

Merryhill Elementary and Preschool

 Parent and Student Handbook



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Nobel Learning Communities, Inc.

Merryhill School Parent Handbook

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MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to achieve the highest level of academic achievement within all grades. In addition, we strive to:

* Develop an appreciation for education and a desire to achieve.
* Emphasize the fundamentals of how to study, organize material, listen, think, reason, and work independently.
* Teach children to read with understanding.
* Attain strong foundations in English, Mathematics and Science.
* Help children develop an appreciation of creative arts, including visual and performing arts.
* Introduce the importance of self-wellness in addition to underscoring the need to exercise and stay fit.
* Encourage students to use initiative and to develop self-discipline and civic responsibility.
* Develop computer skills and attain technological capability.
* Become effective members of a learning community.

VISION STATEMENT

To be the leading provider of infant to elementary private education through curriculum based community schools.

PRINCIPAL’S MESSAGE

Thank you for choosing our school. What makes our school so special? Imagine children having so much fun in school that they can’t wait to arrive each morning. When I see how excited the students are, I know it’s the result of a team effort. The energy and enthusiasm that comes from students, parents and the staff is truly amazing. Our entire campus resonates with it.

At our elementary school, we set our standards high for our students and our teachers. Teachers are passionate, dedicated individuals who use their sensitivity and creativity to bring our well-rounded curriculum to life. Our small class sizes allow them to really focus on the individual learning styles of their students. As a result, we have seen great accomplishments from our students.

We recognize that learning happens both within the classroom, and in the world outside. Throughout the year, we enhance our curriculum with a variety of special events and off-campus experiential learning programs. This approach is designed to further development of life skills. Students learn to manage time efficiently, to work in teams, to think creatively and express themselves in a compelling way.

 ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed and designed primarily to distinguish schools adhering to a set of educational standards.  The accreditation process is also known in terms of its ability to effectively drive student performance and continuous improvement in education.

While accreditation is a set of rigorous protocols and research-based processes for evaluating a school’s effectiveness, it is far more than that. Accreditation examines the whole school—the programs, the cultural context, the community of stakeholders—to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of students.

Accreditation is important because it is a significant part of our overall quality assurance program, and it is a measure that is accepted and understood by our parents, students, faculty, and community partners. As an accredited school, Merryhill School’s primary goals are to ensure that the school strives every day for continuous improvement of our educational programs which support student learning and overall achievement.

SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION

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STAFF INFORMATION

Michelle Bechtel – Principal

Jon Bechtel – Director

Sharlene Abraham – Preschool Assistant Principal

Amanda DeBoer – Office Manager

Angela Seals – Administrative Assistant

Dolly Bartosh – Administrative Assistant

Janice Coleman – Kindergarten I

Marcie Harris – Kindergarten II

Cassie Amason – 1st Grade

Lauren Sansing – 2nd Grade

Amy Bradley – 3rd Grade

Vicki Geurin – 4th, 5th, and 6th Grades

Natalia Chansler – 4th, 5th, and 6th Grades

GENERAL INFORMATION

School Hours

Our academic day is conducted from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Before and after school care is provided from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

School Calendar

Our school-wide calendar is available on our school website. In addition, each Elementary classroom will provide a monthly newsletter detailing important events and upcoming activities.

Activities

Students are provided with the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of afterschool activities. Our dedicated instructors help foster students’ interest in an array of subjects, including soccer, dance, art, Scouts, piano, and karate. We also offer additional academic assistance for all subject areas.

School-wide Behavioral Expectations Policy

Rules of conduct for each classroom will be based on the following general expectations (and will include others which are appropriate for each specific age group).

1. Students will show respect for themselves.
2. Students will show respect for others.
3. Students will show respect for adults in charge.
4. Students will show respect for safety and traffic laws.

ACADEMIC ASSESSMENTS

Stanford Achievement Test 10th Edition/DORA and DOMA

Assessment is an integral part of instruction, as it determines whether or not goals are being met. Assessment inspires us to ask these hard questions: "Are we teaching what we think we are teaching?" "Are students learning what they are supposed to be learning?" "Is there a way to teach the subject better, thereby promoting better learning?"

We monitor every student’s progress in reading and mathematics both during the school year and at the end of each school year. To monitor reading and mathematics during the school year, we administer the DORA (Diagnostic Online Reading Assessment) and DOMA (Diagnostic Online Math Assessment) assessments three times per year. To assess each student’s progress in reading and mathematics at the end of each school year, we administer the Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition.

