



*A community of curious, independent, and compassionate lifelong learners*

2025-26  
Community Handbook for  
Sunstone Montessori Middle School

*13515A SE Rusk Rd · Milwaukie, OR 97222*

*503-768-3847*

*[www.sunstonemontessori.org](http://www.sunstonemontessori.org)*

*Cathy Elliott, Head of School*

# About Our Middle School

## Mission

Sunstone Montessori School develops the whole child by providing an academically strong, emotionally nurturing, and socially supportive environment in accordance with AMI guidelines for Montessori education for adolescents.

## Vision

Our vision is a community of intellectually curious, independent, and compassionate lifelong learners. Our Middle School tailors this vision to the unique developmental needs of early adolescence.

## Commitment to Diversity

As with all of Sunstone Montessori School, our Middle School welcomes students and staff of any race, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, color, nationality and ethnicity, religion, and family constellation to all programs and activities at the school. The school does not discriminate in its educational, hiring, admission, or school-administered policies. It is our goal that Sunstone Montessori School reflects the rich diversity of our community, including varied cultures, economic status, and individual and diverse educational needs.

## Land Acknowledgement

We humbly take on the role of stewards of twelve acres of land in the Kellogg Creek watershed. We acknowledge that this swath of oak savanna and wetland nestled between Kellogg and Alder creek was home to the Kalapuya, Clowwewalla Chinook and Clackamas Chinook people. Some groups passed through this land while others built homes out of western redcedar. With events surrounding the Yakima War of 1855, most of these groups were forced onto the Grand Ronde Reservation.

A series of laws including the Homestead Acts and the creation of the State of Oregon led to the division of native lands into 36-square-mile townships. Steamboat engineer Elisha Kellogg (1826-1904) bought the section of the township where our campus is located and ushered in a new system of land ownership.

## Our Story

Sunstone Montessori School has a rich history of growth, evolution and collaboration with the vibrant Montessori community of Portland, Oregon. Sunstone Montessori was born in 2007 from the successful merger of two well-established Montessori schools, Odyssey Montessori School (ages 6-12 years) and Two Rivers Montessori School (ages 2 ½ to 12 years), each with its own campus in SW Portland, OR.

In the spring of 2012, Sunstone Montessori School's Board of Trustees leased Portland Public Schools' "Terwilliger School" building in John's Landing. After five years in two different locations, Sunstone Montessori was going to be under one roof. Renovations occurred over the summer of 2012 so that the 2012-13 school year could begin with Children's House and Elementary students together on one campus. In the fall of 2013, we launched our first Toddler classroom, expanding our program to serve children 16 months to 12 years.

In the summer of 2021, Portland Public Schools reclaimed the Terwilliger School for their Access Academy program and, after an extensive search, Sunstone relocated to our current location in SE Woodstock. Prior to moving in, we had an extensive interior and exterior remodel done including classroom spaces, bathrooms, administrative offices, and courtyard renovation. In the summer of 2022 we had a complete playground renovation as designed by Learning Landscapes Design, a local landscape architect company that specializes in creating outdoor spaces for learning and play, using natural materials.

In the spring of 2024 we were fortunate enough to lease 12 acres of land in SE Milwaukie, OR. Located just 4 miles due south of our Woodstock campus, our new bucolic campus was perfectly situated to extend our programming to the adolescent level with a Middle School modeled after Dr. Montessori's farm school, while simultaneously expanding our Toddler program from one to three classrooms. Renovations of the existing structures on the property began in the summer of 2024, in time to open our new Middle School and two new Toddler classrooms for the start of the 2024-25 academic year. In 2025-26 we opened a fourth Children's House classroom, located at our new Milwaukie campus.

# Middle School Calendar

This calendar is specific to our Middle School. It highlights key events, planned trips, EARLY DISMISSALS, NO SCHOOL days, and other dates that vary from the normal daily schedule. This list does not reflect the entire school calendar of events. [Please visit the website calendar](#) for the complete calendar of events including details and event related sign-ups. The website calendar will be updated throughout the year as needed.

## *August*

- 26:** Middle School Back to School Night (for parents only), 5:30-7:00pm
- 28:** Whole School Wine & Cheese Reception (at Woodstock Campus), 5:00-6:30pm

## *September*

- 1:** NO SCHOOL—Labor Day
- 2:** First Day of School!
- 23-26:** Fall Expedition. Three-night stay at Andrews Experimental Forest
- 27:** Fall Community Day, 10:00am-2:00pm

## *October*

- 10:** NO SCHOOL—In-Service Day
- 16:** Parent Education (for parents only), 6:00-7:15pm.
- 31:** NO SCHOOL—Conferences

## *November*

- 10:** NO SCHOOL—Veterans Day
- 11:** NO SCHOOL —Staff In-Service Day
- 20:** Parent Education —Transitioning into (and out of) middle school, 6:00-7:15 pm
- 26:** Grandparents/Special Friends Day & Early Noon Dismissal
- 27-28:** NO SCHOOL—Thanksgiving

