

2019/2020



Commitment

The Riverstone School Lifestyle



"We shouldn't ask: What does a person need to know or be able to do in order to fit into the existing social order? Instead, we should ask: What lives in each human being and what can be developed in him or her? Other than will it be possible to direct the new qualities of each emerging generation. Society will become what young people, as whole human beings, make out of the existing social conditions. The new generation should not just be made to be what the present society wants it to become." - Rudolf Steiner

Welcome

The philosophy of the curriculum at Riverstone School is based on an understanding of the developing child. Our approach is holistic, our learning environment supportive, hands-on, and designed to foster the unfolding of each child's full potential. Riverstone School is a stand against the standardized, homogenized model of traditional education. Our students are becoming self-motivated, lifelong learners, with the hard facts, soft skills, and creativity they need to be successful human beings, no matter where life takes them.

Enrollment in Riverstone School is a decision to participate in a unique approach to living and learning with strong core values. This commitment requires a strong working relationship between school and families. As members of the Riverstone School community and parents of its students, we ask more of you than perhaps other schools. We ask that you partner with us. Be our partners in educating a new generation *and* ourselves about how to live up to one's greatest potential and at one's highest frequency.

We hope that you find the Riverstone School Lifestyle Handbook a useful tool to understand the position we take on fundamental topics, as well as a way to learn more about how you can build on a Riverstone education at home.

Sleep

A successful school day is founded on a full night's sleep. School work, play, and developing social skills consume children's energy and mental alertness. During sleep these mental and emotional resources are renewed, information is processed, and the body recovers. Lack of sleep results in notable behavioral changes, affects memory, and preparedness to learn.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, children ages 6-13 should have 9-11 hours of sleep each night. Teenagers need 8-10 hours of sleep.

Sleep Agreement

Children cannot get the most out of their school day with inadequate sleep. **Please plan for your child/children to receive a minimum of 8 hours of sleep on school nights.**

Helpful Tips on Sleep

- *Eliminate electronics at least 1 hour before bedtime.* Screen time disrupts the natural circadian rhythm and makes falling asleep harder.
- *Make bedtime a consistent routine.* When deciding what your family's bedtime routine will look like, make sure to factor in some winding down time. The activities before bedtime should be less stimulating and more calming. You know your child and your family the best so you would create a routine that is consistently used most nights that reflects the types of things you do.

Nutrition

A well-balanced breakfast is critical to a successful school day. Empirical evidence from research on the effects of breakfast on cognition shows that skipping breakfast can have adverse effects on both general energy levels and cognition of school children. Like sleep, notable changes in behavior and abilities are seen in children who are hungry.

Riverstone Lunch & Snack Policy

At Riverstone, we provide students a morning snack and lunch that is organic, non-GMO, dairy-free, gluten-free and low glycemic. **No outside food is permitted within the school.** If your child requires specific dietary needs consultation with the Executive Director is required.

There is substantial scientific evidence drawing the conclusion that the combination of gluten and dairy exacerbates learning and behavioral challenges.

The United States has raised the gluten level in our wheat crops to make the plant stronger against pests and disease to an unnatural level so that our bodies are no longer capable of tolerating gluten in a healthy manner.

Dairy is required to be pasteurized which kills the beneficial nutrients in milk. Artificial vitamins and minerals are then added back into the milk so that we can still perceive it as being a nutritional asset to our diet. Our bodies, however, don't process the dead milk in a healthy manner. For more information, see the Weston A. Price Foundation at www.westonaprice.org.

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) are being introduced into many foods available at the supermarket but there is no long-term testing of the introduction of e.coli and other diseases into the genetic code of plants and how it will affect our bodies. Organic food, or food without pesticides and chemicals, can feed the world without harm to our organic structures, as scientifically proven by the Rodale Institute.

Nutrition Agreement

To ensure students are prepared to get the most out of their school day, **we ask that you send them to school having eaten a protein-based breakfast.** Students who have not had an adequate breakfast will be given a breakfast protein snack for a fee.

Helpful Tips on Nutrition

- *Plan ahead.* Eliminate a.m. stress by planning and prepping breakfast the night before.
- *Make it a power breakfast.* Minimize the amount of added sugars and ramp up the protein and fiber, which provide fuel and sustenance, in your kid's morning meal. Sources of protein include meat, eggs, peanut or almond butter, and eggs, for example. Some sources of fiber include nuts, brown rice, avocado, veggies, and almonds. The combination of protein and fiber will help your child stay full and focused during class.

