EAST COOPER MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL

The School You Choose With Your Head and Your Heart

Family Handbook

2026-2027

Table Of Contents

School History 5
Admissions 7
Registration Fees and Other Costs 7
Attendance & Tardy Policies 9
Arrival/Dismissal 12
Silent Dismissal System 14
Dress Code 15
Personal Items 16*
ECMCS Parent Volunteer Hours
Sports 20
Learning Services
Health Services 21
Medications 24
Parent/Guardian Responsibility 24
Counseling Services 26
Communication 29
Nutrition and Lunches 32
Nut Products 32
Safety 33
Governing Board 36
After School Care 36
Tutoring Policy 38
STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT 39
TERMS TO KNOW: 40
Governing Board
Technology Acceptable Use 58
Digital Device Troubleshooting 64
STUDENT MOBILE DEVICE RESPONSIBLE USE AGREEMENT 64
Grievance Procedure 67
ECMCS 2025-2026 Policies Signature Page 70

Welcome Letter

The faculty and staff extend a very warm welcome to our new and returning families. We are looking forward to another successful year of educating your children, being committed to promoting excellence in education, and creating a partnership with you and your family to best meet the needs of each student.

With the increasing demand on today's students to master a complex set of skills to be prepared for their high school, college and career experiences, it is essential for students to understand and refine their personal gifts. These experiences must match those gifts. Our faculty will work diligently toward helping your child master his/her potential while nourishing his/her own personal gifts. ECMCS believes the Montessori educational philosophy meets the demands of a changing world, and we are eager to partner with you to prepare your child(ren) for life adventures and challenges.

Our mission is to provide rigorous Montessori education, guiding children toward academic excellence, lifelong learning, and stewardship of the greater community. In keeping with our mission, our students are given rich academic experiences in the core curriculum areas, but they are also encouraged to support their community through peace projects and service learning opportunities. Together, these experiences provide academic and social opportunities for high self-esteem and personal empowerment while learning to lead and supporting individual growth needs.

Additionally, we will keep families plugged into school happenings through weekly schoolwide emails, Parent App, classroom updates, report cards, parent conferences, community events, volunteer opportunities, parent education opportunities, social media and your own visits to the school.

We appreciate and honor your trust, enthusiasm, and judgment in placing your most precious gift in our daily care and educational setting. Any time that a question or concern may arise, please feel the freedom and responsibility to inquire. We welcome and support your suggestions. Some of our best ideas have come from parents. May this be our best school year yet! There really is a Montessori difference!

In partnership,

The School Administrative Team

General Information

Hours of operation: 7:30am - 5:30pm
School day hours: 8:00-3:00

Address: Address: 1120 Rifle Range Road, Mt Pleasant, SC 29464
Telephone: 843-216-2883 Fax: 843-216-8880

Website: www.montessoricharterschool.com

School Administration

Principal	Jody Swanigan
Assistant Principal	Kelsey Henson
Instructional Coaches	Alexa Leonard
Instructional Technology	Marie Connelly
Director of Finance	Billy Koll
School Counselors	Chelsea Brown; Jessica Miller
Admissions/Development	Chyna Onembo
Front Office Administrator	Carrie Walker
School Nurse	Christy Thompson

Governing Board Members
Contact: board@montessoricharterschool.com

Parent Members	**Community Members**
Chris Hagy (Educator)	Anne-Merle Bryant (Educator)
Jeff Yurfest (Commercial Real Estate Broker)	Elizabeth Cook (Consultant)
Julie Wessen (Project Manager)	Jenny Quattlebaum (Attorney)
Craig Johnson (Finance)	
Principal	Jody Swanigan (ExOfficio)

Financial Director	Billy Koll (ExOfficio)
Teacher Representative	Sarah Ramsey (ExOfficio)

School History

East Cooper Montessori Charter School: A Public Montessori Success Story

East Cooper Montessori Charter School (ECMCS) is a remarkable example of what can happen when vision, community, and educational excellence align. Founded in 2003 with just 44 students learning in a 1,200-square-foot rental trailer, ECMCS has grown into a thriving school community serving over 450 students from age 3 through 8th grade. In 2014, ECMCS began a new chapter—relocating into a Charleston County School District facility, undergoing a two-year renovation, and gaining access to a cafeteria, kitchen, and over 50,000 additional square feet of educational space on nine beautiful acres.

As a **tuition-free public charter school**, ECMCS receives funding based on student enrollment, but not for facilities, making community support essential for capital improvements. Admission is open to all Charleston County students, and families choose ECMCS because of its **authentic commitment to Montessori philosophy** and high academic standards.

Our Academic Philosophy

At the heart of our approach is the belief that **every child is a unique individual** with an innate desire to learn and grow. Our academic program integrates Montessori methodology with district, state, and national standards to offer a rich, rigorous, and developmentally appropriate education.

Who Was Maria Montessori?

Maria Montessori (1870–1952), the first female physician in Italy, was a pioneer in the fields of education, psychiatry, and anthropology. She believed children are not “blank slates” but individuals with extraordinary potential waiting to be revealed. Through careful observation and research, she developed hands-on materials and methods that empower children to become independent, self-motivated learners. Her legacy continues to shape classrooms around the world, including ours.

The Montessori Method at ECMCS

- **Individual Learner Focus**
  Montessori teachers tailor instruction to meet each child's developmental needs and learning pace. Instruction occurs in a mix of whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one settings, emphasizing cooperative and self-directed learning.

- **Highly Qualified Educators**
  ECMCS teachers are **state certified, Montessori certified** at the level they teach, and **Gifted & Talented endorsed**. They observe, guide, assess, and create environments that inspire deep engagement and curiosity.

- **The Prepared Environment**
  Classrooms are intentionally designed with beautiful, functional Montessori materials. These materials are hands-on, self-correcting, and sequenced to promote both concrete understanding and abstract thinking.

- **Cosmic Curriculum**
  A cornerstone of Montessori philosophy, the Cosmic Curriculum instills in students a profound **sense of gratitude, responsibility, and interdependence**—not just with humanity, but with the natural world and the universe. This worldview helps children understand their role in contributing to a more peaceful, purposeful world.

Key Montessori Practices at ECMCS

- **Multi-age Classrooms**
  Students remain with the same teacher for up to three years. Younger students learn from older peers; older students grow into roles of leadership and responsibility. This structure supports both academic progress and social-emotional development.

- **Uninterrupted Work Periods**
  Long blocks of time allow students to deeply engage with topics, make choices within their work plan, and sustain focus. This approach reduces transitions and maximizes meaningful learning.

- **Hands-on Learning**
  Materials are placed within students' reach and arranged by subject. Students learn by doing—building abstract understanding through physical interaction. As Montessori said, *"The hands are the instruments of man's intelligence."*

At ECMCS, we believe that when children are respected as individuals and given the tools and time to learn at their own pace, they develop into **curious, capable, and compassionate learners** who are prepared not just for school—but for life.

Admissions

Admissions Requirements and Procedures
Detailed admissions information is available on our website.

Registration Fees and Other Costs

All fees are payable online
https://eastcooper.revtrak.net/

If you qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and are unable to pay the registration fee, please contact Billy Koll (billy@montessoricharterschool.com) for assistance.
Instructional Fee - $45 (all students)

School Supply Fee - $60 supply fee which covers the standard school supplies (all consumables including paper, notebooks, binders, composition books) as well as community supplies (snack supplies, classroom tissues, etc.) which are standardized across grades for size and quality. Families do not need to send their child to school with additional personalized supplies.

- **6th grade students** should **purchase** the following supplies: **a 3-ring pencil pouch filled with pencils**, **earbuds** or **headphones** that fit in a pencil pouch (headphones can also be checked out at ECMCS.)
- **7th and 8th grade students** should **purchase** the following supplies: **Planner/calendar** of student choice (Students can also use planning sheets provided by advisors.), **3-ring pencil pouch filled with pencils, earbuds** or **headphones** that fit in pencil pouch (headphones can also be checked out at ECMCS.)

Technology Fee - $30 (students in 1st - 8th grades) covers instructional software and programs that students can use at school, and in many cases at home. Information regarding specific learning programs that students will have access to for home and school will be shared at Back to School Night. A device will be issued to all students in grades 1st-8th.

Primary Fee - $30 (3, 4 and 5 year old students in the primary program)
This fee covers our preschool practical life consumable activities, including food preparation works, flower arranging works, consumable sensory works, and so on.

Other Fees - There are other fees throughout the school year that include field trips, breakfast and lunches. See lunch section and field trip section for further explanation.

*Fees can be waived for those who qualify for free or reduced price lunches. Scholarships sponsored by the Governing Board for some school sponsored activities are also available. Contact Billy Koll, Financial Director at billykoll@montessoricharterschool.com for more information.

After school enrichment programs are also available for an additional fee. Further information is provided in the designated sections of this handbook and also on the ECMCS website.

All other fees are also payable online via the shopping cart. This secure online payment system is accessible via our website. Simply click SCHOOL STORE on the homepage to be directed to our online store where you can pay for registration, field trips, and ECMCS merchandise.

Fundraising

Charter schools are public schools and do not charge tuition. Like other public schools, charter schools are funded according to their enrollment (also called average daily membership, or ADM), and receive funding from the school district and the state according to the number of students attending. However, the ways and amounts at which charters are funded compared to their district counterparts differ. On average, charter schools are funded at 61 percent of their district counterparts.

Furthermore, as a charter school, we hold ourselves to a higher standard. We provide an excellent Montessori education with high quality materials and pedagogy that includes a teacher and an assistant in each classroom providing a lower student-teacher ratio, global learning opportunities, STEM program with a dedicated STEM coordinator, and much more.

The Annual Fund is a source of revenue from generous parents and community members that directly support educational programming otherwise not provided in our annual budget. All contributions are tax deductible. Make your gift here.

Student Placement

One of the most important tasks is generating class lists for student placement. Most parents/guardians are understandably concerned that their child will be placed with a caring and competent Montessori teacher for the three-year cycle. It is a task we take very seriously, focusing on the creation of balanced, well-matched learning environments. Input from teachers, specialists and parents is highly considered and appreciated when given.

Student Placement is based upon following beliefs:

- Learning occurs best for all students in heterogeneous classes
- Parents know their child best and parent input is valued in this decision.
- Teachers provide important information for consideration when placing students, including teaching styles, learning styles, academic progress, and classroom social considerations.

The placement committee intends to accomplish the following:

- Create heterogeneous classes that will provide a balance of: age, gender, academic levels, personality types, and social skills.
- Challenge each student academically and socially to do his/her very best.
- Provide students with the opportunity to work and play with a variety of different children so that they can accept and celebrate differences and learn to get along with all kinds of people.
- To the best of our ability to predict and provide a complementary match between the teachers and students.