DORA and DOMA Reading and Mathematics Assessments

Assessment tools that provides our staff with valuable information regarding how well our students are meeting or exceeding reading and mathematics standards are the DORA (Diagnostic Online Reading Assessment) and the DOMA (Diagnostic Online Math Assessment) assessments. Students are assessed three times per year.

Teachers use the DORA and DOMA assessment information to customize lessons which insure that every student is receiving the appropriate instruction for his/her reading and math level. Educators refer to this as “assessment for learning” because the results help the teacher learn about each child’s needs and can then adjust lesson plans and instruction to meet the needs of each student.

Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition

Each year all students in grades K-8 are expected to take the SAT10 test during the spring. The SAT10 is a national, norm-referenced achievement test that evaluates each child’s progress toward meeting rigorous and essential content standards in reading, mathematics and language arts. The results help us determine how well students are performing compared to other students their age and how well our teachers are teaching all of the essential skills and standards for each grade.

The test is given once per year and over a series of days. We ask parents and students to remember a few important test-taking tips:

* Get a good night's rest and eat a normal breakfast before testing.
* Remember not to schedule any outside appointments during the testing window.
* Prepare all supplies needed (pencil, test forms, calculator, etc.) before you go to sleep.
* Relax, taking a few deep breaths.
* Keep a good attitude. Think positively!

 ADMISSIONS’ PROCEDURES

We welcome new students and families, and we want to make sure that every student can be successful in our academic program. Therefore, we do require students who are interested in attending our school to:

* + Provide the most recent school year’s report card
	+ Take the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT8)
	+ Spend a minimum of half-day participating in classroom activities

This admissions’ process helps us ensure that all students who attend our school will be successful academically, socially and behaviorally.

ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

It is our expectation that all students will be in school every day when they are healthy enough to do so. Please call the school to notify us when your child will be absent and for what reason. All absences require a note upon the student’s return to school.

Most students do not exceed ten absences per year, or an average of one day per month. Absences do affect a student’s ability to learn to his/her fullest potential. If your child absences become excessive, the teacher and principal will request a conference to determine how to remedy the situation. Excessive absences can be reason to not re-enroll a student for the following school year. Please consult with the principal if you have any questions or concerns.

Tardiness to school is sometimes unavoidable. A pattern of repeated tardiness, however, can be disruptive for not only the late student, but also for the rest of the class. Please help us preserve the importance of the academic day by helping students arrive on time.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The core curriculum contains the content of what we teach—the state or national academic standards. In planning instruction and lessons, we weave both 21st century themes and skills into the delivery of the content standards in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Each school year is divided into quarters, and each of those quarters focuses on a 21st century theme: Q1: Global Awareness, Q2: Environmental Studies, Q3: Systems, and Q4: Leadership. Teachers design academic experiences to incorporate the theme of the quarter, and specialized projects are embedded in each quarter as well.

Nobel Learning is an affiliate of the *Partnership for 21st Century Skills*. This organization promotes the teaching of Life and Career Skills, Learning and Innovation Skills, as well as Information, Media, and Technology Skills.

These essential skills are taught in both the regular content delivery as well as in the quarterly projects.

*Giving Without Walls*

The *Giving Without Walls* projects allow our 1st through 6th grade students to be active participants in service-learning opportunities. Student-led service-learning projects integrate meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, to teach civic responsibility, and to encourage lifelong civic engagement.

The projects are unique in that they are completely led by students. *Giving Without Walls* projects develop content area skills along with civic literacy and reinforcement of 21st century skills. Our students are an active part of their own learning and the projects assist them in enhancing their connection to their school, community, and world. The projects enable the students to identify a need, to investigate issues, to research and evaluate possible solutions, to develop and implement a plan of action, and to assess and to reflect on the results.

1st Grade
First grade students will evaluate the needs versus wants of their school. Students will identify an area of need within their school and plan and implement a course of action.

2nd Grade
Second grade students will explore animal welfare and systems that are currently in place to protect animals. Students will investigate an area of need for animals within a local system, such as the SPCA or FFA, and develop and implement a service project that will impact that system.

3rd Grade
Third grade students will investigate environmental awareness issues and will explore environmental needs in the world around them. Students will investigate an ecosystem of their choice, and develop and implement a service project that will impact that system.

4th Grade
Fourth grade students will explore health systems and health issues as they relate to their community. Students will determine a health issue within their state and develop and implement a service project that will impact that system, such as a focus on health care, obesity, pollution, or smoking.

5th Grade
Fifth grade students will explore the concept of leadership and research issues facing our veterans. Students will then develop and implement a service project that will address this need faced by military veterans in their community.