## *December*

- 19:** DROP-OFF/PICK-UP at WOODSTOCK CAMPUS—Winter Sing/Solstice Celebration, 1:00-3:00 p.m.
- 22-31:** NO SCHOOL—Winter Break

## *January*

- 1-2:** NO SCHOOL—Winter Break
- 5:** NO SCHOOL—In-Service Day
- 6:** Back to School
- 19:** NO SCHOOL—Martin Luther King Jr. Day

## *February*

**5:** Parent Education (for parents only)—6:00-7:15pm.

**13:** NO SCHOOL—In-Service Day

**16:** NO SCHOOL—Presidents' Day

## *March*

**13:** NO SCHOOL—Conferences

**23-27:** NO SCHOOL—Spring Break

## *April*

**6:** NO SCHOOL—In-Service Day

**16:** Parent/Guide Happy Hour, 5:30-7:00pm

**18:** Spring Community Day & Plant Sale (hosted by middle school students), 10:00am-12:30pm

## *May*

**2:** Gala and Auction, 5:00pm

**25:** NO SCHOOL—Memorial Day

TBD: Spring Expedition, planned by middle school students

## *June*

**11:** Last Day of School

**12:** Graduation

# Table of Contents

About Our Middle School.....	2
Land Acknowledgement	2
Middle School Calendar.....	4
Communications .....	8
Important Numbers and Emails	8
School Calendar	8
Transparent Classroom	8
FinalSite	8
Parent Portal of the Website	9
The Weekly Communications	9
Attendance & Contingency Policy .....	9
Extended Absences	9
Illnesses	9
Sick Policy	9
At School: Accidents, Medication, and Lice	10
Inclement Weather/Make-Up Days	11
Air Quality Index	12
Emergency Plan	12
FlashAlert	12
Drop Off & Pick Up.....	13
Motorists	13
Cyclists & Pedestrians	13
Drop-Off / Pick-Up Locations	13
Drop-Off Period (8:20-8:50 a.m.)	14
Pick-Up Period (4:00-4:15 p.m.)	14
Late Arrival & Early Pick Up	14
Late Arrival (anytime after 8:50 a.m.)	14
Late Arrival for Appointments	15
Late Arrival for Support Services	15
Early Pick Up	15
Late Pick Up	15

Repeated Lateness	15
Pick-Up Authorization	15
Scheduled Weekly Pick-ups/Carpool Arrangements	16
Baseball Games & Other Traffic Issues	16
Educational Programming.....	17
Core Skills	17
Plans of Study and Work	18
Special Events.....	19
Birthdays	19
Holidays	19
Trips & Time off campus	19
Dress & Conduct.....	19
Code of Civility	19
Dress	20
Relationships	20
Aggressive Behavior and Discipline	20
Food & Nutrition.....	21
Lunch	21
Caffeine and Sugar	22
Allergies	22
Technology.....	22
Computers and Other Digital Equipment at School	22
Personal Devices	23
Social Media	23
Technology and Social Media at Home	23
Advisory.....	23
The Advisory Triangle	24
Goal Worksheets	24
Conferences	24
Family Culture & Home Life	25
Withdrawal and Disenrollment.....	26

# Communications

## Important Numbers and Emails

**Office:** 503-768-3847, [info@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:info@sunstonemontessori.org)

**Attendance:** email [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org), [Peter](#) and [Jennifer](#), or call the office, 503-768-3847, if your child will be absent, tardy, or needs an early pick-up.

**Medical Permissions:** Milwaukie Campus Manager, Savanna Hupe, [shupe@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:shupe@sunstonemontessori.org)

**Program, Student and Classroom Inquiries:** Middle School Director, Peter Oviatt, [poviatt@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:poviatt@sunstonemontessori.org)

**Financial Inquiries, Billing, Contracts, Tuition, Financial Aid:** Finance Manager, Dee Kuns, [dkuns@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:dkuns@sunstonemontessori.org)

**FinalSite Enrollment Forms:** Program Director, Caitlin Sweeney, <mailto:csweeney@sunstonemontessori.org>

**FinalSite Enrollment Contracts:** Business Manager, Dee Kuns, <mailto:dkuns@sunstonemontessori.org>

**Transparent Classroom:** Milwaukie Campus Manager, Savanna Hupe, [shupe@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:shupe@sunstonemontessori.org)

## School Calendar

### [Website Calendar](#)

We highly recommend that you familiarize yourself with our website calendar. This calendar reflects the most current dates for both campuses for the entire school year and is updated throughout the year as needed.

## Transparent Classroom

### [Login to Transparent Classroom](#)

Transparent Classroom (TC) is your online portal for medical forms, conference reports, your classroom directory, and photos of your child. For questions about Transparent Classroom please contact Savanna Hupe, [shupe@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:shupe@sunstonemontessori.org).

## FinalSite

### [Login to FinalSite](#)

FinalSite is your online portal for enrollment contracts, enrollment forms, emergency forms, and registration forms. For questions about FinalSite please contact Program Director, Caitlin Sweeney, [csweeney@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:csweeney@sunstonemontessori.org).

