made in advance of the start of the school day and you are responsible for communicating those arrangements to your student before the school day begins. We are aware that emergencies happen. In the case of an emergency, please notify the elementary school via phone call at 863-413-0003 and will make every effort to assist you. However, our limited staff is primarily devoted to teaching and working with students. We are unable to accept or deliver messages about changing pick up plans during or after the school day.

Checking Students Out Early

Students are discouraged from being checked out during school hours. If students need to be checked out for a doctor's appointment, please bring a doctor's note the following day in order to have an excused absence. Student MAY NOT be picked up from the P.E. field. Students dismissing early can not be checked out after 1:45pm.

Absences and Tardiness

The responsibility of the parent is to ensure that his or her child attends school on time each school day for the entire day. The status of an absence (excused or unexcused) or tardiness (excused or unexcused) must be resolved with school personnel within two school days of the student's absence. Refer to section 2.01 in the PCSB Code of Conduct for a definition of excused and unexcused absence.

The state of Florida requires that attendance be kept and on file at all times. Students are expected to be at school by 8:15 am every day. Tardiness is recorded. If a student misses class/lesson, it is the student's responsibility to communicate with the teacher. Short absences should be made up within a week and longer absences should be handled by the end of the work cycle. To get full credit for academics, athletics, service learning, and outdoor education, 80% attendance is required. If a student has not met the 80% attendance requirement for academics for the cycle, then a teacher / student / parent conference will be held to address the problem.

If a student does not arrive by 8:30 am and if a staff member is not present at the drop off line in front of the museum to check a student in, a parent or guardian is required to walk the student up to the classroom and sign him or her in. It is essential for the safety of our students that parents sign in tardy students.

Too many late arrivals or absences will result in a note home and will require the implementation of a plan of action to correct the situation. As a public charter school, we depend on students' and families having chosen to attend this school to create a productive learning community. Parents are responsible to see that students arrive on time and that absences are kept to a minimum. Florida's mandatory attendance laws require this.

Make up work is only made available to students with excused absences. With the exception of medical emergencies, longer absences must be prearranged with the principal. Approval and/or make up work will be created at the discretion of the teaching team based on the needs of the student and the amount of notice given.

Parent Involvement/Volunteering

LMMS believes that the school's partnership with families is a key to student success and to the success of the overall program and will help determine to what degree performance standards will be attained. Active family participation is strongly encouraged. Enrollment is a parent/student cooperative choice, wherein parents/guardians contractually agree to be responsible for their child abiding by the rules and regulations applicable to attendance, classroom participation, and behavior. In order to be automatically re-enrolled for the next school year, parents will be required to

fulfill the requirement a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer service per year to the School. This requirement is per family and can include grandparents, aunts and uncles, etc.

Please use the online [Volunteer Hours](#) form for tracking volunteer hours.

<http://lakelandmontessori.com/parents/volunteer-application/volunteer-hours/>

All parents are automatically members of the Parent Action Committee (PAC) upon admission to the school. The PAC sponsors regular meetings, which are listed on the school calendar.

If a parent wishes to volunteer on site when students are present, he or she must be a Polk County School District approved volunteer. Because the school district processes this background check and it can take time to be processed, it is recommended that parents complete the [Volunteer Application](#) at the beginning of the school year.

Volunteers who on special occasions chaperone students off campus , or drive students, or chaperone students overnight requires an additional level of background check. If you are interested in being this type of volunteer, please contact the principal as soon as possible.

Please keep in mind that the most sought after volunteer opportunities are chaperoning field trips. Spaces for those spots are limited and we give priority to those parents who have emergency medical training, particularly for overnight trips, out of a concern for safety of all students.

School Policies

LMMS Community Commitment

Learning and Productivity

Everyone at Lakeland Montessori Middle School...

- has the right and responsibility to teach and learn without disruption.
- chooses behaviors that are considerate of the learning environment.
- attends each class on time, with the proper materials, prepared to work and learn to the best of their ability.
- takes pride in putting forth their best effort.

Safety

Everyone at Lakeland Montessori Middle School...

