

Family Handbook



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2025-2026 School Year

Dear Mountain Sage Families,

The greatest strength of Mountain Sage Community School is our highly skilled and dedicated community of teachers, students, parents, and friends. This Family Handbook provides an overview of important information, yet no handbook can anticipate every situation or question. As you gain familiarity with the information here, please do not hesitate to contact us with questions. The need may arise to alter information in this handbook as the school deems appropriate, so please be aware that the school reserves the right to interpret or change these guidelines without prior notice.

Warmly,

Liv Helmericks

School Director

schooldirector@mountainsage.org

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Introduction to Mountain Sage

Mission - Cultivating the Creative Mind

Mountain Sage Community School offers Waldorf-inspired, arts-integrated education, fully incorporating sustainable living practices into student learning. Each child is empowered to cultivate meaningful connections to their intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and creative capacities in healthy, safe, and beautiful learning environments. Through a supportive community of peers, parents and teachers, each child will become a confident, self-directed, and engaged learner, invested in their own education.

Vision - An Engaged Community of Intelligent, Compassionate, and Creative Individuals

Mountain Sage Community School is a highly sought-after school providing a rigorous educational program where a whole-child approach to learning results in student curiosity and enthusiasm, allowing each child to reach the fullest expression of their individual potential. Children emerge from Mountain Sage as intelligent, compassionate, creative thinkers, who are engaged citizens with a strong work ethic, prepared to become stewards of the earth and its many diverse communities.

By integrating the Colorado Academic Standards into the traditional Waldorf curriculum, children leave Mountain Sage with a life-long passion for learning, well prepared for the transition into other academic programs.

Inspired by Waldorf Education & Sustainable Living

The arts (drama, music, painting, drawing, movement etc.) are integrated into the entire academic curriculum. Education through the arts awakens imagination and creative capacities, bringing vitality and wholeness to learning. Each topic of study is presented with deep regard for its inherent value for the children in relation to their developmental stage, while also integrating the Colorado Academic Standards.

The school's environment expresses an appreciation for beauty and nature. The classrooms have a nurturing and imaginative ambience. We seek to create and maintain a calm and nurturing educational environment.

Mountain Sage defines sustainable living practices as daily choices that reflect our striving to nurture healthy and equitable relationships between social, economic, and environmental

systems. We define sustainability as the mindful awareness of the interconnected relationships between our planet and the diversity of life upon it.

The Word “Parent” at Mountain Sage

The word “parent” is used in Mountain Sage communications when we are addressing the adults in our family community. We understand that not everyone identifies in the same way with this word, so we are providing our own definition: “someone who is a primary caregiver and/or guardian of a child, whether through biological and/or legal relation.” When you see the word “parent” used at school, know it is with this definition in mind.

Governance and Organization

Mountain Sage Community School is an independently operated charter school, authorized by Poudre School District (PSD).

Mountain Sage uses a threefold approach to governance and school community structure:

1. The **Board of Directors** provides operational oversight, establishes policy with input from school faculty, develops and implements strategic plans, and more.
 - The **Faculty and Staff** uphold pedagogical and curricular expertise, embodying and enlivening the school's mission and vision through daily, weekly, and seasonal school life.
 - The **Parent Community** participates through active volunteerism, participation in [Community Circle](#), and assisting in school various committees, such as the [School Accountability Committee](#) and MSCS Gives Committee.

The School Director ensures and facilitates communication within and between these groups, oversees educational program and operational compliance, supports students and families, and guides the school's continued positive development in alignment with the school's mission and vision. The Educational Director manages the educational program, working directly with the School Director.

Meeting dates and time of the Mountain Sage Board of Directors are posted on the school's online calendar. Board Meeting agendas and meeting minutes can be found at our [website](#). Guests are welcome to attend board meetings. Please review our [guest policy](#) before attending.

Mountain Sage All-Staff Meetings are held most Friday afternoons.

Meeting dates and times of Community Circle, School Accountability Committee, MSCS Gives Committee, and other opportunities are posted on the school's [online calendar](#). Volunteer information can be found on our [website](#).

Attendance

If a child will be absent, **the school must be notified through ParentVUE or the attendance line no later than 8:30am the day of the absence.** Any absence requires an explanation from an authorized adult.

Submit absences, including pre-planned dates, using the Attendance feature in [ParentVUE](#) or the ParentVUE app:

1. Log in to ParentVUE
2. Focus to the student for which you are entering attendance
3. Click on 'Report Absences'
 - Set attendance mark of 'E- Excused' or 'EI- Excused Illness'
4. Add a note
5. Click Save

Note: Future absences are not visible in ParentVUE until the date of the absence.

Absences may also be reported through the attendance line, although reporting through ParentVUE is preferred. Call 970-568-5456 and leave a message with information regarding your student's absence.

Regardless of how an absence is submitted, the information will be reviewed by the Attendance Clerk and you will be contacted if there are questions.

Help your child build lifelong habits by making daily, on-time attendance a priority. Your commitment to getting them to school each day supports their learning, well-being, and success—now and in the future. Even as children grow more independent, your guidance continues to make a meaningful difference.

To help families stay informed and offer support when needed, we will reach out if your child's absences reach 10%, 15%, or 25% of the school year.

