RMS Middle Years Program Handbook

This handbook is supplemental to the policies and procedures found in the Rochester Montessori School Parent Handbook.

RMS Middle Years Education

The whole life of the adolescent should be organized in such a way that it will enable him or her, when the time comes, to make a triumphal entry into social life, not entering it debilitated, isolated, or humiliated, but with the head high, sure of himself or herself.

- Dr. Maria Montessori

The Rochester Montessori School offers an authorized IB Middle Years Program (MYP) which takes place during grades six, seven, and eight. Students enrolled in the MYP can expect challenging academic studies, community service, entrepreneurial experiences, a global perspective, and more.

Young adolescence is a period of tremendous metamorphic growth and challenge. However, the process of growth is extremely individual, varied, and normal. Growth occurs rapidly for some and more gradually for others. In accordance with Montessori pedagogy, the program and the prepared environment for young adolescents differ remarkably from the Toddler Community, Children's House and Elementary programs. Simply, young adolescents work to accomplish different developmental and academic needs.

If there is one compelling need for students in grades six through eight it is to belong and contribute to a community. This is a central preoccupation. Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1954) described children of this age as "social newborns" seeking to take their place as contributing members of today's global society. Montessori wrote, *Success in life depends in every case on self-confidence and the knowledge of one's own capacity….The consciousness of knowing how to make one-self useful, how to help mankind in many ways, fills the soul with noble confidence….The feeling of interdependence must be bound to the power to be self-sufficient.*

It is essential for young adolescents to be immersed in rigorous academic study that also engages them with real world decision making. We believe that students learn best when their learning experiences meaningfully connect to their lives. We do this by preparing environments in which students have access to the resources they need to inquire into the human identity, global challenges, and what it means to be internationally minded.[1]

The IB Learner Profile

A Montessori/IB education begins with respect for the whole person, for their learning styles, strengths, challenges, knowledge, and experiences. Our program addresses each student's cognitive development and social, emotional, and physical well-being. We guide students to become active and caring members of their communities as well as internationally minded learners.

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[1] I.B. The middle years programme. Education for a better world.

The Learner Profile describes the IB mission in action. We engage students in activities that empower them to become inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective.

Eight Subject Groups

The MYP curriculum is organized into eight subject groups: the arts, design, individuals and society, language acquisition, language and literature, mathematics, physical and health education, and sciences.

Each subject consists of defined learning objectives, key and related concepts, global contexts, and content. The key and related concepts are presented and learned in terms of specific global contexts. Concepts are powerful ideas with universal application; the meaning and interpretation of concepts change according to personal experience which is contextualized.

Subject Group	*Description*
The Arts	This subject includes classes in both the visual and performing arts. Students have opportunities to work as artists and to explore, shape, and communicate their sense of identity and individuality. As artists, students experience the process of creating art. This involves developing curiosity, creativity, and performance capabilities. Creativity is defined as a process involving "the capacity to generate new ideas and consider existing ideas from new perspectives."[2] Students also work to develop an understanding of the arts in terms of historical and cultural contexts. Students maintain an arts process journal in which to show progress and record the development of ideas and skills.
Design	The ability to design is an essential 21st century set of habits, and design is not limited to a "talented few." In the MYP, design is defined as the "link between innovation and creativity."[3] Students engage in a variety of design projects and experience design as a process through which thoughts and possibilities are brought to successful implementation. More specifically, students use the MYP design cycle and experience design as inquiry, problem solving, model creation, and decision making. Students also become aware that design involves identifying and understanding a variety of factors that may aid or constrain the process.
Individuals and Societies	In this subject group, students study topics drawn from the traditional humanities subjects including history, anthropology, psychology, geography, political science, and economics. These studies ask students to develop respect and open-mindedness for the diversity of human cultures and beliefs. Students develop and test hypotheses, collect information, describe and analyze data, and interpret and present findings. A further goal is for students to consider their own identities as individuals and as members of local and global communities. As they grow into an increasingly changing, interconnected world, "studies in individuals and societies are essential for developing empathy and international-mindedness, including the idea that 'other people, with their differences, can also be right.'"[4]
Language Acquisition	Learning a language is a highly individual process and involves developing knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skills. Through the study of another language, students come to realize and appreciate there are other ways of living and understanding the world. RMS students study Spanish, and they work to use and comprehend Spanish in its spoken and written forms. This involves developing vocabulary, grammatical

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[2] I.B. *Arts guide*, p. 5.