- recognizes that their personal safety is their own responsibility and takes the appropriate measures to always remain safe.
- refrains from using unsafe behavior. Horseplay, running in the halls, etc. are not tolerated.
- raises their voices in emergency situations only.
- alerts adults regarding potential safety hazards.

Respect

Everyone at Lakeland Montessori Middle School...

- uses positive language and behaviors to demonstrate respect for themselves and others. Inappropriate language, intimidating and bullying behaviour are not tolerated.
- dresses appropriately for the learning environment. Clothing which is overly revealing, offensive or promotes alcohol or drug use is not acceptable.

Responsibility

Everyone at Lakeland Montessori Middle School...

- accepts responsibility for his or her actions.
- takes positive action when someone or something is at risk.
- is expected to contribute to the good of the LMMS community. We all positively represent LMMS as ambassadors for our community.

Health and Environment

Everyone at Lakeland Montessori Middle School...

- has the right to work and learn in a safe environment that is free from tobacco, alcohol and drugs.
- keeps the school environment free from litter.

Integrity, Respect, and Responsibility

The classroom is based on the premise of integrity, respect, and responsibility. The Montessori classroom provides many opportunities at all levels for the development of these universal values. Integrity involves trust and honesty. Learning to trust oneself, peers, and adults is the first step in establishing a community of learners. Trust is an important factor in early adolescent development. Honesty in personal relationships and academic work is a cornerstone of the classroom rules.

Students are expected to treat themselves with respect, treat each other with respect, and respect the materials in the environment. Specifically, grace and courtesy lessons are part of the classroom learning and are discussed and practiced. Everyone in the environment needs to experience affirmation. The books and materials in the environment will need to be treated with care. Most textbooks and learning materials belong to the school and must remain in good condition so that others can use them. Because the primary mission of Montessori education is to educate students to be peacemakers in the world, we emphasize that some resources are limited and must be shared. Being accountable to classmates for sharing is a vital learning goal and the classroom has been set up accordingly.

There are two kinds of responsibility--Responsibility 1 is taking responsibility for one's own needs in the learning environment - such as learning time-management, completion of homework on time, focus, physical organization, and problem-solving. Responsibility 2 is taking care of the needs of others and contributing to the group. This involves supporting others, working cooperatively, active listening and self-management in groups. All of these aspects are important in establishing a classroom community.

Ground Rules and Consequences

For learning to occur, the classroom atmosphere must be physically and psychologically safe. To ensure this safety, a set of baseline ground rules and their consequences have been established. Ground rules include treating property, peers and staff with respect. In cases where the student invades peer privacy, disrupts the work environment, abuses property or interrupts the teacher/a peer who is presenting, a three-step warning system is used consisting of:

1. Warning
2. Redirection
3. Parent Communication form is completed and sent parent.

Students are asked to take responsibility for communicating inappropriate behavior to their parents in the following manner:

1. The first time the student displays inappropriate behavior, he/she is asked to fill out the [Parent Communication form](#) and email it to their parent and the administrator.
2. The second time a student displays inappropriate behavior; he/she is asked to fill out the Parent Communication form, email it to their parent, and a phone call to notify their parents will be made.
3. The third time a student displays inappropriate behavior, he/she is asked to call his/her parent and set up a conference with a teacher. This conference is to problem-solve and create a plan for the student to follow.

Verbal acting out (yelling, unacceptable language, threatening harm, etc.), physical aggression (hitting, pushing, shoving, etc.), and/or abuse of the three step warning system for inappropriate behavior disrupt the learning environment. Since the classroom is no longer safe for others, immediate action is taken. Students are removed from the classroom and may receive an out-of-school suspension or other disciplinary action as outlined in the Polk County School Board Code of Conduct. Before the student can be admitted back into the classroom, parents must meet with the teacher and the **student**.

Dismissal from LMMS

In the event that dismissal of a student is necessary at LMMS, the principal will make the decision in conference with teacher and the parents. Before reaching this point, however, many interventions would be implemented to help student and his or her family. These appropriate measures may include:

- student/teacher conferences
- parent/teacher conferences
- out of school suspension
- probationary status letter
- student –initiated contract for behavior

Students may be dismissed for reasons such as:

Attendance dismissal—In the event that a student incurs more than 10 absences a student may be dismissed. Dismissal for this reason will depend upon the reasons for absence and whether or not they can be categorized as excused. To be considered excused, proper documentation must be provided in a timely manner.