Assignments for missed material will be determined at the discretion of teachers. Encourage your child to inquire with their teacher regarding missed work. This teaches responsibility and self-advocacy.

Late Arrivals

If a middle school student (grades 6-8) arrives after 8:15am, they must be signed in, either by themselves or an adult.

If a K-5 student arrives after 8:30am, the child **must** be accompanied by an adult into school and signed in at the front desk. Students who arrive late will be marked as tardy.

Please visit the Poudre School District [website](#) to review the policy on Student Attendance and Truancy.

Early School Departure

If it becomes necessary for a child to be picked up before the scheduled school dismissal time, an authorized adult must come into the school and sign the student out at the front office. If the student is returning during the school day, they must be signed back in at the front office upon their return.

Middle school students may sign themselves out, however the school must be notified by an authorized adult ahead of the early departure. Students will not be allowed to sign out or leave campus without advance notice from an authorized adult.

Whenever possible, schedule routine appointments outside of school hours.

Behavior and Discipline

Students and staff at Mountain Sage are expected to model and follow our four Positive Behavior Values: Kind, Safe, Respectful, and Responsible.

We seek to put into practice the values necessary for a compassionate community; a loving community in which each child is valued and appropriately supported, a community of respect in which conflicts are resolved or mediated, a community of responsibility in which we show up on time and do our best.

To provide a school environment that fosters these values, children are expected to learn to follow these guidelines:

- Safety first - Unsafe physical actions and destruction of property are not acceptable.
- Be kind and respectful of others and yourself - Name calling, putdowns, teasing and bullying are not acceptable.
- Be responsible for your own learning - Come to school on time and be prepared.
- Be supportive of everyone's learning - Each individual is responsible for helping to maintain an effective, positive learning environment.

Teachers will communicate specific expectations, and the consequences of failing to meet such expectations, to their students. When there is divergence from these expectations, the teachers will seek age-appropriate interventions to redirect behaviors.

We believe that all children want to be successful and want to learn. If they are having difficulties, it is our task as the adults in their lives to help remove or mitigate those impediments. Angry words and actions or long lectures from adults increase anxiety and self-blame in a child whose actions are an expression of anxiety and possibly poor self-esteem. We strive to give fair and appropriate consequences for behavior in a manner that lets children know we love them, just not the poor choice they made.

Restorative Practices

Mountain Sage Community School utilizes Restorative Justice practices when seeking to resolve challenging behaviors that affect other members of the learning community. For example, if property is damaged, replacing or repairing it is appropriate. If someone is hurt, a restorative circle may be held to ensure those involved have their needs met toward rebuilding a sense of safety and repair in the learning community. If time is wasted, a student may be required to use some of their free time to contribute something positive to the learning community.

More serious or repeated behaviors (bullying, defiant behavior, willful disruption) are given firm consequences if the problem cannot be solved using Restorative Justice practices. The goal is to change the offending behavior while protecting the emotional and physical safety of all the children. Teachers use class meetings, instructional and literary examples, and a variety of techniques (role playing, conflict resolution, pedagogical stories, etc.) to address social problems. School-parent partnership is essential when working to solve behavioral issues.

Suspension and Expulsion

The School Director or their designee, at their discretion and on a case-by-case basis, may initiate suspension or expulsion for a student in alignment with the [PSD Code of Conduct](#). Suspension can provide time for teachers and adults at home to plan a strategy for the student to return. It also allows the student and adults at home an opportunity to reflect on behaviors and develop a new relationship to the expectation of the teacher and school. Suspension can teach reasonable consequences directly related to negative actions. Most suspensions do not result from a specific conduct violation, but rather due to a student's repeated inability to successfully respond to consequences and restorative practices.

For questions pertaining to specific student discipline policies, please email connect@mountainsage.org.

Communication

All School News

The Beat

Our twice-monthly school newsletter comes to your inbox via ParentSquare. Containing important all-school information, inspiration from across the grades, and fund tidbits, it's a must read.

School and Classroom Communications

All communications are made through ParentSquare, our family communication platform. In case of emergencies, you will receive a phone call, text, email, and ParentSquare app notification.

Website and My MSCS

The school website, www.mountainsage.org is an important informational resource that includes an online school calendar and much more. The Family Portal can be found in the My MSCS section of the website (look for the backpack icon on the homepage).

Facebook and Instagram

If you have a Facebook account, you can follow [our page](#). Current families and staff are encouraged to join the [Mountain Sage Family Community group](#). If Instagram is more your speed, you can follow us [there](#).

ParentSquare

ParentSquare is the school communication platform used to contact families about all things related to the school, including teacher emails and important announcements regarding weather closures and emergencies. For this reason, **it is mandatory that parents enroll in this system**. Do this by accepting the email invitation to register your child in ParentSquare. Keep the school informed about phone number changes, as this system is only as effective as our current data.

Parent Evenings

Parent Evenings are a time for the adults in your child's class to engage with one another and their child's class teacher. Teachers share curriculum, current happenings, as well as insights on how these elements relate to child development. It is a time for the adults to ask questions and share their experiences. Please plan to attend all Parent Evenings.

