



Parent Handbook

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Renaissance Vision Statement

Envisioning a community that embraces timeless values, awakens the human spirit and ignites a lifelong love of learning.

Renaissance Mission Statement

Inspiring individuals to express their unique potential with purpose, passion, and vision.

Renaissance Four Pillars

1. A Passion for Excellence
2. Timeless Values
3. Social Responsibility
4. Global Understanding

Renaissance Educational Philosophy

The word educate derives from the Latin word, *educere*, which means to lead forth. At the Renaissance School, we believe that all children carry within themselves unique gifts. With these gifts, each child, in a very real sense, creates the adult that is to be. We feel honored to guide children in their natural creative process of education; to help them bring forth their gifts, and realize the unlimited potential that is all their own.

Our chosen educational framework is based on the Montessori approach to education, as well as current educational research. Montessori recognizes that the only valid impulse to learning is the self - motivation of the child. Children naturally move toward learning. Montessori thus provides rich, carefully “prepared environments” based on the needs and interests of the child at a given stage of development. In these environments, with teacher guidance, children are free to explore, discover, interact, and learn. Dr. Montessori believed this freedom to be crucial in order for the child to develop his or her physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential to the fullest. With every freedom comes responsibility. The child’s freedom in the Montessori environment is a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline. The children learn to respect themselves, others, and the environment, as they become responsible members of the peaceful and cooperative culture that is cultivated in the Renaissance School learning community.

Each classroom at the Renaissance school is guided by a certified Montessori teacher who is trained to understand the developmental needs for that specific age group. The Montessori teacher prepares the environment and then connects each child with appropriate learning opportunities within that environment. The order and structure built into the prepared environment allows the child to learn at his/her own pace, according to his/her abilities, in a non-competitive atmosphere. The learning environment cultivates individuality, concentration, independence, problem solving abilities, social interaction, interdisciplinary breadth, and competency in basic skills.

Montessori children are free to learn because they acquire an “inner discipline” from their exposure to both physical and mental order. Patterns of concentration, persistence, and thoroughness, established in childhood, produce confident, competent learners and successful members of society in later years. At Renaissance School, we introduce children to the joy of learning and provide a framework in which intellectual and social discipline go hand-in-hand. Our objective is to provide a safe, nurturing environment, which helps children develop the habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas, which are essential for a lifetime of joy, creativity, independence, and learning.

Our philosophy, based on Montessori principles and tailored to the developmental needs of children, is evident in all of our programs, and is characterized by:

- A responsive environment prepared with multi-sensory, sequential, and self-correcting materials to support self-directed learning.
- Multi-age, continuous progress classrooms which provide older children with opportunities to become teachers and leaders, while younger children are inspired by, and learn from older mentors.
- Nurturing and observant educators trained to understand children and to assess learning styles, paces, and goals.

- Concentration on purposeful and meaningful work as the engine of whole person development.
- Freedom of movement to interact with peers and select activities.
- Uninterrupted time to complete an activity successfully, thus building self-confidence and self-esteem.
- A culture of mutual respect and a commitment to peaceful and cooperative environments.
- A “personal best” approach, eliminating peer-competition in favor of self-motivation.

Renaissance History

In 1992, three years before the official birth of Renaissance School, Kathy Leitch opened a small, one classroom Early Childhood Montessori school in Bonita Springs, Florida. Kathy did not realize when she began Bonita Montessori School, with those first seven children, that she was laying a solid foundation for the incredible school that Renaissance is today. Within a year, the Bonita Montessori School had 30 young students and had established itself as an excellent school with a strong community spirit.

Soon, there was considerable interest in expanding the program to include Elementary students. Kathy, together with faculty and parents, began to create a vision for their dream school. The Bonita facility did not have room for expansion and so the search for a suitable space began. Soon the search began to move beyond Bonita Springs and it became apparent that a new name was needed for the school. In 1995, Kathy established a professional board of trustees, restructured the school as a not-for-profit organization, and gave it the name, Renaissance School. Renaissance School was now able to take the first step in implementing the vision of creating a self-sustaining school with the potential to serve hundreds of children and families in Southwest Florida for years to come.

The Barkley Circle campus was acquired in 1997, enabling Renaissance to add a Toddler program and two more Primary classrooms. Finally, with this solid base of early childhood students, we were ready to begin our Elementary program. In the Fall of 2000, the first Lower Elementary classroom was opened.

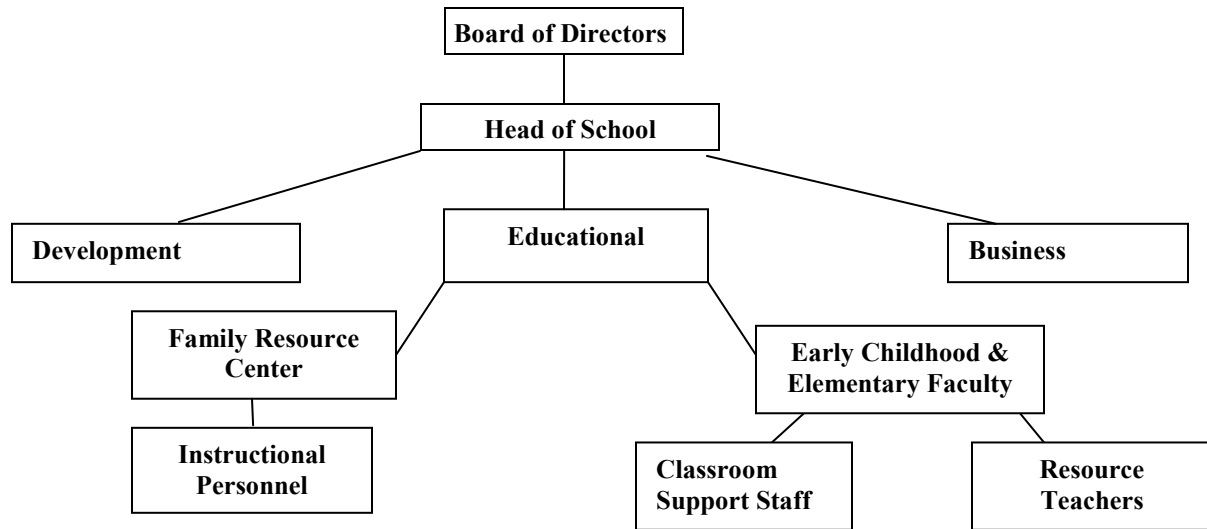
The Elementary group quickly filled to capacity. It was again clear that additional space was needed. In the Fall of 2002, Renaissance leased classroom space on the property of Unity Church of Ft. Myers. This beautiful campus had a Lower Elementary, an Upper Elementary and a Junior High classroom. Renaissance School also opened an Infant Program in the Fall of 2005.

During the most recent years our community, along with the nation, has undergone a major economic shift. In our efforts to once again respond to the needs of our community, in the summer of 2008, we consolidated our Early Childhood and Elementary programs on the Barkley Campus. This move has enabled Renaissance School to streamline our operations in order to focus on our core programs. We have created a small, mission-oriented school that serves children from twelve months through sixth grade.

A Renaissance Future

We reflect with pride on all that has come to pass for Renaissance. With a clear vision and commitment to children, Kathy Leitch continues to inspire us to look ahead and plan for an even brighter future. Our long time dream of broadening our support for families in the community is being realized with the opening of our new “Family Resource Center”. This Center will offer a variety of classes, workshops, and consultations designed to enhance and support the joys of family life. The board, faculty, and many Renaissance parents are continually re-evaluating current programs and planning for future needs.

The Renaissance Organizational Chart



The Renaissance Board of Trustees

Renaissance School is a non-profit 501(c)3 Tax Exempt Florida educational corporation, governed by a Board of Trustees. The Renaissance Board is comprised of business and educational professionals who are committed to the vision and mission of our school.

The Primary Functions of the Board of Trustees are:

- To establish the school's institutional mission and define the fundamental objectives and core values
- To establish policies under which the school will operate
- To select a chief administrator (Head of School) who will translate the school's mission and objectives into day-to-day operations
- To oversee the on-going operation of the school within board policy and government regulations
- To look to the future and plan for long term institutional growth, development, and stability.