## Parent Portal of the Website

You can find classroom, staff, board, and room parent directories, and other helpful resources in the [parent portal of the website](#). The directories will be live in August and are updated as needed throughout the year. This is a password protected page. Password: Sunstone

## The Weekly Communications

*The Communications* is a weekly email newsletter and your main and most important source of information at Sunstone. If it's important, it will be in *The Communications*. Please read this email every week. If you miss a week you can find all of *The Communications* archived in the [parent portal](#) of the website. Password: Sunstone

---

# Attendance & Contingency Policy

If your child will be absent, tardy, or needs an early pick-up, please email [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org), or call the office (503-768-3847). Consistent attendance and on-time arrival is vital to the success of your child's experience at Sunstone. The school will contact you in the morning if your child is absent and we have not heard from you by 9:30 a.m.

## Extended Absences

In cases of extended absences, please email [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org), [Peter](#) and [Jennifer](#) with as much notice as possible, and let them know the timing and duration of the absence.

## Illnesses

If your child is ill, please email [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org), so that we can alert other families of contagious conditions and take preventative measures in the classroom. We will notify families of communicable conditions such as strep throat, head lice, chickenpox and other childhood diseases.

## Sick Policy

Please see our Respiratory Viral Illness Policy in the parents' portal of the website for our COVID related policies and procedures.

**Children with communicable diseases** (including respiratory viruses, serious colds, sore throats, persistent coughs, rash, conjunctivitis/excessive eye discharge, excessive mucus, and other conditions) or had a fever

over 100 degrees, **must be kept at home until they are symptom free and fever free without medication for 24 hours.**

**Children who have vomited**, where there is no explanation for the vomiting, and/or **had diarrhea must be kept at home until they are symptom free without medication for 48 hours.**

Being in a community is much more demanding than being at home. A child who seems well at home may deteriorate quickly at school, requiring an early pickup. Children who are unable to participate in normal class activities or outdoor play time should be kept home.

Children unable to participate in normal class activities may be sent home at the discretion of your child's Guide. In this case, parents will be contacted and asked to pick up their child within 30 minutes. If you will not be able to pick up your child in 30 minutes, please provide [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org) with a contact who can.

## At School: Accidents, Medication, and Lice

**Accidents:** Minor injuries will be addressed at school, and you will receive an Accident Report describing the incident. If your child is seriously injured at school, we will contact you or your emergency contact immediately.

**Serious Accidents or Illnesses:** If necessary, we will call 911 or transport your child for emergency care.

**Medication:** Children are not permitted to administer their own medication, vitamins, or pain relievers while at school. In order for staff to administer medication of any kind during the school day, the proper form must be filled out and submitted.

### **Medication for Non-Life-Threatening Condition:**

If your child needs to take medication, whether prescription or "over the counter," during the school day, for a non-life-threatening condition (e.g. eye-drops, ibuprofen, vitamins) you will need to fill out the Medication Authorization Form.

- First, email [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org) or stop by the office and we will assign you the Medication Authorization Form in Transparent Classroom.
- Fill out and submit the form.
- Bring the medication to the office, in its original container, with your child's first and last name clearly labeled on it.
- Staff will administer the medication per the instructions on your Medication Authorization Form.

### **Medication for Serious Allergy or Medical Condition Requiring a Medical Protocol:**

If your child has a serious diagnosed allergy or other medical condition requiring a medical protocol (for example: allergies which may create a breathing emergency, a need for epi pens, antihistamine, seizures, severe asthma etc.) you will need to fill out the Medication Authorization Form and submit a Medical Action Plan.

- First, email <mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org> or stop by the office and we will assign you the Medical Information and Permissions Form in Transparent Classroom.
- Open the form and follow the instructions for the ‘Medical Action Plan.’
- Please bring the signed Medical Action Plan and medication to the office, in its original container, with your child’s first and last name clearly labeled on it.
- Staff will administer the medication per the instructions on your forms.

**Head Lice:** Head lice are a common concern in schools everywhere. Head lice can be extremely inconvenient and time-consuming to treat, and can cause discomfort, but they do not cause or spread disease. We follow the most current recommendations of the county Health Department in these situations.

- Prevention: Sunstone employs a professional head lice screening and removal service to check the heads of all children three times a year.
- Lice at School: If live lice or nits are observed on a child at school, we will contact parents immediately and the child must be picked up and treated. You may treat your child at home or have them treated professionally. However, before children can return to school, they must be checked and cleared by a professional lice removal business, such as Linda’s Lice Out. All Sunstone families will be alerted that lice have been observed, and all children may be checked for lice as the situation warrants.

## **Inclement Weather/Make-Up Days**

For school closures, delays and schedule changes due to inclement weather, we follow the Portland Public School (PPS) district schedule and monitor Clackamas county before making a final decision. If PPS distinguishes between east and westside, we will follow the eastside schedule.

Sunstone will send out a whole school email announcement and post a FlashAlert (see below) if school is closed, delayed or otherwise has a schedule change. Our greatest concern is for the safety of you and your child. Regardless of our schedule, please feel free to keep your children home if you feel conditions are not safe.