Siblings

Students will not be assigned to classrooms with their siblings or step-siblings. Due to the special nature of the relationship between twins, the option exists for placement of twins within the same classroom. The placement of twins will be a joint decision between the principal, the parent(s), and their current teacher(s). Consideration will be given to each individual case. In the event that the "twinship" becomes a detriment to the twins' learning or that of the classmates, the placement may be changed by the administration.

Changes
Once a final decision has been made for classroom placement, changes rarely occur and only under extreme circumstances. Transfers during the school year can be made by the principal only. Placements will not be changed due to any staffing changes which occur following completion.

Attendance & Tardy Policies

School achievement begins with regular attendance. Parents/guardians have the responsibility to ensure that all school-age children in their care are in school and on time every day. Students have the responsibility to be on time and attend all classes. Students are expected to attend school for 180 days. School begins at 8:00am and ends at 3:00pm. The half-day primary program for three-year-olds is from 8:00-12:00. Aftercare fees for students not picked up in carpool will begin at 3:00. Families who aren't signed up for drop-in aftercare will be charged $2.00 per minute up to $35 which is the cost of a full day of aftercare.

South Carolina Compulsory Attendance Law

South Carolina Compulsory Attendance Law South Carolina Code of Laws Section 59-65-10 (as amended) reads: All parents or guardians shall cause their children or wards to attend regularly a public or private school ~ of this State ~ from the school year in which the child or ward is five years of age before September 1st until the child or ward attains his seventeenth birthday or graduates from high school. All children are required to attend a public or private kindergarten beginning at age five. If parents choose not to send their children to kindergarten, they must sign a waiver, which may be obtained at the local school.

South Carolina Code of Laws of Section 59-65-20 reads: Any parent or guardian who neglects to enroll his child or ward or refuses to make such child or ward attend school shall, upon conviction, be fined not more than fifty dollars or be imprisoned not more than thirty days; each day's absence shall constitute a separate offense; provided, the court may in its discretion suspend the sentence of anyone convicted of the provisions of this article.

South Carolina Code of Laws of Section 59-65-70 reads: If the court determines that the reported absence occurred without the knowledge, consent, or connivance of the responsible parent or guardian or that a bona fide attempt has been made to control and keep the child in school, the court may declare such a child to be delinquent and subject the provisions of the law in such cases.

South Carolina Code of Laws of Section 16-17-510 reads: It is unlawful for a person to encourage, entice, or conspire to encourage or entice a child enrolled in any public or private elementary or secondary school of this State from attendance in the school or school program or transport or provide transportation in aid to encourage or entice a child from attendance in any public or private elementary or secondary school or school program. A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than two years, or both.

South Carolina Code of Laws of Section 59-40-50 reads: Charter Schools are required to meet, but may exceed, the same minimum student attendance requirements as are applied to public schools.

Daily Schedule

- **7:30 AM** – Doors open / Before-school recess begins
- **8:00 AM** – School begins
    - *Note: Due to DSS regulations, 3K students should not arrive before 7:50 AM*
- **8:01 AM** – Students are considered **tardy**
    - Parents must park and check students in through the front office For full details, please refer to the **Attendance and Tardy** section in the Family Handbook.
- **9:00 AM or later – No Drop off of forgotten items**
    - To encourage responsibility and independence: The front office **cannot accept forgotten items** (lunch boxes, water bottles, assignments, etc.) after 9:00 AM
    - Students will be provided with water and school lunch if needed
    - Please do not ask the Front Office staff to make exceptions.
- **2:40 - 3PM Carpool**
- **3 - 3:15** Once carpool is complete, students will be released from classrooms to Aftercare or Afterschool Enrichments

***REQUIRED - Pre-Planned Dismissal Note

A written note is required for all students, regardless of grade level, in the event of a preplanned early dismissal. This note must be sent with your child and given directly to their teacher. Click here to print notes.

Please include in the note the specific time you wish to meet your child at the front office for dismissal. This written notification is mandatory for any student to be released early from school.

This is to minimize the number of distractions in the classroom.

Absences
Absences in excess of ten days per year will not be considered excused with a parent/guardian note unless they are accompanied by official medical or legal documentation.

Lawful Absences

- Illness of the student and whose attendance in school would endanger his or her health and the health of others
- Medical or dental appointment
- Court appearance
- Out of school or in-school suspension
- Death in the immediate family
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Activities approved by the administrative team
- Extenuating circumstances as determined by the principal

Unlawful Absences

Absences from school, including absence for any portion of the day, shall be considered unlawful under the following conditions:

- Absence from school without the knowledge of their parents
- Absence from school without acceptable cause with the knowledge of their parents
- HomeBound or Home Based students who are not available for planned sessions.

Documentation of Absences

All absences require a written explanation from the parent/guardian within three (3) school days of return from the absence. Written explanation of absences must include the student's name, parent/guardian's full name, date(s) of absence(s), and documentation of the reason for absence. Students can have **a maximum of 10 parent notes** for excused absences. A doctor's note is required for any additional absences.

Text messages or phone calls are not acceptable documentation for student absences. Please fill out the Attendance Reporting Form here .

All documentation required by the school is subject to review and approval by the principal. Absences in excess of ten days per year will not be considered excused with a parent/guardian note unless they are accompanied by official medical or legal documentation.

Chronic Absenteeism

As defined by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), chronically absent students are those absent 10 percent or more school days during the school year. According to the OCR, an absent student is one who misses 50 percent of the instructional day for any reason and regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. In other words, students who are absent for any reason - including suspension, illness, and death in the family - AND miss 10 percent or more of the school year will be considered chronically absent.

Students in grades K-8 may not be eligible for promotion if they have more than ten (10) absences in one school year.

Public charter schools in South Carolina are considered public schools of choice. Student participation in these schools is by parental choice and is not mandatory. Students who violate the district's attendance policy and are chronically absent will be subject to intervention

planning. Once the intervention options have been exhausted and there is no significant improvement in attendance, the student may be withdrawn from the charter school and referred back to the resident district for further intervention and adjudication.

Tardiness

It is very important that students be on time at the beginning of the school day. School begins promptly at 8:00 am. Students can begin arriving at 7:30 am and ending no later than 8:00am. Excessive, chronic tardiness will result in similar disciplinary action as defined in the truancy intervention procedures below.

Lawful Tardy	Unlawful Tardy
● Illness of the student ● Doctor or dentist appointment ● Observance of a religious holiday ● Court appearance or court ordered activity ● Teacher, guidance or administrator conference	● Illness on part of the student without a written excuse ● Personal reasons ● Oversleeping ● Carpool trouble ● Traffic / Car trouble

Important Notes

Students not present for more than 50% of the school day will be counted as absent for a full day. Absent students may not attend after school enrichments or participate in performances or school events (day or night) on the day of the absence. Suspensions are not counted as unlawful for truancy purposes. A deadline will be imposed for the work to be made up, and the burden of getting and completing assignments will be on the student.

Early Sign-out - Early Dismissal Procedures and Early Dismissal Note

Early Sign-out On A Regular Basis

Early sign out is only permitted for emergencies and other occasional unavoidable circumstances. Early checkout is not permitted on a regular basis for programs including but not limited to extracurricular programs, counseling services, private tutoring, and special education therapy programs as students will not meet the Defined Minimum Program Regulation as defined by the SC Dept of Ed R 43-231 & 43-232.

Truancy Intervention Procedures

1. When a student accumulates three (3) unlawful absences, the school notifies the parent or guardian by telephone or email.
2. When a student accumulates three (3) consecutive or a total of five (5) unlawful absences, the principal or designee will complete a truancy evaluation.
    - A conference may be required with student and parent or guardian to develop a truancy intervention plan designed to improve student attendance and eliminate unlawful absences.

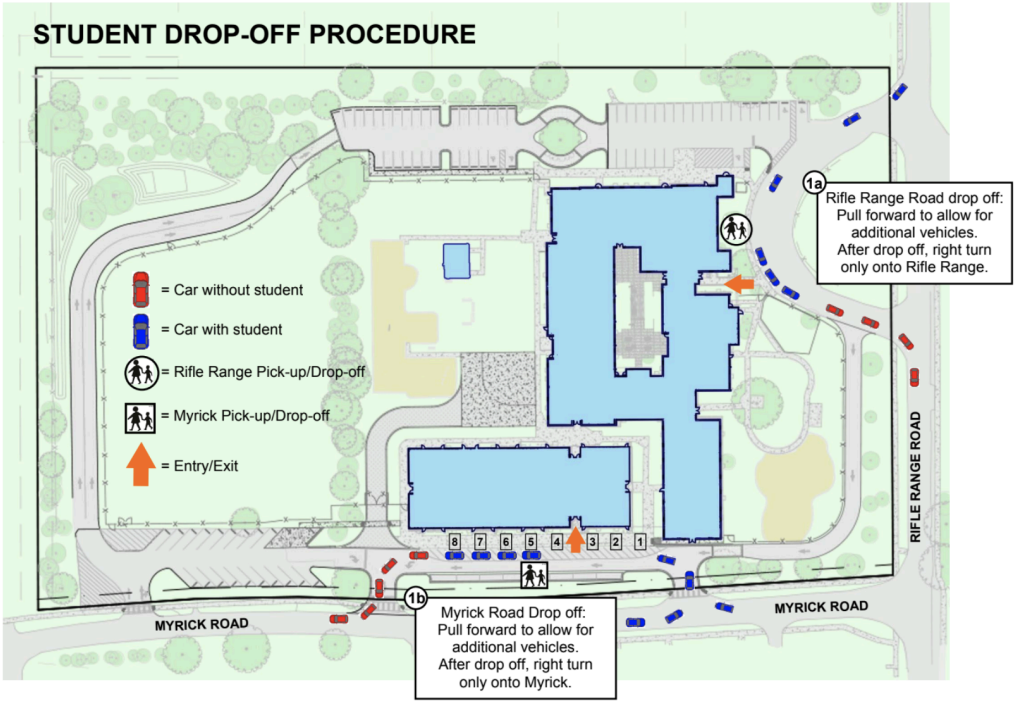
- A written truancy intervention and attendance contract may be signed by all participants with a copy provided to the parent and student.

3. When a student accumulates two (2) more unlawful absences, the school will update the truancy intervention plan, indicate why the plan was unsuccessful, and make amendments as needed.
4. In the event that unlawful absences continue, the case will be reviewed for additional interventions and/or further action. The case may be referred to the Department of Social Services, the Ninth Judicial Circuit Solicitor's Office for participation in Family Court, or other interventions.