Communication from Teachers

Teachers may update families about classroom life monthly or bi-monthly and about specific events or needs, like a class play or need for volunteers, on a more frequent basis through their

class group in ParentSquare. Each teacher establishes their own frequency and email content. Learn more about ParentSquare below.

Communications Policy

All daily and regular communication with teachers and staff at Mountain Sage runs through ParentSquare. For certain communications, an email outside of ParentSquare may be sent, otherwise messages should be sent using the [Messages feature](#) within ParentSquare. For family-to-family communication, please use the Directory within ParentSquare. Each person can choose to make their information visible or hidden for the school directory. Learn more [here](#). Please use the directory to communicate objective and school related information or for social connection and gathering. We encourage you to handle disagreements or disputes using a medium other than email. Sending individual or group emails of a contentious or negative nature is not allowed.

Communication sent to the school or your child's teachers between the hours of 8am and 4pm, Monday through Friday, will typically receive a timely response. Communication sent outside of those hours will be attended to as soon as possible.

Family/Teacher Communication Guidelines

We wish to foster a healthy, effective communication process between staff and adults in our family community. To help us achieve this goal, please use the following steps when questions arise:

- Questions about curriculum and instruction should first be brought directly to your child's teacher. Ensuring timely communication with your child's teacher about any concern is very important.
- In most cases, a direct message should only be used for the dispersal of information, clarifying information, or coordination, e.g. requesting a phone call or personal meeting.
- If possible, sensitive questions or concerns should be brought in person. If a scheduled meeting is not easily achievable, a phone call is the next best option.
- If you have utilized the above modes of communication and still feel that your child's teacher has not adequately answered your questions or alleviated your concerns, please contact the [Educational Director](#) and/or the [School Director](#). The result will mostly likely be a facilitated meeting that helps you and the class teacher solve outstanding issues. A teacher may also request a facilitated meeting if they believe it may be helpful for resolution.
- If, at this point, a resolution has not been reached, the parties involved can request the formal grievance process (listed below) be initiated.

Grievance Process

This procedure for redress is a series of steps designed to assist in the resolution of disagreements when the parties are unable to settle their differences. Parents, students, or teachers may initiate this process. Such a request must be in writing and submitted to the [School Director](#) for further action. The School Director will then communicate with those involved in the conflict. A meeting will take place, resulting in an agreed-upon plan of resolution. If, after completion of this meeting, the conflict has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the parties involved, it may then be taken to the MSCS Board of Directors for a final ruling. The procedure for filing concerns is as follows:

1. The parties (e.g. teacher and parents) will make every attempt to resolve their concern through direct communication, utilizing the escalation process outlined in the Family/Teacher Communication Guidelines. If the parties are unable to come to a resolution, they may file their concern, in writing, with the School Director.
2. In cases where the concern has been addressed with the School Director, and any party remains dissatisfied with the decisions made to resolve the conflict at this level, that party may take their concerns to the MSCS Board of Directors by emailing board@mountainsageboard.org. Such a complaint will be made in a written statement, which details the violation, procedures taken, and requested remedy. The complaint shall be submitted to the MSCS Board of Directors at least one week prior to the next Board of Directors meeting. Complaints submitted after that month's board meeting will be addressed at the subsequent meeting of the Board of Directors. Emergency issues will be dealt with on an as-needed basis, with the Board of Directors responding at, or prior to, its next regular public meeting.
3. The Board of Directors will hear arguments from the parties, review prior decisions and evidence, and make inquiries as it deems necessary. The Board of Directors will then make a written decision within ten business days after the meeting unless additional time is needed. The Board of Directors' decision shall be final.

Curriculum

Student Assessment, Conferences, and Progress Reports

Student academic growth is assessed through teacher observations, review of practice work, formative and summative assessments, and student portfolio reviews. Third through eighth grade students are assessed using NWEA MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) twice per year. We also participate in state mandated assessments: early literacy assessments for kindergarten through third graders compliant with the Colorado READ Act and annual standardized assessments for third through eighth graders called CMAS (Colorado Measure of Academic Success). You can learn more about standardized assessments [on our website](#).

Family-Teacher Conferences are scheduled in October and March. For grades K-5, these conferences are for adults only. For grades 6-8, these conferences also involve the student. To assist in the development of the child, the parent or teacher may request additional conferences. Mid-year and end-of-year progress reports are available in the ParentVUE system. Access information will be provided at the first Parent Evening of the year and can also be requested by contacting the school.

Homework at Mountain Sage

At Mountain Sage we view homework as a training of the will. Homework should help to reinforce skills and concepts taught in class, as well as develop healthy habits around individual responsibilities, organization, and time-management. Homework provides an opportunity for adults at home to see what their child's class is working on, as well as insight into their child's academic practice and progress. We do not want there to be a heavy and overwhelming load on the growing child.

We ask that the adults at home support their child in their homework responsibilities by:

- Creating an uncluttered, quiet environment for your child to work, with supplies ready.
- Establishing a consistent time when homework is done.
- Being available to field questions.
- Asking their child about what homework they have.
- Reviewing homework, if needed, to ensure it is done well and can be turned in on time.
- Reading teacher email newsletters about homework rhythms.
- Helping to plan and prepare when your child is assigned a long-term project (3rd - 8th grade).