6th Grade
Sixth grade students will explore the issue of disaster relief and prevention in South America. Through peer collaboration and ongoing research, students will develop and implement a disaster relief/disaster prevention service project.

*Learning Without Walls*

*Learning Without Walls* Projects are offered for grades 4-6. These projects require students to use 21st century skills while working with other schools from our national network of schools. The projects challenge students to explore highly relevant, curriculum-based topics, to use a variety of technology tools to research their topic, and to collaborate with students in different parts of the country as they work through the project timeline. They are able to share research, resources, observations, ideas, and challenges on an ongoing basis. This ability to share, interact, and work in small regional (two to three schools) or larger national teams (seven or more schools) offers a rich learning environment, in which students are challenged to apply their knowledge in authentic ways to solve real problems.

4th Grade
Students collaboratively research and define global warming, identify regional causes and effects, and develop recommendations to slow and/or eliminate causes. The program culminates in a community outreach project designed by the students to raise awareness on the issue of global warming.

5th Grade
By collaborating with 5th grade peers across the country via webquest, students further develop their environmental awareness and investigate freshwater supplies through research and interviews. Students develop a video presentation of their conclusions and a "Water Bill of Rights."

6th Grade
Partner classes work within a budget to define and design the perfect learning environment. Using web and video conferencing, students solve their challenges, analyze proposals, and assess various perspectives. In the end, each class develops a multi-media presentation to share their computer-generated blueprints and photographs of their ideal learning environments.

Personal Learning Plans

The Personal Learning Plan provides an opportunity for teacher, parent, and student to set goals and to measure progress on school-related learning that is not captured on the traditional report card. The Personal Learning Plan has four sections:

Academic Goals: Students, in consultation with the teacher and parents, choose a reading and mathematics goal for the year. Then, all three members of the PLP team together decide what each member will do to meet those goals.

Life and Career Goal: The student, teacher, and parent choose a particular study skill, such as time management or organization, that all three will work on together to assist the student in enhancing academic performance.

21st Century Skills Goal: At the conclusion of each project, students are given an opportunity to choose which product (art work, brochure, report, poster, and diorama) or performance (skit, song, debate, and poem) assessment they would like to do as their final assessment of learning.

Learning Styles: The student, parent, and teacher discuss the results of the learning styles inventory and make adjustments to both classroom and home learning environments and activities.

Enrichment

The University of Connecticut Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development

in partnership with the University Of Virginia Curry School Of Education has worked to broaden the concept of giftedness to include more than just an IQ score. Researchers and scholars from those schools developed the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) as an enrichment program for academically gifted and talented students. Subsequently, the model was found to be effective for students beyond the traditional gifted and talented population. The SEM focuses on enrichment for all students through high levels of engagement and the use of enjoyable and challenging learning experiences that are constructed around students' interests, learning styles, and preferred modes of expression.

The SEM program embraces the ten core attributes of giftedness: communication skills, creativity/imagination, humor, inquiry, insight, interests, memory, motivation, problem-solving, and reasoning. Through our Personal Learning Plans, Learning Styles Inventory, and Project-Based Learning, we provide a rigorous, engaging educational experience that provides the key elements of a gifted and talented enrichment program for all of our students. Our special area courses in music, art, technology, health and physical education provide the psychomotor and visual/performing arts enrichment noted in the core attributes. The creative thinking, leadership, intellectual and academic ability core attributes are woven throughout the general education program with the biggest focus occurring in the quarterly projects.

Academic Success

The ultimate measure of an educational program is student achievement results. Using both the annual Stanford 10 Test and the DORA/DOMA formative assessment data collected during the school year, we are able to measure and to document the progress and achievement of our students in both reading and mathematics. It also provides valuable information to the teacher so that he/she can customize and personalize lesson plans to meet the needs of every student

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Safety procedures help keep students and staff alike safe in unpredictable circumstances. Our school has procedures and practice drills for all types of emergencies. The principal reviews these procedures regularly, and students and staff practice a wide variety of drills throughout the school year.

HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

Homework is given on a regular basis to improve skills and to develop responsibility. Homework solidifies and reinforces concepts taught during the school day. All homework assignments are expected to be completed on time. The same standards required for the students’ daily work apply to all homework assignments. Students in Kindergarten and 1st grade will be provided with a weekly homework log. Students in 2nd – 6th grades will be responsible to write their homework assignments in their homework planner. Please check, and sign, your student’s homework communication log on a daily basis.