Media, Technology & Digital Content

The philosophy of Riverstone School is based upon an understanding of the developing child. While television, social media, movies, and video games can serve as a source of information and entertainment for adults, children do not think and process images/content at the same developmental ability level as adults. Children need hands-on, real, multi-sensory experiences to build their thinking capacities. Such activities are the seeds of imagination, creativity, and organic learning. It is important that your children be able to absorb the rich artistic curriculum each day--without electronic interference--in order to integrate and process it during sleeping hours. This is how learning becomes an

integral part of life. Allowing your children to attend to the tasks of growing and learning without the stimulation of electronic media also enhances their ability to focus and become immersed in the day's curriculum.

Extensive research has shown that exposure to entertainment media for children has a detrimental effect upon their self-image, their ability to concentrate and develop attention span, their relationship skills, values, reading abilities, energy levels, psychological health, creativity, and social behavior. We would be happy to provide more information and research on this topic if you desire it.

Age Appropriate Content & How to Use Media

We acknowledge that today's 21st century world requires computer skills and digital literacy. When students reach the ages between 10-13 they are able to think and understand deeply about their world. In recognition of the developing capacities and needs of maturing children, we encourage and support parents to dialogue with their children about the appropriate use of media and technology. We advocate the use of appropriate technologies for study aids, word processing, and online research for students as determined by their teachers and parents. We also support the use of technologies for students who need such accommodations as determined by the student's teachers, in conjunction with parents.

We want our children to make good decisions so they can take advantage of the powerful technology that fills their lives. But in order to make good choices, children must know how the digital world works. The very nature of the constantly connected culture means children must understand the concept of privacy, so that what they post and create won't hurt or embarrass them at some point in the future. The fact that much of digital communication is anonymous means that consequences can be separated from actions, which can lead to irresponsible or disrespectful behavior. Much of the task of childhood and adolescence involves figuring out who you are. But in digital life, anything said or posted can live on indefinitely and create undesired consequences.

The stakes are high because our children's technological abilities can be greater than their maturity and judgment. Having unrestricted access to information and people can result in gaining a wealth of information and experiences. But it can also mean accessing inappropriate contact and content. The difference between a positive experience and a negative experience lies in the decisions children make. Just as children learn to eat properly, swim safely, or drive a car carefully, they need to know how to live in the digital world responsibly and respectfully. Their ultimate success depends on their abilities to use digital media to create, collaborate, and communicate

well with others. Those who master these skills in using digital tools will be able to harness the digital world's awesome power.

Research

1. Concerns about the effects of television have centered almost exclusively on the content of the programs children watch. Many might argue that watching a nature program is educational and good for the child. However, as Marie Winn states in her book, *The Plug-In Drug*, "It is easy to overlook a deceptively simple fact: one is always watching television when one is watching television rather than having any other experience." Winn goes on to say that certain specific physiological mechanisms of the eyes, ears, and brain respond to the stimuli emanating from the screen regardless of the cognitive content of the programs. Television viewing requires the taking in of particular sensory material in a particular way no matter what the material might be. The sedentary mode of watching television does not match the active internal experience that occurs in response to what is being viewed. For example, one would not jump out of the way of an oncoming car that is on the screen, yet one may feel the anxiety, fear, and panic of the situation being viewed. There is, indeed, no other experience in a child's life that permits quite so much intake while demanding so little output as watching television.

2. In order to function in a society which relies upon mastery of the spoken and written word, a child must acquire fundamental skills in oral and written communication. Frequent use of electronic media can be counterproductive to the development of brain functions needed to master skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic, and language development. It can also work against the natural development of analytical thinking. Joseph Chilton Pearce, an internationally renowned educator, author and lecturer, states that the child's first seven years are devoted to development of the symbolic, metaphoric language structure in the mid-brain and that all future cognitive development rests on the integrated functioning of the right and left sides of the brain. Television viewing disrupts this development and can cause a child to be easily distracted and bored. Reading, writing, speaking, and reasoning are functions of the left side of the brain. This is the part of the brain that orders data and analyzes what it perceives. The right side of the brain perceives the world as a whole and does not code and decode, as does the left side. Television viewing engages the right side of the brain, and as a child is inundated with the short sequences and the accelerated pace found in any television program, the ability to use the symbolic analytical-thinking brain functions may be diminished.

3. Recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics based on media research indicate that parents should:

- Allow children and teens to engage with entertainment media for no more than 1-2 hours per day, and that should be high-quality, age-appropriate content. It is important for kids to spend time on outdoor play, reading, hobbies, and using their imaginations in free play.
- Keep the TV set and Internet-connected electronic devices out of the child's bedroom.
- Establish "screen-free" zones at home by making sure there are no televisions, computers or video games in children's bedrooms, and by turning off the TV during dinner.
- Review TV, movies, and videos with children and teenagers, and use this as a way of discussing important family values.
- Monitor what media their children are using and accessing, including any websites they are visiting and social media sites they may be using.
- Model active parenting by establishing a family home-use plan for all media. As part of the plan, enforce a mealtime and bedtime "curfew" for media devices, including cell phones. Establish reasonable but firm rules about cell phones, texting, Internet, and social media use.
- See more at:
<http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Pages/Media-and-Children.aspx> – sthash.jbSIDHO4.dpuf