Arrival/Dismissal

Arrival: During morning arrival, parents may drop off at the roundabout facing Rifle Range Road -OR- the school entrance facing Myrick Road. Should you need to enter the school, please find a parking place away from the pick-up line in the designated parking lots. A staff member will be in the carpool line to greet you from 7:30-8:00. Only let your child out of the car where there is a staff member.

For the students' safety, please position child safety seats in such a way that your ECMCS student can enter and exit from the passenger side only.



Dismissal: Carpool will begin at 2:40 and end promptly at 3:00.

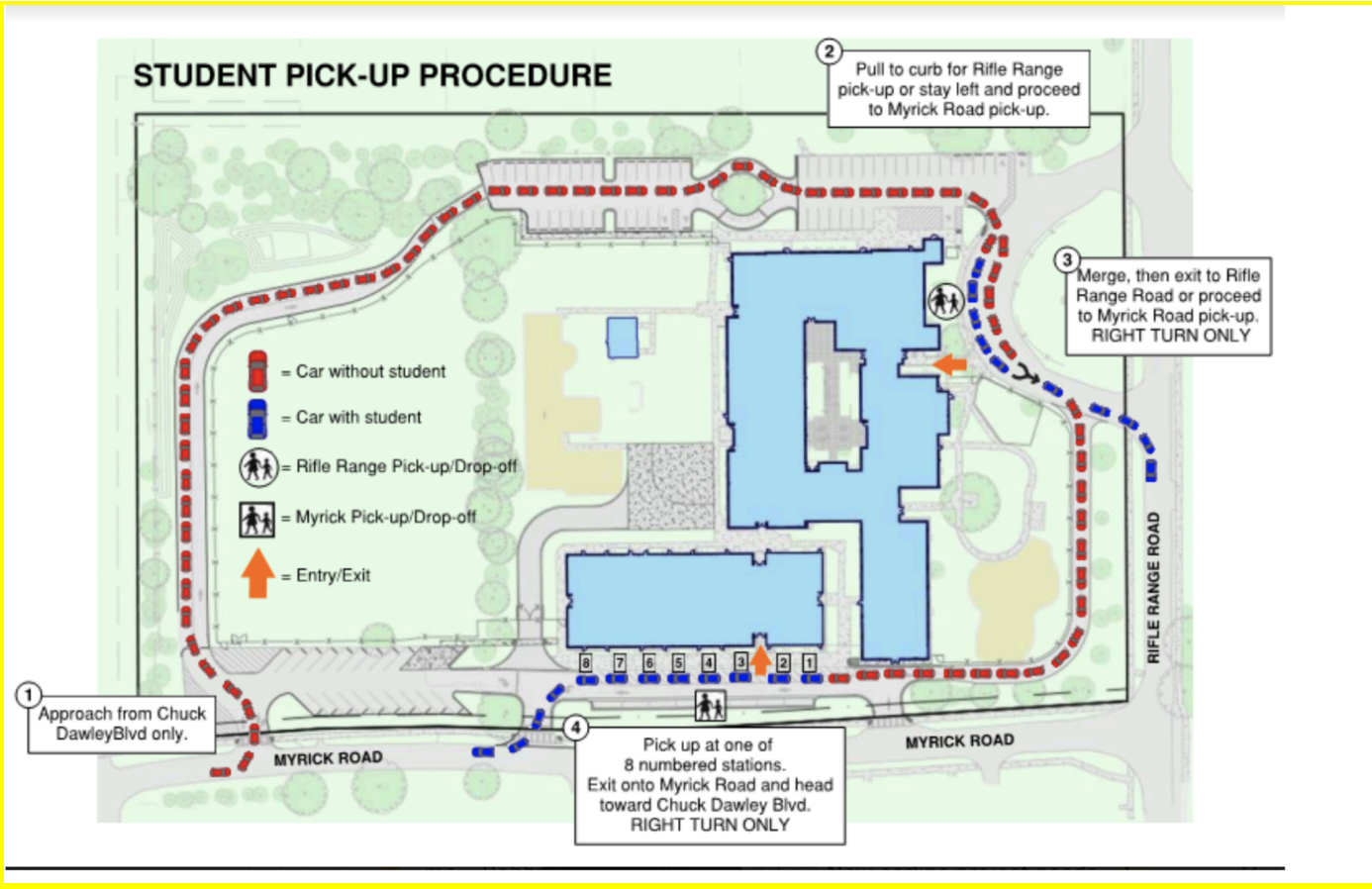
All families will **ONLY** enter the carline from the Myrick Road entrance and follow the traffic around the school property. Primary students and siblings will be picked up in the right lane when the lane splits beside the cafeteria. Please be a courteous carpool driver and do not block driveways or pull over into our neighbors' grass. Note: Do not arrive for afternoon pick-up before 2:20 PM.

Myrick carpool pick-up families will enter the carline from Chuck Dawley turning into the entrance. Right turns into the entrance coming from Rifle Range Rd cannot be permitted during carpool dismissal.

When exiting afternoon dismissal, families must turn RIGHT onto Myrick Road heading back towards Chuck Dawley Blvd. Making a left hand turn out of the carpool lane onto Myrick Road heading towards Rifle Range Rd is not permitted.

Any cars in line at 3pm will be allowed to continue through the carline at which point it will be closed. Any cars approaching the final loop after the 3pm closure will not be permitted. Do not drive around the cone. After the carpool lane closes you will park and come into the office for late pick up. Students not picked up by 3pm will transition to enrichments and aftercare and you will be charged.

Note: Students may not be checked out of the front office past 2:20 as dismissal preparations are already underway. If a student needs to be checked out for an appointment you must arrive at the school before 2:20 or wait in the office until the Silent Dismissal process is completed.



Silent Dismissal Carpool Process

Required for all parents - https://secure.smore.com/n/2t01j

We utilize the Silent Dismissal system. Each family is provided a unique number tag to place on the passenger-side visor of your car or rearview mirror. These numbers are linked to each student and as the numbers are entered, students are notified in their classroom. You can also request a group carpool number if you drive for a carpool or your child participates in a carpool.

NO CHILD WILL BE DISMISSED FROM SCHOOL TO AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON. A parent or guardian MUST update their child's silent dismissal site when being picked up by a non-custodial parent or guardian. The person will also be asked to show ID in the carpool for clearance. We ask that you give authorized persons your carpool tag for ease of pickups on a regular basis. Alterations in dismissal will not be accepted after 2:15. Drivers will park and come into the front office.

Walking/Biking

Biking to and from school is an excellent way for students to be active. Deciding if your child

is responsible enough to walk or bike to school is a parent's decision. Students may be dismissed as walkers or bikers only during regular dismissal. During the school day, students will *not* be released unless a parent or guardian is present.

Cycling Guidelines for Safety

Cyclists, skateboarders, and scooter riders must always wear helmets.
Cyclists must use the approved bicycle route and dismount and walk across the crosswalk(s) (some exceptions depending on home address).

Note: E-bikes -South Carolina State Law §56-1-10(29) defines an e-bike as: having fully operable pedals and an electric motor of no more than 750 watts, and a top motor-power speed of less than 20 MPH (subject to certain rider weight and road surface criteria). Once the vehicle is designed to have an input exceeding 750 watts, it is considered a moped. Moped users are required to have a valid driver's license on public roadways (§56-1-1720).

Walking Guidelines for Safety

Walkers and bikers will be dismissed at the beginning of carpool at 2:40.

Dress Code

East Cooper Montessori Charter School follows the principles of the Montessori Method. As such, care of self and care of the environment are core pieces in the development of the child's consciousness and understanding of the interconnectedness of all things. In creating the "prepared environment," Dr. Montessori wanted to optimize the conditions under which children teach themselves and learn independently. Student attire contributes to this independent learning environment.

"Bring the child to the consciousness of his own dignity and he will feel free."
~Maria Montessori~

The administration of East Cooper Montessori Charter School reserves the right to make the final decision regarding the appropriateness of clothing and/or accessories. Dress code violations are considered Level I offenses in the Code of Conduct. Please see this code for potential interventions and consequences related to dress code violations.

Dress Code- Overall Appearance:

- Present a neat and well-groomed appearance free from the need to shift, adjust or constantly monitor clothing.
- Students should be covered from the upper chest to the upper thigh.
- Clothing should not reveal bare skin between upper chest to upper thigh
- The following garments should not be worn at school: clothing that is see-through or exposes the back, abdomen, sides or midriff when the student raises his/her arms to shoulder height; sleepwear and beachwear.

- Pictures and writing should be appropriate for the school setting.

Shoes

- Tennis/gym shoes are required for Physical Education class.
- Solid, closed-toed, and preferably rubber-soled shoes which are properly fitted and secure on the foot should be worn on the playground. Students are encouraged to wear socks for health reasons.

Personal Items

We have limited storage and a variety of equipment for the children to use on a daily basis. Please keep toys, trading cards, cosmetics, jewelry, money and other personal items at home or in your car. All items need to fit in your child's cubby or locker. In an effort to help with this, each student will have one cubby or locker with limited space. Bags and backpacks need to be free of clip on toys, animals, etc. A good rule of thumb is, "if it doesn't fit in your cubby or locker you must not need it at school." Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary lockers are 10.5" W X 12.5" deep X 20" high. Rolling back-packs are not permitted.

ECMCS Parent Volunteer Hours

The Policies Agreement reflects the 10 hour per family volunteer commitment. Hours do not accumulate over multiple years. The background check link is located on the Overnight Field Trip Chaperone Form.

The ECMCS charter application was written to include parent volunteers as part of the academic and financial success of the school's infrastructure. Volunteers must understand that volunteering is a privilege, not a right, and the school may, in its sole discretion, decide to discontinue any volunteer participation at any time and for any reason or no reason, with or without notice or warning. All volunteers must consent to a criminal background check before being left alone with children in the school setting and be placed in the "approved volunteer" database compiled via Raptor. Volunteers must adhere to the same ethical and dress standards of teachers. Confidential information accessed during volunteering must remain confidential. Volunteerism is vital to the success of the school and many families contribute more than the required amount of hours. The school seeks to engage those precious hours in the most effective manner for the school and the family.

Attending informational meetings or functions such as Parent Teacher Network meetings, committee meetings and orientation also count towards service hours; however, recreational functions including, but not limited to, sports events, school plays, performances, and recognition ceremonies do not constitute as time that may be utilized towards service hours, unless otherwise specified by the school. Leading a committee or taking on certain tasks can even double your hours or in some cases count for all of the hours. If volunteering is a burden for your family, please contact the administration.

