

Dear Parents,

Thank you for choosing to send your student to Lakeland Montessori Middle. We have been fortunate to have a wonderful community of students who look out for each other and are encouraging to one another and to us. We hope you will find, or make, a similar positive and welcoming community of parents here.

Our goal is for students to have a safe, challenging place to grow academically and emotionally. Most importantly we hope to help every student become self-directed, a self-managing learner, aware of their own joys, and adept at setting and meeting goals. Middle school is a place to prepare for the challenges of high school without some of the consequences of high school; like the pressure to have a romantic relationship, or having to view evidence of learning as items for college application transcripts.

Middle school is a challenging time for both students and parents. Major changes in the brain and emotional regulation means that students require more routines, more sleep, and more stability from the adults in their lives. Many educators and parents have compared the challenges of parenting middle-schoolers to the challenges of parenting toddlers; there is a surge in the need for independence and a need for help regulating intense emotions. So this is a great time to take care of yourselves as parents, get plenty of rest, take up calm, slow breathing – it takes real discipline to stay off the emotional roller coaster that your child will experience as his or her brain and body changes.

As teachers, we re-examine and refine our practice every year. This year we have some important trips planned, that are the culminating experiences of the 5 preceding weeks of academic work. Our trips are integrated parts of our curriculum. Students develop investigations, packing lists, rehearse collaborative skills and devise schedules ahead of trips. Afterwards they have opportunities to connect their experiences to their learning in science, math, social studies and language arts.

See the tentative intersession schedule below for a calendar and estimated costs. We strive to create safe and relatively inexpensive trips that allow students and families to experiment with a greater degree of physical and emotional independence than they may have experienced in the past. We are grateful to the families in previous years who have taken it upon themselves to raise money so that funds are not an obstacle for other families. The process of becoming a Level 2 Polk County District approved volunteer who is able to attend these trips is extensive and we additionally screen potential volunteers for their outdoor skills and their ability to attend to other children despite the wonderful distraction of their own child. If you would like to attend field trips, please come to an understanding with your student on how you will each be respectful of each other's space on trips, and then contact Aimee Diaz, at [adiaz@lakelandmontessori.com](mailto:adiaz@lakelandmontessori.com) to begin the process of becoming a Level 2 Polk County district volunteer.

This year, we will be hosting monthly Class Meetings specifically targeted to parents, (your student gets to see a lot of us). These meetings will be on the second Tuesday of each month at the **elementary** school from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm. Class Meetings will be a time to see a presentation, ask questions, and to see what is happening in your child's classroom. We will continue to communicate via email for all school communications. It is vital that we have an email address that works for you. We do try to include many photos of the students, so it is a nice place to see the community come together. The class meeting dates and topics are as follows:

- September 8- Structure of a cycle and everything you'd like to know about intersessions
- October 13- Adolescent Brain and planes of development
- November 10- High School options and applications
- January 12- Alumni Student presentation
- February 9- Healthy Relationship Skills-"Community Meeting"
- March 8- Montessori Secondary Math
- April 12- Global Education and Montessori Model United Nations
- May 10- Personal Reflection: What is it and why is it important?

Please take the time to review the Middle School handbook located on the Parent's page of the website with your student. We do revise it every year to make sure that it is accurate and speaks directly to the needs of our student community. The handbook outlines our schedule of the day, academic program, and school policies that will facilitate a productive family-school partnership. It is designed to protect your child as well as the whole group.

We appreciate your willingness to communicate and keep us in the loop. We may reply to an email and think we have answered your question when we don't hear back. If we have not, please give us a call and speak to us directly. Electronic communication is often confounding.

This year, we are asking you to consider one more task. Please take a moment to write us a good, old -fashioned letter, telling us about your child. There just is not enough time in a family conference to get to some of the really important things, like introducing us to your child, letting us know what your concerns are, your excitement, what has worked for you. At this point in our careers, we have met many parents of middle school students, and we are happy to pass along what we have learned from them as we learn from you. Your student will be writing a similar letter in school; this one is just for you. If family members want to send more than one, that is fine.

As you think about how to prepare yourself and your student this year for school, consider all those items that can't be bought. Has your child learned courtesy and kindness? Can they introduce themselves to someone new and carry on a conversation? Do they have the skill of self-advocacy, asking for what they need and politely declining the perhaps pushy requests of others? Are they able to take responsibility for mistakes and apologize? To accept an apology from others? To make gossip stop with them? These are vital skills that we work on all year in school, but your ability to coach them is far greater than ours.

And then with our math and science hats on, we ask that you consider leaving your math baggage in the closet (Yes, we know how that sounds). Rare is the parent who announces that they find reading difficult therefore their child need not spend much too much time on it, but we do occasionally hear such sentiments about math. If you had a terrible experience in middle school math class or always hated science, consider saving that story for college graduation dinner. Let your student be free to fall in love with math as though that is the most routine thing in the world or to love exactly the microscope work you hated.