[3] I.B. *Design guide*, p. 4.

[4] I.B. *Individuals and societies guide*, p. 4.

Subject Group	Description
	structures, and increasing the length and complexity of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in a variety of contexts. Students also study various cultural aspects of Spanish speaking countries.
Language and Literature	Human thought and activity occur in language. Studies of English language and literature guide students to explore self-identities and an appreciation of the nature of language and literature including its power and beauty. Students develop analytical thinking, imagination, creativity, and communication skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as they engage in inquiry-based activities.
Mathematics	A RMS goal is for students to understand mathematics conceptually rather than as series of memorized formulae and rules. When students think mathematically, they can engage with authentic problem situations designed for the growth of analytical reasoning and problem-solving skills. As students engage as mathematicians, they also use technological tools to represent information and build models. Learning to communicate how solutions are derived is more valued than merely having the "right answer."
Physical and Health Education	Understanding and appreciating the value of being physically active and making healthy life choices are goals for this subject group. Students engage in activities designed to teach a variety of concepts and skills that foster an awareness of physical development and health perspectives. This includes learning to appreciate and respect the ideas of others and developing effective communication and collaboration skills.
Sciences	MYP science studies guide students to investigate issues through research, observation, and experimentation. Students conduct investigations through an experimental cycle involving inquiry, design, process, and evaluation. Students also explore related issues such as morality, ethics, culture, economics, politics, and the environment. Critical and creative thinking develop as students engage in research and design and as they consider and reflect on assumptions and alternative explanations.

The content of each subject is presented through a variety of teaching and learning experiences including presentations, investigations, field trips, and units of study. In sum, the learning experiences guide students to become creative, critical, and reflective thinkers. The learning activities also provide considerable intellectual challenge through a set of concepts and skills the connect students with the real world. Each course further guides students to develop communication skills, intercultural understanding, and global engagement. We regard these as essential qualities for students who are becoming global leaders.[5]

A unit of study provides students with guided inquiry. Each unit begins with a statement of inquiry and identifies one or more learning objective, the key and related concepts, a global context, learning activities and learning skills, assignments, and rubrics used to assess final unit projects. Additional information is provided below.

In each subject we emphasize active learning and "learning how to learn." We emphasize developing habits of thinking and lifelong learning through engagement with complex global challenges.

MYP Units of Study
A unit of study incorporates specific objectives, a key concepts, several related concepts, a global contexts, a statement of inquiry, inquiry questions, ATL skills, purposeful learning activities, and criteria for formative (on-going) and summative (final) assessments.

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[5] I.B. *Individuals and societies guide*, p. 4.

Objectives

Each subject is structured with four subject-specific objectives which define what students should know, understand, and be able to do at the end of the program. In each subject objectives are aligned with corresponding assessment criteria.

"Knowing and Understanding" is an objective found in the subject *Individuals and Societies*. The purpose of this objective is for student to develop factual and conceptual understanding. Students at the end of eighth grade should be able to:

  i. use terminology in context.
  ii. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of subject-specific content and concepts through descriptions, explanations, and example.

"Investigating Patterns" is an objective found in the subject *Mathematics* which allows students to experience mathematical discovery. Students at the end of eighth grades should be able to:

  i. select and apply mathematical-problem solving techniques to discover complex patterns.
  ii. describe patterns as general rules consistent with findings.
  iii. prove, or verify and justify, general rules.

Conceptual Understanding

Our MYP studies incorporate inquiry, conceptual understanding, and global contexts for learning. Learning to inquire and think involves transforming personal understanding and constructing meaning by developing conceptual understanding. In each subject, students engage with a defined set of key and related concepts. The key and related concepts are the central ideas of each subject.

Concepts are big, enduring, and relevant ideas that transcend time and culture. Concepts enable inquiry into issues that have personal and global significance. Concepts have multiple dimensions and definitions which enable student engagement with higher-order thinking as they connect facts and skills with more complex conceptual understanding. As defined by the IB, "Concepts represent the vehicle for students' inquiry into issues and ideas of personal, local, and global significance, providing the means by which the essence of a subject can be explored."[6]

The MYP identifies 16 key concepts for curriculum exploration. Each unit of study develops one key concept through a variety of learning activities and investigations. The key concepts are:

Aesthetics	Change	Communication	Communities
Connections	Creativity	Culture	Development
Form	Global Interactions	Identity	Logic
Perspective	Relationships	Time, Place, and Space	Systems

A unit of study also includes several related concepts. The study of related concepts promotes deeper learning and understanding. Related concepts are drawn from specific disciplines.