The Members of the Board of Trustees are:

M. Kathleen Leitch, President

Founder and Head of School
AMS Teaching Certification for Infants and Toddlers & Early Childhood
Instructor at various Montessori Teacher Education Centers
Parenting Instructor
Over 25 years experience in education

Katherine M. Bravo, Vice President

AMI Primary Teaching Certification Founder and Head Emeritus of New Gate School, Sarasota, FL
Director of New Gate Center for Guided Montessori Studies
Montessori Consultant
Parenting Instructor
Over 25 years experience in education

Robert A. Leitch, Treasurer

Project Engineer, Edward Don and Company
Founder, Friends of Renaissance, benefiting our financial assistance fund.

Privacy Policy

In the natural course of business it is often necessary for us to collect, retain, and utilize certain business and financial information as provided by you. We recognize and respect your privacy concerns and expectations about this information.

Data Collection Procedures/Use of Client Information

We acknowledge that we may collect, retain, and utilize business and financial information about you in the course of the operation of our business. We obtain information in a variety of ways (for example, directly from you in applications and from your transactions or experiences with us.) Also, when you visit our website, we may at times collect information to measure the use of our site and to improve and expand its content (such as your IP address and/or referral URL).

Disclosure of Information Policy

We do not currently, nor will we ever, sell your name, address, or email address to third parties for their independent use. Disclosure may occur under normal business practices, when dealing with third party vendors, as outlined below. Third parties may assist us in providing products, services, and support. They are contractually bound not to utilize shared information for their independent use. Information is shared with third parties in accordance with the following guidelines:

- To complete transactions that you have initiated
- To other recipients of combined statements
- Whenever required by law
- To others with your consent
- To provide you with additional products or services we wish to offer
- To assist in providing operational, marketing, or advertising support

Protection of Information

We maintain procedures to protect the security of your information. Employees receive training in proper confidentiality and client privacy procedures.

The Renaissance Curriculum

The Renaissance School implements the Montessori curriculum at every level. This curriculum is developmentally based and designed to appeal to student interests and meet individual student needs. Students move through the sequential curriculum at their own pace, moving forward as they master skills and taking extra time when a skill or a concept proves to be more challenging.

Our curriculum encompasses the full substance of excellent traditional school curriculums and goes beyond to teach students how to think clearly, do their own research, express themselves well in writing and speech, and put their knowledge to practical application. The Renaissance Kindergarten through sixth grade curriculum provides learning experiences that exceed the grade level requirements of the Sunshine State Standards. It is important, however, to keep in mind that the Montessori curriculum does not always follow the same sequence for presenting these standards.

The Renaissance curriculum is organized into a series of integrated studies that increases in complexity in each successive year. Lessons are introduced simply and concretely in the early years and reintroduced several times during the following years at increasing degrees of abstraction and complexity. Our course of study is also thematic and practical. The separate disciplines are brought together to create a rich understanding of the physical universe, the world of nature, and the human experience.

Peace Education

“Peace is a goal that can be attained only through common accord, and the means to achieve this unity for peace are twofold; first, an immediate effort to resolve conflicts without recourse to violence- in other words to prevent war- and second, a long term effort to establish a lasting peace among men. Preventing conflicts is the work of

politics; establishing peace is the work of education.”
“Education for Peace” by Dr. Maria Montessori.

At Renaissance School, we practice the essentials of peace education introduced by Maria Montessori. Dr. Montessori developed a curriculum that inspires adults and children to be self-aware, self-disciplined, and self-confident. When these skills are developed and nurtured, there’s a commitment to resolve conflict in peace, to work together in cooperative teams, and promote global peace awareness.

Some academic skills which develop awareness and global vision include cultural, political and physical geography, environmental interdependence, care and needs of plants and animals and study of the fundamental needs of humanity. Peace-making skills are also introduced into our environments through lessons in grace and courtesy. Classroom activities include various opportunities for students to develop a sense of inner calm and peace. This inner sense guides the students to recognize and regulate their emotions and responses. This is the foundation for developing the emotional intelligence necessary to live a fulfilling and peaceful life.

Children learn through play and example. Violent toys, games, and videos send violent messages. According to psychological research, violence on television negatively affects children. Some of these effects are: less sensitive to pain and suffering of others; more fearful of the world around them; and more likely to behave in aggressive ways toward others. Children have difficulty separating fact from fantasy. The brain, as well as neurological impulses, respond the same to stimuli whether real or imagined. We have discovered through years of careful observation, that these activities incite some children to engage in inappropriate behaviors. Therefore, we request that the children abstain from these incompatible activities. We provide opportunities for the development of cooperation and creative communication. We support children in resolving conflicts with strategies provided by the peace curriculum. Peace education has to be cultivated in our classrooms; it is vital for the success of our children.

Infant Level (Children 12 weeks - 18 mos.)

Dr. Maria Montessori had a special vision for the very young child which we put into practice in our parent-infant environment. The primary goal of this program is to assist each child in developing basic trust and sound self-esteem through respect and compassion. Every step of the Montessori experience is aimed at facilitating continual success. We guide each child’s discovery of his or her own special and independent abilities. Our infants have a spacious environment that allows for freedom of movement and is filled with engaging materials for exploration, sensory experiences, language development and healthy emotional growth.

We follow each child’s natural developmental patterns, listening intently to his or her individual needs. By observing and interacting with each infant we develop the ability to read their cues, which is essential in building trust. By meeting the infant’s needs in a respectful, responsive and reciprocal manner, we provide the nurturing and security necessary for happy and healthy infants.

Toddler Level (Children 15 mos. - 3 years old)

The primary goal of our Toddler program is to create a nurturing and secure environment where young children can do what they do best...explore everything! Our Toddler environment is designed to support the tremendous amount of development that occurs during these first three years of life. The main focus is language and motor development, assisting the child in developing self-help skills, encouraging and aiding the child’s budding independence, and helping children to build trusting relationships. The Toddler curriculum areas described below provide activities that support these goals.

Aids to Independence

The activities in this area assist the child in being able to do more for his or herself, laying a foundation for a strong self-concept. The entire Toddler environment supports this goal by providing the child freedom to explore. Demonstrations are given to assist children in learning simple procedures for taking care of personal needs and there are specific lessons for teaching care of self and care of the environment.

Aids to Movement

Activities for refining both gross and fine motor coordination are essential for the children at this time when they work hard to master control of their body movements. The Toddler class activities that support this area include both indoor and outdoor activities that strengthen muscles and help the child develop balance and coordination. Activities for fine motor control are designed to aid the greater refinement of the hand. As the child gains mastery over the hand, he increases independence, his use of tools, and prepares for writing. This work encourages the development of concentration and coordination.

Dr. Montessori recognized the value of movement in learning even beyond the obvious goal of motor coordination. She stressed that, “the hand is the instrument of intelligence.” Current research supports her theories that use of the hand, as well as other motor activities, stimulate brain development and are critical for development.

Sensorial Awareness

The Toddler classroom includes lessons for sensory exploration. These activities provide the child with opportunities to develop an awareness of the different qualities of objects in the environment. These activities appeal to the child’s natural interest and need to explore, through touching, smelling, tasting, etc. There are also stereognostic activities that encourage identification of objects through touch alone. Through touching and feeling objects without the use of sight, the child develops a muscular memory. The child is then able to visually remember the object by touching and feeling it. These sensory activities help the child begin to organize the impressions of the world and develop heightened awareness, perceptual clarity, and concentration.

Language

Language development is one of the primary tasks of the child at this age. With this in mind, dialog is considered the most important teaching aid in the environment. The teachers name and discuss everything, giving children the opportunity to hear spoken language and study how our mouth forms words. The teachers are careful to speak quietly, gently, and exactly. In addition to the use of clear rich dialog, the teachers engage the children in specific activities designed to learn new vocabulary and encourage expression.

Aids to the Development of Expression

The art activities in this area help children develop self-expression and communication. These fun activities respond to the child’s need to create. Children are generally more interested in the process of the activity than they are in the finished product.

Outdoor Activities

Our open outdoor classroom provides the young child with many opportunities to experience the richness of nature while also providing freedom of movement. The outdoor activities further support the goals of the above areas. While the child explores and plays outdoors, he or she develops motor coordination, language, sensory awareness, independence and self-expression.

Primary Level (Children 3 – 6 years old)

Dr. Montessori believed that the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of study, but rather, to cultivate and nurture the child’s natural desire to learn. In Montessori Primary classrooms, this objective is approached in two ways: first, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by his or her choice, and second, by helping the child perfect his or her natural tools for learning, so that the child’s abilities will be maximized in future learning situations.

Dr. Montessori recognized that young children learn best through sensory exploration. With this in mind, she developed a comprehensive sequence of hands-on learning materials. These materials are arranged in the classroom in the following areas.