Finally, the most wonderful signals of a great school year are parent conferences in which student and parent are comfortable, and supportive of one another. We know that conferences can be a nerve-wracking prospect, and it helps to be able to discuss before-hand as a family how it is going to go, and what is ok to share or not. Here is how conferences go: we ask your student to introduce themselves, tell us who they are and how they came to be at our school, and what their goals are for the school year. We usually ask for a stretch goal, and we ask how they and we all will know that they are achieving that goal. Grades by themselves are not a very specific goal. We will ask you about the goals you are assigning your student this year. Finally we will ask, if there is anything we need to know before the school year starts, and we will answer last minute questions about the summer assignments.

Thank you,

We are looking forward to a great year!

### Tentative Intersession Schedule and Estimate of Costs

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cycle 1 Mon-Fri October 5-9, 2015  Estimated student cost: \$50.00	Introductions to Nature Journaling, Rain projects, Water sampling, and wildlife survey. Students prepare games schedule, divide chores, and practice tent set-up.	Beginning of service learning historical preservation. Walk to Tiger Flower cemetery for data collection for demographic study.  Storytelling practice	Ropes course, camping and canoeing.	Ropes course, camping, canoeing.	Storytelling festival
Cycle 2 Mon-Fri November 16-20, 2015	Lake surveys with City of Lakeland. Middle School	Polk Historical Society in Bartow-research, museum, visit courthouse,	Develop service water project- on site, half day Afternoon	Circle B Data Collection and Service Project	Synthesis of Intersession Learning Reflection on

<p>Estimated Student Cost: \$35.00</p>	<p>Master Chef</p>	<p>African- American history museum,</p>	<p>research (genealogical and population demographics)</p>		<p>Personal Growth</p> <p>Last Day to Decide on Menu</p> <p>Student Chef Potluck Extended PE</p>
<p>Cycle 3</p> <p>Mon-Fri January 19-22, 2016</p> <p>Estimated Student Cost: Ticket price per person between \$10-20 depending on findings of math class</p>	<p>NO SCHOOL</p>	<p>Lessons from Restaurant Professionals</p> <p>Food Shopping with crew</p>	<p>Dress Rehearsal (elementary school show)</p>	<p>Dinner Theater Student Business</p>	<p>Left-over banquet</p> <p>Extended PE</p>
<p>Cycle 4</p> <p>Mon-Fri February 29-March 4, 2016</p> <p>Estimated Student Cost: \$30</p>	<p>Water project/ and cemetery projects continue</p>	<p>Circle B</p>	<p>Lakeland Highlands Scrub</p>	<p>Mock Trial or Naturalization ceremony</p>	<p>Student Chef Potluck, cemetery project, Extended PE</p>
<p>Cycle 5</p> <p>Mon-Fri April 25-29, 2016</p> <p>Ticket price estimated between \$5-10 per person based on class research</p> <p>Estimated Student Cost: \$500</p>	<p>Portfolio Night/ TALENT SHOW</p>	<p>Ellis Island simulation</p>	<p>Nature's Academy Trip</p>	<p>Nature's Academy Trip</p>	<p>Nature's Academy Trip</p>
<p>Cycle 6</p> <p>Mon-Thurs June 6-9, 2016</p> <p>Estimated Student Cost: \$10</p>	<p>End of year trip with money raised by student dinner theater.</p>	<p>Field day at Kelly Rec. Center</p>	<p>Graduation and rehearsals</p>	<p>Student's last day</p>	<p>No school</p>

Weekly Schedule and Structure of Classroom

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:15	Lay out supplies / work	Lay out supplies / work	Lay out supplies / work	Lay out supplies / work	Lay out supplies / work
8:30	Community Meeting	Community Meeting	Community Meeting	Community Meeting	Community Meeting
9:00	Group Work	Group Work	Group Work	Group Work	Group Work
10:30	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
11:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:00	Personal Reflection	Personal Reflection	Personal Reflection	Personal Reflection	Personal Reflection
12:30	Individual Work	Individual Work	Individual Work	Individual Work	Individual Work
2:00	PE	Tutorials	PE	Tutorials	PE
After School	Clubs	Family Conferences / Class Meetings	Study Hall	Staff Meetings	

Nature's Academy Trip

We plan one major going away trip each year. This year we are going on a trip to Fort De Soto that involves kayaking, snorkeling, shark dissection, an indepth lesson on Loggerhead Turtles, a kayak study of Weeki-Wachee, spelunking at Withlacoochee and more over 2 nights and three days. The entire trip including meals, supplies and equipment is not inexpensive. In all it costs \$500.00 per student. We encourage students to set a goal of earning a third of the cost themselves before asking their parents to contribute. A detailed itinerary can be viewed at this link:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B5NoKSaj8lh8N2IVd0hfakRITEh2c0V6SWhPWnRMMmRaWWNB>.