Suggestions for ways you can integrate into the community will be available at Back to School Parent Information Night, through weekly Office Notes, at PTN Meetings or by contacting your child's teacher. To submit your hours, go to the Volunteer tab on our website and complete the Volunteer Tracking Form.

Sports

Joining a sports team can be an enriching and rewarding experience for children of all ages! Sports programs rely on parent support through coaching and volunteerism to be successful. Each team we put together will require two parent volunteers. The more volunteers we have, the more opportunities our students will have to compete. Coach Laughton will include sports information, including opportunities to sign up to coach, in Office Notes as we prepare for each season. For more information contact laughton_gooding@montessoricharterschool.com

Season Dates:

- **Volleyball:** July-September (5th-8th Grade)
- **Basketball:** October-February (4th-8th Grade)
- **Lacrosse:** January-March (6th-8th Grade)
- **Tennis:** January-May (K-8th Grade)
- **Baseball:** February-May (6th-8th Grade)
- **Cheerleading**: August-Feb (4th-8th Grade)

Curriculum Support

Textbooks
Textbooks are owned by the state of South Carolina. They are on loan to students for the year. Every book has a barcode on it and can be tracked to each child. Lost or damaged books must be paid for by parents in order to have a new book issued. Students will return books in the same condition as received. Textbooks are allocated to schools for several years and are not replaced until the next adoption.

Media Center
The media center is open to students for book and project check-out, as well as learning time together. The vision of our revitalized media center is more than just books and instead a place that is alive with projects, tinkering, collaboration and innovation.

Homework
The Montessori Homework experience is meant to support the parent-child connection to learning. Homework is designed to support skills already taught by a teacher, and/or project based learning experiences which are occurring at school. Homework is usually assigned one week at a time to allow families to budget their time around outside extracurricular activities and other time commitments.

If your child is having difficulty with homework assignments, make sure to communicate with your child's teacher in order to make a modified plan to support success. Students with academic learning disabilities may have homework assignments modified to fit their learning needs. The ECMCS report card reflects homework as part of the grade. Parents also have a responsibility to provide a time and place at home for students to complete homework, to encourage and support student effort, to regularly ask students for correspondence sent home by the teacher, and to communicate with the teacher if there are concerns regarding assignments. Students have a growing responsibility as they mature to ask questions about assignments before leaving the class, to manage assignment due dates and completed work, and to maximize the effectiveness of homework assignments for their own learning by putting forth their best effort.

Homework may serve one of three purposes:

Practice and Review. Practice assignments reinforce newly acquired or previously mastered skills or knowledge.

Preparation. Preparation assignments are intended to provide background information for content, which will soon be introduced in class and may include readings, library or online research, collection of materials, or any other activity that will engage student interest and prepare the student for effective learning.

Extension and Connection. Extension and connection assignments require students to transfer skills and concepts to a new situation or to integrate skills and concepts in order to produce a product. These assignments encourage creating learning, initiative, research and problem solving.

CCSD and ECMCS recommends the following guidelines for the maximum amount of time required to complete all assignments be considered when assigning nightly homework:

Kindergarten	10 minutes
Grades 1-2	20 minutes
Grades 3-5	90 minutes
Grades 6-8	120 minutes
Grades 9-12	180 minutes

Technology Use
Technology is readily available to students at ECMCS as needed to support, not supplant learning. The philosophy of technology use at ECMCS is that students should more often be producers and not consumers. That means students use technology to create presentations, research topics, write stories, keep assignments, make portfolios in Drive or other creative applications as opposed to playing games, watching movies or social media. Students primarily use iPads or chromebooks. Students in first through eighth grades will be issued a school-managed device.

Related Arts/Electives
ECMCS offers a robust curriculum integrating the arts and sciences across the curriculum. Related Arts are offered by educational specialists in their field which include:
Studio Visual Art
Performing Arts in Music
Performing Arts in Theater
Musical Theater
Physical Education and Sports Education
Technology & Keyboarding
Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics (STEM)
Guidance
Health Education

Field Trips
In order that students may benefit from experiences that make learning more relevant, memorable, and meaningful, ECMCS supports and encourages the extension of learning through instructional field trips (as developmentally appropriate). ECMCS does not endorse field trips without any academic benefit. Various field trips occur throughout the year to expose children to a variety of academic and social lessons beyond the classroom. Field trips may include walking tours, recycling trips, aquarium trips, trips to various museums and historical sites, as well as overnight bonding experiences that support building community. Generally, every school aged student attends a three-day, two-night trip. Trip dates, costs, venues and information can be found on our website or by contacting the front office.
ECMCS staff is authorized to establish regulations and procedures to ensure that:

- all reasonable and prudent steps are taken to safeguard the physical and educational welfare of the participating students and of students who do not participate;
- appropriate and adequate adult supervision is provided;
- parents chaperone responsibilities are to all students in their care, not just their own child in attendance,
- the highest standards for instructional field trips are established to ensure that student participation enhances achievement of state curriculum standards and Montessori principles.

Safety and Supervision
The suggested adult supervision is to be provided as follows unless alternative ratios are mandated by field trip location:

- Kindergarten: Minimum one supervisor for every 4-5 students.
- Elementary: Minimum one supervisor for every 8-10 students.

- Middle/High: Minimum one supervisor for every 15 students.

On overnight trips involving co-ed groups, at least one chaperone of each gender must be included in the total group of chaperones. ECMCS chaperone decisions are considered final.

Determination of appropriate chaperones to supervise children in the care of ECMCS is at the sole discretion of ECMCS staff. Chaperoning field trips is not a privilege of ECMCS parents, but rather a responsibility of ECMCS to ensure the safety of all children in our care. If a parent has been given limited access to volunteering at ECMCS or restricted access to ECMCS staff for inappropriate interactions, attendance on field trips will also be considered limited. If a parent is uncomfortable allowing their child to attend a field trip without their presence, the student should remain at ECMCS for the alternative to the field trip experience.

At least one certified employee of ECMCS must be in charge of each field trip and must accompany students on the trip. For each chaperone, the school must check any reference data provided by the District (i.e., Sex Offender List) or any other information available at the school. All chaperones are to be briefed prior to the trip regarding their responsibilities and to be made aware of which employee is in charge of the trip. Chaperones will be selected based upon the needs of the students and the needs of the particular trip. In accordance with the Montessori philosophy of independence, it is often a burden to the student experience on field trips to have excess adults beyond necessary safety needs.

Students with medical needs must disclose these needs in advance of all field trips. The school nurse will secure any medical information and medications to be administered for children on the trip from the parents with directions prior to leaving on the trip.

The school principal may deny a student the opportunity to participate in a field trip if, in the professional judgment of the staff, the student's participation would jeopardize his/her personal safety/educational progress or the safety/educational progress of others.

*Parents will be asked to acknowledge the transportation agreement found in the Policies Agreement Form.

Learning Services

ECMCS is committed to providing services to exceptional learners. The school's dedicated support team can determine through assessment and evaluation any additional supports that may be necessary to help your child to access the curriculum. If you are concerned about your child's progress, contact the school's psychologist for information on how to support your child's academic growth.

Students with Disabilities Section

Special Education services are available for students who are found eligible under the criteria outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Eligibility is determined through a comprehensive evaluation and may include one of the recognized disability

categories under IDEA. In addition to having a qualifying disability, the student must demonstrate a need for specially designed instruction in order to access the general education curriculum.

Services may include, but are not limited to, speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, support from a Resource Teacher, and other related services. If a student is found eligible, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed to outline the student's present levels, measurable goals, accommodations, and services. This process is voluntary, and parents have the right to participate in all decisions and to accept or decline services.

Instructional supports may be delivered through a variety of service models, including push-in, pull-out, and consultation, based on the individual needs of the student as determined by the IEP team.

The Montessori environment is designed to support a wide range of learners and fosters independence, exploration, and individualized growth. For some students, additional structure or supports may be necessary to ensure meaningful progress. In those cases, the IEP team will meet to determine the most appropriate supports and placement, guided by the principle of the least restrictive environment (LRE), ensuring that each student is educated in a setting that best meets their unique needs.

Intervention Services

Students who score below school-established benchmarks on district-wide assessments, and who are further identified through diagnostic screenings, may be eligible to receive targeted reading and/or math interventions. These interventions are designed to provide additional support to help close learning gaps and accelerate academic growth. Progress is carefully monitored, and students' instructional plans are adjusted as needed to ensure the interventions are effective.

If a student does not demonstrate adequate progress despite consistent, research-based interventions, the school may recommend a comprehensive evaluation to determine whether the student may have a learning disability or another area of eligibility under IDEA. Families are fully involved in this process, and any evaluation or services are provided with parent consent.

Multi-Language Learners

Our School provides services for English Speakers of Other Languages. You will be asked to complete a Home Language Survey (HLS). The HLS is a legal document that informs the school district about the language or languages that are spoken by or with your child. The HLS asks you questions about the languages used by you and your child. If the HLS indicates that your child speaks a language other than English or a language other than English is spoken with your child, your child will take an English language proficiency assessment. The English language proficiency assessment is used to assess your child's abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. The results of the assessment will determine whether your child is fully proficient in English or qualifies for English language support at school. MLL students work directly with qualified instructors at their level ensuring the best possible access to classroom instruction.

Gifted and Talented Academic and or Artistic

The definition for giftedness is established by the South Carolina Board of Education in Regulation 43- 220 GIFTED AND TALENTED. All second grade students in the state of SC are tested for Gifted and Talented qualification. Students in higher grades can also be nominated annually for qualification of testing.

Gifted and talented students are those who are identified as demonstrating high performance ability or potential in academics and therefore require an educational program beyond that normally provided by the general school program in order to achieve their potential. Gifted and talented abilities for these regulations include students who have the academic and/or intellectual potential to function at a high level in one or more academic areas. Gifted and Talented on an instructional level at ECMCS does not function differently than traditional Gifted and Talented programs. On the contrary, Montessori education inherently approaches teaching and learning through the lens of a GT student because the task of the Montessori teacher is always to meet each child where they are, challenge them, and create a lifelong love of learning.

ECMCS Gifted and Talented Rationale

ECMCS GT programming meets the needs of GT students in the following ways:

- Curriculum compacting by condensing and modifying the curriculum to reduce repetition of previously mastered material. This allows students to have enriching experiences beyond the basic curriculum.
- Acceleration which helps us to match students abilities, talents, and interests with optimal learning opportunities.
- Service learning projects/peace projects helping GT students with their voice in fighting against injustice and looking at different perspectives.
- Peace lessons help to develop the social and emotional domains of our students.
- Opportunities for collaboration, research, inquiry based on student interest.
- Many choices in both process and product.
- Specialty programs: Project Based Learning (PBL), Science Technology and Math (STEM), Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN), etc
- Differentiation of lessons based on student need

ECMCS works with the Charleston County School District Artistic Gifted department to determine students who qualify for the artistically gifted and talented program. Information will be disseminated when portfolios or auditions are being held. For more information about programming and assessments Gifted and Talented CCSD.