Practical Life Exercises

The Practical Life exercises enhance the development of task organization and cognitive order through care of self, care of the environment, exercises in grace and courtesy, and activities for the refinement of physical movement. At first glance, the practical life activities appear to be simple everyday tasks, but there is more to

these activities than meets the eye. Young children are naturally drawn to them because they are familiar and allows them to imitate adults. Imitation is one of the strongest urges during the early years. Through this imitation, young children practice and develop new skills in a relaxed manner as they joyfully work on meaningful activities.

As the children work on pouring skills, use various everyday tools, wash dishes, or polish shoes, they perfect their coordination and become absorbed in activity. They gradually lengthen their span of concentration. They learn to pay attention to details as they complete the orderly sequence of steps involved in each task. Finally, they attain independence and good work habits as they complete each lesson and put away the materials before beginning a new activity. Thus, the concentration, coordination, order, and independence inherent in the performance of the practical life activities build a foundation for higher learning and success in life.

Sensorial Exercises

The sensorial materials enable the child to order, classify, separate, and describe sensory impressions of length, width, mass, color, texture, temperature, sound, etc., thus relating new information to what they already know. The sensorial lessons isolate a particular quality, such as the focus on length with the long red rods. As the child carries each rod, one by one, he physically experiences the gradual increase in length. He has the opportunity to further compare and analyze this quality as he grades the rods and organizes them from the shortest rod to the longest. This process is the beginning of conscious knowledge. It is brought about by the intellect working in a concentrated and organized way on the impressions given by the senses. The sensorial materials also provide the foundation for the development of the mathematical mind, i.e., the ability to use higher level thinking skills to compare, analyze, and problem solve.

Mathematics

Dr. Montessori observed that when children are interested in counting they like to touch or move the items as they enumerate them. By combining the various manipulative math materials, separating them, sharing them, counting them, and comparing them, children demonstrate to themselves the basic concepts of mathematics. This allows children to internalize number concepts, symbols, sequence, mathematical operations, and memorize basic mathematical facts.

Language

The Montessori curriculum offers a language-rich environment. Through observation of the children, we gain an awareness of their interests and guide them toward experiences that expand, extend, and translate their interests into language related activities. Thus, our language curriculum expands beyond the language shelves, incorporating every area of the classroom.

The activities in the language area are designed to promote the development of oral language, written expression, and reading, as well as the study of grammar, creative dramatics, and literature. Phonetic study is combined with a rich whole language approach. Children learn letter sounds and writing, using multiple senses with the sandpaper letters and moveable alphabet. Writing, or word construction, nearly always precedes reading as the children begin to link sounds and letter symbols to express their thoughts. Proceeding at their own pace, children learn to read and write through fun activities as naturally as they learned to speak.

Science and Nature Study

The science area is designed to nurture children's sense of wonder as they explore the world around them. Discovery projects, scientific observation, and basic science experiments stimulate curiosity and allow children to draw their own conclusions. The plant and animal kingdoms are studied to foster a love and appreciation for all living things. Class gardens and other outdoor projects provide children with wonderful opportunities to connect with nature and explore life cycles. As with other areas of the curriculum, the science lessons provide the child with opportunities to further develop concentration, the ability to follow a logical orderly process, and to organize impressions of their world. The science area also provides many language opportunities as children expand their vocabulary and practice budding writing and reading skills.

Cultural Subjects

The Montessori cultural curriculum exposes children to geography and history lessons so that they develop an awareness of the world around them. Geography lessons begin with simple presentations in land and water forms such as lakes and islands, peninsulas and bays. The large wooden puzzle maps are among the most popular activities in the classroom. At first the children simply use the maps as puzzles. Gradually, they learn the names of the continents and then the countries.

The geography studies continue as they explore various countries, learning about the customs, food, music, art, climate, language, flora, and fauna. Other cultures are experienced from the perspective of commonality of needs. The children see that people all over the world have the same basic needs for clothing, food, shelter, spirituality, etc. They see that while we all share the same needs, we meet those needs in a great variety of ways. This helps to raise their consciousness about other people, to gain understanding, tolerance, and therefore, compassion for all people in the world.

Our study of human needs also takes us back in time to examine how earlier cultures have met these needs. Children have a concrete presentation of history through their work with time lines. The long strips of time line paper are stretched across the classroom and marked off in segments, which represent consecutive periods of history. Pictures of different time periods are matched to the appropriate time period on the line. As an introduction to the idea of history, the children make a time line of their own lives, starting with a baby picture and adding one for each year of their lives.

Cooking and Nutrition

Simple food preparation lessons and cooking projects are incorporated in both the practical life area and the cultural area of the classroom. Children enjoy the opportunity to prepare and serve food. They study the four basic food groups and learn what their bodies need in order to be healthy and strong.

Art

The art activities in the Primary classes strive to maintain the joy that children find in creating something of their own. First, children are presented simple activities that develop individual skills necessary for art, such as cutting, pasting, and the use of paints. Then, they have the opportunity to explore their imagination in a variety of mediums. Our art area recognizes that young children are more interested in the process rather than the product.

Our art curriculum also exposes children to a great variety of classic and folk art. Children learn about the lives of various artists as well as learning about various artistic styles. Children enjoy looking at, and matching art prints, and delight in creating their own art in the style of the featured artist.

Music and Creative Movement

The creative music, movement, and dramatic program is an ongoing flexible process that integrates itself into all areas of the overall program. Children are drawn to the rhythm of music and the natural response to rhythm is physical. Therefore, the body is the first instrument through which the movement in music is reflected and interpreted.

Our music and movement curriculum also includes the study of various musical and dance styles from their own and other cultures. Children learn about the great classical composers and learn about the instruments of the orchestra.

Spanish

Recognizing that children under six are in a sensitive period for language development, Renaissance School presents Spanish to even our youngest children. Our Spanish instructor spends time in each Early Childhood class weekly. Speaking only Spanish, she engages the children in conversation, plays games, and sings songs. The Spanish curriculum is based on brain research and follows the same process that the human infant goes through to acquire language. It is amazing how quickly the children are able to demonstrate that they comprehend the new language, then imitate, and finally begin to converse.

Elementary (6 - 12 year olds)

The Elementary program builds on the skills of concentration, coordination, order, and independence developed at the early childhood levels. The student, now in a new stage of development, is able to use higher level cognitive skills and is interested in more abstract concepts. Using stories and props, the teachers spark the vast imagination of the students and inspire them to further explore their world through research and prepared lessons. The Elementary curriculum encompasses the basic learning areas discussed in the Primary section. While there is generally not a specific practical life area in the Elementary classroom, the students continue to hone these skills through activities in caring for the classroom, gardening, cooking, and building projects.

Although there is not a sensorial area in the Elementary classroom, many of the primary sensorial materials are still used by the older students. It is exciting for these students when they are able to discover the principles of geometry and algebra hidden within the very same materials they explored when they were three, four, and five.

The Elementary program offers:

- An integration of arts, science, geography, history, and language that evokes the native imagination.
- The presentation of knowledge as part of a large scale narrative, unfolding the origins of the earth, of life, of human communities (agricultural and urban), as well as empires and modern history, always in context of the wholeness of life.
- The presentation of the formal scientific language of zoology, botany, anthropology, geography, geology, etc., thus exposing the student to accurate organized information that respects the student's intelligence and interests.
- The use of timelines, picture charts, and other visual aids to provide a linguistic and visual overview of the first principles of each discipline.
- The presentation of mathematical concepts with concrete materials, becoming more and more abstract as the student is ready. These materials simultaneously reveal the arithmetic, geometric, and algebraic correlations.
- The teaching of all subjects in an integrated form, not as separate disciplines, but as part of a whole intellectual tradition.
- There is an emphasis on open-ended research and in-depth study, using primary and secondary sources (books and the Internet), as well as other materials.
- The utilization of community resources beyond the four walls of the classroom, incorporating the principle of students "going out" to participate in learning projects, cultural events, and community service.

Elementary Enrichment Program

With our goal being to offer a holistic curriculum, the enrichment teachers work closely with the Montessori lead teachers to weave their projects into the fabric of the overall program. Students have several opportunities throughout the week to work with the enrichment teachers in small groups and at times, one-on one. The enrichment curriculum includes:

Spanish

The Elementary Spanish program uses the Total Physical Response (TPR) system for language development. Based on brain research, this program follows the same pattern of language acquisition as the human infant; comprehension, imitation, then conversation. It is a very active approach, utilizing stories, songs, games, and movement commands to develop vocabulary within a natural conversational setting. As with our younger students, the Spanish instructor only speaks Spanish to the students. As their skills increase, they will be encouraged to develop writing, reading, and grammatical skills in Spanish.