PPS closures and schedule changes are available at:

- web: [https://www.oregonlive.com/weather/page/oregon\\_school\\_closures\\_delays.html](https://www.oregonlive.com/weather/page/oregon_school_closures_delays.html)
- for PPS text message alerts: text YES to 68453

## Air Quality Index

Students and staff will refrain from outdoor activities when the AQI registers 120 or above at our campus location.

## Emergency Plan

If an evacuation of the school facility is necessary, our planned assembly places are the parking lot, and North Clackamas Park Complex & Ball Fields. In the case of an earthquake, we will assemble in the parking lot and move to the North Clackamas Park Complex & Ball Fields as necessary. We will connect with families using cell phones as long as we have cellular connection. Sunstone has developed a detailed emergency plan with contingencies for illness, accident, fire, earthquake, local hazard, lockout/lockdown, and evacuation.

See the full plan in the parents' portal of the website.

## FlashAlert

**Subscribe Now:** <https://www.flashalert.net/id/sunstone>

Sunstone families should subscribe to the Sunstone FlashAlert channel, as it will be our primary way to communicate any emergencies, inclement weather, school closures, delays, early pick-ups and more. Once you are subscribed you will automatically receive emails alerting you to and updating you on any emergency situations or inclement weather communications directly related to Sunstone.

### Get the App

After you are subscribed to FlashAlert, we highly recommend that you get the FlashAlert messaging app for your smartphone. The app is free, easy to install, will sync with your Sunstone FlashAlert account, and will flash an alert on your phone's screen without you having to check your email.

---

# Drop Off & Pick Up

Drop off: 8:20-8:50am  
School begins at 9:00am  
School ends at 4:00pm  
Pick up: 4:00-4:15pm

## Motorists

Drop off and Pick up occur at the gate next to our Toddler Community. Please drive in a one-way pattern that circles around the parking lot coming from the baseball fields and departing toward the rose garden. See the map below. Please remain vigilant of other students (toddlers or adolescents) and keep your goodbyes brief so everyone can make it to school on time. Your child can walk to our Middle School building on their own.

## Cyclists & Pedestrians

Cyclists and pedestrians are welcome to enter via Rusk Road or the North Clackamas Park Complex and Ball Field parking lot. Our bike rack is located behind the middle school. If you ride your bicycle with your student, please say goodbye in either the parking lot off Rusk Road (next to the church), or the North Clackamas Park Complex and Ball Field parking lot.

Please contact Peter Oviatt ([poviatt@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:poviatt@sunstonemontessori.org)) for recommended cycling routes to our Milwaukie campus.

## Drop-Off / Pick-Up Locations

There are two locations for drop off and pick up: one option is from the church parking lot next to the Middle School building (labeled blue on the map below), another option is from the North Clackamas Park Complex parking lot (labeled red on the map below). The church parking lot is *not* for our use. If you choose this option, drop off/pick up needs to be drive-through style: please keep your good-byes and hellos brief and in the car. In both cases, traffic circles the parking lot in a ONE-WAY pattern, as indicated on the map below.



### Drop-Off Period (8:20-8:50 a.m.)

Students are welcome to arrive anytime between 8:20 and 8:50 a.m. This is an open time for students. Some may need this time to feel grounded for the beginning of their day; others may want to begin community chores, or complete assignments. It is important for the academic and social/emotional success of your child that they arrive with sufficient time so that they are ready for class by 9:00 a.m.

### Pick-Up Period (4:00-4:15 p.m.)

Students will start coming out of our Middle School building at 4:00 p.m. You can park in the North Clackamas Park Complex parking lot and walk to the Middle School building to pick up your child or do a drive-through pick up from the church parking lot.

### Late Arrival & Early Pick Up

**Email:** [milwaukicattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukicattendance@sunstonemontessori.org) with as much notice as possible.

**Please make every attempt to arrive on time and schedule appointments outside of the school day.**

Our school policy considers what supports the most consistent and peaceful environment, the success of the individual child, and what is best for the Middle School community as a whole.

Students who arrive late typically have a hard time transitioning into the flow of the day and engaging with activities. Late arrival is also disruptive to the other students in the community. Your child will thrive with a consistent on-time schedule in which they are able to start their day with the rest of their peers.

### Late Arrival (anytime after 8:50 a.m.)

Please call or email as soon as you know that you will be late. Say your goodbyes in the parking lot and have your child sign-in with a staff member in the office, who will direct your child to wherever we may be.

## Late Arrival for Appointments

If your child requires an appointment, please contact [Peter](#), [Jennifer](#) and [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org) well in advance to coordinate a schedule that best supports your child and the rest of the community.

## Late Arrival for Support Services

If your child has regular appointments for support services (such as occupational therapy or speech), please contact [Peter](#) and [Jennifer](#) to coordinate a schedule that best supports your child and the rest of the community.

## Early Pick Up

If your child needs to be picked up before 4:00 p.m., for any reason, please email [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org), [Peter](#) and [Jennifer](#), as soon as possible. You can pick your child up from the Middle School office.

