



**Merritt**  
ACADEMY

*Enjoy the Journey*

**PARENT  
HANDBOOK**

**2023-2024**

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to Merritt Academy! We are excited you chose us to be a part of your child's educational journey! Life is a journey of moments and we look forward to guiding your child along the way!

Merritt Academy is proud of being a place that serves dual working parents, a place where your child can build a strong academic foundation and a place where your child will learn how to make wise choices, with character-based values and manners.

Since its founding in 1963, Merritt Academy has been committed to a strong focus on:

- **Service to Parents**
- **Character Education**
- **Academic Strength**

We have also remained dedicated to the mission of our founder, Rachel Merritt:  
***To nourish and challenge the intellectual abilities, creative talents and spiritual growth of children.***

This handbook provides a lot of details about what you will be experiencing this year. Your child's environment is extremely important and the best environment we can create is a partnership with you.

I hope this handbook will provide answers and clarification to any questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact me with anything that has not been addressed within these pages. I can be reached at [christins@merrittacademy.org](mailto:christins@merrittacademy.org) or 703-273-0787.

I am so excited to start another year at Merritt and have the chance to know your child and your family better!

All the best,

Christin Soly  
Executive Director

## OUR PHILOSOPHY

Merritt Academy was established in 1963 by Rachel O. Merritt. Rachel was searching for a school for her own two daughters that would focus on their individuality and develop their unique abilities. Having a clear vision for a school with this mission, Rachel set out to start her own school based on the following philosophy:

“Children progress along a well-defined road to maturity, but each according to his or her own tempo. They do not grow evenly or according to a time schedule. New features emerge, sometimes suddenly, sometimes gradually. From birth to maturity, it is through experiences that the child grows in body, knowledge, and skill.”

As a working mother, Rachel also wanted to help make life easier for working parents. She developed a strong afterschool program that gave children enriched extracurricular activities such as piano lessons and intramural sports programs so that parents would not have to go elsewhere.

Originally the school was named The Talent House Private School, because Rachel believed that each child has talents and it is the responsibility of the educator to discover and nurture those talents.

Merritt Academy continues to be committed to the principles that Rachel put in place over 50 years ago. We now define those principles as the Legacy of our Founder.

### **WE BELIEVE IN THE LEGACY OF OUR FOUNDERS\*:**

- Being hospitable to all faith traditions from a base of Christian values
- Encouraging the unique talents and potential of each child in a safe and nurturing environment
- Embracing the joy of learning
- Promoting academic excellence
- Developing the strength of character to make morally sound decisions
- Providing support and service to our families
- Treating the members of our community — students, staff and parents — and the world around us with respect and kindness
- Nourishing compassion and the desire to serve others
- Promoting harmony between the physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual

*\*Adopted by the J127 Education Foundation Schools (formerly the Sunrise Senior Living Education Foundation) at its October 8, 2003 meeting, these core values guide us at Merritt Academy in all that we do.*

## ***A NATIONAL SCHOOL OF CHARACTER AWARD RECIPIENT***

Merritt Academy is proud to have been named one of ten schools selected nationwide as the **1999 National Schools of Character**, in recognition of outstanding work in encouraging the social, ethical, and academic development of students through character education. National Schools of Character is an awards program that recognizes K-12 schools demonstrating exemplary character education initiatives that yield positive results in student behavior, school climate and academic performance.

This program is sponsored by the *Character Education Partnership (CEP)*, a national nonprofit coalition based in Washington, D.C. CEP administers the program in collaboration with Boston University's Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character.

Merritt Academy received this national honor because it has created a safe, caring school that promotes learning by integrating character education into every aspect of the school's curriculum and culture. The entire staff of Merritt Academy, from the newest employee to the Executive Director, is committed to character education.

Visit [www.character.org](http://www.character.org) for more information about this national program.

### **MERRITT ACADEMY'S CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The Merritt Academy Character Education Program is an important component of our school curriculum and is an integral part of the learning process in the classroom - from infants through elementary school.

The program consists of two curricula – Values and Manners. The Values Curriculum has been part of the program at our school as long as the school has been in existence, since 1963, and has teachers incorporate two specific values each month into the learning environment. These values are prominently displayed in the classrooms, in the teachers' letters to the parents, and a strong part of the students' experiences each day.

The Manners Curriculum has more recently been developed to complement the Values Curriculum and strengthen the Character Education Program through attention to how the students interact with, and respond to, their peers and the adults in their lives. Four areas of etiquette are incorporated into the program – social, dining, business, and communication.

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>SEPTEMBER</b><br>❖ Respect<br>❖ Attentiveness      | <b>JANUARY</b><br>❖ Caring<br>❖ Patience    | <b>MAY</b><br>❖ Helpfulness<br>❖ Perseverance  |
| <b>OCTOBER</b><br>❖ Sharing<br>❖ Self-control         | <b>FEBRUARY</b><br>❖ Love<br>❖ Honesty      | <b>JUNE</b><br>❖ Politeness<br>❖ Neatness      |
| <b>NOVEMBER</b><br>❖ Thankfulness<br>❖ Responsibility | <b>MARCH</b><br>❖ Kindness<br>❖ Forgiveness | <b>JULY</b><br>❖ Citizenship<br>❖ Loyalty      |
| <b>DECEMBER</b><br>❖ Joyfulness<br>❖ Wisdom           | <b>APRIL</b><br>❖ Courage<br>❖ Tolerance    | <b>AUGUST</b><br>❖ Cooperation<br>❖ Initiative |



## MERRITT ACADEMY CODE OF COURTESY

*The students and faculty of Merritt Academy worked together to create the Code of Courtesy. Students and faculty are committed to and abide by this Code on a daily basis.*

### Motto

We are members of a community of character, relating to one another with respect and courtesy, and following The Golden Rule.

### Basics of Courtesy

We show courtesy to others by:

- I. Respecting and honoring the traditions and beliefs of all people
- II. Showing kindness and helpfulness to others through service and our daily actions
- III. Being polite and using appropriate manners

### Behavioral Expectations

As members of the Merritt Academy community we:

- Commit to the Code of Courtesy.
- Model respectful behavior, learn its principles, and expect it of ourselves and others.
- Respect the time constraints of others in our community by showing awareness of others' commitments.
- Express friendliness and helpfulness to those who visit our school by greeting them warmly and  
looking at them when we speak.
- Respect and cooperate with other students on the playground. (We do not embarrass, intimidate, or physically harm other students.)
- Acknowledge the positive in others and encourage them.
- Value listening and learn how to practice it.
- Strive to be helpful to others, cultivating an awareness of their needs.
- Address others with forms of respect. (School students use title and surname when addressing adults. Preschool students may use title and first name when addressing adults.)
- Practice basic table manners and appropriate table conversation in the cafeteria.
- Use manners throughout the campus by holding doors, removing hats and caps indoors, and making room for others to pass safely.
- Act as good ambassadors of our school when we are off campus on field trips or at school events. (We show school pride by wearing the school uniform.)

**Merritt Academy is committed to supporting and valuing the diversity of backgrounds and opinions of our students, families and employees. It is our responsibility to create an environment that encourages the diversity of thoughts and opinions, by treating each other with dignity and respect, in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. We are a stronger community because we value, respect and appreciate our differences.**

## **INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAM**

**O**ur Intergenerational Program has been a hallmark of Merritt Academy for decades. It is a program designed to teach and experience the whole breadth of the world and the people in it. The children get the chance to regularly be with people older and younger than themselves. All our children, Infants – 8<sup>th</sup> graders, get involved in our Intergenerational Program at least monthly and sometimes more!

A blend of voices, young and old, can be heard on a daily basis from several retirement communities, including Sunrise Senior Living, The Virginian, and The Kensington. Students discover a deeper dimension to learning based on the life experiences and ideas of their senior companions. Students also visit their younger friends through our Project Pal activities. So while one group of students may be visiting residents and learning about geography or sharing experiences, another group may be playing with toddlers on the playground or making a craft with the two year olds.

In addition, the senior residents also join us on campus to attend assemblies, special programs, graduations, and ceremonies. Some residents participate in classroom activities such as teaching art or helping young readers. These exchanges bring generations together and build relationships that continue to grow and prosper throughout the years.

## **ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

**M**erritt Academy provides children 6 weeks-8th grade with a challenging learning environment based on Merritt's own curricula in all subject areas, as well as on individual learning styles.

The academic program in the preschool is adapted from Merritt's own curricula, including phonics-based reading. All preschool children are exposed to the educational and academic areas by means of learning centers and special projects that focus on creative arts, math manipulatives, construction and building, language arts, and science/nature. Pre-reading and math concepts are introduced while socialization skills are reinforced. Each classroom is designed to be inviting and challenging. Frequent use of the outdoor areas expands learning opportunities.

Merritt's academic program for the K-8th grades continues to evolve as the school grows. Over the past several years, curricula have been developed by faculty, parents, and administrators in the core academic subject areas: reading, science, math, and social studies. All of the specialty teachers, from P.E. to Spanish and French, computers, art, library, and music, have curricula that allow the teachers to create a learning environment that is age-appropriate and challenging.

## SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM

Today, children are living in a time of rapid growth and change, facing unique and diverse challenges, both personally and developmentally. The counseling program is available to ensure that the social emotional, behavioral and academic needs of the student are being met. The program consists of a variety of services:

- Individual and group counseling, including lunch bunches
- Standardized testing with interpretation of results
- Parent and teacher consultation
- Individual/family/school crisis intervention
- Conflict resolution and anger management
- Classroom presentations from the Second Step curriculum
- Parent, teacher and administrator consultation
- Support for the preschool with consultation, and observation
- Transitioning students who are moving, new, or matriculating.



### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### PRIOR TO ENROLLMENT

##### **General Admissions Requirements**

To comply with Virginia Department of Education requirements and school policy, **a child's file must be completed prior to the first day of attendance.** A complete file includes:

- Application for Admission Form
- Enrollment Contract
- Signed Parent Agreements Sheet
- Proof of ID (Copy of Birth Certificate, Proof of Birth Letter or Passport)
- Emergency Contact Card with two local emergency contacts
- Updated Virginia School Entrance Health/Immunization Form
- <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/58/2016/12/MCH-213G-032014-Fillable-Form-110817FINAL.pdf>
- School Records Release Authorization Form-for students entering 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Teacher Recommendation Form-for students entering 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade

##### **Emergency Contact Information**

It is important that Merritt has all current information on file for parents and 2 emergency contacts at all times. This information includes, but is not limited to:

- Phone Numbers (Home, Work, Cellular)
- Addresses (Home and Work)
- E-mail Addresses

**If there is a change in any of the information, please email us to make the change to the Emergency Contact Card.**

### **Physical Exams & Immunizations**

It is important to have the Virginia Health form completed prior to your child's start date. A physical examination is required to complete that form. There are certain requirements that must be met so it is important to schedule a physical within the appropriate time frame for the accuracy of the form. The schedule of the examinations for the different age groups is as follows:

| Age of Child          | Physical Must Be Completed          |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 6 weeks – 6 months    | Within 2 months prior to admission  |
| 7 months – 18 months  | Within 3 months prior to admission  |
| 19 months - 24 months | Within 6 months prior to admission  |
| 24 months and older   | Within 12 months prior to admission |

We must receive documentation that your child has received the immunizations required by the State Board of Health on or before their first day. To view the required immunizations please go to the following website:

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/immunization/requirements/>

We must receive updated immunization documentation under the following conditions:

- Every six months for children under the age of two
- Once between your child's fourth and sixth birthdays

Merritt Academy may contact the examining physician to discuss any information contained on the School Entrance Physical Examination and Immunization Certificate. Completed forms may be faxed from your physician's office.

|   |
|---|
| Students with allergies requiring epinephrine must have an Epinephrine Authorization Form and an accompanying Action Plan on file. Parents may pick up the appropriate forms at Merritt Academy's front office. |
|---|

*Merritt Academy follows all Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) requirements for physical examinations and immunizations.*

## **Holidays**

In observance of holidays, **Merritt Academy is closed** on the following dates:

Labor Day  
Explorers' Day  
Thanksgiving Day and Day After  
Christmas and Day After  
New Year's Day  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
Presidents' Day  
Easter Monday  
Memorial Day  
Independence Day

**Please see the annual calendar for specific dates as well as closures due to teacher workdays.** While we are committed to staying open as often as possible, occasionally the calendar may adjust due to new holidays, safety or staffing needs.

## **Hours of Operation**

Merritt Academy is open from **6:45 am to 6:15 pm**. If you are delayed for some reason, please call the school and inform the front office that you will be late.

If we do not hear from you by 6:15 pm or are unable to reach you by phone, texting, or email, we will begin calling emergency contacts from the Emergency Contact Card. **We understand that emergencies do occur, but please keep the 6:15 pm closing time in mind.** A late pick-up fee of \$15 for every 15 minutes will be imposed after 3 late pick-ups.

We reserve the right to adjust our hours if the health and safety of the students and teachers are better served or if appropriate staff are not available.

## **Preschool Schedule**

Our preschool program runs 12 months of the year and is open between the hours of 6:45 am - 6:15 pm. The academic day begins at 9:00 am and concludes at 3:00 pm. If your child arrives after 9:00am in the morning, please help her/him to join the group quietly.

A typical day will be similar to this sample schedule:

6:45-9:00am: Morning snack, early recess, centers and free play during drop off times  
9:00-11:00am: Morning circle, morning recess, morning activities and specialties\*  
11:00-3:00pm: Lunch, Nap, Quiet Activities  
3:00-6:15pm: Afternoon Snacks, afternoon recess, activities and centers

*\*Each class will have a different specialty schedule (library, physical education/creative movement, foreign language, music and STEM.)*

### **Kindergarten - 8th Grade Schedule**

Our school program for K – 8th grade students is from **8:30 am - 3:30 pm**. Children may arrive at school from 8:15 - 8:30 am. For additional fees, families can take advantage of our Extended Service Programs. If your child is participating in the before school program, they can be dropped off any time between 6:45 - 8:30 am. The after-school programs run from 3:45 - 6:15 pm. Parents of students in grades K – 8 can choose to pay for a study hall or Recess and Recreation (R&R) option. This means that their children can stay for study hall or R&R only (3:30– 4:30) and must be picked up from school no later than 4:30 pm. For families selecting the full extended day services through 6:15pm, both the study hall/R&R AND extended day options must be selected on the extended service agreement and will remain the same as prior year selections until you make a change in writing to our Principal.

### **Absences - Tardiness**

- If your student is out due to illness, please notify the classroom teacher immediately.
- Please contact the Program Directors or Principal and teacher if your child has been, or will be, out of school for three consecutive days, or we may reach out to you.
- If your child has recently been ill and taken to the doctor, please also notify your child's teacher of the diagnosis so the teacher may watch for similar symptoms in the other children.
- K – 8th grade students are marked tardy if not in their classrooms by **8:45 am** and marked absent if not present by 11:00am.

*Please keep in mind that tuition needs to be paid on time regardless of absence, unless otherwise approved by the Business Office.*

### **Snow Days/Inclement Weather/Emergency Closings**

As part of our Service to Parents commitment, we strive to remain open if possible. Merritt Academy does not follow Fairfax County weather closings/schedules. As long as staff can safely arrive, Merritt Academy will open for academics or Care Only, based on weather conditions. **Please remember that an early closing or late opening may be necessary for the safety of families as well as our staff.**

Merritt Academy utilizes **text messaging** for some emergency announcements. If you are signed up for that service, you will receive notice of weather-related closings and late starts and other notices deemed critical. Sign up during Back-to School registration or contact the front desk to add your cell phone numbers to the list. The text alerts are updated annually so please make sure your number is on the list each year.

### **For up-to-date information about snow closings or delayed openings:**

- Call the Communications Hotline (703-273-8001, x 401.)
- Merritt Academy Website.
- Text-messaging service. (See above paragraph.)
- Emails and/or telephone calls will be made to all parents in case of early closings or other emergencies.

### **Rest Periods (Infants-K4)**

Children enrolled in the preschool have designated rest times. For children in the infant room, the rest periods will be on an individual basis. For children in the toddler-K3 programs, the rest period is 2 hours regularly from 12:30 - 2:30 pm, (the exact time may be slightly adjusted for each classroom schedule). For children in the K4 program, the rest period is from 1:00 - 2:30 pm, (the exact time may be slightly adjusted for each classroom schedule). Children will not be forced to sleep, but they will be encouraged to rest their bodies. They may bring a sleep toy to have during this time. Children are required to wear their shoes during rest/nap times in case of emergencies. For toddlers-K4, a sheet and blanket should be kept at school Monday through Friday for naps, and taken home on Friday for laundering. We highly encourage the use of a nap mat for 2-year olds and older, or a fitted cot sheet for naps. Pillows are only allowed if they are part of a nap mat for 2-year olds and older. Infants will have a sheet provided and washed daily by Merritt Academy. If children do not want to sleep, they will be given 30 minutes of uninterrupted time on their cot to rest. After that time, we try to find quiet activities for the children to do on their cots or in spaces that allow the rest of their friends to sleep. The 30 minutes provided is a VDOE requirement.

### **Afternoon Activities**

Parents have the opportunity to enroll their children (K3 – 8<sup>th</sup> grade) in a wide variety of afternoon activities after the regular school day. These programs are offered on a quarterly basis for an additional fee, throughout the school year, and parents may register their children depending on availability. You may register for activities online.

Afternoon activities offered may include, but are not limited to:

- Ballet Lessons
- Math Club
- Spanish Club
- French Club
- Cooking Club
- Art Club
- Cheer/Tumbling
- Computer Club
- Martial Arts
- Running Club
- Soccer Club
- Piano Lessons

After school activities are offered with the safety and health of all our staff and students in mind and opportunities may be limited when necessary.

### **Athletic Program**

Merritt's athletic program is designed to allow students the opportunity to participate in a variety of sports and benefit from a successful and meaningful co-educational experience. If you register your student for a sport, you and he/she will receive a handbook outlining all policies. Merritt students participate in the ABC League with other local private schools. For the health and safety of our students and staff athletic activities may be paused or cancelled as necessary.

### **Tutoring**

Tutoring is also available for K – 8th grade students by our degreed teaching staff. Registration forms for this service are available in the front office or by request from [office@merrittacademy.org](mailto:office@merrittacademy.org). Our Principal will coordinate the requests with the teachers who are available. For the health and safety of our students and staff tutoring opportunities may be limited or offered as a virtual opportunity.

### **Afternoon Merging**

After 3:30 pm, classrooms may be combined as children and staff members leave for the day. This means that children may change classrooms in the late afternoon based on that day's census. As a rule of thumb, children are merged into classrooms with children of the same age and near the same location. Teachers are asked to post a sign for parents telling them the room in which to find their child. Children bring their belongings into the merging room with them.

### **Morning Kiss and Ride for K-8th**

Merritt Academy has a "Morning Kiss and Ride" and an "Afternoon Kiss and Ride" for **K-8th grade** families. Morning Kiss and Ride allows parents to drive to the designated area and drop off their children between 8:00 – 8:20 am. Teachers and Safety Patrol students are there during that time to help students out of cars and to get them to the playground or their classroom safely.

### **Picking Up Your Student**

A pickup app is used to help us get your child out to you quickly. You may sign up for the app and when you arrive on campus you "announce" your student. Then our dismissal team will collect you student and their belongings and bring them to you.

**If a parent would like to pick up their child in person, the parent or visitor must receive an exit slip to pick up their child. Exit slips are mandatory for checkout for children enrolled in the infant room through 5<sup>th</sup> grade.** Children enrolled in 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade do not need exit slips. However, the students/parents are asked to please notify the adults responsible for 6th grade that the student is leaving school so that an accurate accounting can be made.

You can get an exit slip from the front desk. Only authorized individuals who are listed on your child's Emergency Contact Card will be allowed to pick up your child. **At any time you may be asked to present photo ID to confirm your identity and authorization to pick up your student.**

### **Bus Transportation**

Bus transportation is available for students ages 4 and up, within a limited radius of the campus. There are both one-way and round-trip services available. Please contact the Facilities Manager for further information and to complete a transportation application.

### **Late Pick-Up Policy and Fees**

Elementary and middle school children enrolled for the academic day only (8:30-3:30) should be picked up no later than 4:00 pm. Children who are here past 4:00 pm will be made comfortable in the front office with their belongings. Parents picking up past 4:00 pm will be charged a late-pick up fee.

Children in our Extended Service Program should be picked up no later than 6:15 pm. Families with a **child at the school past 6:15 pm will be charged a late pickup fee. Late pickup fees are assessed after three late pick-ups.** For every 15-minute increment, or part thereof, there will be a \$15.00 late fee assessed (i.e. 6:16 - 6:30 pm is \$15.00, 6:31 – 6:45 pm is \$30.00). When you have been late for the third time, someone from the front office will notify you in writing that the fee will be charged the next time.



### **Winter and Spring Break Camp (K-8<sup>th</sup>)**

During winter and spring breaks, Merritt Academy offers a Camp for K – 8th grade students. This means that academic subjects are not presented, but we do offer care for your children with teacher assistants or substitutes. There is an additional fee for this service. **Preschool tuition includes these weeks and students can attend as usual.**

### **Staff Scheduling**

Employees at Merritt Academy are scheduled to work various shifts from 6:30 am - 6:30 pm. Most of the staff members work an 8-hour day, although a considerable number of part-time staff members are employed at the school as well. If your schedule does not coincide with your teacher's work schedule, do not hesitate to leave a message in your teacher's voicemail or e-mail the teacher. Teachers return these messages as soon as it is possible. To reach someone immediately, please call the Front Desk.

