

Soldotna Montessori Charter School

Parent/Student Handbook

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SMCS Mission Statement

Our mission is to create kind, confident, self-reliant learners who are globally aware and impactful in and beyond their community. We enrich students' academic excellence and social and emotional learning based on the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori.

SMCS Vision Statement

Our vision for Soldotna Montessori is to deliver a three-year curriculum at both the primary and intermediate levels based on a unified understanding of Montessori philosophy. We will nurture and celebrate each students' unique abilities in order to develop the whole child.

Additionally, students will attain high levels of academic proficiency. As life-long learners, students will develop environmental, global, and cultural awareness to influence a personal understanding of their role in a community.

SMCS Core Values

Values:

- We agree children's best interest is our first priority when making decisions.
- We speak to students with composure and respect.
- We agree to work consistently on sustaining a welcoming and safe school culture.
- We agree to work consistently to improve implementation of our agreed-upon Montessori practices.
- We agree to work consistently on improving communication and teamwork.
- We agree to ensure that all team members involved in the daily education and care of a student are alerted to areas of concern.

Norms:

- We strive to achieve consensus on important topics.
- We express our own ideas and opinions respectfully.
- We strive to listen to others without interrupting them.
- We acknowledge we may respectfully agree to disagree.
- We acknowledge the need to work with individuals who may have differing opinions.

Focus for Students

- We commit to be positive and encouraging to each child.
- We commit to make a positive connection with each child, so we can meet their social and emotional needs.
- We will provide opportunities for, and actively celebrate, student interests and strengths.
- We will honor the spirit of each child as we facilitate positive student growth to their fullest potential.
- We commit to develop students who are life-long learners capable of being personally accountable, self-directed, and self-reflective.

Focus for Academics

- We commit to use formative data to provide individualized instruction to increase student achievements.
- We commit to be responsive to individual student needs through the use of best practices, effective instructional strategies, and common, formative assessments.
- We commit to the use of a variety of ongoing monitoring devices and to seek out the most promising instructional strategies and practices to support student learning and success.
- We commit to monitor and improve our 3-year curriculum implementation with coordination between primary and intermediate grades.

Focus for Community and Global Awareness

- We commit to help each child understand how they contribute and play an important role in our school, community, and the world.
- We commit to develop and implement opportunities for students to be involved with their community & environment, and in global & cultural issues.
- We commit to develop and implement field studies.

Focus for Montessori Approach

- We commit to support staff in Montessori training, so we may all have a unified understanding of Montessori philosophy and how that applies to each individual.
- We commit to continuing education and implementation of Montessori philosophy.
- We will be active in clarifying our understanding of Montessori implementation in each classroom, by observing in other Montessori classrooms and actively seeking Montessori professional development opportunities.
- We commit to teacher autonomy in the implementation of Montessori practices within their classroom.
- We commit to the Montessori practices agreed upon by staff and APC.

Agreed Upon Montessori Practices

Many people assume that all Montessori schools are essentially alike. In reality, just like any public school, every Montessori school is unique. However, most Montessori schools do share a set of common principles. The following Montessori principles are practiced at Soldotna Montessori Charter School.

Multi-age Classrooms

Our Montessori curriculum, with the exception of kindergarten, is delivered in three-year cycles in multi-age classrooms.

Hands-on Learning

Our school emphasizes hands-on learning using concrete learning materials, including Montessori manipulatives.

Grace and Courtesy

Students learn to recognize and respect the rights and needs of themselves and others. Students are encouraged to solve problems using peaceful words and actions. School practices encourage self-regulation and conflict resolution.

Field Studies

Field studies encourage students to gain information and experience from the real world, as well as apply their own knowledge in real world situations.

Understanding and Gaining Deep Respect for the Natural World

Our curriculum incorporates many opportunities to interact with the natural environment through instructional activities, research and field studies.

Global Understanding

Students learn about culture, global issues and the vast diversity of people and ideas in our world.

Follow the Child

Instruction is differentiated according to individual student readiness, academic performance and student interest.

Community Service

Students learn to contribute to others and to society through community service.

Student Investigation and Research

Students conduct class and individual investigations as a common method for acquiring curriculum knowledge. Technology, library archives, guest speakers and field studies support student research efforts.

Self-Direction and Student Accountability

Students in all grades gain experience in time management and work responsibility. Students develop self-direction and accountability in their day.

Practical Life Skills

Children use Practical Life Skills to take care of the classroom, themselves and the environment. They also learn to properly utilize technology, manage time and organize effectively. Early practical life skills are also used to develop concentration skills, help develop fine and gross motor control and help develop impulse control.