Behavior dismissal—As outlined in the Polk County Code of Conduct, immediate dismissal will take place for serious breaches of conduct. For example: possession of a weapon, possession of drugs or battery on another student. A student may also be dismissed for frequent or repeated bouts of misbehavior. Strategies will be developed to help resolve the situation. Should the strategies outlined to avoid dismissal not result in changed behavior, then the student may be ultimately dismissed.

Academic dismissal—If a student is academically unsuccessful at LMMS, intervention strategies like parent/teacher conferences, tutoring, academic improvement plans and academic probation will be implemented. Dismissal will only happen if all these strategies prove unsuccessful.

Dismissal Due to Lack of Parental Support—It is the goal of LMMS to assist all students attending LMMS, with the parents' support, in attaining success. In cases in which a parent refuses to support the school as outlined in their contractual agreement, student dismissal may occur. Consistent failure to attend reviews, parent conferences or parent meetings, and/or to fulfill the volunteer requirements may result in a student being removed from the school. Parent contracts will be signed at the beginning of every school year outlining parental requirements for the year. Parents will also be reminded throughout the school year of volunteer requirements and opportunities.

Recommendation for Expulsion

Students who engage in severe breaches of conduct as defined by the Polk County School Board [Code of Conduct](#) will be assured due process by an appeals process through the principal and LMMS's governing board. All exceptional education students will be disciplined according to state and federal ESE requirements. All appropriate parental notifications and consideration for manifestation of disabilities will be addressed in disciplining exceptional education students.

Lakeland Montessori Middle School will use the Polk County School Board's [Code of Conduct](#) as a model to handle extreme discipline matters that might occur.

Dress Guidelines

Lakeland Montessori Middle School students are required to wear a uniform to school each day. The uniform consists of polo shirts with the Lakeland Montessori logo (any solid color), and khaki pants, shorts and skirts. Lakeland Montessori Middle School uniform tops and outerwear can only be ordered from Lands End. Our school code is 900139668. Our logo number is 1054657K. The uniform bottoms can be of any brand, but must be a classic khaki color (tan, not green). When in doubt, refer to the Lands End uniform bottoms to view the khaki we have in mind. Lands End uniform bottoms are of a high quality. Any item bought from Lands End uniform will be accepted. No khaki bottoms may have embellishments, logos, words, tears, bare threads, worn areas, or colors other than khaki (this includes stitching, pockets, etc). We do have some gently used donated uniforms available.

Nutrition Guidelines/School Lunch

Nutrition guidelines are discussed and determined by the Middle School Community. Students may bring their lunch from home or order a bagged lunch from Lakeland High School. Lunches should be nutritious and well balanced. Students may not bring candy or carbonated beverages for lunch. It is the student's responsibility to bring their own lunch to school. If students forget their lunch, they have the opportunity to receive peanut butter, crackers and fruit from the school office, if available. LMMS participates in the free and reduced lunch program through Lakeland High School. Families must submit an [online application](#) to determine eligibility.

Bagged school lunches are provided by the Lakeland High School cafeteria. In order to receive our lunches on time, students must fill in the lunch order sheet upon arrival to school in the morning. Tardy students may miss the opportunity to have their lunch order transmitted to the cafeteria. Using your lunch account to buy lunches for other students is inappropriate as is signing a student up for a lunch without their permission. To avoid confusion please decline requests to fill out the lunch sheet for someone else. Parents must add money to their child's lunch account using [MyLunchMoney](#). LMMS cannot accept cash or checks to add money to a child's lunch account.

Parents may check-out their students for lunch but parents may not eat with their student in the classroom.

One of our goals is to reduce the amount of trash that goes into the landfill from our classroom. Please use reusable containers for lunch and snack rather than individually wrapped disposable packages. We have a sink where dishes can be washed before taken home for a more thorough washing. Bringing an appropriate lunch is a sign of self-respect and respect for the limited resources of the community.