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[6] IB. *From principles to practice*, p. 14.

Global Contexts

Learning is also contextual; that is, learning involves engaging with universal concepts in terms of real settings and events. Each context helps students answer the following questions:[7]

- Why are we engaged in this inquiry?
- Why are these concepts important?
- Why is it important for me to understand?
- Why do people care about this topic?

A goal is for students to develop global awareness and competence. Through their studies and related activities, students come to understand that concepts are subject to interpretation and that their interpretations matter.

> *Global competence calls for deep, engaged learning. To prosper in the world, students must not only be able to understand globalization, but be able to both reflect critically on its promise and peril, and to act responsibly to make that world a better place for themselves and for the communities in which they live.*[8]

The MYP identifies six global contexts. Each context directs learners towards independent and shared inquiry into:

Global Context	Description
Identities and Relationships	An inquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values; personal, physical, mental, social, and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities, and cultures; rights and responsibilities; what it means to be human
Orientation in Space and Time	An inquiry into orientation in place and time; personal histories, homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations, and migrations of humankind; the relationships between, and the interconnectedness of, individuals and civilizations, from local and global perspectives
Personal and Cultural Exploration	An inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic
Scientific and Technical Innovation	An inquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment
Globalization and Sustainability	An inquiry into the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities; the structure and function of organizations; societal decision-making; economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment
Fairness and Development	An inquiry into the rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resources with other people and with other living things; communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution

Statement of Inquiry

The statement of inquiry presents the focus of the unit of study. The statement of inquiry combines the key and related concepts and a global context. The statement explains what students should understand and why that understanding is important. Examples include:

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[7] IB. *From principle to practice*, p. 58.
[8] IB. *From principles to practice*, p. 18.

- Personal and social perspectives on the process and effects of globalization reflect local circumstances and values.

- Language plays an important role in promoting sustainable and eco-friendly forms of tourism, and is the key to working collaboratively on efforts to reduce the negative effects of traditional tourism.

- Understanding form and shape enhances creativity.

- Designers adapt the form in which information is communicated in order to make it accessible to the end-user.

Inquiry Questions

The statement of inquiry identifies factual, conceptual, and debatable inquiry questions. The inquiry questions are developed by teachers and students. The inquiry questions give further direction to learning process and organize and sequence specific learning activities. For example:

- What are the components of a basic essay?
- What is more natural, order or chaos?
- Are myths universally true?
- Why do we tell stories?
- What are the most efficient strategies for building highly collaborative teams?
- Must revolutions involve violence?
- What is the value of negative space?
- Can everyone become artists?
- How do the arts influence society?

To develop conceptual understanding, students engage with levels of thinking that go beyond that required for memorizing facts. Students become increasingly competent critical and creative thinkers. Because concepts require thinking, students develop deeper understanding of the subject, engage in complexity, and formulate principles and generalizations they can use in new situations.

Approaches to Learning

MYP curriculum offers opportunities for students to develop skills that create habits of responsible lifelong learning. Students engage with five skill categories that facilitate effective and efficient learning. Students work with models, clear expectations, and multiple practice opportunities. The skill areas are:

- Thinking Skills including critical, creative, and transfer thinking
- Collaboration Skills
- Communication Skills
- Self-Management Skills including organization, affective, and reflection
- Research Skills including information and media literacy

Instructional Methods

The Montessori MYP uses a variety of instructional approaches. Instruction and assessment practices guide students to become responsible for their own learning, make connections between topics and ideas, and critically evaluate information.

Guided Instruction

Direct, didactic instruction helps students build listening, questioning, and note-taking skills. Lessons are presented by teachers, guest speakers, or even peers as students use various organizers, texts, and supplementary materials to gather information. Presenters use varied questioning strategies and offer challenging follow-up work to check understanding.

Seminar Inquiry

In weekly seminars, the class reads and explores ideas through a Socratic discussion. In these seminars, students learn to share ideas, analyze multiple-meanings of texts, paraphrase, debate, and respond considerately to each other. The Socratic seminar is an important part of the Middle School curriculum because it develops critical thinking and clarity of expression. The seminar allows students to increasingly take on leadership positions in seminar facilitation as they explore first-hand how knowledge can be produced and deepened through critical discussion.