If your child works diligently and keeps track of weekly assignments (when applicable), the time indications and guidelines listed below should apply. If your child has been working diligently for the time indicated for their grade and continues to struggle with a certain element within a homework assignment, the homework session may end and a note for the teacher indicating what their child struggled with should be placed with the homework.

Time Indications and Guidelines

Kindergarten through Second Grade

- Daily reading time with students is strongly recommended.
- Traditional homework is not typically given in kindergarten through second grade because family responsibilities are the student's homework.

Third Grade

- Daily reading is strongly recommended, in addition to any homework assignments.
- Regular or periodic homework may begin with no more than 15 minutes on a school night.

Fourth Grade

- Daily reading may be expected on most weekdays.
- Periodic homework may be assigned & should last no more than 25 minutes on a school night.
- Involvement from adults at home should lessen as students learn their homework/independent work rhythms.

Fifth Grade

- Daily reading, of an increasing length, may be expected on most weekdays.
- Regular homework may be assigned & should last no more than 35 minutes on a school night.
- Adults at home should be monitoring completion and/or helping their child as needed, though most work should be done without this support.

Sixth through Eighth Grade

- Daily reading, of an increasing length, may be expected on most weekdays.
- Regular homework may be assigned and should last no more than 45 min. on a school night. There will be an increase in classwork completion, projects/long-term assignments as well as daily practice. This is designed to strengthen independent work ethic & time management skills.

Dress Code

Mountain Sage Community School recognizes that clothing and personal style can be a means of self-expression and creativity and recognizes that responsibility for the dress and appearance of students generally rests with individual students and their parents. All students should be able to dress comfortably and in a manner that expresses their individuality without fear of or actual unnecessary discipline or body shaming. To ensure effective and equitable enforcement of the dress code, school officials shall enforce the dress code consistently and in a manner that does not create disparities, reinforce stereotypes, or increase marginalization or oppression of any group.

MSCS standards on student apparel are intended to reduce discipline problems and maintain school order and safety. Students are encouraged to dress appropriately for all school activities and school-sponsored events. Reasonable cleanliness of apparel is expected as a matter of general health and welfare. Apparel should not interfere with or endanger the student while the student is participating in classroom or other school-sponsored activities. The decision as to the safety or unsuitability of the apparel is a matter for the instructor's or school administrator's judgment.

Apparel must be worn in a way that covers chests/breasts, nipples, genitals, midriff, and buttocks. Apparel covering these areas must be opaque. Items listed in the “Students Must Wear” section must meet this requirement.

Students Must Wear

1. A shirt (with fabric in the front, back, and on the sides underneath the arms); AND
2. Pants or the equivalent (e.g., a skirt, sweatpants, leggings, a dress, or shorts); AND
3. Shoes (e.g., sandals, boots, or athletic shoes). Children should come to school wearing comfortable, practical shoes that are firmly attached to the feet and are appropriate for movement activities on both solid ground and woodchips, and the weather. Kindergarten through fifth grade students should have a comfortable pair of “indoor shoes” with a firm sole that securely attach to the foot.

Students Cannot Wear

1. Apparel that causes or is likely to cause disruption of the educational process, which may include apparel that displays symbols of hate or speech that expresses animus or violence

toward a particular group or individual on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, age or disability.

2. Apparel that depicts, implies, advertises, or advocates:
 - a. Illegal or lewd conduct;
 - b. Pornography, nudity, or sexually suggestive language or messages;
 - c. Vulgar or obscene language or images.
3. Apparel that covers a student's face or ears. Hats or hoods that do not obscure a student's face or ears are permitted. Protective facial coverings or apparel/headgear worn for religious or medical purposes are also permitted.
4. Any manner of grooming or apparel, which by virtue of color, arrangement, trademark, or other attribute is associated with or denotes membership in or affiliation with any gang.

Dress Code Enforcement

A student who violates this dress code will be notified of the violation. Before re-entering class, the student will be provided with three options: (1) wear their own alternative clothing, if available at school; (2) wear school provided clothing; or (3) call a parent or guardian to bring alternative clothing. A parent conference may be held at the discretion of the MSCS School Director or Educational Director. Other disciplinary consequences, including suspension or expulsion, may result from repeated or serious violations.

Weather Preparedness

Because Colorado weather can change very quickly, children should come to school dressed in seasonally appropriate layers and shoes. Students should have rain/winter gear (weatherproof coat, boots and hood or hat) for cold, rainy and/or snowy days, as outside play is allowed in all but the most severe weather. Sunscreen and/or a sunhat should be worn to protect the skin on sunny days. If your family needs assistance obtaining appropriate gear, please let your child's class teacher know.

Please click [JICA-Student Dress](#) for the complete policy.

Enrollment

Enrollment Policies

Visit the school's website to review [MSCS enrollment process and policies](#).

Re-Enrollment

Mountain Sage students are not automatically enrolled for each following year. Families wishing to return to Mountain Sage must complete the Intent-to-Enroll form no later than the last day of school before Winter Break.

Commitment to Nondiscrimination

Mountain Sage Community School is an equal opportunity educational institution and does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic group orientation, ancestry, or physical or mental handicap in its activities, programs, or employment practices as required by Title VI, Title IX and Section 504.