Snacks/Treats

The guidelines for snacks are discussed and determined by the LMMS community during Community Meeting at the beginning of the school year. Once determined, these guidelines will be posted on our school website.

We are committed to helping our students maintain healthy habits that will nurture them for a lifetime. Students spend considerable time planning healthy menus for trips, events and special occasions and we do not wish to undermine their efforts. Please do not send in or drop off treats to

share for field trips or other special events.

End-of-the-Day Dismissal

Dismissal for all students begins at 3:00 pm. Student may be picked up in the car line, ride the bus or go to the Lakeland Public Library. We wish you to know that the library is wonderful and as a result draws a large variety of older and younger students that sometimes results in issues of safety. If your child is going to the library after school one of our staff members will walk them into the children's section of the library after dismissal. The store across the street from the museum and the museum shop are off-limits to our students and visiting them will be considered a violation of the student behavior agreement unless they are accompanied by a parent or staff.

Bus Transportation

We are fortunate to have bus transportation provided by McKeel Academy. [Current bus routes and permission forms](#) are available on our website. Students are expected to follow all rules and guidelines set forth by McKeel Academy and their bus drivers. Behavior issues and complaints reported to LMMS by McKeel Academy will initially be handled according to the LMMS "Ground Rules and Consequences" section of this handbook. Continued complaints will result in a bus suspension for a number of days as determined by the Principal and McKeel Academy administration.

Immunizations

All 7th grade students and any student new to Polk County Schools must provide proof of immunization on or before the first day of school.

Classroom Policies

Procedures Related to Assignments

Study Guides and Self-Assigned Work

At the beginning of each cycle or week (depending on subject), students receive study guides in each curriculum area which outline the assignments due per cycle/week. Students know their assignments in advance so that they can learn to plan ahead and avoid conflicts or late night studying. Some assignments have deadlines, and others need to be assigned a deadline by the student. We call this “self-assigned work” because the student has flexibility in deciding which assignments to complete first, but all assignments must be completed before students can take the assessments.

Daily Work Policy

Every day students have a writing assignment, a reading and response to reading assignment, and a math assignment that must be completed by 8:15 AM the following day. This work must be written in their math notebook or their writing notebook. Daily work also consists of taking home and bringing back binders and all necessary material. Daily writing, reading or math assignments completed on looseleaf paper will not be counted as complete. Math assignments must include demonstration of the steps taken to solve the problem. Upon completion of the math practice problems, students may check their work and correct errors. Checking one’s own work is a thoughtful, self-reflective practice and has a positive effect on student learning. Teachers model how to check work in a meaningful way and check to see that it is done correctly. If the students need help on any problems, they are to indicate the problem numbers at the top of the page and ask for assistance the next day.

Parents will be notified if assignments are missing or late via Jupitergrades. If a student repeatedly arrives at school without the materials or assignments needed to participate, an action plan may be developed in which the student is sent home or to the office on days when he or she arrive unprepared.

Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the student come prepared to participate and learn. Students will not be allowed to call parents to bring forgotten assignments or materials. Assignments dropped off by parents after 8:15 will not be accepted until the following day.

Organization of assignments and materials

At the beginning of the year, students are provided with an organizational system and related materials. This includes a binder into which all loose assignments are expected to be filed. Notebooks specific to each subject area are also included. Students are provided with an electronic copy of a study guide each cycle shared with them on their Google Apps account. When students complete assignments, teachers will enter their grade into Jupiter Grades.