### **Use of Cell Phones**

Students may not use cell phones during the school day, from 7:00am - 6:15 pm. They may have them on campus, but they must be kept turned off, and in the backpacks. Violation of this rule will result in the phone being taken from the child and given to the parent. The student may not bring the phone back to school until further notice.

Teachers may use cell phones only when not directly responsible for the care of students. Phones must remain on vibrate so as not to distract from the learning environment.

### **Lost and Found**

If your child is missing any items, please first ask your child's teacher. You may then be directed to our school's Lost and Found located in a bin inside the door of the gym. The bin is emptied by teachers or an administrator on a quarterly basis, and the items are donated to a charity. Items such as watches, earrings, phones, etc. are usually kept at the front office, or in the Principal's/Preschool Directors' office for safekeeping. Please label your child's belongings with his/her first and last name to facilitate finding the items that get lost or misplaced. If a family has lost or misplaced an item, please call the main line (703-273-8000). A member of our staff will look through the lost-and found location and bring any found items to you.

### **Video Surveillance**

To ensure the safety and security of students and staff, video and audio surveillance is recorded in a variety of indoor locations at Merritt Academy, including classrooms, the cafeteria, and specialty rooms. The surveillance recordings are only accessible in a closed-circuit system. The video and audio are not routinely monitored in real-time. Similarly, surveillance recordings are not routinely reviewed or monitored and are stored only for a limited time. Parents or guardians of a student who wish to view surveillance recordings must submit a timely request in writing to the Executive Director within six (6) calendar days of the event to be viewed. Parents or guardians may make a written request to the Executive Director to view surveillance recordings related to serious incidents or injuries requiring outside medical attention or medical

professional support. Parents also may submit a written request to the Executive Director to make surveillance recordings available to a medical or behavioral specialist. If deemed appropriate by the Executive Director or her/his designee, surveillance recordings will be made available for viewing only on-site and with a Merritt Academy administrator present."

### **Merritt Academy Parking Lot Rules**

In order to maintain a safe environment at Merritt Academy, we have established rules for parents and visitors to use in the parking lot.

- 1) The speed limit within the parking lot is 10 MPH.
- 2) No passing other cars while they are waiting for a parking spot.
- 3) Be courteous, speak kindly, and respect others while they are picking up or dropping off their children.
- 4) "No Parking or Standing" along any yellow curbs or fire lanes, including the circle and yellow striped areas or in the striped areas between the handicapped parking spaces.
- 5) Observe all signs.
- 6) Do not use your cell phone while driving in the parking lot. Stay alert and minimize distractions; there are children crossing the lot and others trying to back out and leave the lot.
- 7) Parents may park in "non-numbered" parking spaces. Numbered parking spaces are reserved for staff. (numbers can be found on the curbs)

### **Parking Violators**

The safety of our students, staff, parents and visitors is our first concern and your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Violators of the parking lot rules will be subject to the following consequences:

- Fines of up to \$500 per occurrence billed to you on your statement
- You may be asked not to return to the parking lot
- You may be asked not to return to Merritt.

Safe and available parking makes all our lives easier and even improves staff tenure. Thank you for keeping our campus, our students and our staff safe.





## **MERRITT'S SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Visitor Policy**

For the health and safety of our community, we reserve the right to restrict visitors to campus for the safety of our students and staff. In order to maintain a safe and secure environment for your child, all visitors need to report to the front office to sign in and receive a visitor's badge. Badges must be worn at all times while on campus.

### **Custodial Parents Rights**

All custodial parents or guardians have the right to have their student brought to them at any time. Legal custody restrictions must be documented and on file at the school.

### **Staff Badges**

All staff members wear a name badge while on campus during business hours.

### **Non-Smoking Campus**

For the health and safety of all our children, Merritt Academy is a non-smoking campus. Please help keep our campus healthy by not smoking anywhere on campus.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

All teachers and assistants receive training in recognizing the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect. As mandatory reporters under Virginia Commonwealth law, school personnel are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect to an immediate supervisor who then reports to the appropriate agency.

### **Emergency Preparedness Plan**

There is a written plan in place to ensure the safety of all the children at Merritt Academy in emergency situations. Staff receive training as part of their orientation on understanding their role in emergency evacuations, shelter-in-place procedures, and other possible events. These emergency preparedness plans have been developed in consultation with local authorities. Emergencies include, but are not limited to, natural disasters, chemical spills, intruders, emergency health situations and terrorism. There are monthly fire drills, regular shelter-in-place drills, lockdown drills, and may practice evacuation to the Virginian Retirement Community.

### **Internet Safety and Information Security**

Access to the Internet enables students to explore thousands of libraries, databases, museums, and other repositories of information and to exchange communication with other Internet users around the world. Merritt Academy has Internet acceptable use policies and employs content filtering software. These policies and filters are necessary but cannot prevent all risks to the students. Since Internet threats change constantly, we may take additional steps to safeguard students. Parents/Guardians may be issued passwords or access codes for different purposes throughout the year. These must never be shared with others, including other parents and families without permission from Merritt Academy

Students are responsible for appropriate behavior on the school's computer network just as they are in a classroom or on a school playground. Communications on the network are often public in nature. It is expected that users will comply with school standards and specific computer use.

The use of the network is a privilege, not a right, and may be revoked if abused. The students are advised never to access, keep, or send anything that they would not want their parents or teachers to see.

### **iPads and Chromebooks**

Students in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and above will be assigned an iPad for use in school. The students learn so much through the availability of this technology, including the value of responsibility as they use it appropriately.

In 5<sup>th</sup> grade and Middle School, students are provided with Chromebooks that support the curriculum. At graduation, students will be able to keep their Chromebooks as their own devices and continue their education experience into high school! If distance learning is required, iPads will be made available for students who do not have a device at home, to borrow to complete their courses.



To ensure that appropriate nutritional guidelines are met, a team of individuals meet regularly to focus on healthy and tasty food choices to give your children the best experience at snack and lunch times!

**Please label and date all food brought from home with your child's full name and date!**

### **Peanut Sensitive Campus and Other Food Restrictions**

**Due to the life-threatening allergies of several of our students, peanuts and peanut products are not allowed in any of our classrooms. Our cafeteria food is a nut free environment. Please keep in mind that although items may not have peanuts directly in them, even items that have been made or processed with or near peanuts are restricted. Please check packages of food before bringing any items in. We appreciate your cooperation.**

Individual classrooms may have students who have other serious allergies. We will inform families of all the allergies of a classroom and may restrict other ingredients that can be brought to school based on the severity of the allergies in the classroom.

Merritt Academy cannot provide refrigeration or re-heating of food brought from home. Please send temperature-sensitive foods in an insulated container with appropriate cold-or hot-packs to maintain the temperature of the food.

If your child requires epinephrine due to a food allergy, paperwork for epinephrine, antihistamines and the accompanying action plan are available at the front office.

### **Morning Snack**

A light morning snack is served daily between 7:00-8:30 to our preschool students and between 7:00-8:00am K – 8th grade students in Extended Service.

### **Lunch and Snacks**

#### **Preschool:**

Preschool children are served a mid-morning snack in addition to a hot lunch and two afternoon snacks. **Refrigeration and/or microwaving are not provided for any food brought from home for Toddlers – K4 students.**

#### **Elementary and Middle School (K – 8th grade):**

Elementary and Middle School lunch and snacks are provided as part of your child's tuition. K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students may either eat school lunch or bring lunch from home. Please label your child's lunch box/bag. **Refrigeration and/or microwaving are not provided.**

**One afternoon snack** is provided to K-8<sup>th</sup> students, including MAAP students.

**Two afternoon snacks** are provided to extended-care and MAAP students, and to all Preschool children.

A monthly menu of lunches and snacks is available and attached in each Wednesday letter.

There is a Wellness Committee which meets regularly to discuss issues related to what we are doing to help our children stay fit - from exercise to what they are eating. If you are interested in participating in this, please contact the Principal.

### **Birthday Celebrations and Class Parties**

Your child's birthday is a special occasion. We want to join you in this special time, and since we have so many friends at school, we want to make sure everyone can share in the event. If you do want to bring a food item, please bring items that are peanut free. We ask that you purchase items that have been processed in a health department-certified location (aka the grocery store, baked goods manufacturer, formal bakery or another regulated environment), to limit the possibility of cross-contaminated services. Please let us know your plans in advance and we look forward to celebrating your child's birthday with him or her!

### **Outdoor Time**

Merritt Academy recognizes the value of fresh air and outdoor play, and although sometimes weather conditions prevent this, we go outside as much as possible. We need your support to ensure your child/ren (infants - 8th grade) are sent to school ready to go outdoors wearing proper clothing including heavy coats, mittens or gloves, warm hats, sturdy shoes/boots and other appropriate layers.

### **Insect Repellent/Sunscreen/Lip Balm/Body Lotion**

Please apply any sunscreen, lotion, insect repellent or lip balm to your children before school. The teachers will assume you have done the first application of the day. Additional applications of sun block, insect repellent, lip balm or body lotion will be done for infants through K4 children regularly. K – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will be provided additional times to re-apply, with help if needed. Parents are responsible for bringing a new supply of unexpired products each academic year along with the appropriate **Topical Product Authorization Form**. We are not able to accept aerosol spray sun block.

### **Long term and Short Term Medication**

**Merritt Academy's ability to provide medication is governed by VDOE standards.** Merritt Academy will administer medication to your child, with your permission, for a maximum of 10 working days. **To exceed a duration of 10 working days, parent and physician authorization is required. The Medication Form and medication must be turned in to the front office, not the teacher, and can be valid for as long as the academic year. (For example, epinephrine and inhalers require a physician's signature.)**

At the end of the academic year all medications (including non-prescription medicines/prescription medications/epinephrine /teething gel/sunscreen/lip balm/diaper cream) will be returned to you. New medication forms are required for each new academic year.

**All medication forms can be found on the Merritt Academy website, the weekly Wednesday letter, or by request from [office@merrittacademy.org](mailto:office@merrittacademy.org).**

- All prescribed medication must be in the original prescription package with the original measuring vial, labeled with the child's name, prescription number, doctor's name, dosage, and directions for administration. **Directions MUST match the medication form.**
- Medication will only be given according to manufacturer directions. If you need to provide non-prescription medication or over-the-counter medication in dosage that is not what is listed on the package, a doctor's directive and signature must be provided.
- Cough drops are not allowed for preschool children, as they are a choking hazard.
- Baby powder is also not allowed at Merritt Academy due to potential inhalation hazards.