Fine Arts

Guided by our fine art instructors, the students are presented skill-building activities and engage in wonderful art projects that allow for creative expression. At this level, the students engage in a more in-depth study of artistic styles, eras, and the great masters.

Music

Our music curriculum combines music appreciation, exploration, and the learning of musical concepts. Students will first learn bar notation using rhythm sticks and move on to learn the basics of reading music. They will use a variety of activities and instruments to fully explore rhythm. Students will work with Orff instruments.

Wellness Program

Our Wellness program introduces students to the seven dimensions of wellness : physical; environmental; spiritual; emotional; intellectual; occupational; and social. As students learn these systems of health, they will be supported in implementing positive life-long habits.

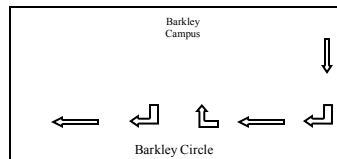
School Hours

Renaissance School opens at 7:30 a.m. and closes at 5:30 p.m. daily.

The school day officially begins at 8:30 a.m. for all students. There is a half-day dismissal at 11:30 a.m. for Early Childhood students. The Kindergarteners and full day Early Childhood students are dismissed at 2:45 p.m. All Elementary students are dismissed at 3:15 p.m., and the Extended day program runs through 5:30 p.m.

Morning Drop - Off Procedures

- Early Childhood families arriving before 8:00 a.m., must park and bring your child into the school. For safety reasons, always keep your child by your side. Never allow them to run ahead, especially in the parking lot.
- Enter the school parking lot traveling counter clockwise, stopping under the roof of the portico and staying with your vehicle at all times. Please only park in a parking space if you want to come in to the building. **Do not park on the incoming side, or under the portico at any time, as this blocks other families from dropping off their children.**



- Beginning at 8:00 a.m., Early Childhood children are to exit the care only if a staff member is there to greet them. The staff member will help them out of the care and into the classroom. Parents should remain in the car and allow the staff member to assist their child.
- Elementary students should be dropped off at the porch and then proceed on their own into the school. Parents are asked to wait to leave until they see that their child has entered the school.
- Do not let your child out anywhere except in the designated area. This way they will not walk through moving traffic. If you would like to escort your children into the school, you must park your vehicle in a designated parking space.

Tardy Policy

All students should arrive at school **well before 8:30 a.m.** This allows children ample time to say their good-byes, greet friends, put things away, and get settled in before their daily class activities begin.

Children arriving after 8:30 a.m. are considered tardy/late. When children arrive late it is a difficult adjustment for them, as well as being a disruption to the class. Please make every effort to arrive on time.

The following procedures must be followed if your child arrives at school after 8:30:

- All students must be signed in by a parent. You must park your vehicle in a designated parking space and walk your child to the school office area where a staff member will take the student to their classroom.
- Elementary and Kindergarten students keep in mind that 6 tardies = 1 unexcused absence.

In the event of an unavoidable delay, please call the office to inform us that your child will be late. If your child is tardy three times, you will receive a call from your child's teacher, so that they can assist you in developing an appropriate plan.

Attendance Policy

Absence from school can never really be made up. Success at school requires, like success on any job, consistent attendance, punctuality, responsibility, and dependability. The school believes that the student must not only complete the schoolwork successfully, but also maintain a good attendance record.

Attendance Regulations: Kindergarten through Elementary

***Please call the school office before 8:30 a.m. if your child is absent for any reason.**

This will save unnecessary calls by the school staff. On the day following your child's absence please send a note to your child's teacher stating the reason for the absence. Extended absences **may** require a doctor's verification. If a doctor's note is not provided upon request, parent verified absences will count as unexcused absences. The school believes that excessive absences put the student at serious academic risk. We follow the State of Florida statutes which state that six (6) tardies equal one (1) absence and nineteen (19) absences (excused and/or unexcused) **may** result in the student not being promoted to the next grade level. Excessive absences or tardies (6 or more per trimester) will result in referral to the Child Study Team. Inconsistent attendance is viewed by the school as a lack of commitment to the goals and philosophy of Renaissance School and **may cause dismissal from the school.**

Reasons for absence which may be considered excused:

- *illness or hospitalization
- *religious observances
- *death in the family or funeral
- *school activities
- *family trips (when advance notice is given and work is satisfactorily completed)
- *professional health and legal appointments (please try to schedule outside of school hours)

Parents who wish to have students released from school prior to the end of the academic day must provide a note to the classroom teacher. For emergencies, notify the office.

Dismissal Procedures

- Enter the school lot driving counter clockwise. Please pull all the way around the island stopping at the end.
- The children will be escorted to the car with their belongings. Parents of young children will need to get out of the car to buckle the child in their car seat. **Please do not leave your car for any reason.** (Elementary students may buckle themselves in the back seat.) **We will not permit children to sit in a front seat (unless they are 13 years or older), nor will we allow a child to leave our campus unless they are properly buckled in a car seat that is appropriate for their size and age. Children under four years of age/ 40 lbs. must be in a car seat.** Once children outgrow their forward-facing seats, (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds) they should ride in booster seats in the back seat of the car. They should continue riding in booster seats until the vehicle safety belt fits properly. Safety belts fit properly when the lap belt lies across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest (usually at age 8 or when the child is 4'9" tall). We support and strongly advocate that children up to eight years of age/ 4'9" tall,
 - be buckled in an appropriate booster seat.
 - Parents who walk up to the porch or loading zone present a real danger. Drivers may not see small children as they excitedly run to greet parents. This also distracts the teachers who must give their full attention to the safety of the children at this time.
 - Any student enrolled in the morning program who is not picked up by 11:45 a.m. will rejoin his/her class and be charged accordingly. (\$25.00 per day).
 - Any toddler or primary student who is not picked up by 3:00 p.m. or elementary student not picked up by 3:30 will be taken to extended day and charged accordingly (\$25.00 per day).

Release of Students

Children will only be released to parents and to those listed on the student release form in the student's file (see special circumstances below). The staff will ask for photo identification when they don't recognize the person picking up the child. Even parents may be asked for identification if you are new to the staff member on duty. Please have your photo I.D. available just in case, and instruct those picking up your child to do so as well.

In special circumstances, parents may send in a note giving permission for the school to dismiss your child to another Renaissance parent or to other individuals not on the student release form. Please be sure the note gives the date of the special dismissal request and is signed.

In case of an emergency or last minute change requiring pick up by someone other than a person on the student release form, a parent may call the school office to verbally give permission. The office personnel will ask you questions that will verify that you are the child's parent (sorry, at times we may not recognize your voice). The child's teacher will receive a note from the office verifying who will pick up the child and that permission was received by phone. Again, the person picking up your child will be asked for identification.

Extended Day

Renaissance school does provide after school care for all ages. Our goal is to provide a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for the children who need an extended day. The staff follow the same respectful Montessori approach to children as they plan and provide a balance of group projects, with time for individual activities and outside play.

- Extended Day hours are from 3:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. Parents who have not enrolled their child in the extended day program may sign up for occasional use. You may sign up in the office or call and ask for your child to be put on the extended day list for a particular day. We recommend that you sign up in advance of the day that you need care, as space is limited, and will be given on a first-come-first-serve basis.
- To pick up your child from extended day, park in a designated parking space and come to the staff member in charge of signing out students. Parents are asked to sign out their child, recording the time of dismissal. **All children must be signed out.** Please make sure your child stays with you as you go to your car through the school parking lot.
- The extended day program ends at 5:30 p.m., at which time Renaissance School closes for the day. It is essential that all students be picked up by this time. **A late fee of \$15.00 will be assessed for every 10 minutes past 5:30 p.m.**

School Cancellation Due to Weather

If severe weather conditions make travel hazardous, school will be postponed, close early, or be cancelled. In the event of such inclement weather, we will make decisions based on the safety of students and staff. Closing will be announced on local radio and television stations. In the event of a hurricane watch, the school will remain open. If a hurricane warning should go into effect during school hours, parents will be called to pick up their children and the school will remain closed as long as the warning is in effect. We will try home, work and cell numbers. **Please keep us up-to-date with these numbers throughout the year.**

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an accident or the sudden onset of a serious illness, the School will seek proper care for the child. The child's individual emergency instructions, on file in the office, will be consulted and the parents will be called. If the parent is unavailable, the school will call the emergency contact provided on the child's file and will continue to try to reach the parents. If necessary, the child's physician and/or **911** will be called. First Aid or appropriate care will be administered. All Renaissance staff members are required to take the Red Cross First Aid training and Pediatric and Adult CPR. Should the child need to be transported from the school in an emergency, the child's emergency information will also be sent.