Homework

Students are not assigned “homework”, per say, however, there is a certain amount of work that

students will probably have to complete at home to keep up with their daily work. Math, reading and writing assignments must be completed every day. If they are not completed at the end of the school day, they should be finished at home. Other assignments are completed weekly or by the end of the cycle. If students are consistently spending longer than 90 minutes a night on their homework, please request a conference and try the following strategies consistently for a week before the conference:

- Keep a 5 minute log during homework time to keep track of what you are spending time on during that period.
- Establish a family desk time, when every member of the family is seated at a table or a desk working on homework, office work, bills, reading or coloring every day. This provides implicit support for doing work without nagging. It also minimizes the distractions in the household.
- Put electronic devices in the deep freeze during the family desk time. Research shows that listening to music, access to phones or other electronic devices all increase the amount of time it takes to complete homework.
- Require your child to put their planner, their study guides and their completed assignments on the dinner table every day before dinner begins. Simply looking at the work every day, even if you do not discuss it with your student, is a way of demonstrating trusting support and reinforcement.
- Praise your student for effort, challenges overcome, perseverance, never for ability. When students understand from repeated messages that achievement comes from struggling with things that are uncomfortably difficult they lose their fear of failure, and enjoy school more.
- Pretend to Lose Your Baggage. Research shows that the greatest influence on student achievement is the attitude of parents towards education. Our culture encourages many of us to claim that we are bad at certain subjects and many of us had negative experiences in school. For your students' sake please pretend to lose that baggage! For example, "I have always thought math is interesting."
- Ensure that your student gets enough sleep. At no other time outside of infancy will your student need as much sleep as they do in middle school. Early bedtimes, quiet activities before bed, and electronic devices only allowed in the parent's room will all make homework a less challenging, less frustrating experience.

Late or Incomplete Work

Parents are notified daily via text message or email through the Jupitergrades program if regular daily assignments are not completed. Additional assignments must be completed by Friday afternoon.

- If students have not completed their academic goals by 2:00 pm on Friday, they are expected to catch up on their own over the weekend with parental support.
- Students may be required to stay in from PE on the following Monday to complete and/or turn in late work.
- If students do not complete their work by the end of the cycle, they may continue to work during the Intersession week (Monday only) at LMMS. Students will not be permitted to take assessments unless work has been completed.

Cooperative Learning (Color Group) Assignments

Cooperative Learning time begins with direct instruction and guided practice in language arts,

science and social studies in color group. During that block of time students also meet in small teams to complete cooperative learning assignments. Cooperative work must be done with the assigned team. No group work may be completed at home unless there is teacher approval and all group members are present to agree. The goal of group projects is not only an understanding of the material, but also participation in the process of working together. Some of the “best” projects are the smallest without artistic or technical flourishes. A sure sign that a group has mastered the material that they are presenting is when they are not reading aloud during their presentation and when their speech is written entirely in their own words. We frequently ask students to reflect as a group or individually on how the process is going and how things can be improved. This is an important component of learning self-management, goal-setting, and critical thinking skills.

Community Meeting

Community meeting is held every day. Students are assigned daily roles and take turns facilitating the meeting. Active daily participation is required. Community Meeting is where community standards are discussed and addressed, where lessons are given, and where concerns and praise for one another is shared. Community meeting is designed to meet the criteria of speech class and includes components of debate, group discussion, public speaking, facilitating meetings, story-telling and conflict resolution. Assignments in community meeting include setting goals for the whole group, planning events, meals, and trips, determining nutrition, technology, and dress code policies (within guidelines set by the staff), sharing world news events and daily critical thinking challenges.

Personal Reflection

As part of the health curriculum, students spend thirty minutes each day after lunch in personal reflection. Personal reflection is a time to be alone and to silently work on activities that lead to greater self-knowledge. The personal reflection study guide typically includes assignments that involve reading about a personal skill and writing answers to questions that require examining ones' own values, behaviors hopes, and dreams. Dr. Montessori felt that early adolescents have a quest for self-knowledge, which in turn helps adolescents develop their identity. In our hurried society, we want the students to learn to spend time reflecting on goals, reducing stress, and creating a personal vision. During this time, students will respond independently to a variety of guided, self-knowledge activities that are recorded in a notebook as relaxing music is played.

Physical Education

Physical education is an important part of a holistic education. Students should come dressed for physical education activities on a daily basis. This includes wearing appropriate shoes for running, soccer, frisbee and other sports. Students will be asked to actively participate in all physical education activities in order to receive credit. Students will learn rules of a variety of sports, and may be assessed on these rules. If a student is unable to participate for medical reasons, a written request by the parents is required. A Reusable Water bottle filled with water only is a required school supply every day. Students must bring their water bottle to PE.