**For your child's safety, please keep all medications and medical authorizations current. If your child's medical status changes, for example, your child is no longer allergic to certain foods or substances, please provide a doctor's statement to that effect. We will continue to act on the original doctor's diagnosis and orders until we receive notification from your child's doctor that there has been a change.**

### **Diaper Cream**

Diaper ointment or cream may occasionally be required by an infant or toddler and will be administered by staff as needed. Parents need to fill out the appropriate Topical Product Authorization Form authorizing the use of diaper ointment.

|   |
|---|
| Children should <u>not</u> be in possession of any prescription or non-prescription medicines at any time, including cough drops, throat lozenges, or lip balm. |
|---|

## Illnesses

**We reserve the right to deny entry to any student exhibiting symptoms of illness. We also know that in a group environment there is a risk of illness. Merritt Academy is not liable for any student or staff member contracting an illness. Merritt follows all federal and state laws to maintain a healthy and safe school community.** Many illnesses are contagious before symptoms show, therefore we treat each day as a “sick day” and clean regularly, but understand that illness can still occur and pass to others.

For the protection of all children and staff, children should not be brought to school when they are ill. All J127 Foundation schools follow the state required guidelines through VDOE and the Virginia Department of Health. Please do not send your child to school if they are experiencing one or more of the following symptoms. If they are displaying any of these symptoms at school, they will be sent home.

- Fever: If a child’s temperature reaches 100.5 degrees, they must be picked up and kept at home until they have been fever free for 24 hours.
- Diarrhea: A child with recurring diarrhea will be sent home and needs to remain out of school for 24 hours after symptoms clear.
- Vomiting: A child who has vomited digested or partially digested food once will be sent home and must remain home for 24 hours after symptoms clear.
- Colds, ear, eye or nasal discharge, sore throat: While runny noses, cold symptoms, and coughs are common among children, if they are experiencing these symptoms and are not feeling well we ask that you please keep your child at home until they are feeling better.
- Highly contagious illnesses: If you or your child has contracted or has been exposed to a highly contagious illness, **the parent must contact the school within 24 hours of the condition.**

A class exposure notice is then posted to alert other parents to watch for similar symptoms or other guidance from the health department will be followed. This category of illness includes:

- |                             |                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ▪ COVID - 19                | ▪ Salmonellas, shigellosis      |
| ▪ Strep throat              | ▪ Measles                       |
| ▪ Pinworm                   | ▪ Mumps                         |
| ▪ Viral pox                 | ▪ Influenza, ringworm           |
| ▪ Conjunctivitis (pink eye) | ▪ Fifths disease                |
| ▪ Scarlet fever             | ▪ Hand, foot, and mouth disease |
| ▪ Whooping cough            | ▪ Parvovirus                    |
| ▪ Impetigo, meningitis      | ▪ Hepatitis A                   |
- Any questionable rashes must be identified and documented with a note from a physician and treated properly before a child is brought back to school.
  - Lice and scabies are also contagious and difficult to treat. If either condition is contracted by your child, please follow a doctor or pharmacist’s advice about treatment so that your child may return to school as soon as possible. **Your child must be nit free (egg free) and must be checked by a teacher or administrator before re-entering the classroom.**
  - Life threatening communicable diseases: Please inform the School Principal or Preschool Directors if your child is being treated for any life-threatening conditions such as HIV, hepatitis B, etc. Information will be kept confidential. This school and all J127 schools follow all universal health precautions in order to keep our community safe.

When a child becomes sick during the school day, we will separate them from the other children and contact a parent with the request that they are taken home. **Please pick up your child within an hour of the call.** We will call the next number from the Emergency Contact Card if a child is not picked up within this time frame or a parent is not reached.

We appreciate your help in keeping our school healthy and free from illness. We reserve the right to send a child home when they are visibly uncomfortable, have unexplained rashes and discharge, or are showing any concerning symptoms of illness until they have confirmation of health from a doctor. A child on antibiotics should be kept home at least 24 hours after the first dose to allow the medicine to work on the condition. When your child returns to school from any illness, they should be healthy enough to participate in outdoor recess.

To best protect the health and wellbeing of your child and of the other children in our care, Merritt Academy reserves the right to require a doctor's note for any symptoms or potential illness we deem necessary.

### **Life Threatening Communicable Diseases**

Please inform the School Principal or Preschool Directors if your child is being treated for any life-threatening communicable diseases such as HIV, hepatitis B, etc. Information will be kept confidential. Merritt Academy follows all universal health precautions in order to keep our community safe.

### **Medical Emergencies**

We reserve the right to call emergency medical personnel at any time. In the event of a medical emergency or serious accident, parents will be contacted as soon as possible. If we cannot reach parents within a reasonable time frame, we will reach out to emergency contacts. The school reserves the right to contact your family physician for information regarding your child's welfare.

### **Injury Reports**

An Injury Report is created when a child has an accident or injury. We cannot provide the names of other children involved in order to protect the confidentiality of all children. We will ask you to sign a copy of the injury report and will provide you a copy. In the event of a head injury, a phone call will be made to parents and an administrator will review the injury report.

### **Incident Reports**

An Incident Report is created when a situation has occurred and a behavior needs to be firmly addressed. Details about the incident and actions taken by the teachers are provided. An example of an incident may be throwing furniture, biting, or other aggressive behaviors. A copy of this form will be sent home that day.





### **Preschool Attire**

Please make sure that at drop-off your child is dressed in comfortable and appropriate clothing in order to allow freedom of movement throughout the day. The child's clothing may get dirty while participating in the classroom activities or playing outside. Clothing with few fasteners/buttons/zippers/snaps/buckles will allow children to be more independent in their clothing and toileting needs. We recommend closed-toe shoes on campus at all times because we have many areas of pea-gravel and several mulch areas on campus. Tee-shirts depicting violence or printed with inappropriate language or pictures are not permitted.

**Unless the weather is severe, children are taken outdoors daily and should dress accordingly. Allergies do not preclude the children from going outside to play.**

### **Elementary and Middle School Dress Code**

Beginning in Kindergarten and continuing through 8th grade, students are required to wear a uniform. The uniform ensures that a student's first priority is to his or her studies. Students must adhere to the uniform code Monday through Friday of each academic week during the school year. Periodically students enjoy approved casual dress days.

If a student is in violation of the uniform code, a teacher will issue the student a Notice of Uniform Infraction. This form is intended to alert the student and the parent to the problem with the student's dress so that it can be quickly corrected. The administration reserves the right to send home any student on any day if the student's dress is inappropriate or does not meet the guidelines.

Merritt-specific uniform components may be purchased from **Flynn O'Hara** or **Lands' End**. Additionally, JCPenney carries appropriate dress code-quality pants/shorts. Merritt Academy's PTO sponsors a free "Uniform Swap" for families to pass down gently-used uniform pieces that older students have outgrown.

**BOYS Kindergarten through 8th grade may choose from any of the following:**

### **Shirts**

- White cotton/oxford button-down, collared shirt, long or short sleeves (school logo optional)
- White or navy collared knit **polo** shirt, short sleeves (school logo mandatory)

**Note:** *Students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 only may also wear hunter green knit **polo** shirts (school logo mandatory)*

- Turtleneck-solid white or navy blue, long sleeves only (school logo optional)

**Comments:** *Students in Grades 2-8 must wear their shirts tucked in. Shirts with buttons must be buttoned to the second button.*

### **Pants and Shorts**

- Long trousers in navy or khaki with a belt (Belts not required in Kindergarten or First Grade). **Pants without belt loops do not require a belt.**
- Shorts in navy or khaki with a belt (Belts not required in Kindergarten or First Grade).
- Conservative styles only-*For example, cargo, bell bottoms, or painter-type pants are not permitted.*

**Comments:** *Pants and shorts may be pleated or flat front. Trousers may be cuffed or un-cuffed. Shorts length must be below the student's fingertips when hands are at the side.*

### **Sweaters and Vests**

- Solid navy or white V-neck, crew neck pullover, or cardigan style (school logo optional)

**Comments:** *Sweaters must be hip or waist length. It is important that students have a sweater or the Merritt sweatshirt/hoodie on cool days as coats and jackets may not be worn in the classroom.*

**Navy Hoodies with school logo may be worn as part of the dress code.**

**Navy Merritt Spirit Sweatshirt may be worn as part of the dress code as well. (Note: The Royal Blue Spirit Sweatshirt is not part of the dress code.) Please note that sweatshirts/hoodies are being phased out this school year (23-24) and will not be part of the dress code beginning in the 24-25 school year. The new ¼ zip fleece jacket is replacing sweatshirts/hoodies as part of the uniform.**

### **Shoes**

- Athletic shoes or other conservative styles are recommended. **For safety reasons, no open-toed shoes (including Crocs) or sandals may be worn.**

**Comments:** *Athletic shoes must be worn during P.E. classes.*

### **Socks**

- Must be worn with shoes or sneakers, and be visible. **White or navy socks are preferable, but other colors may be worn as well.**

### **Appearance (boys and girls)**

- Neat clothing with no visible rips, soil, or holes
- Hair *conservatively* styled and kept clear of eyes; Hair may not be dyed unless it is approved by the Principal for a special occasion.
- No make-up, perfume, perfumed lotions, cologne or aftershave
- Conservative jewelry (earrings must be studs or small hoops no bigger than 1/2")

**GIRLS Kindergarten through 8th grade may choose from any of the following:**

**Shirts**

- White cotton/oxford button-down collared shirt, long or short sleeves (school logo optional)
- White or navy collared knit **polo** shirt, long or short sleeves (school logo mandatory)

**Note:** Students in Grades 6,7, and 8 only may wear hunter green knit **polo** shirts (**school logo mandatory**)

- White Peter Pan collared shirt, long or short sleeves (school logo optional)
- Turtleneck-solid white or navy blue, long sleeves only (school logo optional)

**Comments:** *Students in Grades 2-8 must wear their shirts tucked in. Shirts with buttons must be buttoned to the second button.*

**Pants and Shorts**

- Long trousers in navy or khaki
- Shorts in navy or khaki
- Conservative styles only-For example, cargo, bell bottoms, hip-huggers or painter-type pants are not allowed.