Key School Information

- SMCS is located in the 400 Wing of the Soldotna Elementary School building at 158 E. Park Avenue in Soldotna, Alaska. Our phone number is 907-260-9221.
- Soldotna Montessori Charter School (SMCS) is a free, public school of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District serving K-6 students.
- Soldotna Montessori Charter School complies with all KPBSD School Board Policies and KPBSD Negotiated Agreements. Board Policy and all Negotiated Agreements may be viewed online. <http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us>
- As a public school, SMCS is accountable for all state standards and mandated assessments.
- SMCS follows the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District calendar for all holidays, vacation days, in-service days, teacher work days and parent teacher conferences. The district calendar is available online. (<http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us>).
- Staff contact information can be found on the school website, or you may contact the school at 907-260-9221 and request teacher contact information.

Academic Policy Committee

In accordance with Alaska Statute 14.03.250 (Section B) SMCS is required to have an Academic Policy Committee (APC). The Academic Policy Committee is responsible to oversee the curriculum of the school and to hire and evaluate the school administrator. The Academic Policy Committee is composed of six parents, the administrator and two certified staff members. Parent members are elected to a three-year term by school families and staff. APC meetings are open to the public and are published in our school newsletter and online at our school website.

Acceleration/Retention Process

When a teacher or parent believes that retention or acceleration is necessary to meet a student's needs, s/he will ask the Principal to establish an intervention team meeting to consider options and opportunities for improving the child's academic, social and emotional performance.

Information on concerns, considerations and placement options shall be recorded on the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Retention/Acceleration form and will include:

- Students being considered for retention or acceleration must be identified **by February**.
- The rationale for considering retention, or acceleration, or other instructional, program or placement options must be deemed appropriate to meet the needs of the student;
- Parent opportunity to express observations, opinions and concerns is guaranteed;
- A timeline for monthly meetings monitoring the intervention strategies selected for the current year and documentation of discussions related to next year's placement alternatives will be developed.
- The intervention teams will continue to monitor all retained or accelerated students in the following year.

Attendance – Absences & Tardies

Soldotna Montessori Charter School follows the KPBSD Attendance policies (BP5113/AR5113). The following information highlights key elements for maintaining proper attendance at SMCS.

- Notify the office with a note or phone call (260-9221) if your child will be late/absent.
- The school start time is 8:40 and end time is 3:30.
- Tardy/Late – Students arriving to school after 8:40 and before 8:55 are considered “tardy” if they are unexcused; they are considered “late” if they are excused by a parent/guardian either by note, by phone call, or is pre-arranged. **Students must check in at the office before going to class.**
- Partially Excused Absences- Students arriving to school after 8:55, or leaving school at any time during the school day are considered “Partially Excused” if they are excused by a parent/guardian either by note, by phone call, or is pre-arranged. **Students must check in/out at the office before going to class or leaving school.**
- Excused/Unexcused Absences – For excused absences, when a student returns to school, they must present an explanation verifying the reason for the absence. The following methods may be used to verify student absences:
 - Written note from parent/guardian or parent-representative.
 - Conversation, in person or by telephone, between office staff and the student's parent/guardian or parent representative.
- Planned absences of more than 5 days **must** be pre-approved using the Pre-Arranged Absence Form which can be found in the Parent Handbook (Appendix C), in the office, or online at the school website. Teachers may assign work to be completed while student is away for a pre-arranged absence.

Excessive Tardies and Absences

Parents of students with consistent tardies or absences will be referred to the school Intervention Team. At that meeting the parents and team will work together to develop a plan for on-time arrivals and/or regular school attendance.

Birthdays

We love to recognize your child's birthday at school. If you plan to bring a class snack for your child's birthday, **please refer to the food standards listed in the *Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks* section.**

If your child is having a birthday party or other social event that involves personal invitations, your child may not distribute personal invitations at school unless the entire class is invited. If invitations are going to be sent to selected children, please make those invitations by phone or mail to avoid hurt feelings. You may also ask us to put individual invitations in individual weekly folder that go home with students. Class phone lists are available by request in the office.

Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks

SMCS students may participate in the school district breakfast and lunch program. Free and reduced price meals are available. Free and reduced breakfast/lunch participation information is completely confidential. Students are also welcome to bring a nutritious lunch from home. Please reserve candy and soda pop for special occasions at home; **do not send candy or soda pop in your child's lunch**. We do not allow students to trade food or share food during lunch.

Students eating breakfast at school may arrive as early as 8:20. Allow time for your child to eat breakfast before class starts if you are dropping your child off at school. The school day begins at 8:40 am. Students should complete their school breakfast before then.