Health Services

Many health care services can be provided for students to keep them at school where they can learn and participate with other students. Our goal is to provide information to parents and legal guardians about some of the services and programs available for addressing the health care needs of students during the school day to help students succeed in school. It is important that the necessary health care information is shared with the appropriate people to ensure that the students' needs are met throughout the school day.

School Nurse
ECMCS employs a full time registered nurse to monitor student health records and provide aid for student health concerns. A completed medical information form is required for school admission. It is the parent's responsibility to update the form if their child's condition changes. In addition, an individualized health plan will be developed for specific conditions such as asthma or other ongoing health concerns. Our nurse is an RN and can be contacted at christythompson@montessoricharterschool.com

Services Available for Students with Special Health Care Needs Parent Notice Required By S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-63-90 (Supp. 2005)

Individual Health Care Plans or Individual Health Plans (IHPs)
Individual health care plans are also called individual health plans or IHPs. School nurses who are registered nurses write IHPs to guide how a student's health care needs will be met while at school. The nurse works with the student, the student's parents or legal guardians, the student's health care provider, and other school staff to write the plan. IHPs are written for students who have special health care needs that must be met by school staff during the school day. IHPs are also written for students who have been approved by the school district to self-medicate or self-monitor.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)
Section 504 is a federal civil rights law under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance, including public schools, ensuring they get a free appropriate public education (FAPE) with necessary accommodations like a 504 Plan to provide equal access, unlike IDEA which focuses solely on special education. It requires schools to provide accommodations for students with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit major life activities, ensuring they aren't excluded or treated differently.

A team decides if a student is eligible. The team should include the student's parent or legal guardian, the student (if appropriate), and others who know the student or know about the student's disability, such as a teacher, an administrator, a guidance counselor, a school psychologist, nurse, and other school staff. If the student is eligible, the team develops an individual accommodation plan. The individual accommodation plan explains how the student's

needs will be met while at school and may include health services for the student during the school day if needed.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
Students, ages 3 through 21 years, may receive services under the IDEA if the student qualifies for special education and related services to access his or her educational program. A team decides if a student qualifies for services under the IDEA. The team includes the student's parent or legal guardian, administrator, school psychologist, teachers, and other school staff. The team develops an individualized education program (IEP) if the student meets federal and state requirements. The IEP outlines a plan for helping the student receive a free appropriate public education and meet goals set by the team. The IEP may include health services for the student during the school day if needed.

Medical Homebound Instruction
South Carolina mandates regarding medical homebound instruction appear in the State Board of Education Regulation 43-241, Regulation 43-241 says that students who cannot attend public school because of illness, accident or pregnancy, even with the aid of transportation, are eligible for medical homebound or hospitalized instruction. A physician must certify that the student is unable to attend school but may profit from instruction given in the home, another location, or hospital. The school's LEA or his/her designee may approve or deny any student requesting homebound instruction. A school or district representative may contact the parent and doctor to request additional information and discuss strategies to maintain the student in the school environment. The parent has the right to appeal the homebound decision made by the superintendent or designee and school team. The appeal must be made in writing to the Department of Alternative Programs and Services within 10 days of receipt of the homebound denial letter from the school. Homebound service is appropriate for short term intervention and should not be viewed as a long term placement for regular school attendance. Homebound instruction is designed so the student does not fall significantly behind. Homebound services are approved for 45 instructional days at a time. If it is necessary for homebound instruction to continue beyond the approved period of time, a new Medical Homebound Instruction Form will be required. The school or district representative may ask for additional information regarding the student's individual health/treatment plan, progress towards treatment goals, and specific plans to transition the student back to the school setting in order to justify the need for extended services.

Health Services for Medication and Medical Procedures
No student shall carry medicine in school except for students given permission to do so by the Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP) to guard against a life threatening condition. All medications must be brought to the school by a responsible adult and delivered to the school nurse, or the principal. All medications administered at school require a Doctor's Order.

For all families - If your child takes medication, you must sign in medications directly with the nurse along with the completed doctor's order form (linked above). Please contact your Physician's office ASAP to obtain orders for the upcoming school year, as many offices are inundated with requests at the start of school. **These are due to Nurse Christy by August 7th before noon.** Nurse Christy will accept medication on August 3rd - 6th at the main school office between 8:00 am-12:00 pm

Medications

1. Medication may not be transported to or from school by students.
2. When possible, medications should be given by parents/guardians before or after school hours.
3. Any prescription medication to be given at school or school related activities must be accompanied by written orders from a health care practitioner who is recognized by SC's Dept of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation as authorized to prescribe medications and accompanied by a completed CCSD Medication/ Procedure Doctor's Order form.
4. CCSD and ECMCS reserve the right to refuse to honor medication requests that are not consistent with professional standards and/or deemed unsafe for the school setting. If this occurs, alternatives for meeting the students' needs will be discussed.
5. Medical Procedures require receipt of the completed CCSD Medication/ Procedure Doctor's Orders form and necessary equipment for the procedure.
6. The school nurse, in consultation with the parents/guardians, physician and student, will develop an IHP for the medical procedure.

Parent/Guardian Responsibility

1. Deliver the completed CCSD Medication/ Procedure Doctor's Orders form along with medication in the original labeled prescription container and/or proper equipment for medical procedure to the school.
2. Inform the school of any changes in the student's health condition, medical procedure, or medication.
3. Update CCSD/ECMCS forms annually or when there is any change in the medication or medical procedure.
4. Pick up any unused medication or medical supplies within one week of discontinuation or last day for students, whichever comes first, after which medications will be disposed of.
5. Provide no more than thirty (30) day supply of medication to the school.
6. Be responsible for medication/equipment until it is received by the school nurse or an administrator.

*The form can be found on the Nurse section of the website.

Guidelines regarding readmission after common childhood illnesses:

Colds: Students may return when there is no presence of yellow or green mucus, which may be related to an infection (may return if there is no elevated temperature, sore throat, or severe cough).

Conjunctivitis: Students who have pink or red eyes, and who have eye pain, reddened eyelids, with white or yellow discharge, or eyelids matted after sleep, may have purulent conjunctivitis and should not be in school until treatment.

Diarrhea: Students may return when free of diarrhea for 24 hours or more if caused by illness and not medication.

Fever: Students must be fever-free without medication for at least 24 hours.

Head Lice: Students may return after completing an approved treatment. A parent must accompany the child into school upon return and provide proof of treatment (the lice shampoo bottle or medication box). No live lice may be present at the time of re-admittance.

Strep Throat: Students may return after treatment with antibiotics for at least 24 hours.

Vomiting: Students may return when free from vomiting for 24 hours or more.

A more detailed description of all illnesses that require school exclusion can be found in the Nurse Services Department section of the CCSD website.

Note: A faculty member certified in CPR and first aid is available at all times during regular school hours. ECMCS also has an AED Defibrillator.

Vaccinations

ALL vaccinations required for each student must be properly documented and submitted to the school nurse by July 31st.

***Non-compliant students cannot begin school until proof of vaccination is provided to the school on a South Carolina Certificate of Immunization form or an exemption is on file. This is State Law!*

School Counseling Services

ECMCS has a comprehensive school counseling program that is a vital part of our educational mission. Our school counseling program ensures that every student has access to the social, emotional, and academic support they need to thrive and become productive citizens and contributing members in an ever-changing global society. Our district program is based upon the American School Counseling Association National Model, which provides a data-driven, systematic approach to ensure that every student has access to the support needed for social-emotional growth, academic success, and career readiness.

Through school counseling programs, students' individual needs are met through a tiered system of support. Tier 1 supports are the foundation of the program and are designed to reach 100% of students. The goal is to provide all students with the "Mindsets & Behaviors" necessary for success. Tier 1 supports are provided through classroom lessons, collaboration with teachers to integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into the general curriculum, as well as through school-wide assemblies.

Tier 2 Supports include targeted interventions for “some” students - 10-15% of the student population – identified by data such as attendance reports, behavior reports, or grades. Tier 2 supports include short-term, individual check-ins; small group counseling; as well as consultation and collaboration with parents and teachers to develop specific emotional, behavioral, or academic plans.

Tier 3 supports are intensive services reserved for “few” students - 1–5% of the student population - experiencing significant barriers or chronic challenges that require high-intensity, individualized support. Tier 3 supports include short-term, individual counseling; crisis intervention; as well as intensive goal-setting and/or individual safety planning. It can also include referrals to our school-based Department of Mental Health counselor or community mental health providers or specialists to ensure a wraparound support system.

The school counseling department works closely with school administration and staff to accomplish the following:

- Instruction: Deliver classroom lessons based on ASCA Student Standards (e.g., lessons on bullying prevention, academic skills, emotion regulation, social skills, and career exploration.
- Counseling: Provide short-term, individual and small-group counseling for students with identified needs.
- Consultation & Collaboration: Work with teachers and parents to develop strategies for student success.
- Referrals: Connect students and families with community mental health resources for long-term support.
- Advocacy: Participate in IEP, 504, or MTSS meetings to ensure student access and equity.
- Data Analysis: Review school-wide data (attendance, grades, discipline) to identify and close achievement gaps.

- Individual Student Planning: Conduct Individual Graduation Plans to aid in the transition to high school.

Crisis Intervention/Risk Assessment:
At times, students may indicate either verbally, in writing, or through drawings, a threat to harm themselves or others. In order to ensure the safety of all of our students, the district takes these threats very seriously. As a result, a team of trained professionals, such as Counselors and School Psychologists, may be called upon to conduct a self-harm or threat assessment to determine the imminence of the threat. The assessment will then guide the development of a plan of action to support the student and the school. If a self-harm or threat assessment is conducted with your student, you will be notified and you may be asked to provide additional information. If those conducting the assessment determine that your student is at a moderate to high risk of causing harm to self or others, you may be asked to take your student for further clinical assessment.

Assessment and Accountability

Academic Assessment
ECMCS is unique in that it must stay true to the Montessori philosophy while meeting the requirements of a public charter school dictated by SC law. Because of this unique anomaly the administrative and teaching faculty has spent countless hours and attention to create a thorough and multifaceted system for individual assessment. Report cards disseminated quarterly reflect progress.