Events & Activities

Class Plays

Plays begin with the simple observation of fairy tale puppet plays in kindergarten and can culminate in a complex play offering in 8th grade. Plays are unique to each class while sharing a common pedagogical thread of oral recitation, choral and/or instrumental music, costumes, set creation, teamwork and problem solving, curriculum enhancement, enlivenment, and fun. Your child's class teacher will communicate with you when a class play is at hand. Please plan to support and attend these wonderful events for your child and their classmates.

Festivals

These events are an integral part of our school curriculum and community. Families are strongly encouraged to support, attend, and participate, as students have roles to play in these events. Our school celebrates two main festivals that occur outside of school hours: Harvest Festival and May Faire. Lantern Walk is celebrated with a focus on children in grades K-3 but provides space for anyone in grade 4 and above, including graduates and adults. Dates can be found on our [online school calendar](#). Information about each festival, including events that are held during the class day, such as Winter Spiral, can be found on the school [website](#).

Field Trips & Nature Walks

Class field trips are selected and planned by the teacher with adult support from the class families and are designed to enrich the students' experience of a particular aspect of the curriculum. Adult assistance is appreciated and may be necessary to help facilitate field trips or nature walks.

Children must demonstrate the ability to be safe, kind, responsible, and respectful in school before being allowed to participate in events off campus. Whether a child is eligible to participate in a field trip or nature walk is at the teacher's discretion. Children who will not be attending a field trip must be kept home.

Field Trip/Nature Walk Guidelines for Chaperones

Chaperones must be registered and approved volunteers. Please visit the [Volunteer](#) page of the website (under the Support tab) to register. We ask that volunteers participate actively in field trip supervision, with the guidance of the teacher, to help ensure the success of any trip off campus.

To accomplish these goals, we ask volunteers to follow the volunteer expectations in the [Volunteer Must-Read](#).

Fees and Payments

School Fees

At Mountain Sage, we do not ask families to purchase school supplies for their students. Instead, we have a school supply fee that allows us to fund bulk purchases of high-quality curriculum materials used in the Waldorf-inspired classroom. The School Supplies Fee is \$250 per K-8 student and \$100 per Homeschool Enrichment student.

School fees are due in full by October 15th of the current school year. There are three ways to pay your school fees:

- With a credit card through ParentSquare. You will receive an invoice at the beginning of the school year with a link to pay via credit card.
- With a check in the mail, sent to Mountain Sage Community School, 2310 E. Prospect Rd. Suite A, Fort Collins, CO, 80525.
- With a check or cash in person. Stop by the school's front office between 8:00am and 3:30pm.

If this fee is a hardship for your family and you do not qualify for free or reduced-priced services (see below), please [contact](#) the Mountain Sage Business Office.

All Other Fees

Teachers will communicate directly with the class about any fees associated with field trips or other class activities. Payments can be made directly in the digital permission slip, at the Front Desk, or sent to school in the envelope sent home.

Free and Reduced-Price Services

We ask that all families complete the [CharterChoice Combination Form](#). This form collects important information that allows the school to apply for state and federal funding. It is also the form used to gather information for free and reduced-price services eligibility. Mountain Sage does not collect this information; CharterChoice, our School Food Authority, collects and processes the data adhering to strict confidentiality guidelines. **The Free and Reduced-Price Services paperwork for the Poudre School District does NOT apply to Mountain Sage.** You must complete the CharterChoice Combination Form to be eligible for free and reduced-priced services through Mountain Sage.

Family Involvement

Visiting

All those who visit the school must first check in at the front office. You will be required to show your state-issued ID. All school visitors must always have a visible Visitor badge or name tag. This shows faculty and students that you have checked in and are allowed to be inside the school building.

Volunteering

To ensure the safety of students and staff, all volunteers must be registered and approved before arriving onsite to volunteer. Visit the [Volunteer page](#) of our website (under the Support tab) to register. All volunteers must complete and sign the [Volunteer Application and Agreement](#) and read the [Volunteer Must-Read](#). When at the school, volunteers must check in at the front desk and wear their Volunteer name badge when volunteering at the school. Please return your badge to the front desk after use. For more information, contact our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@mountainsage.org.

Donations and Fundraising: Mountain Sage Gives

The Mountain Sage community is a generous one! We hope that families will support our school with a one-time donation, monthly contributions, attending and supporting school-wide fundraisers, running your own class fundraiser, donating a car, or something else entirely. We welcome and encourage your efforts! Learn more on the [Give](#) page of our website.

Support at Home: Healthy Childhood & Educational Experience

Parents can support their children by providing:

- ✓ **Proper Nutrition** - A nutritious breakfast every day before school and well-balanced meals are strongly encouraged. If you need support finding food resources, please contact us at connect@mountainsage.org, 970-568-5456, or contact the school social worker.
- ✓ **Adequate Sleep** - Try to be in bed no later than 8:00 PM on school nights. Most children still need 10 to 12 hours of sleep each night.
- ✓ **Minimal Media** - Limit computer, TV, video games and other screen time on Sundays through Thursdays. Avoid murder, mayhem, or movies or videos meant for adults.
- ✓ **Quiet Time** - Providing some daily quiet time, without radio, screens, or videogames, is essential for resetting the nervous system and helps your child meet the demands of the day.