Classroom Snacks

Each classroom has a mid-morning snack. Your child's teacher will communicate their classroom snack plan at the beginning of the year. Some classrooms provide snacks for a small annual fee. Other classrooms ask that snacks be brought from home. Examples of nutritious snacks are fresh or dried fruits and veggies, whole grain crackers, pretzels, cheese, nuts, or trail mix. **Candy and pop may not be provided as school snacks, according to district policy.**

SMCS complies with the following Food Standards as set forth in the School Board Student Nutrition Policy for snacks, breakfast or lunch items and special occasions at school:

- **Fat:** 30% or less of total calories from fat (excluding fat that occurs naturally in tofu, nuts, nut butters, seeds, eggs, legumes, fruits and vegetables, cream cheese, low-fat salad dressings, cheese, and butter).
- **Saturated plus Trans Fat:** 10% or less of total calories from saturated plus trans fat (excluding fat that occurs naturally in tofu, nuts, nut butters, seeds, eggs, legumes, fruits and vegetables, cream cheese, low-fat salad dressings, cheese, and butter).
- **Sugar:** No more than 35% total sugar by weight including naturally occurring and added sugars (except for sugars that occur naturally in a dairy product, fruit, or vegetable).

Student Allergies

Parents must submit all student allergies to the school. Students with food allergies may not be offered any food items without consulting the child's parent. Parents may provide alternative food items for their child to be kept at the school.

Bus Guidelines – SMCS & SOEL

Seating

- If students have an assigned seat on the bus they must sit in their assigned seat at all times.
- Students may not change seats at any time during the bus ride.

Staying Seated

- Students must stay seated facing forward at all times during the route.
- Drivers may issue a bus interaction report to any student that continues to stand or sit backward in the seat after one request to sit properly.

Safe Behavior

- Students may not throw objects or hold any object that could cause harm to themselves or another student.
- Drivers may report any student that continues unsafe behavior after one request to stop.
- Drivers may stop the bus or return the bus to school if students continue unsafe behavior.
- Providing transportation home from school is the responsibility of the parent if a student is returned to school for unsafe behavior on the bus.

Suspension from Bus Privilege

- Students will be issued a “bus interaction report” for unsafe behavior or for failing to comply with the directions of the driver.
- On the third bus interaction report, students will be suspended from the bus for up to 3 days, depending on the incident.
- If a subsequent 4th bus interaction report is filed, the student will be suspended from the bus for up to 4 days, depending on the incidents.
- After a 5th report of unsafe behavior, a meeting will be held with the school administrator, student, and parent to determine the student’s eligibility to return to bus privileges.
- Very dangerous or unsafe behavior can result in immediate suspension from the bus.

Classroom Observations

Parents are welcome to observe in their child's classroom. Parents wishing to observe in a classroom must make prior arrangements ahead of time by appointment with the teacher. Observations may begin after the first six weeks of school. This gives the students sufficient time to adjust to the school routine and to become independent members of their classroom culture.

Parents who wish to observe their child in a music or PE class must make specific prior arrangements with the teacher each time they wish to observe.

Discipline - Montessori Philosophy Behavior Guidelines

Our behavior guidelines are based on Maria Montessori's belief that the "work" of the child is to create the adult s/he will become. This work includes a focus on character development and the acquisition of life skills such as caring, common sense, cooperation, effort, initiative, integrity, patience, problem solving, flexibility, and responsibility.

Classroom teachers introduce school guidelines at the beginning of the year and to any student new to the school after the start of the school year. Classroom teachers conduct on-going discussions and lessons regarding student behavior and school guidelines. Classroom teachers also conduct social skills lessons that address classroom behavior and pro-social skill development. Such lessons may include but are not limited to listening skills, asking skills, friendship skills, problem solving and practical life skills.

Consequences for Misbehavior

Our classrooms have clear expectations and routines, which set boundaries for student interactions at school. Our discipline approach is a progressive process. The process may involve verbal warnings, designated work locations, reflection sheets, removal from class, meeting with staff and/or school administrator. If these consequences are not effective, a behavior contract will be implemented; the process for implementing the behavior contract will include the student, family, and school. The student's age, general behavior, and behavior pattern prior to and following the incident may be factors considered in this process.

Conscious Discipline: Our classroom management program

Conscious Discipline is a school program that integrates classroom management with social-emotional learning, utilizing everyday events as the curriculum and addressing the adult's emotional intelligence as well as the child's. Conscious Discipline helps adults to consciously respond to daily conflict, transforming it into an opportunity to teach critical life skills to children.

These critical skills are included in the Seven Skills of Discipline. We use the Seven Skills to teach children the social-emotional and communication skills necessary to manage themselves, resolve conflict and develop pro-social behaviors.

Figure 1.1 shows how each of the Seven Skills of Discipline, when utilized consciously, promotes critical core values and life skills.