**Comments:** *Pants and shorts may be pleated or flat front. Trousers may be cuffed or un-cuffed. Shorts length must be below the student's fingertips when hands are at the side.*

**Skirts, Skorts, Jumpers and Kilts**

- Navy, khaki, or school plaid

**Comments:** *Correct plaid is currently available at Flynn O'Hara and Lands' End. All hem lengths must be below the student's fingertips when hands are at the side.*

**Sweaters and Vests**

- Solid navy or white V-neck or crew neck pullover, or cardigan style (school logo optional)

**Comments:** *Sweaters must be hip or waist length. It is important that students have a sweater or the Merritt sweatshirt/hoodie on cool days as coats and jackets may not be worn in the classroom.*

**Navy Hoodies with school logo may be worn as part of the dress code.**

**Navy Merritt Spirit Sweatshirt may be worn as part of the dress code as well. (Note: The Royal Blue Spirit Sweatshirt is not part of the dress code.) Please note that sweatshirts/hoodies are being phased out this school year (23-24) and will not be part of the dress code beginning in the 24-25 school year. The new ¼ zip fleece jacket is replacing sweatshirts/hoodies as part of the uniform.**

**Shoes**

- Athletic shoes or other conservative styles are recommended. **For safety reasons, no open-toed shoes (including Crocs), high heels, or sandals may be worn.**

**Comments:** *Athletic shoes must be worn during P.E. classes.*

**Socks and Tights and Leggings**

- White or navy socks are preferable, but other colors may be worn as well.

**Leggings may be worn under skirts or jumpers, and must be solid navy or white. No patterns please. They may not be worn as pants with a shirt.**



## SCHOOL SUPPLIES

### **Infant Program**

What to bring:

- Full size backpack, large enough to hold a blanket and 3 complete outfits. (Please do not send backpacks with wheels.)
- Disposable diapers — 12 daily or a full box may be left and replenished as needed.
- Baby wipes — one full container to be left at school and refilled as necessary.
- Three complete changes of clothes for accidents/spills are to be stored in the baby's bag. This includes a shirt, pants, socks, undershirt, etc.
- When your infant starts to walk, please send him/her in shoes, preferably closed toe.
- Diaper ointment, as needed accompanied with the correct medical form.
- All bottle formula, breast milk, jars of baby food, and sippy cups for the day must be labeled with the baby's full name and date on the bottle or container.
- Short biography on your child to include sleeping and eating habits, likes and dislikes, and any other information you would like your child's teacher to know upon entering our program.
- A light blanket for naps. Blankets will be sent home every Friday to be laundered. Merritt Academy will provide bibs for feeding and sheets for cribs.
- A pacifier may be used, but must be labeled. Please provide a clip to attach it to your child's clothing.
- Please label your child's belongings with their first and last name.

Since the children spend a great deal of their time crawling and exploring on the floor, we need to keep it as clean and healthy as possible. We ask that when entering the play area, you cover your feet with the provided "booties".

### **Toddler Program**

What to bring:

- Full size backpack. (Please do not send backpacks with wheels.)
- Disposable diapers - 12 daily or a full box may be left and replenished as needed.
- Baby wipes - One container to be left at school and refilled as necessary.
- Two to three complete changes of clothes for accidents/spills to be stored in the baby's bag.
- This includes a shirt, pants, socks, underwear, etc.
- Diaper cream, etc. as needed accompanied with the correct medical forms.
- Sippy cups for the day must be labeled with the date and child's full name on the container.
- A light blanket and a cot sheet for naps. Blankets and sheets will be sent home every Friday to be laundered.
- **Please label your child's belongings with his/her first and last name.**

## **K2, K3 and K4**

What to bring:

- Full size backpack. (Please do not send backpacks with wheels.)
- A complete change of clothing for accidents/spills to be stored in the child's bag. This includes a shirt, pants, socks, underwear, etc. Girls are encouraged to wear shorts under dresses.
- A nap mat or cot sheet and blanket. Blankets and sheets will be sent home every Friday to be laundered.
- You may send a soft "sleep toy." (Pillows are only allowed if attached to a nap mat.)
- Please DO NOT bring toys to school unless requested by the teacher for a designated "show and share" day.
- Please label your child's belongings with their first and last name. If your child is in K2 and not toilet trained, please also provide diapers, baby wipes, diaper cream, etc.

## **K-8<sup>th</sup> grade**

Teachers will communicate with families via email on what supplies K-8<sup>th</sup> students need to bring before school starts. Please be sure to select a backpack or book bag that fits into the appropriate storage space (locker or cubby). For this reason, rolling backpacks are not permitted.

**Restricted Items for all Merritt Academy Students:** Please do not allow your child to bring electronic equipment, pillows, toys, gum, candy or soda to Merritt Academy.

Teachers are permitted to go through a child's backpack, cubby or locker at any time.



## CULTIVATING THE MIND - ACADEMICS

### **A Child's Placement**

The Merritt Academy staff delights in a child's progress almost as much as you do. The school's goal, to provide an environment for each individual child that is developmentally appropriate by age, is accommodated by teacher training, encouraging good behavior, and academic success. A child's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development is the focus of our curriculum, and the basis for a child's transition to the next age level's program. If there are any questions or concerns about a child's placement, please check with the Preschool Directors or Principal. A great deal of time and attention is spent matching students with the teacher(s) whose teaching style would best fit the unique personality and learning style of the child. For returning families, we take into consideration the current teachers' recommendations and parent requests. Other considerations made during classroom placement include age and gender. While we make every effort to consider parent input, Merritt Academy Administrators will make final placement decisions and does not guarantee any class placement based on teachers or students.

### **PRESCHOOL**

#### **Curriculum**

Merritt Academy preschool curriculum includes the following features:

- A year-round program
- Themed-approach curriculum
- Developmentally appropriate but individually based education
- Phonics language arts program
- Hands-on experiential instruction
- Multi-language instruction: Spanish and French for K3-K4
- Music
- Creative movement/physical education
- Introduction to technology through use of computers, Interactive Boards, iPads, etc.
- Monthly values
- Intergenerational programming
- Field trips for K3 - K4

#### **Preschool Progress Reports**

Progress Reports for infants, toddlers and preschoolers are issued in January and June. Progress reports will outline developmental stages and milestones your child has met during the course of the year. These developmental milestones are based on healthy and appropriate expectations.

## **ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL**

### **Curriculum**

Merritt Academy has curricula for each of the academic subject areas and teachers use these to develop lesson plans and plan appropriate activities for the students. A challenging academic program is expected at Merritt, and the teachers work hard to provide a learning environment that is differentiated to meet all students' learning styles and talents.

### **Gifted Program**

The Gifted Program is Merritt Academy's academic enrichment program for students in grades K-8 in the subject areas of reading and mathematics. This program, with levels designed for students with academic strengths in reading and/or math that range from advanced to significantly advanced in these areas, will facilitate scholarly growth and enrichment beyond the students' current grade level and outside of the current grade level classroom. Students who are chosen to participate have scored well on their standardized tests, have been recommended by their teacher, and have been evaluated by the appropriate instructors in the proposed enrichment areas. The different levels of the program address the academic needs of the students. Parents may address concerns about their child's progress to the classroom teacher, the enrichment instructor or the program facilitator.

**Level 1:** Enrichment is offered in all classes for all students through differentiated instruction.

**Level 2:** Students who exhibit a need for additional challenge in reading and/or math are provided more challenging content, assignments, resources and/or instructional grouping within the classroom.

**Level 3:** Students will receive instruction for math/reading with the math specialist because of aptitude, achievement and test scores. This enrichment will continue throughout the academic school year, as appropriate, based on the skill and progression of the academic subject and the achievement of the individual child.

**Level 4:** Students will participate daily in the Gifted Program by attending class in the next grade level for instruction on the selected subject (reading and/or math). During the time of students' participation in the Level 4 Gifted Program they will only be responsible for the work that is given by the next grade level teacher.

### **Specialty Classes for School and Preschool**

During the week, students in Infants - 8th grade take "specialty classes." Age-appropriate activities offered include music, art, creative movement, physical education, library, computers and foreign languages.

### **Music**

The music curriculum for K4 – 8<sup>th</sup> grade is loosely based on the national standards as outlined by the Music Educators National Conference. Emphasis is placed on strong sight singing as a basis for learning the rudiments of music. Students simultaneously learn to play instrumental music, progressing from rhythm instruments to boom whacker tuned percussion tubes, recorders, hand chimes, and ultimately culminating in handbell ensemble. Our Music Director uses the Orff Schulwerk method of teaching music using poems, rhymes, games, songs, and dances as examples and basic materials. These may be traditional or original. Spoken or sung, they may be

accompanied by clapping and stamping or by drums, sticks, and bells. The special Orff melody instruments include wooden xylophones and metal glockenspiels that offer good sound immediately. Played together as in a small orchestra, their use helps children become sensitive listeners and considerate participants.

The preschool music program at Merritt Academy encompasses the infant through K4 classrooms. It includes singing, rhythmic movement activities, moving and resting to musical cues, ensemble and solo playing with rhythm instruments, beginning note reading and writing, solfege singing and ear training, and keyboard.

Different types of musical performances are given throughout the year. A program for parents of K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students, Spring Performance, is presented every year in the beginning of May, while the Spring Recital for parents of the K3 and K4 children is presented later in the spring.

### **Art**

The Art program for K-8<sup>th</sup> grade at Merritt Academy seeks to build children's confidence, familiarity and skills in working with a variety of materials. There is a wide emphasis on drawing and painting. The children work from life and from their imaginations, using the principles of design to make their artwork more visually compelling and meaningful. Students also get the opportunity to experiment with an array of techniques, for instance collage, papier mache, serigraphy, 3-D construction, printmaking, wire sculpture and clay. Children also learn about art in a historical and cultural context, as it is relevant to their studio work.

Throughout the year, students in K-8<sup>th</sup> grade take field trips to local art museums or venues such as the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the various Smithsonian museums, and art galleries to see examples of art in real life, or to enhance lessons on a particular style of art. The art teacher leads these field trips, and the classroom teacher joins. Docent tours are incorporated into the learning experience when possible. Art experiences are incorporated into the daily preschool program for infants-K4.

### **Creative Movement and Physical Education**

The physical education program for preschool focuses on both creative movement and physical education, while the K-8<sup>th</sup> grade program is physical education, organized into five strands. Creative movement for preschool students involves dances such as "Skip to My Lou," and "Chicken Dance," along with movement concepts such as space awareness. Jumping and landing, throwing and catching, dribbling and cooperative games are all incorporated into the program as well.

Developing fundamental movement patterns and body awareness is the primary focus for the kindergarten students, while the older students begin to understand how their decisions can impact their health and wellness now and in the future. As they progress in age, the students improve in physical abilities and can demonstrate more proficient movement patterns while participating in educational games and activities. Merritt Academy's physical education program is designed to allow experiences which will help develop positive attitudes toward leading healthy and active lifestyles.



## **Library**

The library program allows students from K3- 8th grade to select books from a wide variety of genres that are appropriate and congruent to their ages and stages of development. Students also learn library skills that enable them to independently access books to meet their informational, educational, and recreational needs. It is the goal of Merritt Academy's library program to develop in all students a love for reading. When students read and are informed they become critical thinkers. The library is computerized with Alexandria Book Program. Book fairs are held twice a year with the proceeds going to purchase new books and teacher materials.