Scientific Research

Through scientific inquiry, students learn to apply the steps of the scientific method to organize and guide their questioning. Either in the classroom lab or the outdoor environment, the scientific method is used in order to *do* the work of scientists and further students' understanding of rigor, validity, and reliability.

Individual Lessons

Individualized lessons occur in every aspect of the program. Teachers work one-on-one with students on a variety of lessons, assignments, and projects allowing instruction to be delivered at appropriate levels. Furthering the curriculum's attention to individual student needs, students' work plans are organized and presented in study guides that are modified to offer appropriate challenges to each student.

Peer Coaching

In a Montessori middle school, students typically work in small groups. They contribute to and support one another's learning as project collaborators, peer editors, business partners, and community service providers. Students are often challenged to work with partners or small groups, fostering collaborative, group work skills.

Assessment and Assessment Philosophy

At Rochester Montessori Middle School, we believe that assessment is an essential tool for developing engaging and clear curriculum and encouraging active student learning. The purpose of assessment is to:

1. Support curricular goals and encourage student learning.
2. Inform, enhance, and improve the teaching process.
3. Promote positive student attitudes towards learning.
4. Support the development of rigorous learning experiences and outcomes by describing clear and directed learning objectives.
5. Support students' developing responsibility for monitoring and sustaining their own learning.

Assessment of student work, learning, and progress is a community effort. Teachers, administrators, parents and most importantly the student herself or himself will be responsible for participating in the assessment process.

In accordance with the IB MYP, assessments are criterion-related, based upon pre-determined criteria set by the IBO and RMS faculty. Criterion-related means that teachers measure student work and achievement against specific subject area criteria, not against other individuals in the class. The objectives for each subject group are directly related to the assessment criteria of that particular subject group. The level of student success in reaching subject group objectives is measured in terms of levels of achievement, described in students' assessment journal and reported to parents in quarterly report cards.

Types of Assessment
A variety of assessment methods will be designed to help students meet learning objectives and demonstrate their knowledge and skills. These will include tasks that encourage self-reflection, peer-evaluation, teacher and parent evaluation, and goal setting. A mixture of formative (ongoing) and final (summative) assessments will be used.

Formative assessments allow students and faculty to examine learning and evaluate student achievement as an ongoing process and will include assessments such as:

1. rubrics
2. checklists
3. open-ended tasks
4. essays
5. research projects
6. performances
7. observations
8. journals
9. group work and collaboration

Students demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and skills through summative or final project assessment tasks. Summative assessments challenge students to examine their work in its entirety and build skills necessary for advanced coursework in the future.

Summative tasks are assessed using MYP assessment criteria. The process is transparent: students review the assessment criteria and rubrics when each unit of study begins. The purposes of assessment include:[9]

- Enhance student learning by providing feedback on the learning process.
- Provide opportunities for students to exhibit transfer of skills and knowledge across disciplines.
- Promote positive student attitudes towards learning.
- Promote a deep understanding of subject content by supporting students in their inquiries set in real-world contexts.
- Promote the development of critical – an creative – thinking skills.
- Reflect the international-mindedness of the program by designing assessments to be set in a variety of cultural and linguistic contexts.

Summative assessments may include:

1. exams
2. portfolio assessments
3. projects

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[9] I.B. *From principles into practice*, p. 78

4. formal presentations
5. formal papers and reports

Assessment Journals and Portfolios
An important goal of the RMS MYP is to develop learners who can take responsibility for their own learning, monitoring and sustaining their learning process and outcomes. A key tool in this effort will be the use of assessment/process journals. These journals will provide spaces for students to examine, reflect, evaluate, and set goals for their school work. Subject area learning objectives and criteria will be found in these journals as well as IB Learner Profile and Approaches to Learning reflective frameworks. The IB Learner Profile and Approaches to Learning reflective frameworks will help students and teachers reflect and monitor students' individual engagement, participation, and outcomes.

Assessment journals will be used as a central form of communication between students, parents, faculty and staff in regards to the student's growing responsibility for the direction and course of their learning. Student and teacher entries and reflections will be ongoing and journals are available to share with parents at any time. The journals will be formally sent home for parental input on a quarterly basis.