Figure 1.1

Conscious Discipline Skills support for SMCS Student Outcomes		
Conscious Discipline Skill	Student Outcomes Life/Communication Skills	Student Outcomes Personal Values
Composure	Anger management, gratification delay	Integrity
Encouragement	Pro-social skills (kindness, caring, helpfulness)	Interdependence, optimism, gratitude
Assertiveness	Bully prevention, healthy boundaries	Respect for self and others
Choices	Impulse control, goal achievement	Persistence
Empathy	Emotional regulation, perspective taking	Honoring diversity, honesty
Positive Intent	Cooperation, problem-solving	Compassion, generosity
Consequences	Learn from your mistakes	Responsibility

Field Trips and Chaperone Guidelines

SMCS will comply with all district guidelines for field trips.

Staff and Parent/Chaperone Participation

Only individuals who have completed the volunteer application/screening process through the district, have passed the district required background check and been approved by the district, may serve as a chaperone for field trips. In addition, all chaperones must complete the volunteer indemnification form (E 6153h) prior to the trip.

Parents are encouraged to drive separately in their own vehicle when busses are used for field trips. Parents may ride on the bus at the request of the teacher or administrator.

Sibling Participation in Field Trips

Non school-aged siblings may not attend field trips. Older siblings enrolled in district schools may be considered for eligibility to attend single-day field trips.

Chaperone Guidelines for Field Trips

These guidelines are designed to ensure positive, consistent interactions and to ensure that our field trips reflect the school's philosophy, mission and methods. Chaperones will be required to agree to the following:

- Alcohol and Drug Free. All chaperones must be alcohol and drug free throughout the total trip.
- Discipline. Leave discipline to the teachers. Let the teachers know if you have witnessed an incident that you believe might require discipline and let them address it. Only intervene if it is necessary to ensure immediate safety for the group.
- Group Dynamics. You are a chaperone for the group, not specifically for your child. Please interact with all students equally.
- Engaging with staff and speakers. Do not engage with staff and speakers during presentations or times when teachers are giving directions.

Chaperone Drivers

Parents/Chaperones who are willing to drive students in personal vehicles are required to complete the following:

- District background check passed
- District driver form completed
- Vehicle check by designated staff member
- Copy of current driver's license, current vehicle registrations and current vehicle insurance.

Field Trip Visitors

Sometimes a field trip may occur at a location in the community making it easy to visit. Visits to field trips should be carried out similarly to a visit to the school; Check in with the teacher to let them know you are there, visit during lunch.

General Appearance, Clothing Requirements, and Restrictions

Shoes

We require that an extra pair of shoes be kept at school for use in the gymnasium only. Open-toed shoes, flip-flops or taller heeled shoes are not allowed in the gym or on the playground at any time of year.

Hats

Hats may not be worn inside at any time. Hats cause overheating and sluggish thinking when worn indoors.

Hoodies

Hoods may not be worn on the head indoors.

Shirts and Tops

We require that sleeveless t-shirts for boys or girls, halter-tops, spaghetti straps and clothing exposing the mid-section be reserved for home.

Skirts

Skirts may not be shorter than 3 inches above the knee.

Shorts

“Short shorts” may not be worn at school.

Make Up

Students may not wear make-up at school. If make up is worn, the student will be asked to remove it in the restroom, or be asked to visit the nurse for assistance with removal. Parents will be contacted and reminded about the school policy.

Cold Weather Gear

Students must have appropriate cold-weather gear for school. If you need help with this, contact the office.

Homework

Kindergarten and lower elementary students may have minimal homework. Homework may consist of reading aloud, spelling or math fact practice, or conducting research that can be completed at home. Upper elementary students may have homework of varying amounts and complexity. Homework assignments for 4th – 6th graders should never take more than a total of 40 to 60 minutes to complete on any given night.

Lottery Guidelines

- In the event that there are more applicants to the Soldotna Montessori Charter School than can be accommodated, students will be admitted to the school on the basis of a lottery.
- The applicant pool will consist of students who submit the Admission and Lottery Application to the school on or before the deadline. The application period will be advertised within the community. The deadline for applying occurs the last Friday of February.
- The school does not discriminate against anyone with regard to race, gender, national origin, color, disability, or age.
- The number of openings available in the lottery will depend on the number of available spots in the given classes.
- Combined classes will maintain a balance of students in the various grade levels insofar as there are sufficient applicants for each grade. It is anticipated and acceptable that these numbers will fluctuate.
- Students currently enrolled in the school do not have to go through the lottery.
- Siblings of students enrolled in the school do not have to go through the lottery and will be accepted into the school as long as there are spots available.
- In the event that the number of siblings applying to the school exceeds the number of students that can be accommodated by the school, the siblings will be chosen by lottery according to the lottery guidelines.
- The names of all applicants meeting the qualifications outlined in (1) will be entered into the Enrollment Lottery.
- The lottery drawing will take place the first Monday in March. The drawing will be conducted by a certified public accounting firm.
- The lottery results will be posted the Monday after Spring Break.
- Families of students on the lottery waitlist are responsible for keeping their contact information current.
- Students will be dropped from the lottery waitlist if no reply is received within one week after the school has contacted the family regarding potential enrollment.