Student Promotion and Retention
There are important factors to be considered by the teacher before determining that a student will progress to the next grade. Student promotion at ECMCS is based upon an evaluation of each student's achievement in terms of appropriate instructional goals. The basis for making the determination should reflect teacher judgment based on consideration of the following: quarterly report cards, classroom assignments, daily observations, standardized tests, student portfolios, Academic Success Plans (where used) or IEP plans (where appropriate, county approved) and other data as appropriate or required. The primary responsibility for determining each pupil's level of performance and ability to function academically, socially and emotionally at the next grade level is that of the classroom teacher, supported by the educational and developmental data available and/or promotion/retention committee.

It is important to note that the promotion and/or retention of any student must be discussed as a team starting in January, which includes the principal, teacher and parent(s) using the "LIGHTS Retention Scale." The decision regarding promotion/retention must ultimately be made by the School Principal as he/she is the only one authorized by the state to grant additional state funding to any student.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
FERPA affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day the District receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit to the school principal or District designee a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

The right to provide written consent before the District discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exemption, which, under the law, permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school employees, to include school officials with legitimate educational interests. School officials are persons with a legitimate educational interest in the student such as: instructors; administrators; health staff; counselors; attorneys; clerical staff; trustees; members of committees and disciplinary boards; and contractors, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the District to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Family Court Dispute Policy
Due to student privacy and other concerns, ECMCS will comply with court mandated subpoenas and will not voluntarily provide information (outside of regularly disseminated information regarding child or parent) in family court disputes. During all matters of family dispute, any legal documents requesting information on behalf of the school, family enrolled in the school, or student enrolled in the school must be submitted to the Principal.

Communication

At East Cooper Montessori Charter School, we strive to foster clear and robust communication between home and school. The chart below offers guidelines regarding the proper channels to use for gaining information and solving problems.

Please note: If families are experiencing a separation, please let the school and/or guidance counselor know so that we can support your child. Additionally, we will need to ensure both custodial guardians receive electronic information such as report cards. We will not be aware of this need unless you inform us.

ECMCS Conflict Resolution Procedure
Misunderstandings and problems may arise in any situation. Communication built on respect is essential for open and honest conflict resolution. The parent conflict resolution procedures, as well as the grievance process, are outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

Point of Contact by Area

Child's Progress Classroom Activities Class Procedures Behavior and Discipline	Classroom Teacher
Legal Matters Policies Instructional Concerns Fundraising Public Relations Pedagogical Questions or Concerns Teacher Effectiveness	Principal Jody Swanigan Jody@montessoricharterschool.com
Educational Initiatives and Concerns Professional Development Curriculum and Instruction Learning Concerns or Challenges Gifted and Talented Education	Assistant Principal Kelsey Henson KelseyHenson@montessoricharterschool.com Instructional Coach Alexa Leonard Alexaleonard@montessoricharterschool.com Instructional Coach Lindsey Jarotski LindseyJarotski@montessoricharterschool.com Instructional Technology Marie Connelly MarieConnelly@montessoricharterschool.com
Medical Policy and Procedures	Christy Thompson

Health Concerns Emergency Planning	christythompson@montessoricharterschool.com
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion - Cultural Competency Social-Emotional needs for all students Transition to High School School success/student motivation	School Counselors Primary & Lower Elementary Jordan Bates jordanbates@montessoricharterschool.com Upper Elementary & Middle School Jessica Miller Jessicamiller@montessoricharterschool.com
Intervention Psychological Evaluations Behavioral or Attention Challenges 504 Plans IEP Services	School Psychologist Mary-Catherine Stoney marycatherinestoney@montessoricharterschool.com
Billing Accounts Auditing Facilities HR	Financial Director Billy Koll Billykoll@montessoricharterschool.com
Admissions/lottery Annual Fund Marketing PowerSchool Scheduling Student Records	Director of Admissions/Director of Development Chyna Onembo Chynaonembo@montessoricharterschool.com
Volunteerism Check-in/Check-out Attendance School Wide Communication Carpool/Dismissal	Front Office Administrator Carrie Walker Carriewalker@montessoricharterschool.com
Afterschool Enrichment/Schedule	After School Care Coordinator Catherine Netter CatherineNetter@montessoricharterschool.com

Other Methods of Communication

Email

Parent information will be disseminated in a variety of ways including email, newsletters, class notes, weekly Office Notes and via student take home folders. Please check your child's take home folder for notices. It is VERY important that parents read all communications including Office Notes and check the website regularly for calendar dates, the Upcoming Events updates, forms, and other vital school information.

Website

The school's website offers up to date information about the school and upcoming events. The school's policies, procedures, information, calendar, Governing Board information, classroom information, surveys, payment portal, and other interactive information can be found on the website.

School App

Parents can download the CCSD app for the latest information and to make payments. Once you download the app, you can add the schools your children attend including East Cooper Montessori.

Parent Conferences

Two parent conferences will be held to share student progress and determine goals: one after the first nine weeks of the school year and one after the third nine weeks of the school year. Conferences may be held at any other time as requested by the administration, teacher or parent on an as-needed basis.

Facebook Page

Please follow our school Facebook page for exciting news, announcements, and photos of our students learning.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are very special and unique in the Montessori environment. While each level celebrates slightly differently depending on the age of the child, ECMCS honors birthdays as a beautiful celebration of life.

Primary and Lower Elementary students concretely walk around the representation of the sun once for each year of their life usually accounting for reaching milestones in each year. Check with your child's teachers for further details and timing. Parents should only send a snack for birthdays if one of the first five ingredients is not sugar.

Media Release

Families can opt out of having their child interviewed or placed in any ECMCS media by indicating your wish on the media release through the CCSD registration process.

Understand if you opt out through the registration process, you are declining all opportunities including the yearbook.

School Pictures

School pictures are taken in the fall by a professional photographer. A fee schedule will be produced each fall. Pictures are compiled in a yearbook sold at the end of each school year regardless if a family purchases individual pictures.

Nutrition, Snacks and Lunches

Snack

Students are welcome to bring a snack. The snacks cannot list sugar as one of the first five ingredients. Snack must be portable and not refrigerated.

Nut Products

Students in 1st-8th grade are permitted to bring nut products in their lunch.

- Nuts are prohibited in the Primary rooms (3-6 six year olds)
- Notify the school nurse of any allergies.

Breakfast

Breakfast is available for purchase at ECMCS prior to the start of school starting at 7:30am. The kitchen closes at 8:00am each morning. Students may bring cash or use the district online account to purchase meals including breakfast.

Lunch

Nutritious lunches are very important to your child's good health. Students who do not arrive with a lunch will be provided a lunch and the family will be billed. Lunch cannot be accepted in the front office after 9:00am. Please No FAST FOOD drop off lunch meals.

Daily Options:

1. School Hot Lunch: Please refer to the CCSD website for the annual cost of school lunch. The preferred method for paying for lunch is using the Prepay Meal Payment account on the CCSD website; or you can send a check (made payable to CCSD) or cash with your child. Unless you specify otherwise, changes will be applied to your child's meal account.
   Lunch Prepay directions:
   A. Register at the www.linqconnect.com
   B. Click on "register now" then choose "start registration". Your child's student ID is required. You may contact the front office if you do not know your child's ID number. See comment

Free and Reduced Meals

*Families must apply for Free and Reduced Lunch every year. There is a 30 day grace period for families who qualified last year. Free and Reduced Lunch applications are available online.

2. Pack a Lunch box: This option is available every day. The lunch should include one component of protein and two components of fruit and/or vegetables as well as 100% juice, water, or milk. Don't forget to put an ice pack inside the box to keep everything fresh. A microwave is not available for heating lunches. Please do not send candy, sodas or junk food. "Grow food" for growing minds and bodies should be the major component of your child's lunch.

3. Student Run Pizza Business Thursdays: The middle school business will organize and offer pizza every Thursday. The students are fully in charge of their business and will be responsible for taking orders, creating a spreadsheet, tracking orders, balancing their account and delivering pizza to each customer. Pizza comes with a veggie and drink. The cost will be announced in Schoolwide Office Notes.

Safety

Conduct Expectations (See the Student Code of Conduct)
ECMCS believes in the dignity of all and that everyone, including students, families and staff, should be treated with dignity and respect. As a part of Cosmic Education (a study of each cosmic unit in relation to the whole), Maria Montessori was an advocate of Peace Education: the idea that the study and understanding of different cultures and societies would lead to acceptance and peace between nations.

In general, East Cooper Montessori Charter School uses redirection and verbal explanation for most discipline issues. The best deterrent for discipline problems is to have appropriate faculty-child ratios and enough equipment and activities to build choice into the child's world. Discipline is verbal with a clear, concise and short message. This verbal discussion may also be recorded on an incident report, discussed and then signed by the student, teacher, principal and parent. If a conference is necessary, all of the above parties would participate in the conference. Behaviors are also subject to other consequences as outlined in ECMCS Code of Student Conduct. ECMCS uses the CCSD web application "Simple Discipline" to notify parents of behavior incidents when they occur.

In accordance with these principles, ECMCS will not tolerate any behavior by students, families or visitors which is insulting, degrading or stereotyping of any race, religion, gender, disability, physical characteristics, ethnic group, sexual preference, age or nationality. ECMCS staff also expects disagreements among adults to be handled professionally and without aggression.