Parent-Student-Teacher Conferences
Formal parent, teacher, student conferences will be held twice a year. The Assessment Journal and student portfolio will be key tools for reflection and goal setting during conferences.

Formal grades and report cards will be sent home three times a year for grade six and quarterly for grade seven and eight. Report cards are based on formative and summative assessments including MYP subject area criteria.

Additional Information
Criterion-based and formative assessments support multiple learning styles as students are encouraged to demonstrate their knowledge in individually appropriate ways. For students needing curricular modifications or assistance, formative assessments, conferences, and reflective work will help students, parents and faculty set appropriate goals and objectives for students.

Because the Rochester Montessori Middle Years Program curriculum is interdisciplinary, assessment is a collaborative process for subject area teachers and students. Curricular planning will happens alongside assessment planning and formative assessments throughout the school year will provide opportunities for faculty to examine, reflect, evaluate, and modify curricular practices.

Report Cards: For Grades Seven and Eight Only
In preparation for grade-based assessments in high school and college, we will use the following grading scale for assigning letter grades:

A+	98-100
A	93-97
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76

C-   70-72
D+   67-69
D   63-66
D-   60-62
F   Below 60

Schedule, Grades Seven and Eight

The Middle School schedule is divided into four thematic quarters of eight to nine weeks. Each quarter is guided by an overarching theme contextualizing primarily the science and humanities topics and secondarily topics in Language Arts, Technology, Arts, Physical Education, Spanish and Mathematics. A one week, intercession program takes place at the end of each quarter. Grades will be determined for subject areas at the close of each thematic quarter.

Notes: Science and History meet for alternating three- or four-week periods.

Intercessions, Grades Seven and Eight

Four week-long intercessions may occur throughout the school year. A variety of subject-related activities will take place such as small business development, community service, and off-campus study. An off-campus site might be a local farm, state park, or environmental learning center. While there, students could engage in place-based studies involving humanities, sciences, and the arts. Working collaboratively with local farmers, land managers, or educators as well as their own teachers, students may further their studies in experiential education, local problem solving, and community service.

Service and Action: The Community Project

Community service is integral to Montessori and IB pedagogy. Students are guided to become caring community members and to making positive contributions to others and the environment. Often service activities are connected to classroom lessons and student can apply concepts, skills, and knowledge to real world circumstances. Service then becomes more than doing for others; service becomes engagement with others to accomplish shared commitments. Through the course of service activities, students can: become aware of their strengths; take on challenges and develop new skills; discuss, plan, and evaluate student-initiated activities; develop perseverance; and develop international-mindedness.[10]

Students will be expected to complete at least 20 hours of volunteer community service or apprenticeship studies per year. Details about this requirement and its supporting curriculum will be described during the initial parent/student/teacher school meeting.

The eighth grade Community Project supports student practice and strengthening ATL skills as they develop an in-depth inquiry leading to service in the community.

Micro-economies

Developing and running small businesses connects the young adolescent to the supreme realities of social life. Learning to think and engage as an entrepreneur is an essential 21st century skill. By developing and managing a micro-economy, students learn about business plans, initial investments, supply chains, marketing, customer relationships, sales, and banking. Over the years, middle school businesses have included cooking and selling breakfasts and lunches, growing and selling farm produce, and manufacturing an array of products such as soap,

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[10] I.B. *From principles into practice*, p. 24.

jewelry, pottery, and books. As part of their regular weekly activities, students will be expected to participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of a variety of micro-economy projects and build skills in economic management and entrepreneurship.

Summary

Young adolescents desire a place of their own in which they can contribute to others. This involves making, implementing, and learning from their plans, decisions, and mistakes. They have already learned to make choices. A developmental task of young adolescence is to become mindful of, and to anticipate the consequences of, their choices. These experiences open a new level of adult-like independence.

Montessori education for younger children provides carefully designed environments where children are appropriately challenged, engaged, and provided opportunities to develop independence and build academic, social, and intrapersonal skills. Our Middle Years Program continues this process by providing adolescents environments where they can begin to participate in their classroom, school, community, and world as engaged, productive citizens. We want students to develop responsibility and ownership for their own learning, supported by a community of learners and curriculum that is situated in real, meaningful, and purposeful contexts. The student's courses of studies are international in scope and support their understandings and engagements with the complexities of life on both a micro and macro level.