Parent – Teacher Conferences

Formal Parent-Teacher conferences are held two times per year (October and February). Parents are encouraged to meet with teachers or school staff often throughout the year.

Personal Possessions & Electronics at School

Students **may not** bring electronics of any type to school without specific prior permission from a classroom teacher for specific use during instruction. Personal items other than supplies and materials needed for class may not be brought to school unless specifically arranged for between the parent and the teacher. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen personal items.

At no time are weapons or toy weapon look-alikes of any kind allowed on the school campus or a school bus.

Placement Requests for Classrooms

Careful consideration is given to student placement in any classroom. The staff considers gender balance, student performance levels, peer relationships, behavior patterns, learning style and overall potential classroom dynamics to create the best possible classroom environment for each child.

Parent requests for a particular teacher's classroom for their child will be taken into serious consideration.

Parent requests are made for the transitions to first and fourth grades. Students usually remain in the same classroom for 3 years. Requests to transfer to another classroom after one or two years will be considered.

Recess Guidelines

At recess time our guidelines include ***Be Kind, Be Safe, Show Respect*** as well as the following:

- Tackle or grabbing games are not permitted.
- War games or imaginary fighting games are not permitted.
- Toys from home are not permitted.
- Sleds from home are not permitted.
- Recess equipment brought from home is only permitted with prior permission from the administrator.
- The area behind the hill is off limits at all times.

Snow Guidelines

- Snow/Ice throwing is not permitted at school.
- Sled Hill: Snow pants must be worn by students choosing to use the sled hill.

Resolution of Concerns

In order to maintain a positive and professional environment for students, staff and families, the process for resolving concerns or giving and getting accurate information is:

1. Contact the teacher most directly involved via phone or email to schedule an appointment.
2. If there is still cause for concern or you feel that the situation is not resolved, a meeting between you, the teacher and the principal may be requested.
3. If there is still cause for concern or you feel the situation is still not resolved, you may request a meeting with the principal only.
4. If the situation remains unresolved, the issue may be brought to the APC for consideration.

Meeting with the Principal

An appointment may be made at any time by contacting the office.

School Emergencies

Our school has a detailed emergency plan. We have a stock of emergency supplies in our school office and in each classroom. Our school staff has been trained in First Aid. We conduct regular drills for all emergency types: intruder drills (ALICE), earthquake, and fire drills. Teachers will remain with their students throughout any emergency. The Staff is trained not to alarm students during a drill or an actual emergency.

If a real emergency occurs at school, we will rely on your cooperation. Each family receives an emergency procedures letter in the fall. The following information is also important to have:

Communications during an Emergency

- Do not call the school. School phones may be needed for communicating with emergency services.
- Turn your radio to: KPEN 101.7 FM KWAVE 104.9 AM KSRM 920 AM

Student Release Procedure

Students will only be released to individuals listed on their Emergency Contact Card. Students will only be released at designated exits at the school. Individuals picking up students must sign the "student release form". Please be patient with this process. We want to ensure that your child is officially in the care of someone you trust.

Emergency Contacts for Your Child

Make your emergency contact list extensive. Attempt to include at least one individual living within walking distance of the school. Include one out-of-state phone contact in the event that local phone service is disrupted but cell phones can still be used to notify friends or relatives living out of the area.

Traffic Control at and Around School in an Emergency

- Emergency vehicles may need access to school during an emergency.
- Use parking areas away from the school ground such as Frosos or Beemuns.

Emergency Message Information

In the event of an emergency an accurate statement will be prepared by the administrator in charge. That statement will be shared via PowerSchool Messenger and may include a recorded phone call, a text-message, or an email. It is critical that staff and parents recognize the importance of sharing only accurate information that has come directly from the administrator or individual in charge of any school emergency.

Special Programs

Special Education and Gifted and Talented Programs:

SMCS students have access to the district Special Education and Gifted and Talented program services. If you feel your child may qualify, please speak to your child's classroom teacher.

Physical Education and Recess

SMCS recognizes the value of adding movement to the learning day. Current research indicates that periods of activity enhance learning and improve mental and physical health. We conduct two 30-minute structured physical education sessions per week for each of our classrooms. We also encourage movement within the classroom on a regular basis. Our playground is open before school for early morning movement prior to the start of class. We conduct a daily 30-minute outdoor recess. When temperature reaches -10 degrees or colder, or we experience other extreme weather conditions, recess is conducted inside.