<p>It is IMPERATIVE that you keep the emergency contact information up to date. Please notify the office immediately if work, home, or cell phone numbers change. It is also recommended that you provide your emergency contact person and physician with current health insurance information.</p>

Accident Reports

In the event that a child has an accident and/or is injured at school, a form will be completed by the teacher or staff member in attendance. This form will explain the circumstances of the accident/incident, the nature of the child's injury, and any treatment provided. Parents are asked to read the report, sign it, leave a copy at the school and take a copy home. Feel free to call if you have additional questions related to the incident.

Fire Drills

Fire drills will be held on a monthly basis. This enables the students to learn about fire safety and to be prepared in case of a real emergency. When the alarm sounds, the staff will assist children in exiting the building through the exit assigned to their classroom or building location. The students learn to exit the building quickly, calmly, quietly, and in an orderly manner. The staff and children meet at the designated spot on each campus. Attendance book and student emergency information is brought out as well, along with a cellular phone. The last person out of the school checks to be sure that all children have safely exited the building. **In the event of an actual fire, the fire pull station will be activated to sound the alarm which automatically alerts the fire department.** Fire extinguishers and smoke alarms are located on-campus and all staff members have been trained in emergency procedures.

Health Records

The State of Florida requires all students to have updated and completed immunization and physical examination records (must be official state forms) on file in the school office. These forms must be signed and dated by the physician. **The state further requires that the school disallow student attendance if there is a failure to comply with this regulation.** Parents will be notified in writing 30 days in advance of immunizations expiring as well as needing updated physical forms.

Medication Policy

Prescription medication will be administered to students on a limited basis and only when the proper procedures have been followed. In the event that it is absolutely necessary for a child to receive **prescription medication** at school, the medication must be sent in the original container with the prescription and the name of the student on it. Parents must also complete and sign the medication authorization form, stating the time, day, and type of medication to be given. These forms are available at the front desk. Lead teachers will administer **prescription medication** and must record the time that it is given and initial the form. Non-prescription medication, including Tylenol, aspirin, cold medication and cough remedies will **NOT BE** administered by any Renaissance Staff member. The parent will be responsible for administering this type of medication. **Under no circumstances may a student bring any medication, prescription or non-prescription to school to give to the teacher or to self-administer.** Please do not bring your child to school if they are too ill to attend without medication.

Illness and Infection Control

In the school setting, it is not uncommon for the illness of one child to spread rapidly through the group to other children and to staff members. For this reason we are careful to follow stringent measures to limit and hopefully prevent the spread of disease. Many common childhood diseases are contagious. These are spread in several ways. Respiratory infections spread through coughing, sneezing, and runny noses. Other diseases are spread through direct contact. Careful hand washing by the staff and children can eliminate approximately 75 percent of the risk of spreading these illnesses. Other precautions include separating sick children from those who are well, taking extra precautions with children who need assistance diapering and toileting, and working to maintain sanitary conditions through out the school.

If a child exhibits any signs of the symptoms below, the parents should be called and asked to immediately pick up the child from school and keep him/her out of school until the symptoms have been gone at least 24 hours without the use of medications.

The Symptoms include:

- ✦ Fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher when in conjunction with any other signs of illness
- ✦ Severe coughing (child gets red or blue in the face)
- ✦ A high pitched whooping or croupy sound with a cough
- ✦ Difficult or rapid breathing
- ✦ Stiff neck
- ✦ Yellowish skin or eyes
- ✦ Exposed, open skin lesions
- ✦ Conjunctivitis (Pink-eye, excessive tearing, redness of eyelid or lining, eye swelling, discharge, or pus)
- ✦ Unusual spots or rash
- ✦ Sore throat or trouble swallowing
- ✦ Infected skin patches
- ✦ Crusty bright yellow, dry or gummy areas of the skin - possibly accompanied by fever
- ✦ Unusually dark, tea colored urine - especially with fever
- ✦ Grey or white stool
- ✦ Vomiting
- ✦ Continual greenish/yellow discharge from the nose
- ✦ Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool within a 24 hour period)
- ✦ Sever itching of body or scalp (A child identified as having head lice shall not be permitted to return until treatment has occurred and all nits have been removed from hair.
- ✦ Any other unusual sign or symptom of illness

In the event a child does not show the above symptoms but is too uncomfortable/irritable to successfully participate in a group setting, he/she will be sent home.

If your child is ill and unable to attend school, please call the office in the morning to let us know.

Students with an infectious disease or conditions, such as influenza, strep throat, impetigo, or head lice, must stay home until the contagious stage has passed. Please inform the office immediately with your doctor's diagnosis or your confirmation of such conditions.

Dress Code

Students are encouraged to wear comfortable clothes that are simple, sturdy, and washable. Appropriate school attire helps to create a positive, safe, and respectful learning environment. With this in mind, all Renaissance students must follow the dress code outlined below:

No characters, sayings, or advertisements may be on clothing, shoes, or lunchboxes. Characters on the clothing tend to be a distraction in the classroom, drawing a lot of attention from peers and sometimes leading to inappropriate play. Small simple logos are acceptable.

Please make sure all clothing is in good condition with proper fit (no tears or holes).

Shoes with closed toes, backs, and rubber soles are required for the outdoor environment. Please, no cowboy boots, jelly shoes, flip-flops, or sandals (water shoes are a good option for toddlers who may get wet). Comfortable shoes of your child's choice are permitted inside.

Modest attire is required at all times; specifically, no spaghetti straps, bare midriffs, extremely tight clothing, oversized pants, or revealing attire is permitted.

Shorts and skirt length should be no shorter than mid-thigh.

Shorts should be worn under dresses and skirts.

Young children need to wear clothing that they can easily get on and off by themselves. This enables them to feel successful and independent.

All children in the Primary and Toddler environments are required to have at least one complete change of clothing at school (including socks and underwear). Elementary students are required to have a change of athletic attire at school for free play and wellness activities. Please check periodically to replace clothing that may no longer fit or may be inappropriate for the current season.

What's wrong with characters, sayings and advertisements?

We would like to take this opportunity to explain our rationale. Generally, our attitude is there is nothing "wrong" with characters, sayings and advertisements. However, we feel they are not appropriate for school attire. We have found over the years that this type of clothing can be very distracting, making it difficult for children to attend to their work. Sometimes children imitate the characters, acting out in an inappropriate manner. Another difficulty is the disharmony it can create among children who either like or dislike the characters. We certainly recognize that many characters represent good values and are good role models but others are more questionable. We would rather not put our faculty and staff in the difficult position of having to judge the moral fortitude of each character. Our goal is to create a positive environment where both children and faculty can stay focused on the joy of learning. It is our belief that the current dress code is important for creating this atmosphere.

What Students Need to Bring to School

Renaissance provides the needed school supplies for our carefully prepared learning environments. Therefore, unless a teacher makes a specific request, the children do not need to bring supplies to school.

Toys, make-up, jewelry, candy, and gum should not be brought to school. These items are often a distraction and can be a source of conflict when a child does not want to share with others. Please support us in this policy and see that these items are left at home or in the car.

Some classes have a designated show-and-tell time or a special "me museum" day when the child can bring something special to share with the class at circle time and put on display. Teachers will let parents know the specific procedure for this kind of sharing for their child's classroom.

Please be on the alert for small, unfamiliar items that may show up in your child's pockets or lunch box. The tiny pieces of our Montessori materials are sometimes so precious to children that they decide to carry them around and sometimes even carry them home. If you find something that you suspect may belong at school, simply remind your child that school things need to stay at school so that all of the children can use them; please return it to the teacher on the next school day. Some of those small pieces are very expensive and difficult to replace, so please help us help the children take care of them.

Nutrition Policy

The Renaissance community places a great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition as the first step in a life-long wellness education program. The food our children eat for breakfast, snack, and lunch must provide them with the energy and nutrition needed for a positive and successful day of learning. We are counting on you to help us teach your child about properly fueling their body with healthy food choices.