References

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The International Baccalaureate. http://ibo.org

Special Needs Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ✓ Communicate with our school community the program's expectations for creating and maintaining an inclusive learning environment in accordance with the policies and procedures of the IBO.
- ✓ Establish responsibilities of school community members (program coordinator, faculty, students, and parents) regarding the school's inclusiveness program.
- ✓ Support the work of teachers, parents, students and administrators by offering references and resources for students with special educational needs.

I.   Program Philosophy

The Rochester Montessori Middle School shares the vision of the International Baccalaureate Organization that all children can learn and that every child should receive the opportunity to develop the critical, creative thinking, and learning skills that will support their transition into caring, thoughtful, capable, and motivated adults. Thus it is our goal to create an inclusive, learner-centered educational environment where students of all abilities are challenged, supported, and guided to become active and engaged learners.

The IBO defines inclusion as:

> …an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers. This can only be successfully achieved in a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, support and problem solving. Inclusion is the learner profile in action, an outcome of dynamic learning communities (IBO, 2010 p. 3).

The Montessori Method emphasizes the uniqueness of every student, and our faculty is trained to recognize, support, and challenge students based on their individual interests, talents, and challenges. Our classrooms and curriculum provide a carefully constructed learning environment that offers many pathways to achievement. By highlighting difference and diversity, individual differences in culture, learning style, age, and ability are seen as opportunities for enriched learning. We support wholeheartedly the IBO's assertion that inclusion builds community and increases active, engaged learning.

II.   Processes and Procedures

The IBO defines special educational needs as "individual learning needs [from candidates] who have the intellectual capacity to meet all curriculum and assessment requirements, and who require special arrangements to demonstrate their level of achievement." (IBO, 2009, p.3). This includes needs such as language, learning, and communication disorders, social, emotional and behavioral issues, physical and sensory conditions, medical conditions, gifted and talented issues, and mental health issues.

In accordance with the IBO philosophy and practice models (IBO 2010 p. 5-7) we promote the following principles of good practice in our classroom curriculum and school community to support the participation, inclusion, and access of all learners in our program, especially those with special needs:

1. Affirming identity and building self-esteem;
2. Valuing prior knowledge;

3. Scaffolding ("a strategy that enables learners to accomplish a task that would otherwise be impossible or much more difficult to accomplish.") (IBO, 2010. p. 6);
4. Extended learning.

The goal of our school community is to remove barriers to learning and participation while encouraging students to take responsibility for their own thinking and learning. We do this through developing learning skills and through differentiated instruction, a keystone of Montessori and IBO education, and through the development of the IBO's Areas of Interaction, in particular, Approaches to Learning. This principle is described as:

"…general and subject-specific learning skills that the student will develop and apply during the programme and beyond. The focus of this area is on teaching students how to learn and on helping students find out about themselves as learners so that they can develop learning skills" (IBO, 2008 p. 20).

This includes skills such as organization, collaboration, communication, information literacy, reflection, thinking, and transfer. For students with special educational needs, these skills are important as they address their unique needs for thinking and learning. In the classroom, students will be provided the opportunity to explore these principles, set goals for their practice, apply them in an academic environment, and reflect upon their achievements.

Differentiated instruction is critical for all learners. The IBO defines differentiation as "the process of identifying, with each learner, the most effective strategies for achieving agreed goals" (IBO, 2010 p.4). Teachers at RMS will provide differentiated instructional opportunities through curricular planning, practice and assessment. In action, this might mean that teachers work with individual students to structure their learning work plans to address and support their academic needs. This could include adopting strategies like the use of organizational aids, technological support, support from our special needs teacher, colored guides and frames, additional time, group activities, graphic instructions, peer proofreading, or modified assignments.

The resource specialist will support teachers in planning, delivery, and assessment of curriculum for students with special educational needs. This includes determining reasonable adjustments to help students demonstrate their ability on assessments and using technology where available to support learning and assessment. Adjustments shall be applied in ways that are fair and do not give an advantage to students with special educational needs but instead remove barriers that would create conditions of disadvantage for those students.

RMS administrators and faculty will work collaboratively with parents and students to support students' individual educational needs through conferences, email and phone communications. These meetings are documented using the School's Initial Inquiry, Learning Plan Form, and Response to Intervention Form. Formal Parent/student/teacher conferences are held twice a year, and informal conferences are held as needed. These provide an opportunity to reflect upon learning strategies and set goals for each student's achievement.