## Late Pick Up

This is not an option for Middle School students. Staff may have off-campus engagements scheduled shortly after 4:15 p.m. Please be considerate and pick up your children on-time. If an emergency situation arises, please call 503-768-3847 ASAP.

## Repeated Lateness

As with extended absences, repeated lateness leads to your child feeling separated from their community, hampers their work progress, and obstructs our ability to guide your child. Advisors will work with parents and students who may fall into this pattern to resolve the issue.

## Pick-Up Authorization

**Email:** [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org)

**Phone:** 503-768-3847

According to state licensing requirements, **we can only release students to parents, legal guardians, and persons listed on the pick-up authorization section of your child's Emergency Information form.** We must also have verbal or written permission, from a parent or legal guardian of the child being picked up, **each time** we release a child to someone other than his/her parent or legal guardian. If the person picking up isn't on your authorized pick-up list, and we don't have verbal or written permission, we cannot release your child.

### To add a new person to your authorized pick-up list:

Email [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org) or call the office, 503-768-3847

### To release a child to someone on your authorized pick-up list:

- Email [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org) or call the office, 503-768-3847, each time to give verbal permission for pick up. **Scheduled weekly pick-ups or carpool arrangements are excepted from this rule.** (Please see the *scheduled weekly pick-up* section below.)
- If your authorized pick-up person is not a parent of a child at Sunstone, please have them come to the office before the first time they pick up. Staff will check their ID and direct them to the appropriate pick-up station. Once they have been checked, they no longer need to come to the office prior to picking up your child.
- Please explain our dismissal procedures to anyone who will pick up your child, prior to them picking up, to avoid any confusion.

## Scheduled Weekly Pick-ups/Carpool Arrangements

**Email:** [milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:milwaukieattendance@sunstonemontessori.org)

**Phone:** 503-768-3847

If a person other than a parent or legal guardian picks up your child on a regular basis, you can schedule them as a regular weekly pick up or carpool arrangement. To do this, email Woodstock attendance with a schedule and include days, times, adults, and children involved. Once we have received this schedule, you are set for the year and need only email attendance if your current arrangement needs to change.

## Baseball Games & Other Traffic Issues

In the event that the North Clackamas Park Complex and Ball Field parking lot is full (due to a baseball game or other event), we will notify parents by email as soon as possible and provide alternative drop off/pick up instructions.

---

# Educational Programming

## Core Skills

We guide adolescents to become confident and joyful human beings, a view that rises far above testing and textbooks. To this end, our program focuses on core skills that adolescents will carry through life, whether in high school or university, their career or family life. We might categorize these core skills as Community, Production & Exchange, Self-Expression, and Academics.

### **Community**

Our middle school is designed to foster responsibility and independence for adolescents. For this reason, we have firm requirements that *all* students participate in community and campus work. After all, independence requires interdependence. Not all students have to chop onions or ‘muck out’ the goat pen, but everyone must do some chores and contribute to their community in their own personal way. Beyond key lessons in practical life and the development of social skills (which they will carry throughout life), such work will build confidence and help adolescents form their adult identities.

### **Production & Exchange**

Economic independence is fore on an adolescent mind. A central part of our educational program is what we might call a ‘micro-economy.’ Students take the lead in producing and selling products/services that might include blueberry preserves, child-care, personalized stationery and thank-you cards, hosting a school-wide brunch or goat birthday parties for younger Sunstone students. Such work gives students experiential insight into how economies work, from accounting to supply-and-demand principles and basic human relations.

### **Self-Expression**

In addition to working in community and learning how trade supports human fundamental needs, adolescents require ample time to experiment with and express their changing identities. While some of this happens through community work and our micro-economy, we also make explicit space for artistic pursuits (music, creative writing, the fine arts), athletics (dance, individual and team sports, from trail running to ultimate frisbee), and all manner of craft (sewing, wood carving, knitting, cooking, farming, etc.). Such activities also tie into what we might call core academics.

### **Academics**

For the entirety of their time at our middle schools, students follow an individualized program in math, writing, and research skills. At the beginning of each year, we work with each set of parents/caregivers and their child to create or re-evaluate a program for academic work and expectations. In addition to these individualized programs, we expose students to academic content through Plans of Study and Work.

# Plans of Study and Work

Each school year consists of a curated series of Plans of Study and Work. These plans last between 3 and 6 weeks; depending on the topic, they contain varying mixtures of academic study, self-expression, hands-on work, micro-economy, and community service. Plans of Study and Work respond to the needs of our community and our campus. In this way, work is meaningful to students. Examples include Human Growth and Development (responding to our neighboring toddler and senior communities); Forest Ecology and Research Inquiry (leading to our stay at Andrews Experimental Forest, and understanding how to steward our land); Domestication (as part of installing an apple tree orchard and goat care); and Disc Golf (an exploration of recreational activities and constructing a disc golf course). We curate Plans of Study and Work so that they expose students to content across the sciences and humanities.