Music, Band, and Choir:

SMCS students receive formal music instruction two times per week. Band is offered as an option for participation by students in the 5th and 6th grades during lunch & lunch recess. Choir is offered as an option for participation by students in 4th through 6th grades after school.

Swimming:

Our 6th grade students participate in a 5-day swimming course each spring.

Student Cell Phones

At Soldotna Montessori Charter School, we acknowledge that cell phones are a necessity for some families. Students who bring cell phones to school must turn them off and leave them in their backpack, with their teacher, or the school office until the end of the school day. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen cell phones. The school may confiscate cell phones. Parents will be notified if this occurs, and may be asked to pick up the cell phone depending on circumstances.

Student Computer Use and Internet Access

Our students often use computers to complete work at school. They often access safe, teacher-directed internet sites. At no time are students allowed to use personal or school email/Gmail accounts without permission from the teacher. Students must always comply with the district internet use policy. Parents are responsible for reading the district internet use policy and sharing that information with their child. This district internet policy, and all district policies, are available on line on the district web site. Students found to misuse school computers

or district provided applications such as email/gmail, IM/chat features, online learning tools, etc., may have access to these items suspended for a period of time. Parents will be notified when action is taken to restrict access.

Student Testing and Assessment

SMCS participates in all district and state assessment programs. Families receive a calendar each fall listing all assessment dates for the year. A description of the district assessment programs and testing timelines is available on the district website at <http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us>. Click on Departments then on Assessment. We ask that you refer to this calendar when planning family vacations. It is critical that students in grades 3 – 6 are present for the State Standards-Based Assessment each spring.

SMCS teachers regularly observe students and give informal assessments on the concepts and skills that they have been studying.

Transportation, Drop-off, Dismissal and Parking

Transportation

SMCS offers bus transportation for students living in the Soldotna Elementary School attendance area. Students enrolled at SMCS who do not live in the Soldotna Elementary School attendance area may meet an attendance area bus at the appropriate stop, or must provide their own transportation to and from school.

Student Drop-off

School doors open @ 8:20. Students supervision on the playground or while getting a school breakfast in the gym, beginning at 8:20 AM. Students who arrive @ 8:20 must enter directly to the SMCS hallway and prepare to head to the playground for morning recess or to the gym to get breakfast. Students should be in classes no later than 8:40 AM.

Students must be dropped off from the parking lot on Park Avenue only. Parents may choose to park in a parking spot and accompany their student into the school or drive through the curbside lane, next to the sidewalk along the front of the school, and let their student out. The curbside lane is used for a single lane of thru traffic. Cars may not be parked or left unattended in the curbside lane.

Student Dismissal

School is dismissed at 3:30 for students who walk home, or are being picked up. Students riding busses are dismissed at approximately 3:25.

Students walking home are dismissed from the front entry doors of the school. Walking students may not stay on school grounds after dismissal; Students may not be on the playground without teacher supervision at any time, including after school.

Students must be picked up from the parking lot on Park Avenue only, and may choose from two options for pick-up

- 1) Parents may choose to park in the lot,
 - a) Notify the crosswalk duty, and the student will be called, via radio, from the classroom to the crosswalk.
 - b) If necessary, enter the building to pick up student(s) if there are other school specific tasks that the parent will be accomplishing during the visit and pick-up.

- i) Parents may not pick up the student from the classroom or wait outside the classroom. All entry-to-the-building pick-ups must be accomplished in the office.
 - ii) NOTE: Parent entry into the building at dismissal is discouraged as it can cause congestion within the building.
- 2) Parents may choose to use the pick-up line,
- a) Enter the lot and access the curbside lane next to the sidewalk.
 - b) Pick-up line is one lane only.
 - c) May only be accessed by SMCS families @ 3:30 to allow for SOEL dismissal to complete.
 - d) Students will be called down by the dismissal duty, via radio, from the classroom to the pick-up line.
 - e) **Cars may not be parked or left unattended in the curbside, pick-up lane at any time or for any reason.**
 - f) Families with kindergarten students **may not** use the pick-up line due to length of time needed to secure kindergarten students in car seats. Contact the principal for clarifications or accommodations to this requirement.

Dismissal staff may ask to see ID if they do not know you personally or a designated individual who is authorized to pick up a student. Please understand that this procedure is strictly for your child's safety. If your child must leave school early, please report to the office to sign your child out of school.