Parents are asked to request child services from community resources (the public schools and/or medical facilities) proactively as they are needed. They will communicate with teachers and administrators their observations and experiences of the child's needs in support of the student's learner profile and educational plan.

III. Support and Tools

The IBO document, *Teaching students with particular special educational and learning needs* (2004), is a helpful reference guide for teachers to determine the learning needs and styles of their students and identify appropriate teaching strategies and resources. Additionally, the Special Educational Needs forum of the OCC has a wealth of instructional, assessment, curricular design, and communication tools for teachers regarding special educational needs in the IB MYP classroom.

IV. References

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Academic Honesty Policy

The purpose of this policy is to promote the IBO's and Rochester Montessori School's commitment to academic honesty. Because our program supports the development of knowledgeable, inquisitive, thoughtful, and principled learners, we embrace with gravity and enthusiasm the teaching, learning, and practice of academic honesty in all pursuits. We take very seriously the skills development, practical applications, and principled personal commitments required to fulfill the IBO's and RMS's expectations for academic honesty.

I. Philosophy

We live in a global community where resources and ideas are fluid; everything we do is connected to those who have come before and those with whom we share the planet today. Academic honesty helps us celebrate the interconnectedness of thought and creativity by locating our work in the context of others' contributions. The IBO defines in its learner profile booklet (2008) a *principled* learner as one who: "…act(s) with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They

take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them" (IBO 2008:5). Students are able to develop this characteristic through many activities at RMS. It is especially practiced in their academic work and behavior through the values and skills known as academic honesty. Promoting academic honesty throughout our school community means that everyone has specific responsibilities to uphold.

Students

We believe that instruction at RMS should support students' understanding of academic honesty. Students are taught to understand RMS' expectations for required principled practice. Students are also taught the skills needed to present their work with honesty and integrity. These skills include appropriate documentation of others' ideas, working collaboratively and fairly, and working with authenticity. Therefore, students should:

1. present their work honestly and with integrity;
2. not cheat;
3. appropriately acknowledge the work and contributions of others in their efforts;
4. support each other by encouraging honest academic practices and discouraging poor practices (like cheating or copying work); and
5. present their work and ideas in their own voice while embracing the important contributions of others.

Teachers

We believe that teachers must promote, model, and support students' growth as principled, honest academics. Through clear expectations, scaffolding, and assessment teachers are the primary support system for students' efforts. Therefore, teachers should:

1. Model appropriate practice in academic honesty;
2. Provide guidelines and clear expectations for honest practice in their classrooms;
3. Promote academic honesty through course materials, instructional practices, classroom activities, and assessments;
4. Design dynamic and authentic learning opportunities that allow students to develop original, creative ideas and apply critical thinking skills instead of simply copy information; and
5. Follow through with consequences when teachers identify instances of academic dishonesty.

II.   Definitions

Academic Honesty

Behaving and working honestly in researching and presenting schoolwork. This includes respecting the ownership of the ideas and materials of other people, and behaving appropriately when taking exams (IBO 2003, 2009).

Plagiarism

The representation of other's thoughts or work, as the student's own in order to gain an unfair advantage. This includes using others' work without citation or sourcing (IBO 2003, 2009).

Collusion

Allowing one's work to be copied or submitted for assessment by another (IBO 2009; 3). Collaboration is a key component in RMS MYP curriculum, but this is very different from collusion. Students should carefully consider their contributions to collaborative work and present their final work independently, taking credit for only the work they have completed.

Duplication

Presentation of the same work for different assessment components or course requirements (IBO 2003:2).

Cheating

Gaining an unfair advantage; for example:

- Having someone else complete a portion or all of one's work;
- Using mobile phones, computers, or notes on an exam;
- Stealing papers from the internet.

III. Processes and Procedures

As a school community, we understand that students need support and guidance to demonstrate academic honesty in their work. To this end, we will address issues and concerns with student's academic honesty on a case by case basis with the end goal being behavioral change. As concerns arise, teachers will strive to define the issue (i.e. plagiarism, collusion, duplication, cheating) and determine student intent. Students will then be provided the opportunity to respond. Teachers will determine appropriate measures that must be taken by faculty and student. These may include:

- Communicating via letter, phone call or meeting with student's parents;
- Interviewing student with parents, additional faculty, and administrators;
- Recording the infringement in student's file;
- Reassigning student work;
- Altering student's grade;
- Excluding student from activities.