After School Study Hall

After school study hall is held Wednesday afternoons from 3:15 pm to 4:00 pm to receive extra help, catch up on missing assignments or re-take tests. Students who have not completed their week's work by the end of the day Friday are recommended to come to Wednesday study hall the

following week to submit missing work. Students need to make a commitment to stay until 4:00 pm, since early departures are disruptive. Students that elect to stay for study hall must be picked up on time at 4:00 pm. Students who are disruptive will be requested to call their parents and leave. If a student has been asked to leave the tutorials, then that student will not be allowed to use the tutorials for the remainder of that cycle.

Summer Work

As an academically rigorous school, all continuing and new students will be assigned summer work. The summer work is designed to help students retain the concepts that they have learned the year before, to encourage reading, and to help new students to get to know other students at LMMS. Some of the work is done via a student blog that is visible to the teachers and the other students at LMMS. Summer work assignments will count as a grade.

Other Classroom Procedures

Supply Donation/List

The majority of school supplies are provided by LMMS through the school supplies donation fund. The donations are used by the teachers for items needed in the classroom. You do not need to purchase colored pencils, markers, scissors, paper, or other consumable items for your child. All families are asked to pay a supply donation of \$95.00 using the [PayPal link on our website](#). The student's family is responsible for the cost of replacement of take home items along with the cost of any items that are broken in a destructive manner.

We ask that students select the following personal items and bring them to school each day:

- An agenda/calendar in which assignments and announcements can be written.
(example: <http://www.studentplannerusa.com/Planners/MiddleSchoolPlanners.aspx>)
- Reusable water bottle to carry to and from PE field.
- 5 composition books (must be bound, no spirals) for natural world, math, social world, science fair log and writer's notebook
- Personal Reflection Notebook/journal - any style, paper must be sewn into binding, not perforated
- 1 pack of pencils (mechanical pencils are acceptable)
- 1 pack of blue or black pens
- Personal pencil sharpener with cap
- Ear buds for computers

Classroom Jobs

One of the goals of Montessori education and our school is that students learn respect for their environment whether it is the classroom or the outdoors. Students are responsible for keeping their work areas tidy and putting their work away in their locker before they move to another location or activity and for completing a rotating roster of classroom jobs.

Lockers

Lockers are re-assigned at the end of every cycle before intersession begins. Lockers will be labeled on the outside with students' first names. Please refrain from posting papers outside of

your locker. Lockers should be kept clean and tidy. No food or food related items may be stored in lockers overnight. Please do not bring valuables to school and leave them in the lockers. Please remember to close locker doors for classroom safety. Please do not store classroom textbooks and shared materials in lockers.

Phone Calls

The office phone is not available to students except in the event of a medical need.

Using Classroom Supplies Wisely

Like all schools, our resources are limited and the supplies in the classroom are intended for your education. Students who use large amounts of disposable supplies for entertainment rather than assignments will receive a reminder about the importance of learning to share materials with respect to other people and our planet's limited resources and a communication to family as outlined in the "Ground Rules and Consequences" section of this handbook.

School Climate/Problem-Solving

It is the responsibility of staff, students and families to create a community of people who demonstrate courtesy and respect for one another and the larger community. Families, students, and staff have many opportunities to be role models, to refrain from gossip, and to solve problems directly rather than indirectly.

Students have several opportunities to initiate problem solving if a problem occurs. Students may approach a teacher who may offer strategies, offer mediation or deal with the situation directly depending on the type of conduct involved. Every student has a responsibility to say something that when they see that another student is being bothered unnecessarily, isolated, teased, or bullied. We recommend saying something low key that de-escalates the situation. Often a student may not notice the impact that their actions are having and simply hearing "that's not cool," from a bystander will give them pause and if said lightly, may end the situation. Report bullying or harassment by speaking to the teachers or the principal, writing a note in the problem book, using the online [Report Bullying](#) form on the school website or by phoning or emailing the staff. We monitor the school climate by conducting surveys throughout the year as well as by direct observation.