Parking

Parents wishing to come into the school to drop off or pick up a student may park in the parking area of the front lot. Please be sure to **use the crosswalks** in the parking lot if you park and walk into the building. The back lot at the rear of the school **may not be used**. The doors at this entrance are locked at all times. Parking in the back lot is strictly limited to building and borough employees.

Volunteers & Visitors

Sign-In Requirements

Volunteers and visitors must sign in on the computer in the office upon arrival at school and sign out upon departure from school. This allows us to keep track of everyone in the school in the event of an emergency or an emergency drill and helps us keep track of volunteer hours. Signing in generates a visitor or volunteer badge that must be worn and visible when in the school. Staff members may ask you to check in at the office if you do not have a visitor or volunteer badge.

Visitors

Visitors are welcome at SMCS. Visits most often occur during lunch times. Also, teachers may invite families to a special presentation and families may wish to attend as a visitor. Visitors must check in at the office, and may only visit the designated classroom. Visitors are not allowed to visit the playground or wander to other locations in the building.

Volunteers

Volunteers are encouraged and welcome at SMCS; they are a critical part of our learning environment. Volunteers make the difference between a good school and a great school. We appreciate the time and energy it takes to volunteer.

All volunteers at SMCS must complete the KPBSD Volunteer Background Check prior to volunteering for any school activity, including field trips. **This process can take up to a week.** District policy dictates that parents may not participate in class events or activities until the Volunteer Background Check process is complete. Parents or other volunteers are encouraged to complete the Volunteer Background Check early in the year. Volunteers are welcome to help in the office or in classrooms on projects designated by classroom teachers. Volunteers are also able to assist at recess with administrator approval. All volunteers must comply with, support, and be an example of the teacher's expectations for student behavior.

During the first two weeks of school, we do not allow volunteers to work directly inside the classrooms. This two-week period is designed to acquaint or re-acquaint students with specific classroom routines and procedures. After the initial two weeks, volunteers may make arrangements with the teacher to volunteer directly in the classroom. Contact your child's teacher or the school office to make arrangements for volunteering.

Volunteer Confidentiality

SMCS considers confidentiality a fundamental principle that should guide every adult involved in our school. Volunteers often become aware of individual student skills, abilities and behaviors. These observations and insights must remain confidential. At no time should volunteers discuss their school observations with family, friends or parents of other students. This includes sharing of private conversations a parent or volunteer may have with an SMCS staff member. Volunteers who do discuss school issues or breach school confidentiality may lose the opportunity to volunteer at our school.

Volunteer Responsibilities

- Respect the confidentiality of all information that relates to our students and staff.

- Use appropriate channels of communication for comments and suggestions. If you have a concern please speak directly to the teacher first, principal second, and finally an Academic Policy Member. Discussing an issue with someone who has access to accurate information and the ability to make change will help to avoid speculation and rumor and protects the privacy of our students and staff.
- Remain non-judgmental when working with students. It is possible that a student you are working with has special educational needs, an individual behavior plan or other confidential information that you are not aware of.
- Allow teachers and staff to handle all matters involving discipline. Report any concerns regarding discipline directly to a staff member.
- If you encounter a problem during a volunteer assignment, please contact a staff member or the SMCS administrator.
- Enjoy yourself and know that you are appreciated!

Weekly Home – School Communication

All students bring a colored plastic folder home with weekly information from the school on Thursdays. This folder should be returned to school the next day, Friday. Teachers will send finished student work home separately. Please **check and read** the contents of your child's weekly news folder and return required paperwork as soon as possible.

Appendix A: Charter Schools: Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we have charter schools?

Charter school legislation is a result of federal and state initiatives and statutes. Alaska passed charter school legislation in 1995. The law was established in response to requests from parents and teachers for more educational choices for their students.

According to state law, up to 60 charter schools are allowed to operate in Alaska. Charter schools provide free, public school choice for students and their families. Charter schools allow parents, teachers and students to choose an alternative curriculum or program of study. Charter schools also offer a choice to parents who want a style or type of instruction that they believe best fits their child's needs.

How are charter schools started?

Charter schools are started by a founding group which submits a charter proposal to the local school board. If the charter application is approved, the proposal is sent to the State Board of Education where it must be approved before a charter school can begin. Charter schools must meet the same requirements for financial, instructional and curriculum accountability as any other public school.

Who is eligible to enroll in a charter school?

Parents/guardians may apply to enroll any student eligible for public school enrollment. A charter school must enroll all students who submit a timely application. According to Alaska state statute, if the number of student applications exceeds the capacity of the charter program, class, grade level or building, the charter school must first consider providing additional space and teachers.

If additional space is not available and it is not possible to accommodate all eligible students, then students shall be accepted by random drawing or lottery and placed on a wait list in the order in which they applied to the charter school. All charter schools in our district follow the same lottery guidelines.

How are charter schools funded?