Parents help provide community snacks for their child's classroom. A snack calendar will be provided so that you will know your assigned days. The snack basket will then be sent home on a rotating basis. We ask that you only provide fresh fruits and vegetables on your child's snack day.

Students in all classes may bring their own lunches to school. Parents and/or students are asked to pack nutritious, well-balanced lunches. Please be sure that lunchboxes are clearly labeled with students' names. Keep in mind that your child will be serving him/herself. Practice at home opening the lunchbox, thermos, and other containers you may be sending with your child. With younger children, it is a good idea to prepare food in small,

easy-to-handle servings, such as cutting sandwiches in quarters, slicing up fresh fruit, and preparing bite-size pieces of cheese. Each classroom has the ability to warm food in microwave ovens. Keep in mind that if every student brings a “warm up” it will take longer before your child’s food is ready to eat.

The following foods are not permitted at school:

- Sodas or sugary drinks
- Candy, Cookies, Cake or other desserts
- Foods that are eaten by squeezing them into the mouth
- Processed foods with excessive sugar, chemical additives, preservatives and food colorings.
- For Toddlers, foods that are choking hazards or allergen risks such as peanut butter, nuts and popcorn.

Special Dietary Restrictions: Some students may follow a special diet for religious or medical reasons. Please be sure to notify teachers if your child should avoid certain foods. This will be taken into account when planning special snacks and cooking projects.

Field Trips and Transportation Policy

Kindergarten through Elementary students will have opportunities to participate in field trips throughout the year. These trips are often planned to coordinate with subjects being studied in class. Other trips are scheduled for enrichment and community service. All trips will be well chaperoned by teachers and/or parents. Parents will always receive a notice about upcoming field trips.

Part of the Elementary curriculum involves what we call, “Going Out.” These are short excursions, often in small groups, for such purposes as doing research or obtaining supplies needed for a special project. (Planning the supply list, working out the budget, and doing the shopping for a project can be a very valuable part of the student’s learning experience.) Parents will always be given at least 48 hours notice for the “going out” excursions.

Transportation Policy

1. All children 8 and under will be transported by bus or volunteer/staff drivers with appropriate booster seats.
2. Upper Elementary students will be transported by bus, volunteer or staff drivers.
3. All parents or teachers who drive on field trips are required to be fingerprinted and have a local background check, a copy of their driver’s license, and proof of insurance on file.
4. Field trip drivers are required to abide by Florida safety laws. Children will be required to sit in the back seat (unless they are 12 or older and over 100 pounds) of the vehicle and wear seat belts at all times.

Birthdays

Birthdays are important to children and they love to share this special day with their friends at school. Renaissance School classes have a special observance for this occasion called, “The Celebration of Life.” Parents are asked to provide a brief biography and a photo of each year of their child’s life. Our classroom celebration includes a dramatic account of the child’s life and journey on the planet Earth. A candle is lit to represent the sun. The birthday child holds a globe and walks around the sun one time for each year of his life. The pictures and biography are shared, along with a special birthday cooking project provided by your child’s teacher. Keep in mind this is not your child’s birthday party.

If you are planning a birthday party outside of school, we ask that you **do not** send in party invitations to be distributed, nor pass them out yourself at school. Likewise, please do not send in gifts for other children with your child. In the past, these situations have been upsetting for children who are not invited.

Celebrations

At Renaissance, celebrations are an important way for us to share our community spirit. Children will participate

in several ceremonies and celebrations throughout the year. Ceremonies are held to commemorate such things as the opening day of school and United Nations Day. Older students will usually plan and run the ceremonies, while younger students participate at a level appropriate for their age.

At Renaissance, we celebrate both traditional American holidays and some non-traditional holidays from other cultures. Holiday celebrations are kept fairly low key and are generally incorporated into our study of the needs of humans. Parents are welcome to share holiday customs from their families and cultural heritage. The more we know about each other and the traditions of people throughout the world, the more we all grow in understanding, respect, and appreciation.

Discipline Policy

The Renaissance School practices positive techniques that will assist the child in developing self-control and pro-social behavior. This consists of direct guidance until the child has acquired the self-control and degree of independence required to act more freely on his own. We believe that children have the right to work and choose activities on their own as long as they work in a manner that does not infringe on the rights of others, nor harm themselves, others, or the environment. Teachers are directed to intervene when a child is engaged in disruptive, abusive, dangerous, or destructive behavior. In such cases, the teacher will first attempt to redirect the child to a more positive activity. If the inappropriate behavior persists, the child will be removed from the group until he or she has regained sufficient control to resolve the conflict. Teachers remain calm, yet firm in maintaining classroom order. Creative and gentle techniques are encouraged such as redirecting children to more appropriate activities or offering choices with logical consequences. We encourage children to deal with their own conflicts in a positive, peaceful manner. Teaching conflict resolution procedures to even our youngest children helps them to learn how to settle their own disputes with minimal adult intervention. Although children are considered responsible for their own behavior, staff members are always available to assist the children in achieving self-control.

In the case of extreme or persistent behavioral challenges, the parents will be notified. The school is committed to working closely with parents to resolve such issues. Our goal is to create a positive and peaceful environment for all students; therefore, physical and verbal aggression/violence will not be tolerated. If your child shows these behaviors, and is unable to regain control and resolve the conflict peacefully, your child will need to go home early. Parents are expected to pick up the child promptly and keep the child home for the remainder of the day. A parent conference will be required for the child to be readmitted to class. The school reserves the right to dismiss the student if the inappropriate behavior persists despite parent and school efforts to resolve the problem.

Our goal is to work in partnership with parents to nurture peaceful students. We believe that if we all work together toward this goal we will succeed.

Ground Rules

Ground rules are necessary to establish and maintain an environment conducive to the development of self-discipline, self-control, concentration, and independence. They are responsibilities based on the rights of the people in the group to learn and work safely and respectfully. The class and school ground rules are stated clearly and consistently during and throughout the school year.

While each class will have procedures specific to that class, all of the Renaissance students are expected to follow these basic ground rules. (We recognize that Infants and Toddlers are just beginning to gain independence and thus are in a learning phase for understanding and following rules).

1. Respect yourself, other people, and the environment.
2. Demonstrate safe behavior at all times.
4. Be responsible.

Children are very observant and learn by imitating adults. With this in mind, we feel that setting a good example is the best reminder of appropriate behavior. With positive help and guidance, children will develop confidence

in their ability to make appropriate behavioral choices and deal with their own problems. When they realize that they are respected, they will likewise be able to respect others in return. We have found that when the ground rules are clear and consistent, and positive redirecting approaches are applied, the children eventually take responsibility for themselves, and as a group maintain the ground rules, thus necessitating only occasional reminders.

Behavioral Incident Reports

We are committed to keeping parents informed, however, we do not feel it is necessary, nor in the child's best interest, to report every small infraction that occurs in the normal process of developing self-discipline. Parents will receive an incident report when we deem a behavior to be unusual and significant. The report will describe the behavior, the circumstances in which it occurred, and what action was taken. Parents are asked to read the report, sign it, take a copy for themselves and leave one for the school. A parent-teacher conference will be called if inappropriate behavior persists.

Special Information

Significant changes at home can affect the child's behavior at school. In the event that a significant change occurs in your home, please consider informing your child's teacher, or the administration, as soon as possible. All information will be regarded as confidential. We will accept your judgment as to the kind of changes that may affect your child's behavior and sense of security. We will also keep you informed of any significant changes in the school environment which may affect your child.

Child Abuse Reporting Policy

All employees are required by the state of Florida to read the Florida Department of Children and Families' Professional Guide titled, "Child Abuse and Neglect in Florida," and to remain informed of Florida law regarding child abuse.

Florida Statute, Chapter 39, Part II, requires anyone who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, abandonment, or neglect to immediately report such knowledge or suspicion. Employees of Renaissance School who are acting in their official or professional capacity, and become aware, or suspect, that a student has suffered, or faces the threat of any physical or mental wound, injury, or disability, or condition that reasonably indicates child abuse or neglect, shall immediately notify the Florida Department of Family Services Central Abuse Hotline (1-800-96-Abuse). Florida law allows for anonymous reporting, however, we encourage our staff to inform the Head of School that a report has been made. At such time, a written record would be made and placed in the child's file of any physical injuries, suspected sexual misconduct and evidence thereof, signs of neglect, drastic changes in behavior, and direct quotations from the child indicating abuse. This information would also be given to the proper authorities when reporting suspected abuse. In the event that such a report has been made and the administration has been notified, the parent would be informed by the Head of School.