As Plans of Study and Work respond to community and campus needs, they are often subject to change. Currently, our schedule for the 2025-2026 school year includes:

- Blueberries (maintenance of bushes; production and trade of berries)
  - Forest Ecology and Research Inquiry (how to form and pursue questions on complex topics)
  - Disc Golf and Pétanque (leisurely recreation in public spaces)
  - Human Growth and Development (human biology and multigenerational care)
  - Weaving and Carving (a natural and cultural history of fibers)
  - Orchards (domestication of fruit trees and establishing Sunstone's orchard)
-

# Special Events

## Birthdays

Please contact [Peter](#) and [Jennifer](#) in advance to arrange for the celebration of your child's birthday at school. Please do not distribute invitations at school for your family's birthday party. To avoid hurt feelings, please mail invitations separately.

## Holidays

Holidays and cultural celebrations are observed based on the interests of students and staff. Explorations of a holiday may include food preparation, song and dance, art activities, research projects, or trips to a place of cultural significance. Please consult with staff if you would like to contribute to a holiday celebration.

## Trips & Time off campus

At the beginning of the year families will be notified of scheduled trips, including our overnight fall and spring expeditions and day trips in the Portland Metro Area. Additionally, we will take smaller groups of students to visit workplaces and conduct off-campus community service work. We will notify caregivers as soon as such trips are scheduled, and mention any special items students may need for the day (a brown-bag lunch, special clothing).

---

# Dress & Conduct

## Code of Civility

Each school year staff and students work together to create a Code of Civility. Through this process, students come to see that school rules are not arbitrary, and that as learners they have agency in how their community is run. While staff and students write their own code each September, this code must adhere to the baseline of values that we uphold at Sunstone Montessori School. This baseline includes care of self, care of others, care of environment, anti-discrimination, and maintenance of a nurturing culture where experimentation (and failure) are seen as necessary for personal and community growth. We take inspiration from Donna Hicks work on dignity.

## Dress

We do not define what Middle School students can and cannot wear. We allow adolescents to flex their socially attuned and reasoning minds and make decisions in accord with our principles of grace and courtesy. As humans who are creating their adult identities, adolescents have a need to express themselves in new and dynamic ways. That said, we expect everyone (adults and adolescents) to wear clothing and accessories that show care of self, care of one's community, and do not unduly distract or offend the values of others. If and when issues arise, they will be addressed during Community Council.

Dress is also practical. Students will regularly spend time outside on our 12-acre campus. We will frequently go on walks in our neighborhood. Please consider our setting and our activities when choosing clothing and footwear.

## Relationships

Sexuality and displays of affection at school must show a care of self, care of the other, and fall within an ethic of consent. When appropriate, we will discuss relationships, sexuality and consent as taught in the Our Whole Lives (OWL) program. Any behaviors that put the physical and psychological safety of our community and individual members at risk will be taken seriously and discussed in a private conference with those involved.

## Aggressive Behavior and Discipline

Sunstone Middle School is a warm, welcoming space where we do all that we can to ensure the safety of our students and provide them with an optimal learning experience. We educate adolescents for life, and foster the development of social-emotional intelligence, problem-solving skills, and the grace and courtesy that supports positive, dignified social interactions. To fulfill these goals, we use preventative and restorative practices when issues arise.

Adolescents are expected to behave safely, respectfully, and responsibly, according to their stage of development. Behavior outside these expectations will be met with restorative practices that include personal and group meetings combined with on-going advisory discussions. Additional actions may include community-wide meetings, increased scaffolding, resetting the environment (altering access to spaces or materials) and redirection.

In instances of aggressive behavior, each situation will be assessed individually and discussed with the Program Director. The parents of all impacted adolescents will be notified of the incident. The names of adolescents involved will not be discussed, in accordance with the National Association for the Education of Young Children recommendations (a practice we continue for adolescents). Staff will communicate with caregivers should serious and/or ongoing behavior problems occur. In certain cases of physical aggression and/or in the event of persistent disruption, the school reserves the right, for the safety and comfort of adolescents, as well as to set firm limits, to remove the aggressor from the community and request that they be picked up by a caregiver at the time of disruption.

Relational aggression, also known as peer mistreatment, is also taken very seriously within our school. Relational aggression is defined by Sunstone as any persistent behavior that harms others through damage or threat of damage to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion. Examples of such behaviors include unwelcome teasing, name-calling, excluding, humiliating, spreading rumors, playing harmful practical jokes, threatening to isolate or harm, disrespecting another's property, coercing, or manipulating power in a relationship.

In cases of serious and/or ongoing behavior problems, including disruptive behavior, physical aggression, and relational aggression, parents can expect the following steps:

- Staff will call a meeting with caregivers to address concerns and develop a solution-oriented action plan. Subsequent meetings may be held between staff and caregivers to evaluate progress.
- If the behaviors continue, a meeting will be called with staff, caregivers, Program Director, and/or Head of School as needed. The student may be referred to see a counselor or other professional at this time.
- In the case of extreme or persistent behavior issues that resist improvement, Sunstone will assess whether suspension or termination of enrollment is best.