Charter schools are public schools. Charter schools receive the same state foundation funding for education as other public schools. Foundation funding is determined by a formula based on the number of actual students enrolled in the school.

Do charter schools charge tuition or admission fees?

All charter schools are free public schools. Charter schools do not charge tuition or admission fees. Charter schools offer free admission just like other public schools. If a charter school is a free public school, what makes it different? Charter schools operate like all other public schools with three exceptions.

1. Charter school curriculum varies from the school district adopted curriculum. The charter school submits a "charter" requesting an alternative curriculum or teaching approach. The alternative curriculum must be approved by the local district school board and the state school board.
2. An Academic Policy Committee of school parents and staff oversees the mission of the school, ensuring that the integrity of the charter is maintained.

3. The charter school administrator is hired and fired by the Academic Policy Committee. The charter school administrator is responsible to the Academic Policy Committee but must ensure that the charter school adheres to local and state educational policy.

Who can teach in a charter school?

Charter school teachers must meet the same teaching certification criteria as any other public school teacher unless the charter school applies to the local school board and to the State to request a waiver from these requirements. No charter school in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District has requested a waiver. All teachers in KPBSD charter schools are selected according to the same criteria as all other KPBSD teachers. Some charter schools require additional training or certification of their teachers in order to meet the educational mission of the school.

How are charter school teachers paid?

KPBSD charter school teachers are paid according to the same salary schedule as any other KPBSD teacher.

Do charter schools pay for public school services?

Each charter school has a contract with the local school board. These contracts are reviewed annually. Costs for bussing, food services, worker's compensation, special education services, nursing, library aides, custodial services, building utility fees, property and liability insurance, and state-required indirect cost fees are all deducted from the charter school budget by the district.

Are charter schools religious schools?

In addition to other requirements of state law, a charter school must be nonsectarian. Religious affiliation is not permitted.

Can charter schools restrict class size or enrollment?

According to Alaska State Statute, a charter school is required to establish a teacher-to-student ratio in the original charter application. This number may only be changed by negotiating the contract with the local school board.

Are charter schools exempt from school district policy?

All KPBSD charter schools operate under existing school board policy.

Do parents have to volunteer at the school if their child is enrolled?

There are no requirements for volunteering at a charter school in our district. Like other public schools, parents are always welcome to volunteer depending on their own family and work schedule.

Do charter schools serve children with special needs?

Just like all KPBSD schools, charter schools provide programs and accommodations for children with special needs.

What other schooling choices do we have?

Alaskan families can choose to send their students to:

- Free local public schools that offer the district adopted curriculum choices
- Free local public charter schools that offer an alternative curriculum choice
- Free public school district optional and alternative high school programs
- Free public local school district home-schooling programs
- Free public out-of-district home-schooling programs
- Private school programs

For more information about school options: <http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/schools.aspx>.

Appendix B: KPBSD App

Parents need school supplies too.

(Luckily, it's just a single download away.)



Download the free Kenai Peninsula Borough SD app today for access to your school's news, calendars, directory, student info, and much more!



The KPBSD App is an all-in-one information source for parents, students, staff and community. Our app was developed specifically to provide direct access to the district's most sought after information in the most convenient format—your mobile device. Free, you can find ***Kenai Peninsula Borough SD*** in the app store.

The KPBSD App provides password-protected access for student and parents to see live grade and attendance information in PowerSchool, allowing parents and students to stay up to date on student progress at any time, from anywhere.

Other app features include

- District and school news, allowing the user to select which schools and district news feeds they want to subscribe to
- Sports scores, schedules, and links to sports sites
- Calendar information for schools and district events, including the ability to add events from school calendars to the user's device calendar
- Push notifications for the school district and schools to send out instant alerts to the user's mobile device
- School and district directories and maps
- Contact information for teachers, administrators, and other staff
- Links to the KPBSD and school social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube
- Superintendent updates with the latest communications from your district leaders

The KPBSD App is free for users and available for immediate download on iPhone and Android devices. You can find ***Kenai Peninsula Borough SD*** in the app store.

Appendix C: Prearranged Absence Form

Soldotna Montessori Charter School

Pre-Arranged Absence Form (Minimum 5 days)

This form is to be completed by Parent/Guardian, Teacher and Administrator prior to departure of proposed trip.

Student Name _____ **Teacher** _____

Dates of Absence: _____ Total School Days Missed: _____

Reason for Absence: _____

To be completed by parent/guardian:

I have met with the teacher and requested work. I agree to assist my child with completion of any assigned work.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Teacher's instructions of work to be completed	Due Date

Teacher please send this form home with student and give a copy to the office, prior to trip.

Administrator's Signature

Yes () No ()
Absence Excused