- ✓ **Time in Nature** - Spend some time in nature every day. Experience the weather; pay attention to the seasons, moon, stars and sky.
- ✓ **Chores at Home** - Assign some responsibilities for taking care of the home, pets, and yard.
- ✓ **Appropriate Dress** - Pay attention to keeping your child warm and dry while at school, especially their feet. Dressing in layers is important in Colorado!
- ✓ **Cultivate Reverence** - Many traditions offer practices that help develop the reverence for life that supports home, school and community relationships. If desired, create your own.
- ✓ **Support Your Child's Education** - Help develop healthy homework habits, participate in school activities, and communicate honestly about your concerns with your child's teachers.
- ✓ **Support the Class Community** - Get to school on time. Plan vacations during breaks. Support the class code of conduct. Children thrive on shared values and alignment among their adult role models.

Health

The school Health Office can be reached via email at healthoffice@mountainsage.org or by calling 970-568-5456. Please visit the [Health Office](#) page of our website (under the Community tab) for more information.

Illness

Please keep your child at home when they are ill. A child who has had a fever (100.4 or higher, vomited or had diarrhea within the last 24 hours, or has a bacterial infection and has not been on antibiotics for 24 hours is not permitted to attend school. Children who become sick or ill at school will be taken to the Health Office and evaluated. Parents will be contacted if a child's condition warrants and asked to pick up their child. In the event of a medical emergency, the school will endeavor to contact parents, and if necessary, arrange for the child to be taken to the hospital.

Please notify the school by phone, 970-568-5456, if your child will miss school due to illness. In the case of an extended absence (more than two days), please have your child discuss with their teachers what missed schoolwork needs to be completed.

Communicable and Contagious Diseases

If it is discovered at home that a child has a communicable and contagious disease (i.e. pink eye, lice, ringworm), you must inform the school. Please also keep the school updated as to the status of the medical condition. If there are more than two children per classroom with the same condition, a letter will go out to the families of all the children in that class. In some cases, a medical clearance may be necessary for the child to return to school. The school Health Technician will share the protocol for the specific situation at hand.

If it is discovered at school that a child has a communicable disease, the child will be evaluated, and parents contacted. The child may be sent home immediately or at the end of the day, whichever is appropriate given the specific situation. The most important thing when dealing with communicable diseases is to maintain honest and open communication with our office staff. Our duty is to treat every situation with professionalism and compassion, protecting the health of all the children at Mountain Sage.

It is highly recommended that you encourage your children to follow good practices to avoid communicable disease. Encouraging your student to not share hats, shoes, and coats, to wash hands often, and to cover coughs with their elbow helps to keep everyone healthy.

Immunization/Health Forms

All children must have a complete series of the required immunizations or a filed exemption according to [state regulations](#). Please note that as of 2021, non-medical exemptions require a Certificate of Non-Medical Exemption. Learn more about this updated requirement on the CDPHE's website [here](#).

Each child must have a complete and up-to-date Mountain Sage health form on file before the first day of school. If your child has an allergy, have your doctor complete Health Care Action Plan paperwork, as well as the Authorization to Administer Medication paperwork.

All of the school medical forms can be found in the Forms section of the Family Portal in [My MSCS](#).

Medication

Colorado Health Department regulations do not permit administration of ANY oral or topical substance whether over-the-counter, homeopathic, or prescription, without a physician's approval. **Students are not allowed to self-administer ANY medication.** Only parents may enter school grounds and administer one dose without a doctor's prescription/authorization.

Medication prescribed or authorized by a physician for a child may be brought to the school only if the medication is in its original container and (if prescription) must have the original label showing date filled, physician's directions for use, and child's name.

A physician must fill out and sign an [Authorization to Administer Medication](#) form (also available at the front office and in the Forms section of My MSCS on our [website](#)). For asthma or allergies, an action plan must also be completed in order to keep medications at school and administer them. Visit the school [Health Office](#) webpage for more information.

See Something, Say Something

Visit the See Something, Say Something page of the website to access Title IX, Safe2Tell, and child abuse reporting information. Mountain Sage is a small community. It is important that we work together to support one another, and that each person reports your concerns and/or any concerning experiences you or a someone else may have had at our school.

State law requires administrators and teachers to report cases of suspected child abuse immediately. This includes suspected abuse occurring at or away from school.

Personal Electronic Devices

Use of personal electronic devices such as laptops, cell phones, smartwatches, gaming devices, iPods, etc. is not allowed on campus for students unless otherwise indicated by a student's 504 or IEP. In the event a teacher requires a student to use a laptop while on campus, only school-issued Chromebooks are to be used. These laptops are equipped with filters & safety protocols that are necessary to keep our students and school network safe.

We understand that some students who bike or walk to school need a phone for safety and communication after school. We expect these students to follow the rules listed below for use during and after school when under the supervision of MSCS staff after school.

All students will be expected to follow these rules:

- Student cell phones should be turned off and placed in lockers when they arrive at school. If a student needs to coordinate dismissal with families, they may check their device **after** asking for permission from a teacher.
- Students may not call or message home during the school day on their own device:
 - If a student is unwell, a phone call will be made by staff to home. At that time, the student may speak to their parent/guardian if they wish.
- If a student needs a parent/guardian to bring an item to school, they may ask to initiate the phone call or their teacher to send a message via ParentSquare.
- If a student wants pictures of memories here at Mountain Sage, they may ask a teacher to take those pictures and then send them to the student's parents/guardian via ParentSquare.