## **STEAM**

The Computer Technology Program for K-8<sup>th</sup> grade at Merritt Academy strives to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to access, evaluate, use and create information using technology. This includes a progression from physical manipulation skills for the use of technology, to intellectual skills necessary for information use, to skills needed for working responsibly and productively within groups. The technology program integrates technology with core, specialist and character development curricula. Computer technology proficiency is not an end in itself, but lays the foundation for continuous learning. The focus is on learning to use technology rather than learning about technology.

In preschool, students learn basic keyboard skills, mouse skills, arrow key control and hand/eye coordination. In addition, computer class teaches skills such as listening and following directions, taking turns and practicing patience as well as meeting the academic goals such as solving patterns, identifying letter sounds, and counting which are supported through games and other online activities.

## **Foreign Languages**

For students in grades K3- 4<sup>th</sup> grade, the foreign language program is focused on introduction of the languages, with attention to simple vocabulary and conversation. Once the students have progressed into grade 4, more advanced instruction is given in preparation for the more intense learning in 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade. Basic grammar and sentence structure are introduced.

Foreign language is a core subject for the students in 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade. It allows the students to begin to develop communicative competence in the target language and expand understanding of the culture(s) of the people who speak the language. This competence is divided into three strands: speaking and writing as an interactive process, listening and reading as a receptive process in which students develop comprehension of the target language, and speaking and writing in a presentational context.

Kindergarten and first grade students will receive foreign language instruction in both Spanish and French. In Kindergarten, the first half of the year is spent learning Spanish, and the second half is spent learning French. In first grade, both Spanish and French are taught in parallel throughout the year. The selection of either Spanish or French will begin in the second grade. We feel that this will continue to expose our students to both languages for a period of time that is appropriate and will offer a strong foundation for the foreign language program throughout the time they attend Merritt Academy.

## **Assessments**

At Merritt Academy students in 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade are tested every fall, usually in early October, with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The Iowa Tests are standardized group-administered achievement tests, used in conjunction with the CogATs (Cognitive Abilities Test), which are administered at 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The Iowa Tests measure student progress and achievement and the CogATs assess a student's ability to reason, with scores reported for verbal, nonverbal and quantitative reasoning. Both tests are nationally normed tests, and scores are a measure of a student's standing in comparison with others around the nation.

The testing is spread over a week's time and assesses student progress in reading, language arts, social studies, science, math, and sources of information. The test scores are used to guide teachers in planning educational programming for each student, and school wide for curriculum development.

Students in grade 1 will be administered the NNAT2 (Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, Second Edition) in online form. The test is a measure of a child's ability to reason.

## **Elementary and Middle School Report Cards and Progress Reports**

**Kindergarten students receive a progress report/portfolio for the first quarter.** Parents have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress with the teachers during parent conferences, which are scheduled in October. These students will receive report cards for each of the subsequent quarters, January, March, and June, using the grading scale of E, S+, etc. listed below.

**Students in 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade receive report cards for each quarter**, in October, January, March and June, and parent conferences are scheduled for them in October and February as well. Interim reports are sent out to all students in 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade half way through the quarter. **Kindergarten families receive report cards at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters.** Parent Conferences are scheduled to coincide with the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter, and mid-year so that teachers can give parents updates on their children's progress. In addition, we encourage communication on a frequent basis between teacher and parent.

**All 1<sup>st</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers use the following grading scale:**

**A= 90-100 (Excellent)**

**B= 80-89 (Very Good)**

**C= 70-79 (Average)**

**D= 60-69 (Needs**

**Improvement) F= 59 and below (Unsatisfactory)**

Students in K – 8th grade receive the numerical grades for sub-sections of the report cards, such as “Knows basic facts” under mathematics. Effort grades are also given for the Values and Work Habits section of the report card, along with the effort given to each subject.

The values and manners of Merritt's Character Education Program are an integral part of Merritt's education program. Both the values and manners that are incorporated into the lesson plans for all grades are assessed and recorded in the Report Cards and Progress Reports. We believe that the values and manners curricula are key elements in the learning environment.

### **Student Support and the Child Study Team Approach**

When the classroom teacher observes difficulty in a child's ability to cope with the academic program or exhibits learning and/or behavior problems, the teacher will consult and meet with the Principal and the School Counselor to identify the student's needs and pinpoint the specific targets for improvement. With consultant assistance from the administrators, the classroom teacher may provide teaching interventions and behavior adjustments for the student.

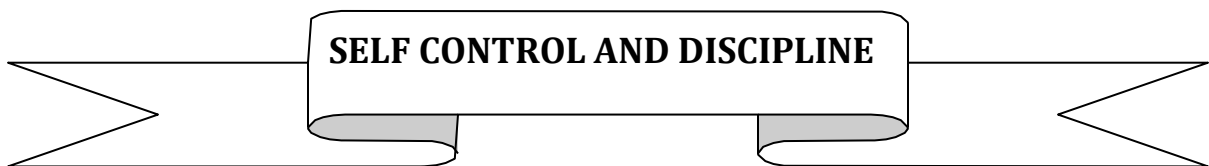
If the student's needs cannot be met with teaching interventions and behavior adjustments, the Child Study Team (teacher, School Counselor, Principal/Preschool Director and Executive Director) will meet with the parents/guardians to provide formal documentation of the student's learning and behavior performance and provide specific recommendations, including referral for assessment and consideration for special services.

Merritt Academy considers that teamwork is the best approach to help the child who experiences consistent academic or behavioral problems identified by teachers and/or parents/guardians. Our goal is to help the child to increase his chances of success with the cooperation between school and home.

The Child Study Team process involves:

- Identifying a student's needs for academic and/or behavioral support.
- Determining the strategies needed to assist the student, and implementing intervention through a continuum of services.
- Evaluating the strategies and the student's continuing level of need.

A Counseling Referral Form is available for school teachers to submit to the Principal and then the School Counselor for proper follow-up regarding a student's specific needs. Parents are informed in a timely manner and involved in the process. We encourage parents to discuss concerns, to request assistance, and contact their child's classroom teacher when they identify the need for this type of support.



Merritt Academy's discipline policy is based on respect for all individuals. Every student is treated in a manner that supports personal dignity. Proper behavior is expected of all students, parents, faculty, and staff in accordance with the Merritt Academy Code of Courtesy. Our Character Education Program outlines values that are taught and the expectation is that those values will be incorporated into the everyday life of everyone at Merritt.

### **Discipline Policy for Infants-K4**

Discipline is about teaching what the right choice would be the next time. In school it is the responsibility of the teachers to help teach the children that they have a choice to make, the cause and effect of each child's choices and guide the children to make wise choices. For each age group the responsibility of the child increases.

For infants and toddlers when we see undesirable behavior, we redirect the children. We use feeling words to try and label what the child is experiencing and then redirect their energy to a positive interest.

For two-and three-year-olds, we discuss more clearly the choices a child may have in a situation and the end result of each choice. We do a lot of reminding in these age groups of what those choices are and that your child has a choice to make in each situation.

For four-year-olds, we believe your children are now more aware of their choices and that there are consequences to their choices. We will usually remind your child a time or two but then will follow through with an appropriate consequence.

At no time will we physically punish a child, withhold food, threaten, or humiliate a child. Potty accidents are not a choice and therefore no discipline is used in response. Consequences for actions are determined based on each child and each action, as appropriate. If repeated negative behavior is observed a Preschool Administrator will reach out to you to set up a parent-teacher conference and create a behavior plan with you to encourage positive change.

### **Discipline Policy for K-8**

Students in K-8<sup>th</sup> grade who demonstrate an inability to stay within the guidelines of the Code of Courtesy (page 10) and the expectations set for students at Merritt will face disciplinary action. This can include, but is not limited to:

- In class consequences, like a time out or loss of a privilege.
- A call to the student's parents to advise them of the inappropriate behavior. This is done in conjunction with an Incident Report being sent home.
- A conference with the student regarding the behavior and how it can be corrected.
- A conference with the parents regarding the behavior and determination of some level of behavior modification.
- In-school suspension of a length of time that fits the inappropriate behavior under discussion.
- Out-of-school suspension of a length of time that fits the inappropriate behavior.
- Expulsion and subsequent dis-enrollment of the student, as a last resort.

A Parent-Teacher Conference may be arranged if problems or misbehavior persists. Discipline will be appropriate to the child's developmental level. Any type of physical punishment, verbal threats, shaming or humiliation of a child is absolutely prohibited.

All Merritt Academy students are taught to show respect for each other, as well as for adults. Teachers and teacher assistants use positive reinforcement to recognize and encourage good social behavior and academic achievement. Teachers and students deserve a classroom environment conducive to learning, concentration, creativity and participation.

The following incidents may result in suspension or expulsion, though the use of both methods is a last resort as part of the discipline policy:

- Theft, cheating or use of foul language
- Vandalism of property, building or others' belongings
- Bullying or cyber bullying
- Action which endangers the safety of others
- Use or possession of unlawful drugs, alcohol or tobacco
- Repeated infraction of school or class rules
- Repeated inappropriate or disrespectful behavior of student or parents toward faculty or staff
- Any action that may compromise the school and its reputation
- Behaviors which disrupt the learning atmosphere and /or violate the community standards of respect

### **Behavioral Management Philosophy**

Behavior problems are handled using a developmental approach. Most problems are avoided by keeping the children actively engaged in interesting activities. When problems do arise, redirecting the children to another activity is helpful. Our staff is trained to channel the child's inappropriate behavior to a more appropriate activity. All children learn how to choose behavior and understand their responsibilities for their choices. Teachers communicate with parents regarding individual students' behavior choices as needed.

### **Biting**

#### **Guidelines for Responding to Biting in Infant-K2 Classrooms:**

Incidents of biting are a relatively common, yet unpleasant, experience with infants, toddlers and K2s because these children have not yet acquired the verbal skills to express their frustrations or desires. Often they are also experiencing the pain of teething. Because we understand the nature of biting at this age, we feel it is necessary to deal with biting in these classrooms on a case-by-case basis rather than to adopt a blanket policy.

Teachers will respond to a biting incident in this manner:

- Immediate care and comfort will be given to the victim.
- A reprimand will be directed at the biter, who will be separated from the group until the situation is under control.
- Injury Reports will be filled out for aggressive biting.

When a child becomes stuck in a biting pattern any one or all of the following measures will be taken:

- Shadowing and Separation: A staff member will be assigned to shadow the biter, ready to intercede before a bite occurs. If necessary the biter may also be separated from the group during very busy times like diapering, feeding, transitions, etc.
- Room Arrangement: Staff will observe and record when and where biting takes place, recording this information in a weekly log, and emailing update to parents. They will then experiment with different room arrangements to help divide children into smaller, more manageable groups using physical barriers (i.e.: shelf units, tables, etc.)
- Program Planning: Staff will evaluate planned activities and the level of frustration or excitability they may evoke.
- Parent Conferencing: A conference will be scheduled to share information, develop a plan of action and possible resolutions.