---

## Food & Nutrition

Food is the way to an adolescent's heart! The production, preparation, consumption and clean-up of food is instrumental in forming and maintaining a strong and nurturing adolescent community. We use food and nutrition to engage students in lessons across the sciences, arts and humanities. Importantly, we rely on students being well-fed, and not consuming caffeine or high levels of sugar, so they can maintain focus and work throughout the day.

### Lunch

Every day we serve an optional communal lunch. The time and attention put into these lunches fluctuates with student interest. In past years we've had a simple "pantry" lunch four days a week (perhaps mac and cheese with roasted broccoli, or a vegetable stir-fry with rice). Then, once a week, students will rotate being the lead chef on a more ambitious menu. If a particular cohort takes greater interest in the culinary arts, then this will become a larger part of our educational program; the reverse is also true.

Students always have the option to bring a lunch from home. Regardless if they bring a lunch or eat what we prepare, all students eat at the same table and work together to set and clean up the dining room and kitchen.

Caregivers will be given advanced notice of communal lunch menus, so you and your child can decide whether or not to pack a lunch for that day. Students are responsible for planning ahead and knowing whether they would like to have communal lunch, or if they will bring a lunch that is filling and nutritious. We will have dishes and utensils for students to use, as well as a microwave for reheating food.

## Caffeine and Sugar

We respect that food and drink are culturally specific, and we welcome students to share family traditions and foodways with our community. That said, at Sunstone we are committed to the health and happiness of our student body. We cannot meet this goal if students are either too hungry or go through the peak-and-crash cycle associated with caffeine and high levels of sugar. While we advise that your child abstains from caffeinated drinks during early adolescence, our policy is that students do not consume caffeine at school. Additionally, while we may have sweet desserts on special occasions (such as birthdays or as part of baking projects), we ask that you work with your child to limit how much sugar they bring to school.

For more on adolescents and caffeine consumption, see:

<https://mottpoll.org/reports/parents-asleep-teen-caffeine-consumption>.

<https://www.jahonline.org/action/showPdf?pii=S1054-139X%2824%2900556-1>

## Allergies

We collect allergy information from all staff and students when they join our program. We will post all allergies in our community in our middle-school kitchen.

---

# Technology

Technology and digital tools are unavoidable in our society, and will only become more prominent once adolescents reach adulthood. As such, we take digital literacy seriously. We are also keenly aware of the correlation (if not causation) between the rise of anxiety, depression and loneliness in Gen Z with the rise of time spent on social media and in front of screens (see, *Generations* by Jean Twenge and *Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt) Discussing the uses and abuses of technology is an ongoing part of our curriculum and advisory program. We ensure that students have ample time away from technology, while also showing them how to use technology in a positive and intentional manner.

## Computers and Other Digital Equipment at School

Sunstone will provide adolescents with all the digital equipment they need. Students will have curated access to either Chromebooks or desktops for three general purposes: (1) our Digital Arts Program, which includes photography, videography, graphic design, and music recording; (2) scientific investigations, primarily

microscopes connected to computers for microbiology; and (3) research tools, such as word processing, creating spread sheets, manipulating and visualizing data (crunching numbers or creating charts), and of course, learning the dos and don'ts of gleaning information from the internet.

Computers may also serve as learning accommodations for students with such needs.

Beyond computers, students will have access to digital microscopes, cameras, audio field recorders, and computerized sewing machines.

## Personal Devices

**Electronic Devices: iPods, cell phones, Apple Watches, etc. are not permitted at school.** Students who carry such devices must drop them off in the office **on arrival**. Students may pick up their devices from the office at the end of the day **as they depart**. Use of these devices by students is not permitted while they are under Sunstone supervision, except in emergencies or other special circumstances.

## Social Media

We do not permit students to use social media on campus. In the event that students need to use social media (perhaps for the sales of campus-grown products), an adult will oversee the process. Social media is a central part of our advisory program and OWL curriculum on physical and psychological health.

## Technology and Social Media at Home

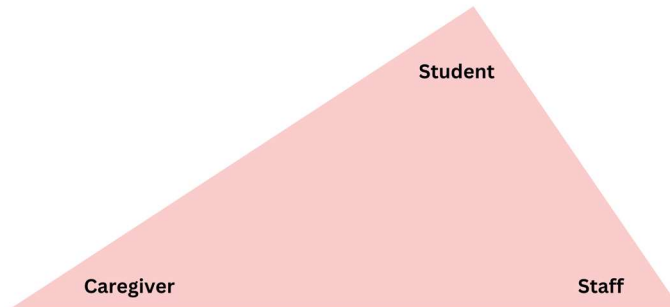
During individual advisory meetings we will discuss with each family the amount of technology, screen time and social media use that occurs at home. At the beginning of each school year we will set goals and expectations around this use. We are sensitive to the diversity of our family cultures, and the many reasons why an adolescent might use technology or social media (educational, social, learning accommodations, etc.). As a community and as individuals, we seek a balance of time spent online with time spent in nature and in the physical presence of peers.