Student Technology Use Agreement

The use of technology tools at Lakeland Montessori Middle School is a privilege, not a right. The privilege is given to those who act responsibly. Within reason, Lakeland Montessori Middle School will honor personal privacy, freedom of speech and access to information. Administrators and staff reserve the right to review files and communications and remove inappropriate files. Both students and parents will be required to sign the [Student Technology Use Agreement](#) every year.

Student Responsibilities

- I will treat equipment with respect, keep it in working order, keep food and drink away from the equipment, and conserve resources. **I understand that if I damage the computer in any way through my negligence, my parents and I will be responsible for the entire repair costs, including parts and labor.**
- I will treat others with respect. When communicating with others I will use appropriate language and images. I will not read, alter, or delete the files of other users. I will not reveal personal information about

myself or others.

- I will not install software on school computers. I will not change the desktop settings or operating system.
- I will follow federal and state laws.
- I will credit sources I use.
- I will use the school's technology tools only for educational purposes. I will access only resources that I have permission to use. I will not use the school's technology for personal gain.
- I will notify an adult if I become aware of any technology problems or violations.
- I will not use the computer to listen to music because research has shown that listening to music while doing schoolwork is not effective.
- I understand that if I am not accomplishing my goals in a timely manner I will lose access to classroom technology for a period to be determined by the staff.

Google Apps for Education

Lakeland Montessori Middle School has the ability to create accounts for all students to allow for collaborative sharing using Google Apps for Education. These accounts will be used for school related projects. However, no student will be assigned an account without [parent or guardian approval](#). The rules governing proper electronic communications by students are included in the Technology Acceptable Use Policy of this handbook and Polk County School's Code of Conduct. Once accounts are assigned, students gain access to the wealth of collaborative tools available through Google Apps. This account is housed on Google servers, thereby giving students access to Google Docs (word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation software), instant messaging, email, calendar, website authoring tools, plus additional services. This will allow students to collaborate with teachers and other students as well as share information with family, friends, and other Internet users. This account will operate like any work account. It is not private and the school administrator can read the email and documents produced by students without their password if the need arises.

Student Email Addresses

Students will be assigned a lakelandmontessori.com student email account. This account will be considered the student's official Lakeland Montessori Middle email address until such time as the student is no longer enrolled in Lakeland Montessori Middle School. The naming convention will be first name and last initial (followed by a number, if needed), ending with @lakelandmontessori.com. For example: John Test could be johnt4@lakelandmontessori.com. Please note, if a student emails the teacher, that email will go directly to the teachers official lakelandmontessori.com email account.

Conduct

Students are responsible for good behavior just as they are in a traditional school building. It is illegal to use obscene, profane, threatening, or disrespectful language. Communication with others should always be course related.

Students should never say anything via email that they wouldn't mind seeing on the school bulletin board or in the local newspaper. Students should notify the teacher of anything inappropriate or that makes them uncomfortable. Bullying will not be tolerated and the privacy of others should be respected at all times. Social exclusion is a form of bullying.

Access Restriction

Access to and use of Google Apps for Education is considered a privilege accorded at the discretion of Lakeland Montessori Middle School. The school maintains the right to immediately withdraw the access and use of the account when there is reason to believe that violations of law or Lakeland Montessori Middle School policies have occurred. In such cases, the alleged violation will be referred to the Principal

for further investigation and application of necessary consequences as indicated in the LMMS Handbook and the Polk County School's Code of Conduct.

Security

Lakeland Montessori Middle School cannot and does not guarantee the security of electronic files located on Google systems. Although Google does have a powerful content filter in place, the Lakeland Montessori Middle School cannot assure that users will not be exposed to non-educational material.

Privacy

Lakeland Montessori Middle School reserves the right to access and review content in the Google Apps for Education system at any time. Lakeland Montessori Middle School complies with all state and federal privacy laws.

LMMS Student and Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Parents and Students: Please acknowledge that you have received a general overview and specific instruction on the content of Lakeland Montessori Middle School's Student and Family Handbook and you have been informed that compliance with the guidelines outline in the handbook are mandatory by completing the online [LMMS Student and Family Handbook Acknowledgement Form](#).