Renaissance Parents/ Creating Partnerships

Parent involvement creates partnerships, builds community within the school and gives the children a sense of connection outside the school day. Being directly involved in the school also provides an opportunity to view the school from a unique internal perspective, giving families a much deeper appreciation for how devoted the teachers are to the children and how committed the administration is to their vision.

Renaissance strongly encourages families to feel at home and participate in the broader life of the school through social, educational, and volunteer activities. Parents play a crucial role at Renaissance. As a community of parents and educators, our ideas, ideals, and input help to literally shape the school.

Volunteering: The Gift of Time and Talent

One of the most valuable contributions that families can make to Renaissance is the gift of their time and expertise. Parents, grandparents, and friends of the school are often found helping out in the office, assisting in the classrooms, working with children in the gardens, serving as field trip drivers, planning the next special event, or serving on a school committee. Although most parents spend considerable amounts of time as Renaissance volunteers, there is no expectation for a set time commitment. We do however, keep a log of volunteer hours. The tallied hours for any given year is quite impressive. We use this information when applying for grants to demonstrate the high level of internal contributions we receive from our families.

Fundraising/Annual Giving

Renaissance is an independent, non-profit, tax-exempt organization. Voluntary contributions to Renaissance, where no goods or services are received in return, are tax-deductible as defined by IRS guidelines. Operating expenses and additional programs are funded through a combination of tuition and fundraising. We anticipate that your child's unique experience at Renaissance will inspire you to support our fundraising efforts and ensure continued quality education.

Our annual fundraising opportunities include:

- The Annual Fund Campaign runs every fall. During this time, parents, grandparents, teachers, staff, Board Members, and friends of the school are asked to show their support for the school through voluntary contributions. For this fundraiser, our goal of 100% participation takes priority over any monetary goal. Everyone is asked to give an amount that fits their family budget; be it \$10 or \$10,000, every gift is valued! The funds raised in this campaign are typically targeted for specific programs or needs within the school and to enhance the curriculum.
- The Golf Tournament is held in the spring. This fundraiser offers opportunities for the Lee and Collier communities to support our school while having fun! Funds from this event go into a fund for the development and expansion of the Renaissance School.
- Friends of Renaissance Scholarship Fund offers an opportunity for parents, grandparents and community members to contribute to the fund or sponsor an individual scholarship.
- While we promise to limit the number of times that we ask Renaissance families to directly contribute money or participate in major fundraising projects, there are various small funding programs in which we do participate. These programs include such things as occasional faculty requests for donated (wish list) items, and special Elementary student fundraising/business venture projects.

Fundraising for the Future: Our Foundation Board

In some years, in addition to the annual fundraising programs listed above, the school will seek contributions to a Capital Campaign to raise money for building, land, and major expansion projects. The Renaissance Board of Trustees are constantly evaluating the needs of our school community and our long-range plans. A capital campaign enables us to move from planning and concept to reality. The school's Endowment Fund offers opportunities for interested parties to contribute to the long-term stability of the school. Contributions to this fund are invested for the school's future. Funds are left untouched for many years until they have accumulated to a level where there is significant interest income that can be used without ever depleting the principal. Schools with a strong endowment are able to provide for extraneous operating expenses and program development, while also providing a high level of security for the school's continued future. Any one interested in contributing to this fund should contact the Office.

Family Resource Center

Renaissance School is committed to supporting families by providing many opportunities for them to become more familiar with the Montessori approach and their child's school experience, as well as child development and positive parenting skills. We offer a variety of workshops and classes while regularly inviting guest lecturers. We encourage all parents to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered; after all, raising and edu-

cating our children are the most important and most challenging jobs we will ever undertake. Additionally, the Renaissance School lending library is available to parents. It contains an extensive library of books, tapes, and videos relating to child development, parenting, and educational issues. Feel free to come in, browse, and ask for recommendations. We will be happy to refer you to available community resources as needed.

Communication Between School and Home

Communication between school and parents is vital. Feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress. We ask, however, that you consider that the teacher's responsibility during the school day is to the children. Morning arrival and dismissal times are particularly sensitive transition times when the students need the attention of their teachers. For this reason, we ask that interruptions during these times be kept to a minimum. If you must speak to your child's teacher in the morning, make arrangements to do so before school begins. Likewise, you can make arrangements to speak to the teacher after school. Otherwise, you can correspond via a note or email, and the teacher will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference. During the school year we will send home letters, notes, newsletters, and announcements. Generally, such information will be sent electronically directly to your email address. Occasionally some hard copy correspondence will come home with our child in Friday Mail Folders. **Check your computer every Friday for our weekly Email Newsletter "Happenings".**

Please carefully read the information we send in the Friday Mail Folders and weekly E-Mails, as well as any other school correspondence. This is our main means of communicating with you and we want you to be well informed! Folders should be returned to school on Monday.

Whenever parents are separated, divorced, or for some other reason are not living at the same address, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and school matters. An exception may be requested by a court order, by either one or both parents: the request would require full consideration of the legal ramifications and other relevant matters, to the effect that dual communication is not required, desired, or to be pursued. If granted, this exception (documented by a signed court order) would be noted in the child's school file and honored as indicated.

When open communication is possible with both parents the following should be considered:

- Both parents at their respective addresses will receive, at no extra cost, copies of progress reports and announcements mailed out or sent home with students.
- Invitations to school functions will be sent to both parents and both parents are equally welcome at school events.
- When parent/teacher conferences are scheduled, we need to avoid separate conferences for each parent, as it is extremely important to communicate the same information to both parents at the same time. If either parent is uncomfortable with scheduling joint conferences, he or she should contact the office to discuss the situation with an administrator.

Free, open, and respectful communication among all parties is encouraged so that all are fully informed and can best support the student.

Classroom Observations

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to observe in their child's classroom. Arrangements should be made in advance with the teacher. Observation Guidelines will be provided prior to your visit. These guidelines will help you to enter the classroom and remain there with minimal disruption to the normal activities of the day. This shows respect for the children, their work, and the environment. It also enables the observer to get a true picture of what is typical in our classrooms.

The first few weeks of school are an important orientation time for both new and returning students. For this reason, we avoid scheduling observations in the first six weeks of school. After this time, we urge parents to contact the teacher and set up a morning to visit. Please keep in mind when visiting, that your role is that of an observer of the children and their activities. Observers are asked not to get involved in what the children are

doing, but to remain in the background, and enjoy watching the children. You should schedule approximately 45 minutes for your observation. Please make note of any questions. The teacher may not be able to answer them during your observation, but she will be glad to call or schedule a conference later to discuss what you observed.

Renaissance Academic Policies Homework

Homework is assigned to Renaissance students beginning at the Kindergarten level. The assignments are intended to extend and enrich the students' learning experience. We do not want homework to be a burden or simply busy work. Rather, it is designed as a vehicle for daily practice and the reinforcement of skills, as well as an opportunity for students to more deeply penetrate a given subject or project on their own. Some of the projects, particularly for Kindergarten will involve parent or family participation, while other projects should be completed independently.

The Elementary students have a higher level of expectation and accountability in regard to their independence. Homework at this level will often be a continuation or completion of assignments and projects that were started in class, but require additional time beyond school hours. Students at all levels are expected to read at home every night.

As parents, it is your responsibility to provide an appropriate place and time for your child to complete homework. It is the student's responsibility to complete the work. Ideally, the projects will provide parents and children with many opportunities to work together and discuss the interesting things your child is learning.

Technology in the Classroom

Renaissance School believes that computers and other technology can be very valuable learning tools. However, based on current child development and brain research, we feel that younger children receive more benefit from the use of manipulative learning activities. For this reason, we do not have computers in our Early Childhood classrooms.

At the Elementary level, we are very committed to integrating technology into all learning areas. Computers and the internet are used as a practical resource for research and creative writing. We would like our students to see computers and technology as the wonderful tools they are, rather than simply a toy on which to play games. For this reason, we are very careful about the types of software that we introduce. We avoid learning games, again preferring our hands-on materials. Ultimately, our goal is for older students to learn to do Power Point presentations, desk top publishing, create websites, do multi-media presentations, and more. Typically, it is the students who drive a school forward in the use of technology. We fully expect them to keep us challenged in offering them cutting edge technological opportunities.