Time spent on completing daily homework increases as students mature. A general, but not rigid, guideline for homework time per night is as follows:

Kindergarten: 20-45 minutes

Grades 1-3: 30-45 minutes

Grades 4-6: 45-75 minutes

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Personal Learning Plans

Parents and teachers will meet each quarter to discuss an individualized plan for students. It is essential to have feedback in order to ensure a successful personal learning plan.

Parent Conferences

Parents are welcome to schedule a conference with their student’s teacher and/or our principal throughout the school year. Conferences may be conducted on a face-to-face basis, through e-mail, or over the phone. Conferences may be scheduled through the front office.

Newsletters

Classroom newsletters are provided on a monthly basis for elementary students. The newsletters provide an overview of classroom activities as well as important reminders, dates to know, and upcoming events.

Report Cards

Report cards are sent home quarterly (every 9 weeks). In addition, progress reports are distributed mid-quarter. Parents are encouraged to schedule a conference to discuss any concerns.

E-mail

We at Merryhill strive to create positive and meaningful relationships between school and home. We want to keep lines of communications open and convenient for our parents. For many of us this includes e-mail. Merryhill now has the capability through E-notify to keep our parents informed. In order to take advantage of this awesome tool we ask that parents provide us with their e-mail addresses as well as grant permission to receive ongoing updates in regards to Merryhill happenings.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We welcome parent involvement and consider strong communication between parents and our school to be one of the most important factors in each child's academic success. The teachers and administrators welcome the opportunity to meet with you at any time throughout the school year and are always pleased to respond to any questions, concerns, or suggestions you might have. We are pleased that you have chosen our school for your child’s education.

REFERRAL PLAN

Parents have the opportunity to share the good news about our school and save on tuition. When you refer a family to our school, you may receive a free week of tuition. Simply call the school office to request a Referral Certificate, provide the Certificate to the family you are referring, and ask the new enrolling family to write your name on the line marked, “Family at School”. The referred family then hands the completed Referral Certificate to the principal during his or her tour.

If you have further questions, you may contact the school principal.

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

Each classroom will have classroom management plans. These plans are available for your review in the classroom and will be discussed at Back to School Night. Although these plans may differ somewhat from classroom to classroom, the underlying philosophy of positive discipline remains consistent throughout the building. Our school code of conduct is shared throughout the building as well, and it is expected that the students will abide by the code at all times.

If discipline problems continue to arise, parents will be informed by means of written communication or a phone call, and a plan will be designed to work collaboratively in reaching a solution. If the problem cannot be resolved, or (in our sole discretion) if the problem is serious, we reserve the right to dismiss or suspend a child for unsatisfactory behavior in order to insure the health and safety of all children. We may also suspend or dismiss a child (in our sole discretion) for lack of parental assistance in efforts to work with a difficult child and/or violations of our policies.

STUDENT RECORDS/REQUEST

All requests for student records must be submitted in writing to the principal. Such requests may take up to seven school days to process. We appreciate your patience.

STUDENT UNIFORM/DRESS CODE

Students should be neatly and appropriately dressed for school. We believe that a student’s appearance reflects upon the manner in which he/she approaches the daily work in the classroom. For safety reasons, clogs, flip flops, high heels and slick soled shoes should not be worn at school. In physical education class, students are required to wear athletic shoes and to be dressed appropriately for sports and physical activity. Girls are required to wear shorts under skirts or dresses. All logos on clothing must be appropriate for the school environment. Merryhill shirts will be required for all field trips and are available for purchase in the front office.

VISITORS AT SCHOOL

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to visit the school. For the safety of our students and to ensure a minimum of classroom interruption, parents and visitors to the school must report to the school office. After registering, the name, purpose of visit and location in the building, the visitor will be asked to wear a Visitor Badge during the time in the school building. We ask that every visitor wear a Visitor’s Badge. The safety of our school environment is very important to all. We appreciate your cooperation with this policy.

WITHDRAWAL/TRANSFER

Students are registered automatically on a month-to-month basis from the first day of school until the last day of the school year. Parents who wish to withdraw their child from school prior to the last day of the school year must give one month’s written notice in order to be excused from paying tuition for periods following the withdrawal date (see the Tuition Agreement for details).

Parent/Student Signature Acknowledgement

My child and I have received a copy of the Merryhill School Handbook.

I understand that the handbook contains information that my child and I will need during the school year.

Printed name of student: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of student: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of parent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Child’s teacher name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Please sign and date this page, remove it from the handbook, and return it to the school.*

POLICIES

Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

Please consult the “Nobel Learning Communities, Inc. Policy on Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources For Grades 3-12” for more information.

Non Discrimination Statement

Merryhill School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in admission to its programs, services, or activities, in access to them, in treatment of individuals, or in any aspect of their operations