- Call to the Parent: If a serious bite (one which breaks the skin) occurs, parents may be asked to pick up their child for the remainder of the day. This measure is seldom employed and is not expected to be a viable deterrent, but merely a measure of restoring peace of mind and for the temporary protection of the other children.
- Occasionally, the Preschool Director may recommend that the parent make an appointment with a child psychologist to determine strategies applicable to that child.
- Disenrollment: The final measure for repeated biting incidents may be disenrollment with referral to home care until the child has passed this stage of development. Often these children respond well to a much smaller environment with limited stressors.

**Guidelines for Responding to Biting in K3/K4 and K-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Classrooms:**

If a child K3 and older bites another student, the following procedures will be typically carried out:

1. Immediate care and comfort will be given to the victim.
2. The biter will be removed from the setting immediately and brought to an administrator by the teacher or assistant.
3. The situation will be assessed by the administrator and appropriate discipline will be given, including the possibility of being sent home or suspended.
4. Incident and Injury Reports will be filled out and sent home for both the child who bit and the victim.

Repeated incidents of biting may result in disenrollment with referral to home care. Often children with these tendencies respond well in a much smaller environment with fewer children and transitions.



## THE MERRITT EXPERIENCE

*How we implement the Merritt Experience may be adjusted or canceled if necessary for the safety of our students, their families, and our staff.*

### **Merritt Traditions**

We believe that certain traditions are a big part of what makes Merritt Academy so special. Anticipating these annual events creates an excitement that spreads throughout the campus!

In preschool, our students enjoy special events, including a week-long celebration of Dr. Seuss; participate in a colorful Umbrella Day Parade across campus; a Thanksgiving Feast together and the Spring Recital musical performances. K4 students have a special graduation ceremony in anticipation of beginning kindergarten in the fall.

In the elementary and middle school grades, students enjoy such special events as Kindertown; 100th Day celebration; Explorer's Play; Pickle Day; the States Project; the Geography Bee; the Spelling Bee; Christmas Caroling; International Week; the Fairytale Ball; Pi Day; Earth Day Science Expo; Student Council; African Drummers event; an overnight experience at one of the science museums in the area; Biography Book Reports in costume; and the Spring Performance musical.

Our entire campus comes together for Fall Festival, Spring Fling, the all-campus July 4th Parade and Halloween Parade with our Sunrise senior friends, Caroling on Campus at Christmas, and Field Days in the spring, Students, faculty and parents look forward to these traditions and enjoy sharing them with each other.

### **Assemblies**

Assemblies are a good opportunity to feature students' multiple talents and recognize those students who have demonstrated good values. Every month, two assemblies are held for the K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students to commemorate special holidays and celebrate events throughout the school year. One is held on the first Tuesday of each month at 8:30 am, and the other one takes place the last Friday of each month at 2:30 pm. The whole elementary school and middle school (K - 8<sup>th</sup> grade) goes directly from the playground into the gym, where the Pledge of Allegiance and The Lord's Prayer are recited, announcements are given. The Friday assembly involves the students in pep rallies and other fun activities.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips and nature walks are an important part of Merritt Academy's educational program. Responsible adult supervision is always provided for these excursions. You are welcome and encouraged to participate in any special event when it is possible. Your permission for your child to participate in field trips, special events, swimming and activities at Sunrise Assisted Living or other senior communities is part of the Agreement signed by parents prior to enrollment.

All children will have the opportunity to participate in field trips beginning in K3. Some of the field trips may include going to the National Mall, National Zoo, National Aquarium, Museum of Natural History, Old Town Hall, Van Dyck Park, Reston Zoo, George Mason Regional Library, and many other locations and destinations. Parents may be asked to help chaperon. The children will be transported by bus fitted with the proper child restraints as well as taking the Metro. All field trips offer many learning opportunities and enough memories to last a lifetime.

### **Spring Musical Performances**

#### **Spring Recital**

Every year, our K3 and K4 children have the opportunity to become stars on stage! The children participate in the annual Spring Recital. The songs are based on a theme carried throughout the Recital. Parents may be asked to help provide costumes or items towards costumes.

#### **Spring Performance**

Spring Performance is an annual special event that takes place each Spring. The Music Director, Principal, Assistant Principal, art teacher, classroom teachers, and students all work together to put on a musical “extravaganza” to entertain family and friends. All students in grades K- 8 are expected to participate, and their work counts as a big portion of the music grade for the third quarter.

### **Graduations**

Two exciting events at Merritt Academy are our annual graduations for our K4 and 8th grade students. Graduation ceremonies are held on campus, and are planned by the teachers, with assistance from the Assistant Principal and Principal, and Preschool Directors.

### **K – 8th grade Summer Camp**

For 9 weeks every summer, the Merritt Academy campus is transformed into a summer camp wonderland. Merritt Academy campers’ days are filled with swimming, arts and crafts, special on- campus events, summer sports, and field trips. Merritt Academy Summer Camp is divided into 9 one-week sessions and is open to children in kindergarten through 8th grade, with Counselor-in-Training and Junior Counselor programs available to students in 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade. Children are required to have completed kindergarten to be eligible for the summer camp program. After-camp activities and bus transportation to and from camp are available for additional fees. Please visit the front desk or the website for additional information on the summer camp program.

### **Project Pals**

Project Pals is a program that allows older students to be paired with younger students so they can share reading and writing projects and events. For many of the older children it will be the first time they have direct one-on-one contact with someone younger. During the course of the school year, the two classrooms build a special relationship that begins with books and grows into much more. As the friendships develop between the younger and older children, there is a unique bond that forms. The children eagerly await the designated Project Pal day. Throughout the year there are craft projects, parties, and shared occasions that begin with the reading of a book but quickly move into special and lasting relationships.





### **Established Lines of Authority for Staff**

All Kindergarten – 8th grade school faculty and staff report directly to the Principal of the school. The faculty and staff of the preschool (Infants – K4) report to the Program Directors, who report to the Director of Early Childhood Education (ECE). Both the Principal and the Director of ECE report to the Executive Director. Others reporting to the Executive Director include: Director of Facilities, Director of Admissions, Special Programs Coordinator, Office Coordinator, Director of Finance and Administration, HR Manager, and the Network Administrator.

### **Back to School Nights**

At the beginning of the academic year, all parents are invited to Back to School Night. Teachers are on hand to discuss plans for the year and to answer questions in your child's classroom. Parents are also invited to meet the administrative staff. If parents wish to meet with their child's teacher individually, they can schedule a Parent/Teacher Conference at their convenience.

### **Parent Conference**

Parent Conferences for students Infants - 8th grade take place twice each year in the fall and spring. These conferences provide parents/guardians the opportunity to gain information regarding their child's social and academic progress, and to discuss how parents and teachers are to reach the common goal of helping the child get the best education possible. Be sure to ask your teacher for specific suggestions on ways to help your child do better, so you leave the conference with an action plan.

Parent Conferences for preschool students are held in the winter and late spring. Additional conferences may be scheduled by the parent or teacher on an as-needed basis throughout the year.

### **Open Campus and Discovery Days**

We encourage all families interested in applying to Merritt to visit our campus and experience the school, either through a personal tour, at Open Campus, or on Discovery Days. These events provide the opportunity to view the school with a tour guide, and to speak with administrative staff members and with our teaching staff in preschool and school. Open Campus and Discovery Days are advertised in advance, and current families are welcome and encouraged to attend.

### **Website – Tadpoles and Google Sites**

You can find general information on Merritt's current web site by clicking onto [www.merrittacademy.org](http://www.merrittacademy.org). Additionally, every classroom has its own Google site as an additional resource to parents. Parents are able to have instant access to homework assignments, last minute announcements and updates, digital pictures of special moments and access to teachers via email. Preschool classes use Tadpoles to deliver daily updates on the children's activities.

### **Wednesday Letter/Friday Letter**

Sent via email, the Wednesday Letter from the Executive Director provides general academy-wide updates. Each K – 8th grade school teacher also provides a class specific Wednesday Letter. All preschool teachers provide a Friday Letter with general academy updates and classroom specific information.



## **PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)**

### **PTO Membership**

Merritt Academy is fortunate to have many parents who devote their time and energy to assist the school in a variety of programs, several of which could not be possible without volunteers. You automatically become a member of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) when you enroll your child at our school. The PTO is an excellent way to meet other parents and share ideas about the school. New and current parents are encouraged to join a wide range of committees and to attend regularly scheduled meetings.

The PTO's goals include community involvement, staff and faculty appreciation, and fundraisers, featuring the annual PTO Auction Gala.

### **Room Parents**

Each classroom has room parents who volunteer to coordinate communication between the classroom, teacher and parents. Room parents support and coordinate special events throughout the year such as Teacher Appreciation Week, PTO Annual Auction, parties and celebrations. If you are interested, please contact your teacher, and you will be given guidelines in order to help accommodate this important position.

### **Spring Fling**

The annual Spring Fling celebration is sponsored by our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and is held in May in honor of our staff and families. The PTO hosts this celebrated event to honor the year-long accomplishments and achievements of our staff and teachers. The festive all-campus event includes games, music, food and fun for all those who attend.

### **PTO Auction**

The annual PTO Auction is a popular event on campus. Parents and staff have a chance to foster good relationships and create good will in the school community. The goal every year is to raise money for the school and proceeds enable Merritt to purchase such items as classroom computers and playground equipment.



## **FINANCIAL GUIDELINES**

### **Tuition and Fees**

We have a variety of payment options available to accommodate our families. Merritt typically bills families in equal installments (12 for Preschool and 10 for School) that may, or may not, align with a particular month. It is assumed that each family will be paying via installments unless we are informed otherwise. Please contact the business office for more information.

- Installments (default): Payments made through our online tuition management system
- For those who wish to pay installments by check, a 1% administrative fee will apply

- Please note that, other than the first payment, payments are made in the same month the service is provided (for example payment on October 20th is for October tuition installment)

Other fees may be applied to your account, including but not limited to the following:

- Late payment fee - \$85
- Returned check fee - \$35
- Late pickup fee –See Parent handbook section of Late Pickup
- Parent ID card - \$20
- Large field trips – 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade and middle school
  - Overnight field trips may require additional fees
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade and Middle school technology and insurance fee – Chromebooks

Please see the annual tuition and fees addendum for additional information.

### **Re-enrollment for Current Students**

Re-enrollment for current students begins each year in February. It is our assumption that you will be reenrolling unless you inform us of your intent to withdraw. Each January a tuition and fees addendum is published and each February your account will be billed the registration fee. If you do not plan to return, please see the withdrawal section of the handbook and provide notice by February 1<sup>st</sup> of that intent so you are not billed the registration fee.