If a student has an electronic device without permission, the teacher will confiscate it and notify the parent/guardian. The device will be returned to the student at the end of the day. If this becomes repetitive behavior, the student may need to use a check-in and out procedure with their class teacher at the beginning and end of each day.

Recess

Recess is a magical time when children get a chance to experience the world and express themselves in their own imaginative ways. It is a joy to observe their play and we try to interfere as little as possible, only doing so when necessary for their safety and wellbeing. A comprehensive list of Mountain Sage Playground Rules is available [upon request](#).

Kind, safe, respectful, and responsible behavior is always expected of everyone on the playground. These are some general rules of recess at Mountain Sage:

- Everyone is welcome to join another group at play with the exception of supervised class-specific games or activities.
- Children are encouraged to problem solve on their own unless it becomes a question of safety. We encourage them to accept changes in the direction of play in a group.
- Children are encouraged to be respectful of others' creations.
- Freedom of movement is encouraged, as long as it does not cause harm to self or others and is consensual.

School Food

Whether packing a lunch or a snack, families are encouraged to send nourishing food and well-balanced meals. Candy, soda, and energy drinks are not allowed. Mountain Sage is a peanut-restricted school. Teachers will inform your class directly if there is a peanut allergy in the classroom and request that all students bring food that is free of peanuts and peanut products.

If possible, food items should be packaged in reusable containers. Mountain Sage Community School is committed to waste reduction, as part of our sustainability mission.

If you need assistance providing food for your family, please reach out to our School Social Worker.

Snacks

All students, except kindergartners, will need to bring a mid-morning snack. Kindergarten students prepare food as part of their daily experience. Snacks are not included in the lunch program.

Lunch

Mountain Sage offers a lunch program with food provided by My Kids Lunch. Mountain Sage is participating in Healthy Meals for All, which means that lunch is free for everyone! **Families are still responsible for placing their orders in advance using the Meal Pre-Order Form.** This allows us to ensure an accurate amount of food is delivered, which cuts down on waste. A link to this form is available on the website and in the monthly newsletter. Please visit the [School Food](#) page of the website for complete hot lunch details.

Birthday Celebrations

In accordance with health code regulations, food prepared at home should not be served to classes for birthday celebrations. At Mountain Sage, each classroom teacher will determine their own means for celebrating student birthdays.

School Safety

Supervision Before, During, and After School

There is **no faculty supervision on school grounds before 8:00am on school days**. From 8:00am to 8:30am faculty supervision is available on the playground (occasionally, on inclement mornings, this supervision will be in classrooms). Before this time, you are solely responsible for supervising your child(ren). If your child arrives at school on their own before 8am, please speak with them about the necessity of being aware of their surroundings, connecting with their peers, and being ready for the school day with a fresh, present mindset.

Students remaining after dismissal has ended will be brought to the front desk area to wait for their ride from school. Students may not go beyond the school property unless they have permission. Once picked up, students are the responsibility of their family.

Pick up begins at dismissal time: 3:30pm Monday-Thursday, and 12:50pm on Friday and closes 20 minutes after. If you arrive after the driveline closes, you must park and come inside to pick up your child. Arrival after 3:50pm (or 1:05pm on Fridays) will result in a late charge of \$1 per minute per child.

Parking Lot Safety

Safety must be your top priority during drop off and pick up. Please visit the [Transportation](#) page of our website for more information.

Four Parking Lot Rules to Remember

- Always drive slowly.
- 1. Carefully follow directives of traffic attendants.
- 2. Cell phones should NOT be in use.
- 3. Turn off your car- no idling.

Weather Procedures

We believe all children should spend time outdoors daily. With that in mind:

- When the temperature is less than 10°F, when raining heavily, hailing, when there is lightning, or the air quality is poor, students will be directed into the building starting at 8am.
- If the temperature is between 10°F and 15°F, students will come inside at 8:15am so that

their time outside is limited to 15 minutes or less.

- During the school day, all children will go out when the temperature is greater than 15°F. **Students should arrive at school with proper clothing and gear even if it is below 10°F at drop off.**
- If the temperature is between 15°F and 10°F, the decision to go outside for recess will be at the discretion of the teacher (depending on the preparedness of the students) and recess may be shortened depending on conditions.
- When the temperature is less than 10°F, when raining heavily, hailing, when there is lightning, or the air quality is poor, all students will remain inside for recess and planned outdoor activities. Games class, nature walks, and arrival/dismissal situations will follow the above guidelines.
- Temperatures, air quality, lightening safety, etc. are determined by the Front Desk.

School Closures Due to Weather and/or Road Conditions

We generally align with PSD's delayed start and school closure announcements when due to inclement weather and/or poor road conditions; we do not follow these announcements when due solely to busing related issues. We do not follow PSD's heat day modifications. Parents and staff will be notified via text and/or email, and the information will be posted on the Mountain Sage website and social media accounts. Please keep your email and phone information current so we can reach you.