---

# Advisory

Our advisory program is woven into all aspects of our middle school. At its core, advisory is about communication between each adolescent and a core group of staff, with parents/caregivers involved at key times, and as needed. Advisory is how we ensure that students get what they need and want from our Middle School, this involves academic growth, work activities, social connections, emotional development and personal expression. Advisory is also how we learn about, celebrate, and support the diversity of family cultures that make up our school. Some students will prefer to have one lead advisor, while others will benefit from having multiple adults as key confidantes or trusted advocates.

## The Advisory Triangle



Advisory includes three parties: student, caregiver(s), and staff. All parties serve the student (the top of the triangle). The triangle is intentionally scalene, with caregivers farther away from students than staff. Caregivers are most involved during the beginning of the year, when expectations and norms are set. During the school year, caregivers serve as an audience, to whom students proudly present their work and accomplishments. Should you as a caregiver have any concerns during the school year, please reach out to staff immediately.

Throughout the year, particularly as we progress through Plans of Study & Work, each student and their advisor(s) will evaluate progress based on individualized aims established at the beginning of the school year.

## Goal Worksheets

During the first week of school all students work with their advisor to create a Goal Worksheet. These individualized worksheets will set work expectations, support desires, and give students deadlines and milestones that they can use to guide their progress throughout the school year. Students will then share Goal Worksheets with caregivers during the second week of school. This will bring the Advisory Triangle to the same page. Goal Worksheets serve a variety of functions:

- Establish preferred lines of communication and communication styles with each family
- Create personalized aims (social, emotional, academic) for the school year.
- Clarify baseline expectations of work, study and culture at our Middle School
- Summarize key information given during the admission process, and clear up any uncertainties

## Conferences

Please see the *Calendar Highlight* section of this handbook or the [website calendar](#) for conference dates. Conference sign-ups will be available online approximately one month before conferences. Additional conferences can be scheduled with staff as the need arises.

### **Fall and Spring Conferences**

Twice a year, students will have the opportunity to share their work with parents/caregivers. These conferences will happen around Halloween and Spring Break. This *is not* a time for caregivers to share grievances, concerns or even appreciation— these meetings are devoted to the adolescent and their work! Should questions or issues arise during the school year, please reach out to staff immediately.

During the Fall and Spring conferences, the school provides a single, 30-minute conference slot for each child. Parents with separate households can attend simultaneously, as the focus is on the child and we want to share a consistent message.

## **Family Culture & Home Life**

Advisory concerns the student at school, as well as their family culture and home life. Our aim in advisory is twofold: to best serve the needs of the student, and to celebrate and respond to the cultural needs of the student's family. Learning about and valorizing the family cultures that comprise our school culture is central to our aim of creating an environment where *all* feel welcome. This is how we build a community that is strong in its identity and values.

In short, we tailor the advisory of each student to their unique personality and family culture.

Each year we do projects on family culture and history. This is part of our effort to build community, awareness, and respect for the diversity of life experiences that we all bring to Sunstone. We will notify parents and caregivers in advance of this project. If there are any aspects of your family life and/or history that you prefer remain private, please let us know.

Following the American Academy of Pediatrics, we ask that adolescents get 8-10 hours of sleep each night. Our other requirements for all students (such as coming to school having eaten a nutritious breakfast) can be found in our Parent Partnership Agreement, which all families sign before the start of each school year. Please communicate with staff when large life events happen, such as a parent leaving town, divorce, or a death in the family. Such information is critical in providing optimal care and guidance to adolescents.

---

# Withdrawal and Disenrollment

Tuition amounts are due in full as agreed and outlined in the Parent Financial Commitment Agreement. You are eligible to file a claim for a partial refund of unused tuition if you paid for tuition insurance.

If you wish to withdraw or disenroll your child from the program, you must send a letter or email to Cathy Elliott, Head of School, [celliot@sunstonemontessori.org](mailto:celliot@sunstonemontessori.org). The date of the email, the postmarked date of a letter, and the delivered date if delivered in person, are considered the date of notice for purposes of this policy. Please indicate “Notice of Student Withdrawal” in the subject line of the email or letter, and include the following text in your correspondence:

Please accept this email as notice of our intent to withdraw our child, [enter child’s name], from Sunstone Montessori School. [Name of child]’s last day in the program is expected to be [enter effective date of withdrawal].

We will confirm our receipt of your written notice, and if a refund is due, we will process that prorated amount in accordance with the terms of the Financial Commitment Agreement you signed. As a reminder, there are no refunds of tuition or fees for missed days of class due to absences, illness, medical conditions or medical emergencies, disability, testing, family emergencies, vacations, inclement weather, moving/relocation, extracurricular activities, or other events that may cause your child to be absent from school.

*Please Note: If you decide not to re-enroll your child at Sunstone, we respectfully request that you postpone telling your child of the upcoming change until the end of the school year. Children under age six, in particular, are very present-moment focused and have difficulty understanding that this change is happening in the future, not immediately, but even some Elementary aged children struggle with this news when it is delivered prematurely. We have observed that children of all ages with advanced knowledge sometimes disengage from the classroom, from the materials, and from their Guide, creating an unsuccessful experience for the child and the entire classroom community. Thank you for your support in allowing the children to have the most cohesive and engaged classroom experience possible.*