Portfolios

Teachers of our youngest children begin a simplified portfolio process by keeping a file of the children's development. This provides a physical record of the child's progress. Students in Kindergarten through Elementary begin creating their own portfolios of work. These folders contain an ongoing record of the student's best work and special projects. At the end of the year, the portfolio becomes a permanent record of the year. Portfolios include art, math, stories, spelling words, essays, special reports and research.

Evaluation of Student's Progress

The Renaissance curriculum is carefully structured and sequential, which enables the teachers to track each student's progress and create individual learning plans. The teachers continually assess and maintain careful records of each student's academic, social, and work progress.

Periodic progress reports will provide parents with information about their child's school progress, learning style, work habits, interests and abilities.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parents are encouraged to meet with teachers and discuss their child's progress and/or behavior as often as they feel it is necessary. Teachers are available almost everyday between 3:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. and would be happy to talk to you on the phone or in person. Appointments are recommended to assure that the teacher can give you the time and attention you need.

Formal parent/teacher conferences are scheduled during the school year. Conference dates are listed on the school calendar. It is imperative that parents reserve these dates and attend every conference, so that they can remain fully informed about their child's progress and school experience, and thus support their child and the school.

Standardized Tests

Renaissance students are given the Stanford Achievement Test beginning in the third grade. Third grade students take a practice test only. Students in grades four and up will be formally tested and the scores will become part of their cumulative file. These tests are considered to be only one means of measuring student progress.

We consider test-taking skills to be a practical life lesson that students need to master. Students will take practice tests and learn the psychology of test taking. They may even make up their own test. Our goal is to remove the pressure so that when the time comes for the actual test, the students will be relaxed and view the process as another work activity.

Teachers will utilize these tests as a measure of students' progress. At Renaissance, teachers use multiple assessment strategies to assist in planning and guiding the students' learning. The teachers will share this information, along with individual test results, at parent/teacher conferences.

Learner Outcomes

Renaissance School offers educational opportunities to students in four developmental levels: Infant, Toddler, Primary and Elementary. The Primary and Elementary are divided into three (3) year cycles. These groupings allow students to progress according to their interest and ability level. Specific skills and concepts in the areas of intellectual, socio-emotional and physical development have been identified for each level. These learner outcomes are expected for each student completing the full three (3) year cycle. In the event a student is projected to be *significantly* delayed in meeting expectations, the teacher will recommend the student for a child study team evaluation and a modified individual learning plan.

Transcripts and Student Records

The parent or guardian, by written request to the office, with at least 24 hours advance notice, may request a photocopy of the student's file, along with completed recommendation forms, to be issued to another school.

Privacy of Student Files

Student files are confidential records and kept secure from unauthorized access.

Parents or guardians may have access to the student's file by written request to the office with at least 24 hours advance notice. The file must be reviewed in the presence of a Renaissance staff member and may not leave the school office. If a parent or guardian disagrees with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the permanent file with relevant comments.

Officials of the State or County Health Department, Department of Children and Families, or the Department of Education, may have the right to view student files without parent or guardian permission. Other government officials may have access to student files by court order. Should this occur, the parents will be notified by the school, in writing, that such an inspection has been requested or made.

A copy of the student's file, or pertinent items from the file, may be sent to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician, if requested in writing by the parent/guardian. Likewise, the school asks parents to sign a release form giving professionals the right to share evaluations and information with the school. Any such evaluations are marked confidential and become part of the student's file.

Financial Policy

Renaissance School is a non-profit organization dependent on tuition as its principal source of income. Tuition is based on a school year calendar and is payable annually. Charges are billed and payable July 1st. For the convenience of parents, payment plans are available. Parents and guardians are responsible for full payment

from the date they contracted to enter the child until the end of the school year. No reductions are made for absences, withdrawals, or dismissals. Student accounts must be kept up to date. If tuition bills are not paid by the due date, a \$50 late fee will be assessed. The school will withhold any and all services to students whose accounts have fallen behind unless written arrangements have been made for deferred payment. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

Re-enrollment

Invitations to continue at Renaissance are normally automatic, but not guaranteed. Decisions are made by the administration and faculty based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and the parents. As always, our goal is to help each child and family find the perfect match between student, home, and school.

Re-enrollment materials will be mailed home in the early spring and are due back with the annual deposit by the date specified on the re-enrollment letter. If the school has not received a student's re-enrollment materials by the specified date, his/her space will be made available to a new student who has applied for school admission.

No student may re-enroll if there is an outstanding balance remaining on his/her account.

Financial Aid

Renaissance School is committed to providing quality education at a fair and reasonable cost. Nevertheless, our tuition is beyond the means of some interested families. In keeping with Dr. Montessori's philosophy that all children could profit from exposure to this method, we have established a financial assistance fund to provide aid to families who otherwise could not offer this educational advantage to their children. All financial assistance is based on need, as well as the family's, and student's ability to benefit from and contribute to our school's program. Additional information about our financial assistance policy may be obtained from the school office. If the school has not received the financial aid information by the due date, the school reserves the right to deny assistance.

Renaissance financial assistance is made possible by fundraising. Timely submission of financial aid applications is very important so that the financial aid committee can accurately assess the need for any given school year and determine how to distribute the funds available.

Photos and Videos of Students

Renaissance teachers and volunteers often have a camera ready to capture those magical school moments. Both still photos and videos are used to record our school's history, memorialize special events, and to make a record of children's work. *These photos or videos may be used for promotional materials such as a school brochure or a magazine advertisement.* **Should you not want your child's photos used publicly, we must receive a written and notarized document prohibiting such use.**

Babysitting Policy

We are dedicated to preserving the integrity of the parent/teacher, teacher/child relationship. Therefore, we prohibit all regular staff members from babysitting for families enrolled in Renaissance School outside the parameters of the Renaissance School Babysitting Co-op Exchange. We encourage families to join this co-op in order to network and build relationships with other families for babysitting exchanges or referrals.

Supporting Your Child's School Experience at Home

Parents are often amazed by the level of independence and sense of responsibility they observe in their children when they are in their Montessori community. Parents often ask, "How can we get them to be this way at home?" Typically, home is a more laid back environment than school (as it should be). One can, however, encourage more independence and responsibility at home by applying some of the same principles we apply when preparing our classrooms. The list below simply offers suggestions to help bridge the school and home

experience and assist your child in feeling that he or she is a capable person and a contributing member of the family.

- Provide a stable stool to assist your child in reaching the sink, light switches, toothbrushes, books, toys and other items of personal use.
- Hang clothes in a low rack in the closet so that the child can hang up his own clothes. Organize clothing in drawers, grouped for mixing and matching to make choosing clothing easier. Keep appropriate school clothes separate from play clothes to avoid the morning argument.
- Encourage your child to help with laundry. Younger children can fold and help put clothes away. Older children can actually be taught to do their own laundry.
- Hang mirrors and art at your child's eye level (at least in their room; but a few carefully placed in other areas of the house are nice too).
- Place appropriate, nutritious food items in a lower cabinet so that your child can prepare his/her own snack when hungry.
- Place everyday dishes in a lower cabinet so children can help unload the dishwasher. This also helps when children are preparing snacks.
- Put milk, juice, and water, in smaller containers in the refrigerator so the child will be able to successfully get his own drink.
- Provide clean-up supplies for your child and give him a lesson in how to clean- up his own messes. (Suggested supplies: small broom and dustpan, carpet sweeper, dust buster, sponges, and towels.)
- Place toys, art supplies, and books on reachable shelves instead of a toy box. Rotate these items so that the child has only a manageable amount out at any given time. Use baskets, desk organizers, and crates to keep like items together and to display them in an attractive manner.
- Provide a shelf or an area in every room for your child to keep some of his/her activities.
- Create a self-quieting corner for each child, so they have a special place to go when they need to be alone, or when you need to recommend that they take some time to calm down.
- Ask yourself, "What new thing can I show my child how to do for him or herself this week?"
- Invite an older child to help reorganize and/or redecorate his room.
- Involve even the youngest children in chores around the house, increasing the expectation as the child gets older.
- Make sure your child has a comfortable place to do homework, research, and special projects.
- Monitor and limit TV and computer time.
- Read to your child (no matter how old he or she is, read together!)

Talk about feelings with your child. Use logical consequences instead of punishment. Logical consequences are always reasonable, related to the misbehavior, respectful, and teach the child to take responsibility for his or her behavior. (Read about this in Positive Discipline, by Jane Nelsen, or Redirecting Children's Behavior (RCB) by Kathryn Kvols. RCB Parenting courses are offered at Renaissance several times a year).

Share your passion and interests with your child and take time to find out about theirs.