4. The Child Mind Institute offers the following tips:

- Start leading by example early. Even before your child has a phone or tablet of her own, show her how they should be used. Don't check your messages at the dinner table. Look at people when they're talking to you — not at your phone. Remember that your children are always watching you and young children notice *everything* — that's how they learn.
- Watch things together. If you're worried that your kids are getting bad messages from the media, the best way to counteract them is to watch alongside your kids and point out when something isn't right. Call out a female character if she only seems to care about boys, or how she looks. Provide context if you are seeing unhealthy relationships (including friendships) or unrealistic beauty standards. Besides reinforcing your values, this will teach your kids to watch television and movies actively, not passively, which is good for their self-esteem. Do this during commercials, too!
- Don't make screens *the* reward (or consequence). Technology is enormously appealing to kids as it is, but when we make screen time the go-to thing kids get for good behavior — or get taken away for bad behavior — we are making it even more desirable, thereby increasing the chances that a child will overvalue it.
- Yes to friending, no to spying. If your child is on social media, developmental psychologist Donna Wick of Mind to Mind Parent recommends that you follow or

friend him, and monitor his page. But she advises against going through text messages unless there is cause for concern: "If you have a reason to be worried then okay, but it better be a good reason," she says. "I see parents who are just plain old spying on their kids. Parents should begin by trusting their children. To not even give your kid the benefit of the doubt is incredibly damaging to the relationship. You have to feel like your parents think you're a good kid."

Cell Phones

Students age 10 and older may bring cell phones onto campus. With administrator approval, cell phones may be used for emergency or urgent purposes or for arranging transportation after school. Otherwise, cell phones must remain turned off and in the Administrator's office during the school day. Parents, please use personal cell phones sparingly while on campus.

When appropriate and with teacher approval, students may use tablets and/or computers for educational purposes.

Media, Technology & Digital Content Agreement

As a school community, we agree that the impact of electronic media impacts children differently than adults, often to a detrimental effect on a child's healthy growth and development. Thus we expect that our families significantly reduce the use of media (television, movies, video games, computer games, iPads, etc.) by their children. **We ask that you limit your child/children's consumption of electronic media to a bare minimum, and seriously consider the complete elimination of violent video games or television and over-PG rated movies.**

We realize that limiting media from your child's life may seem like a tall order. However, with support and reassurance, families find that more free time means more creative and quality time together. We encourage you to speak with staff or other parents for suggestions, support, and resources that you might find helpful on this subject.

A note regarding violence: Please bear in mind that some parents work diligently to protect their children from blood and gore, zombies, war-related content, etc. When you expose your children to these types of content they talk about it at school and undermine other parent's principles.

Helpful Tips on Media, Technology & Digital Content

- *Teach kids the skills they need to use technology wisely and well.* It's hard to be a gatekeeper in a world without fences. Parents have little control over the flow of information to their kids who see too much, too soon. Since we cannot cover their

eyes or shadow them everywhere they go, we need to teach them how to behave responsibly in the digital world.

- *Don't be afraid to say no.* Set clear expectations and rules regarding what is acceptable to watch or play then stick to them.
- *Seek balance.* It's hard to know how much freedom to give children. We want them to learn how to navigate a digital world, and to enjoy movies and video games. We also want them to explore, enjoy, communicate, and create in the real world. Strike a balance that works for your family.
- *Research this topic.* Common Sense Media is one useful resource for parents.

Home Environment

Administrators and teachers everywhere, and Riverstone in particular, recognize the important contributions parents make toward a child's success in school. There is no question about it--parents are the first and most important educators in their child's life and success at school begins at home. Below are some considerations for parents that may help to promote a Riverstone-inspired learning environment at home.

- *Foster independence at a young age.* It's important for brain development, but also for developing an interest in learning. Let them try to do new things by themselves. This puts them in control and encourages them to explore more new things.
- *Stay in touch with what your child is learning* at school and find ways to bring that topic or theme home. For example, check out relevant books from the school library to read aloud at bedtime, tell stories about your experiences with that topic, or do a bit of your own research and talk about it together.
- We're all busy with activities, appointments, errands, etc. However, it's important to *provide your child with free play time each day* to discover and explore. This can be anything from day dreaming to roaming around the backyard.
- *Encourage your child's interests.* Within each child is a genius unique to them. Help them discover it and celebrate it.
- *Allow your child to have opinions.* Let them talk you through why they feel the way they do without passing judgement. Be passionate in your conversations and talk about experiences that tell the story better than any book.