IV. Support and tools

There are a number of resources beyond specific classroom materials that students can refer to for additional information on academic honesty, appropriate citation of resources, and bibliographies. The media center has reference materials such as the *Reader's Handbook* and *Write Source 2000* that can assist students in research documentation. In addition, online sources such as www.paperrator.com can help analyze student work for plagiarism detection, spelling and grammar, style and word choice.

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Language Policy

I.   Language Philosophy

At Rochester Montessori School, we believe language is a central means for self-expression and communication. Language lies at the heart of learning, growth and development. It is a central pathway to personal development, cultural maintenance, and intercultural awareness. All RMS teachers are language teachers, and they help broaden and enrich the linguistic literacy of our students. As citizens of an increasingly global and multicultural society, we are committed to fostering students' fluency in more than one language. Multilingualism promotes intercultural awareness and communication and prepares students to participate actively in diverse communities locally and globally.

II.   Language Profile

Students and faculty at RMS represent the diversity that is Rochester, MN. Families from all over the world have made Rochester home and chosen RMS as their school. We serve our diverse student body in a number of ways. The language of instruction at RMS is English. Communication in the school and outside of the classroom is also English. We currently offer courses daily for all students (Toddlers – 8th grade) in Spanish. Occasionally we offer after-school studios in the study of Mandarin or French. Books are found in our media center in English and Spanish. All faculty are fluent in English; Spanish, Mandarin, and French teachers are fluent in their languages as well.

We believe language learning and teaching is an interdisciplinary effort, and we are beginning to plan units across subjects in the Middle School that foster language development in both English and Spanish.
As students register for our program, we use our admissions application to identify language needs of each student. These needs are further assessed in the classroom by faculty. A language profile is maintained by the director of admissions to monitor the services needed and delivered for individual students. Our resource specialist and others can support English-language learners either alongside students in their classroom or in small ESL classes. For students fluent in both English and Spanish, advanced Spanish courses are provided to maintain and further expand students' fluency.

III.   Language

All teachers at RMS are language teachers, and we are all committed to the teaching and learning of language. This commitment is supported by professional development in language teaching and learning, collaborative planning

focused on the interdisciplinary nature of our language program, and support for individual faculty in curriculum planning and instruction. Understanding that language teaching and learning is multidimensional, our approach to language development draws upon the four dimensions for language teaching outlined by the IBO (*Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*, 2008) to promote engagement and learner participation:

1. Engage prior understanding and build background knowledge;
2. Scaffold meaning;
3. Extend language;
4. Affirm identity.

All students at RMS study English and Spanish. In the Middle Years Program, all students will take Language Arts to support their study of English. Spanish will be taught as Language B.

We are committed to the development and maintenance of students' mother tongue, recognizing its importance for personal and cultural identity, sense of empowerment, and linguistic skills. Students whose mother tongue is Spanish will have the opportunity to take advanced Spanish classes. For students whose mother tongue is a language other than English, RMS will provide opportunities to support continued study of that language through activities that may include:

1. Tangible resources like language texts, audio, and video resources;
2. Technology support like online learning or distance learning opportunities;
3. Community support by identifying community-based opportunities for language development;
4. Direct instruction by additional faculty and tutors as may be necessary.

It is our intent and commitment that students develop competency in two languages, their mother tongue and an additional language (in most cases English + Spanish). To ensure the inclusion and equity of all learners, for students at RMS learning in a language other than their mother tongue (not English), we will provide opportunities to support their cognitive development and growth through activities that may include:

1. English as an additional language class held to support disciplinary coursework in English as well as extend written, spoken, and comprehensive skills in English;
2. In-class tutors to help students' comprehension and participation;
3. Modified assignments and projects that take into account students' language profile, development, and skills.

Our language program will take advantage of the essential role of parents and community in language development and maintenance. Through school publications such as *Montessori Matters*, parent information nights focused on language, and whole school events like book fairs, we will integrate and highlight our language policies and practices. Through these forums we will share our language policies and practices and invite parents' support and contributions to the ongoing development of our language policy.

Recognizing that our school's language profile and philosophy are reflective of a vibrant and dynamic community, we will view these documents as fluid and ever-changing. We will review our practices and make changes that resonate with our school community and mission. A language curriculum committee made up of faculty and administrators will also meet when necessary to identify specific supports needed for individual students, plan professional development efforts, communicate with parents, and ensure the full implementation of this policy.