Emergency Procedures

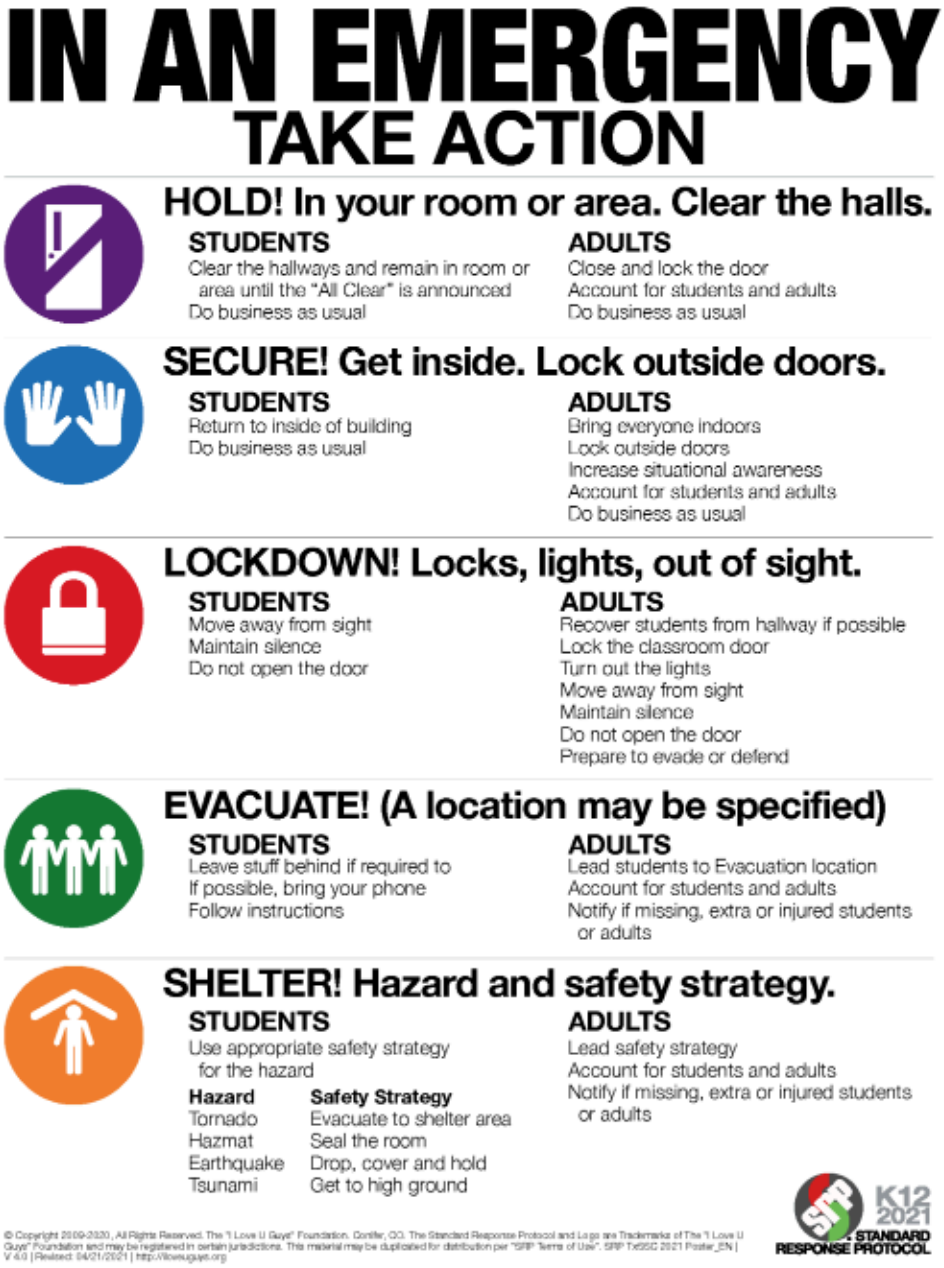
Standard Response Procedure
CCSD and ECMCS adopted a safety response program known as the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) in January 2020. The SRP is a response framework that provides clear, consistent language

and response actions for all staff, students, and first responders. The SRP is a program made available to school districts by The “I Love U Guys” Foundation and has been adopted by more than 100,000 schools.

The five different response protocols in the SRP are:
Secure - Get inside. Lock outside doors. (Called when there is a threat or hazard outside of the school building.)
Lockdown - Locks, lights, out of sight. (Called when there is a serious threat inside or immediately outside the building.)
Evacuate - To the announced location. (This is used when there is a need to move students from one location to another, away from danger.)
Shelter - Hazard and safety strategy. (Called when the need for personal protection is necessary, such as during a tornado or earthquake.)
Hold – In your classroom or area, clear the halls. (There may be situations that require students to stay in their classroom.)

All staff members receive training on this protocol, but the plain language and clear instructions make it easy to understand even for those who have not been through training, such as campus visitors. The SRP does not change our current response procedures; it merely enhances them by adopting clear, consistent language used to initiate a particular Response.

Please review the diagram below for more information.



First Aid Kits
Kits are located in all the classrooms and checked regularly by the nurse.

Fire Drills and Other Emergency Drills
Fire drills and other emergency drills are conducted on a monthly basis in compliance with DHEC. Drills are usually unannounced. Fire drills and other emergency drill routes for students are posted next to the exit of each classroom. All equipment including fire extinguishers, alarm systems, bathroom strobes and exits are checked and tested on a monthly basis.

Weather-Related Closings

During times of inclement weather, ECMCS follows the Charleston County School District regarding closing. When CCSD announces closings due to weather, ECMCS will also be closed. You can also check for inclement weather updates on the CCSD and ECMCS Facebook pages.

Criminal History/Background Checks

All individuals employed by, volunteering for, or working in a consulting relationship with ECMCS, including support, clerical administrative, Governing Board, food service or custodial staff, who have unsupervised direct contact with ECMCS students (even if such contact is on an occasional basis) are subject to criminal history review. The School may conduct criminal record checks through V-Soft Raptor, an electronic tracking system.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

All ECMCS employees are mandatory reporters (and volunteers are encouraged to report) suspected child abuse by any person, even if such person is not the child's parent or otherwise responsible for his/her care. Any ECMCS employee or volunteer who reports suspected child abuse should have no fear of reprisal.

Definition of Child Abuse: South Carolina code 20-7-490, et. Seq., defines an abused or neglected child as any child less than 18 years of age:

- Whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care create or inflict, or threatens to create or inflict, upon such child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means; or create a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions;
- Whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care neglect or refuse to provide care necessary for the child's health; provided, however, that no child who in good faith is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination shall for that reason alone be considered to be an abused or neglected child;
- Whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care abandons such child;
- Whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care commit or allow to be committed any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law;
- Who is without parental care or guardianship caused by the absence or the mental or physical incapacity of the child's parents, guardian or other person standing in loco parentis.

Indicators of Abuse and Neglect

Physical neglect is one of the most widely recognized forms of neglect. It is important to keep in mind that all incidents in which a person fails to provide for the basic needs for a child are necessarily considered neglect.

Some Indicators of Neglect: underweight, poor growth pattern, and failure to thrive; inappropriate dress, consistent hunger, and poor hygiene; consistent lack of supervision; unattended physical and medical problems and needs; and abandonment.

Some Indicators of Physical Abuse: human bite marks, lacerations or abrasions, burns in the shape of an iron, grill or cigarette, immersion burns and any other significant unexplained marks or bruises.

Some Indicators of Sexual Abuse: difficulty walking or sitting; torn, stained or bloody underclothing; pain, swelling or itching in genital and/or anal area; pain during urination; bruises, bleeding or lacerations in genital and anal area; venereal disease.

Some Indicators of Mental Injury: speech disorders; lags in physical development or failure to thrive; hyperactive and/or disruptive behavior; isolation; withdrawn.

Who must report child abuse and neglect?

South Carolina state law provides that certain people are mandated to report when they learn information in their professional capacity that leads them to believe that a child is harmed or at significant risk of being harmed (abused or neglected) by their parent, guardian or other caregiver as defined by statute. All other persons may report when they believe a child is harmed or at significant risk of being harmed.

The Code of South Carolina, Section 63-7-610, requires that certain persons, including teachers and other persons employed, report suspicions of child abuse or neglect within seventy-two (72) hours of "first" suspicion. Failure to file such a report within the prescribed time limit is a misdemeanor and is subject to a fine up to $500 and/or jail up to 6 months. Any employee or volunteer of ECMCS who suspects child abuse or neglect should immediately notify the Principal.

Search and Seizure

Pursuant to state and federal law, any person, student or adult, entering the school campus voluntarily suspends his or her rights and may be subject to a search and/or seizure by the appropriate authorities. Pursuant to S.C. Code Annotated Section 59-63-11 10 et seq. "any person entering the premises of a school in the State of South Carolina is deemed to consent to a reasonable search of its people and its property."

Visitors

Parents and visitors are cordially invited. We require that upon entering the property, all visitors must go directly to the office for proper direction and to obtain a visitor's pass.
ECMCS reserves the right to deny visitors access to the school building.

Parent visitors as volunteers are greatly appreciated. Volunteer duties are best scheduled in advance through the classroom teacher. Expectations of parent visitors as volunteers include appropriate interactions with students and teachers at all times. This includes not occupying the teacher such that he/she may not safely supervise students at all times. Parent volunteers may not, under any circumstances, request to only volunteer with specific students and/or their child(ren) only.

NOTE: If you need to access the building as a visitor beyond the office doorway in either building, you must check in at the front office of the main building and be given a visitor pass. Visitor parking is located in the circular driveway facing Rifle Range Road, as well as designated

parking lots. Parking in the circular driveway is prohibited between 2:15-3:15.

Student Code of Conduct

**Note The ECMCS Code of Conduct is subject to updates*

TERMS TO KNOW:

- PDP - Progressive Discipline Plan
- Teacher Managed Referrals - Behaviors that will be assigned consequences/interventions by the classroom teacher
- Office Managed Referrals - Behaviors that be assigned consequences/interventions by the administrator
- Levels - Refers to the severity of the behaviors (ranges from Level 1 (less severe) to Level 3 (most severe)
- Referral for Expulsion - A discipline hearing will be conducted by the ECMCS board in the zone in which the school is located.

Code of Conduct Policies

Legal Authority and Responsibility

The Board of Trustees of the Charleston County School District and ECMCS are required by the State Statute (see Sections 59-15-40, 59-19-90 et. seq. and 59-63-210 et. seq. Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, and Act No. 340 of the Acts of 1967) to make and adopt rules setting forth standards of scholastic achievement and standards of conduct and behavior that must be met by all students as a condition to the right of such students to attend schools in this District. The rules shall take into account the necessity of proper conduct on the part of all students and the necessity for scholastic progress in order that the welfare of the greatest number of students shall be promoted, even though such rules may result in the ineligibility of students who fail to observe the required standards and may require the suspension or permanent dismissal of such students.

Policy Student Conduct

The ECMCS Governing Board and the Charleston County School District Board of Trustees collectively called “Board” expects students to conduct themselves in an orderly, courteous, dignified, and respectful manner. This requirement refers to their actions toward other students and all school employees, their language,their dress and their manners. CCSD Board and ECMCS Governing Board believes self-discipline is an interpersonal goal of public education. Students have a responsibility to know and respect the policies, rules, and regulations, as defined in the CCSD and ECMCS Student Code of Conduct and the schools they attend. Violations of such policies, rules, and regulations shall result in disciplinary actions. CCSD Board and ECMCS Governing Board directs the administration to establish a student code of conduct and school-wide progressive discipline plan to create and preserve conditions essential to the orderly operation of the schools. CCSD Board and ECMCS Governing Board authorizes its school authorities to employ probation and suspension and to recommend expulsion, if necessary, to enforce this policy.