**February 1** of each year: For returning families, non-refundable registration fee for upcoming school year is due on February 1 (see tuition addendum). For new families, registration fee is due at time of enrollment.

### **Payments**

Merritt Academy uses the FACTS Management Company to provide parents with an online method of tuition payment. Merritt families will annually receive an online enrollment invitation for the upcoming school year. One- and two-payment plan options are not eligible for payment through FACTS.

### **Receipts**

Merritt Academy can provide statements monthly for FSA, tax or other reimbursement purposes.

**If a special type of receipt is needed, sign-up at the front desk and provide a descriptive request of what is needed.** These requests are retrieved 4 days before the end of the month. The requests are processed and sent out either electronically or picked up from the front desk on the last business day of the month.

### **Student Referral**

Families who refer their friends to Merritt Academy are one of our main sources of new students. We appreciate the confidence those families show when they recommend us to their friends. To show our appreciation, we offer a \$500 credit toward tuition to the referring family after the new student has been enrolled for 90 consecutive days. This is a tuition benefit and is not redeemable in cash. The referring Merritt family should send a note or email to the Business Office indicating the name of the family and child they referred to Merritt. Please remind your friends to list your name as the ‘referred by’ person on their enrollment contract.

### **Change of Payment Plan, Transportation or Extended Day Services**

A four-week notice, in writing, is required for a change of program status (i.e., change of bus transportation or before/after-school care). Any change to program status must be in effect for 60 days or longer before another change will be accepted. **A \$25.00 fee will be charged each time you make a change to the services selected in your enrollment contract, including payment plan options.**

### **Withdrawal**

If you do not plan to return, please provide notice by February 1<sup>st</sup> of that intent so you are not billed the registration fee.

It is important to note that Merritt Academy bases its staffing and other resource decisions upon enrollment commitments made well before the start of a school year, and for that reason requires a firm full-year enrollment commitment on the part of Parents. For this reason, Merritt Academy and Parents must adhere strictly to the following Enrollment/Withdrawal policy schedule, with very limited exceptions listed below:

### **Infant – K4 program-** The following applies to families with students enrolled in the Infant-K4 program:

1. Any request for withdrawal must be submitted to the Admissions office with at least 60 days' notice prior to the final day of attendance. Please be advised that the 60-day period takes effect upon the Admissions office's receipt of written notice. Your account will be billed for school days within the 60-day period beginning on the date of receipt (regardless of attendance) or to your child's last day of attendance, if more than 60 days' notice is provided.
2. **The 60-day advanced notice requirement is waived in the event of sudden death of the child or payer, or terminal illness diagnosis of the child. In the event of a Withdrawal, payment and/or refund of tuition may be equitably established based on duration of attendance prior to the Withdrawal, subject to the sole discretion of the Director.**

### **K-8 program-** The following applies to families with students enrolled in the K-8 program:

1. **May 1** of each year: Deadline for written notice of withdrawal. The Registration Fee is non-refundable; however parents will not be obligated to pay the following year's tuition if written notice of withdrawal is received prior to 5 pm EST May 1.
2. Special Withdrawal Exceptions: Merritt Academy recognizes that certain situations are beyond a family's control. Accordingly, withdrawals will only be considered for the following situations, subject to verification by the Director:
  - Military orders requiring a family to move from the area (> 20 miles from the school);
  - Job changes that require moving from the area (> 20 miles from the school);
  - Loss of job greater than 60 days;
  - Death of a child or payer; and
  - Medical issue restricting a child's attendance for the remainder of the year.
  - Move requiring a family to commute more than 20 miles from the school.

3. If requesting withdrawal under one of the Special Withdrawal Exceptions, a 60-day advance written notice requirement applies. Please be advised that the 60-day period takes effect upon the Admissions office's receipt of written notice. Your account will be billed for school days within the 60-day period beginning on the date of receipt (regardless of attendance) or to your child's last day of attendance, if more than 60 days' notice is provided. Failure to make adequate and timely reporting of a Special Withdrawal Exception shall result in the obligation to pay full tuition of up to one full year.
4. The 60-day advanced notice requirement is waived for a Special Withdrawal Exception in the event of sudden death of the child or payer, or terminal illness diagnosis of the child. In the event of a Special Withdrawal Exception, payment and/or refund of tuition may be equitably established based on duration of attendance prior to the Special Withdrawal, subject to the sole discretion of the Director.

### **Involuntary Withdrawal**

The goal of this school, and all J127 Education Foundation schools, is to provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning. Under some circumstances, we may require a child or family to involuntarily withdraw from our school. Merritt Academy reserves the right to withdraw a student at any time, for any reason.

Reasons may include but are not limited to

- Aggressive and/or violent behavior that endangers children, creates an unsafe environment, or interferes with the safety of others.
- Failure to pay tuition.
- Harassment/Bullying (student and parent behavior).
- Failure to meet all policies stated in the Parent Handbook (including the Code of Courtesy).
- Harming the reputation of the school.
- Loss of trust with Merritt Academy and/or lack of parent support.
- Engaging in behaviors that disrupt the learning atmosphere and/or violate the community standards of respect.

If involuntarily withdrawn from one J127 Foundation school occurs, enrollment in other J127 Foundation programs will be prohibited. If parents, teachers, and administrators are unable to reach a feasible solution, a letter of involuntary withdrawal will be given to the parents stating the child's last date of attendance. The length of notice is determined on a case-by-case basis. In the event of involuntary withdrawal, the school will refund, on a pro rata basis, tuition payments already made for the days after the effective date of the withdrawal. Refunds for involuntary withdrawal will apply, except if the withdrawal is due to "failure to pay tuition".

### **Request for School Records (including report cards)**

If you wish to have your child's permanent records sent to another school, please send your written request to the School Counselor or Principal. Requests for records generally take one to two weeks to process, so plan accordingly. **Your financial account must be current in order to process your request.** Report cards will not be released if your account is delinquent.



For the health and safety of our students and staff this program will only be offered if space is available and we can do so while following safety protocols.

### **Merritt Academy's Afterschool Program**

Merritt Academy's After School Program was created in the Fall of 2009 to meet the needs of families in the community who were unable find safe, affordable after school care for their public school children. MAAP offers services to selected area schools including transportation, nutritious snacks and varied activities until 6:30pm. As an added service, MAAP students are also able to register online for Extended Service Care during winter and spring breaks.

### **Payments**

Statements of your monthly billing are being mailed out by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. These statements will have a due date of the first of the following month. The first payment, due August 1, is a deposit for the last month of the contract term. In the event of early withdraw (prior to the end of the school year) without sufficient written notice (at least 30 days), the August 1 deposit is forfeited and applied to the 30-day written notification period. Students enrolling after August 1 will be billed for the deposit along with the first month of tuition.

Any payments received after the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month are subject to an \$85 late fee and the student may be subject to involuntary withdrawal. Accounts that remain in arrears may be sent to a third party collection agency to secure payment. At this point, a withdrawal notice will have been sent to the parent.

### **Returned Checks**

In the event your check is returned by the bank, you will be notified and assessed a \$35 fee. If the check is returned by a bank for a second time, all future payments must be made by certified check or money order.

### **Withdrawal**

In order to withdraw from Merritt Academy, a 60 days written notice is required. A withdrawal form will be provided by request from the admissions office. Please be advised that the 60 day period takes effect upon the admission office's receipt of notice. Your account will be prorated 60 days from the date of receipt or to your child's last day of attendance, if more than 60 days' notice is provided, and a final bill will be provided. The prepayment, which was made upon enrollment, will be applied toward the 60 day notification period.

If you are transferring to a sister school, please see the business office for financial assistance.

## Parent Agreements

***Signed copies of Parent Agreements are kept in each student's file. Please retain this copy for your reference and records.***

I grant permission for my child to participate in Merritt Academy field trips and in visits to Sunrise Assisted Living Communities and other senior living communities. I understand that I will be notified, in advance, of the destination and time of all field trips and that I have the option of keeping my child at home if I choose not to allow his or her participation. I understand that field trips may be cancelled due to reasons including but not limited to, weather, transportation, or shortage of chaperones.

I agree to release, waive, indemnify and hold harmless Merritt Academy and its owner, The J127 Education Foundation, and their respective officers, director, employees, volunteers and agents (collectively "Merritt") from all claims, demands, suits, causes of action, or judgments which my child or I ever had, now have, or may have in the future or which my child's family, heirs, executors, administrators, or assigns may have, or claim to have against Merritt, arising out of or in any way connected with my child's attendance at Merritt Academy, for all personal injuries, property damages (including theft), or claims for wrongful death, caused by the acts, omissions or ordinary negligence of Merritt.

I agree to inform the school within 10 business days of any changes to the following, so that my child's Emergency Care Information may be updated.

I agree to pick up my child within one hour should the school inform me that my child is ill. I agree to keep my child home for 24 hours after symptoms clear before being allowed to return to school if fever, diarrhea or vomiting is present, or 24 hours after being placed on antibiotics.

I authorize Merritt Academy to obtain immediate emergency care and transport my child via ambulance in the event I cannot be reached immediately.

I authorize Merritt Academy to call my child's Emergency Contacts in the event that the child has not been picked up by the time school closes and we are unable to reach parent(s) via phone; or in the event of an emergency if parent(s) is unable to be reached by phone, or if parent(s) are unable to get to the school within 1 hour.

I grant permission for Merritt Academy to use photographs or videos of my child, both print and electronic, in promotional materials unless otherwise notified. No compensation will be given for photographs used by the school.

I agree to notify the school within 24 hours if my child or anyone in our household develops any reportable communicable disease, including symptoms or diagnoses of COVID-19.

**I agree to release, waive, indemnify and hold harmless, Merritt Academy and its owner, the J127 Education Foundation, and their respective officers, directors, employees, volunteers and agents (collectively "Merritt") from all claims of illness, including exposure to COVID-19.**

**I accept and agree to the health procedures in place for the safety of all students and understand and accept the risk of illness and exposure of my student and waive and hold harmless Merritt from any claims related to that exposure.**

**I accept and agree to pay tuition as outlined in the Parent Handbook and the Tuition and Fees Addendum and agree to the related withdrawal policies.**

**I hereby pledge to join the faculty in supporting and upholding the Code of Courtesy in word and deed.**

**I agree to adhere to Merritt Academy's Parking Lot Rules and exercise courtesy with other drivers in the school parking lot. I agree refrain from behavior that sets a poor example to students as part of upholding the Code of Courtesy.**

**I have read the current edition of the Merritt Academy Parent Handbook posted in the weekly Wednesday Letter emails, and available upon request, and accept and agree to all policies stated within.**

**All Merritt Academy parents are members of the Merritt Academy Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO). I give permission for the Merritt Academy PTO to add me as a member to their communications.**