Progressive Discipline Plan (PDP)

The CCSD Progressive Discipline Plan (PDP) is a guide for all administrators to use when processing office discipline referrals. Administrators may elect to provide additional interventions or assign a lesser consequence based on extenuating circumstances. In addition, administrators may assign a more exclusionary practice. The PDP is used to ensure consistency and fairness when assigning interventions, support, and disciplinary consequences to students. The PDP was created with the assistance of elementary, middle and high school administrators, elementary, middle and high school, teachers and district staff. The infraction title and codes listed in the PDP are assigned by the state. The majority of the behavior levels are directed by the state, however behaviors considered more egregious towards adults, may have been placed in a higher level (for example, profanity is a Level 1 offense based on the state's code, but profanity towards an adult is considered a Level 2 infraction for CCSD).

Banding addresses the accumulation of multiple "like" referrals by a student, so that school leaders are able to provide timely and responsive interventions and support to students who are experiencing challenges. Infractions "banded" together, will follow the same progression of consequences AND interventions.

School Resource Officers (SRO)

School Resource Officers (SRO) are provided by the Charleston County Sheriff 's Office, Charleston Police Department, Mount Pleasant Police Department, and North Charleston Police Department in many of our schools. SROs assist students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators as well as other staff with sustaining a safe school environment. SROs also serve as active law enforcement officials on campus and at school sponsored events to assist with emergencies or crises which require police action. School Resource Officers do not work for CCSD. School personnel do not have jurisdiction over law enforcement decisions or actions.

Contact Law Enforcement When Criminal Conduct Occurs

In addition to other provisions required by law or by regulation of the State Board of Education, school administrators must contact law enforcement authorities immediately upon notice that a person is engaging or has engaged in activities on school property or at school sanctioned or sponsored activity which may result or results in injury or serious threat of injury to the person or another person or his property as defined in local board policy.
SC Code of Law Section 59-24-60

Governing Board

As per the defining concept of charter schools, East Cooper Montessori Charter School maintains its success by the strong leadership of its governing board. The three-part alliance between faculty, parents, and community members is critical to enabling the board to focus on results based effective strategic planning. Board members annually participate in training to define the enormous responsibilities of leading a public school. The ECMCS Governing Board is

annually (spring) elected by parents and faculty to fill the positions of (4) parent members and (3) community members. Board members are strategically selected for their skills, knowledge, and commitment. Responsibilities include promoting the East Cooper Montessori Charter School's mission, hiring and supervising the administrator, setting policies, raising funds, conducting a yearly fiscal audit, and developing the school budget.

The Governing Board meetings are posted on the external ECMCS calendar. Governing Board Meetings are public meetings and attendance is encouraged.

*For more information about the Governing Board visit "About Us - Governing Board" on the ECMCS website.

After School Care Program/ After School Enrichment

Afterschool and enrichment offerings, signups and rates here.

Tutoring Policy

A teacher or employee may enter into an agreement with parents for tutoring children for a fee. This practice must be limited to children **other than** those for whom the teacher or employee is currently exercising teaching, administrative or direct supervisory responsibility. These restrictions are to assure all students receive reasonable assistance without charge from their own teachers, as well as to avoid placing a teacher or employee in a position where he/she may have a conflict of interest.

A teacher or employee may not tutor any student for pay during his/her regular working hours. A teacher or employee may provide tutoring services to students under the above criteria on school premises outside of working hours. Additionally, tutoring services externally contracted by parents may not occur within the school day for any reason, in accordance with the law requiring each child receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

Technology Acceptable Use Policy GBEBD

ECMCS complies with and is governed by all current and future CCSD Board policies and administrative regulations pertaining to technology, electronic communications, digital tools, and information systems.

Families and students are encouraged to review the following policies, which are available on the CCSD website:

- **GBEBD – Acceptable Use of Technology**
- **Personal Electronic Device Use**
  - CCSD Cell Phone Policy Update
- **CCSD Student Code of Conduct & Progressive Discipline Plan**
  - *Digital Citizenship* can be found on p. 5 in the Code of Conduct
  - *Electronic and Wireless Device Policy* can be found on p. 44 in the Code of Conduct

Parent/guardians indicated agreement to these policies during the online registration process.

At East Cooper Montessori Charter School, technology is a purposeful learning tool that supports creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. Proper behavior when using technology is no different than proper behavior in any other school activity. Students are expected to use district technology resources in a legal, responsible, ethical, and respectful manner.

All ECMCS-issued devices remain school property and must be returned in good working condition with normal wear. Students are responsible for caring for their devices and reporting damage or loss immediately.

Potential Fees (subject to change):

- Full device replacement: **$525**
- Screen repair: **$150**
- Keyboard/touchpad repair: **$75**
- Charging cord/brick: **$35**

Insurance covers one accidental damage repair per year. Lost, stolen, or intentionally damaged devices are not covered and may result in full replacement cost.

Improper use of school and district technology resources may result in suspension of access, revocation of privileges, restitution for damages, and/or disciplinary action in accordance with the CCSD Progressive Discipline Plan.

We appreciate your partnership in reinforcing safe, respectful, and balanced technology use at school and at home.

ECMCS Digital Citizenship Commitment

At East Cooper Montessori Charter School, technology is a tool for learning, creativity, and connection. How we use technology reflects who we are as a community. Our digital choices are guided by our **Swirl Promises**.

My Digital Citizenship Pledge

When I use technology at ECMCS, I live out our Swirl Promises:

Share Peace

I will bring harmony to those around me.

- I communicate kindly and respectfully online.
- I do not bully, intimidate, threaten, or harass others.
- I help create a safe and positive digital environment.
- I report harmful or unsafe behavior to a trusted adult.

Words Matter

I will choose words thoughtfully and with intention.

- I use professional and appropriate language online.
- I think before I post, share, or respond.
- I understand that my digital footprint reflects my character.
- I do not share messages, images, or content that could harm others.

Integrity

I will do the right thing even when no one is looking.

- I complete my own work and give credit to others.
- I avoid plagiarism or cheating.
- I use AI and digital tools only when permitted and to support my learning, not replace it.
- I protect my passwords and take responsibility for my account.

Respect

I will show care in my relationships, environment, and community.

- I care for my device and use it responsibly.
- I respect privacy and do not record or share without permission.
- I follow school and district technology policies.
- I understand that school devices and accounts may be monitored.

Lifelong Learning

I will persevere in academic and personal challenges.

- I use technology to explore, create, collaborate, and problem-solve.
- I stay focused on learning goals when using my device.
- I make responsible choices even when challenges arise.
- I understand that responsible technology use is a privilege that supports my growth.

Technology use at ECMCS reflects our character.
I accept responsibility for being a respectful and responsible digital citizen.

Grievance Procedure

Parent Conflict Resolution Procedure
Parents and teachers share in the responsibility of a child's education. The two should work cooperatively to foster a positive educational experience for a child. At times, however, conflicts do arise. The Governing Board and faculty at East Cooper Montessori Charter School recognizes the need for parents to resolve conflicts effectively and respectfully in order to support the educational process of their children. The following procedure is to help facilitate a positive learning environment in which good problem solving skills are utilized and modeled for our students. When a conflict arises between a parent and a staff member at ECMCS, the following steps should be taken:

1. The parent should arrange and attend a meeting with the faculty member to discuss his/her concerns and attempt to come to a mutually agreed upon solution.

2. If mutually agreed closure is not reached, the parent may arrange a meeting with the appropriate administrative support at East Cooper Montessori Charter School. In this meeting, the parent should discuss and document the attempts that have been made to settle the problem with the faculty member. The administrator may invite the faculty member to be present.

3. If there is still no closure, the parent may use the Parent Grievance Process, if appropriate, to request action by the Governing Board. The Governing Board will determine if the conflict falls under Board directive and if so, a meeting will be scheduled. The Principal, faculty member and parent may be present at this meeting. The majority decision of the Board of Directors is final, and the conflict will be considered resolved.

We hope the process outlined below provides a means to settle matters in a respectful and timely manner.

Grievance Process
What is a grievance? A grievance is a formal complaint brought by a parent and/or guardian of a child attending or who has applied to ECMCS regarding either a violation of, misapplication of, or interpretation of an ECMCS policy.

In order to bring a grievance, a parent and/or guardian of a child must identify the specific ECMCS policy in question of violation, misapplication, or misinterpretation. A grievance is not for matters of approved policies in, but not limited to, parent handbooks, student code of conduct, employee handbook, and so forth. A grievance is not for matters of grades as those are within the sole discretion of the teachers and administration.
Proceedings will be confidential.

STEP 1:

If the matter involves a dispute with a teacher, request a meeting with the teacher who shall hold a face-to-face meeting within 10 days. In the event the teacher is uncomfortable meeting, notify the Principal immediately, who shall conduct the meeting.
If the matter involves a dispute with the Principal, request a meeting, in writing, with the Principal who shall conduct a face-to-face meeting during school hours within 10 days of the request. In the event the Principal is uncomfortable meeting, the Parent or Principal may notify the Chairperson of the Governing Board and a joint meeting will be conducted.

STEP 2
If there is no resolution with the Principal, the Parent may complete the Grievance Form found on the ECMCS website and submit it to the Governing Board.

STEP 3
If the Board determines by majority vote that the matter is not a proper grievance, the Board shall notify the Parent and the process shall be complete.
If the Governing Board determines that the matter is a proper grievance by majority vote, the Board shall refer the matter to the Grievance Committee. The five member Grievance Committee is made up of two former parent Board members, one current community Board member, and two teachers.

STEP 4
The Grievance Committee shall then meet within 20 days of receiving the Board's referral to review the Grievance and decide whether or not a hearing is necessary to determine the matters set forth in the Grievance.
If the Grievance Committee determines that a hearing is not necessary to decide the issues contained within the Grievance, they shall issue their written non-binding recommendation to the Board within 10 days of their meeting. Go to Step 6.
If the Grievance Committee decides to conduct a formal hearing of the grievance, go to step 5.

Step 5
Present at the hearing are the Grievance Committee, the parent and Principal and/or representative of the school administration.
The procedure for the hearing will be as follows:
a) The Parent presents his/her grievance.
b) The Principal and/or school representative is given time to respond.
c) The parties are dismissed from the hearing.
d) Deliberation and writing of a non-binding recommendation to the Board.

Step 6
a) On the following business day, the Grievance Committee sends its recommendation to the Governing Board.
b) At the next Governing Board meeting, (an emergency Governing Board meeting may be called to address the grievance) the Board may either approve, reject or modify the recommendation of the Grievance Committee or it may elect to conduct further inquiry or gather additional information, including possibly scheduling a new hearing before the full Board.

In any event, the Board shall issue a final decision no later than 30 days from the date the meeting is held regarding the Grievance Committee's recommendation. The Board's decision will then be final without further review.