Safe2Tell

We encourage students to engage in direct communication with Mountain Sage staff when faced with a potentially serious situation involving the school/school community. However, if direct communication feels intimidating, there is another avenue to take. Safe2Tell is a valuable resource that we share with our students. By calling the Safe2Tell hotline or submitting a report through the website or mobile app, students (and community members) can **anonymously report** anything that is scaring or endangering them, their friends, or their family. If you, or someone you know, is struggling and you don't know where to turn for help, you can always start by making a report to Safe2Tell™ Colorado. Call 1-877-542-7233, make a web report using the submit a tip button to the left, or download the Safe2Tell Colorado mobile app on the Apple Store or Google Play.

Title IX

As provided in [District Policy AC \(Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity\)](#), Mountain Sage Community School does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status, age or disability. The

Mountain Sage Title IX Compliance Officers attend training annually and can be accessed via the information found on the [School Policies](#) page of the website.

School Emergencies

Mountain Sage utilizes the Standard Response Protocol developed by the [I Love You Guys Foundation](#). This is a widely used standard response protocol, familiar to first responders in our community. It is important parents are informed about the symbols and actions corresponding with this Standard Response Protocol. Visit this link to learn more about the [Standard Response Protocol](#).

IN AN EMERGENCY TAKE ACTION



HOLD! In your room or area. Clear the halls.

STUDENTS

Clear the hallways and remain in room or area until the "All Clear" is announced
Do business as usual

ADULTS

Close and lock the door
Account for students and adults
Do business as usual



SECURE! Get inside. Lock outside doors.

STUDENTS

Return to inside of building
Do business as usual

ADULTS

Bring everyone indoors
Lock outside doors
Increase situational awareness
Account for students and adults
Do business as usual



LOCKDOWN! Locks, lights, out of sight.

STUDENTS

Move away from sight
Maintain silence
Do not open the door

ADULTS

Recover students from hallway if possible
Lock the classroom door
Turn out the lights
Move away from sight
Maintain silence
Do not open the door
Prepare to evade or defend



EVACUATE! (A location may be specified)

STUDENTS

Leave stuff behind if required to
If possible, bring your phone
Follow instructions

ADULTS

Lead students to Evacuation location
Account for students and adults
Notify if missing, extra or injured students or adults



SHELTER! Hazard and safety strategy.

STUDENTS

Use appropriate safety strategy for the hazard

Hazard	Safety Strategy
Tornado	Evacuate to shelter area
Hazmat	Seal the room
Earthquake	Drop, cover and hold
Tsunami	Get to high ground

ADULTS

Lead safety strategy
Account for students and adults
Notify if missing, extra or injured students or adults

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[Haga clic aquí](#) para obtener una versión en español.

School-Issued Supplies

Books

All children are welcome and encouraged to check out books from the school library. Library books typically are due two weeks from check out date. If a book is lost, replacement of the same book in good condition will be requested, or a fee to cover the cost of replacing the book may be charged. Classroom readers should be returned in good condition upon completion of the assignment and as indicated by their teacher. If a book is lost, a fee to cover the cost of replacing the book may be charged.

Instruments

All children participate in music class once a week, and those in grades 6 through 8 have an additional recorder ensemble class. Pentatonic flutes and recorders are the main musical instruments learned by students both in the classroom and in music class. Instruments are also used in various Elective classes. Teachers bring these instruments to the students with reverence, heralding the craftsmanship and care taken in their creation. Students are taught not only how to correctly play these instruments but also how to properly care for them. If, however, a student damages their instrument or another child's instrument beyond usability, families are responsible for paying the cost of a replacement. On occasion, new parts can be purchased. If this is possible, the school will only charge for the individual pieces required. All instruments remain school property.

Technology

All students who utilize school-issued information technology, whether at school or at home, must agree to and sign the [Student Use of Mountain Sage Information Technology](#). This will be provided to the students at school with an explanation and the expectation that they will bring it home for a signature from an authorized adult.

Chromebooks for students are available upon request and with approval to support homework or remote learning. Authorized adults must sign the [Chromebook Acknowledgment Form](#) if there is a request for a student to use a MSCS computer at home. In the event a Chromebook is damaged, families are responsible for paying a fee to commensurate with the damage. All computers remain school property.

Transportation

Transportation at Mountain Sage focuses on use of the driveline, biking, walking, and the carpool program. Mountain Sage does not offer bussing except for field trips. For more details about all of these aspects of transportation at Mountain Sage, visit the [Transportation page](#) of our website.

Morning Drop Off

Drop off begins at 8am when teachers and traffic attendants arrive outside. The drop-off line ends at 8:30am. If you arrive after 8:30am you must park, walk your child into the building, and sign them in.

Afternoon Pick Up

Pick up begins at dismissal time: 3:30pm Monday-Thursday, and 12:50pm on Friday and closes 20 minutes after. If you arrive after the driveline closes, you must park and come inside to pick up your child. Arrival after 3:50pm (or 1:05pm on Fridays) will result in a late charge of \$1 per minute per child.

Biking and Walking

Mountain Sage is right off the Spring Creek Trail. If you live near the Power Line, Poudre, or Spring Creek Trails, you may even be able to bike to school without crossing many streets! Contact Nancy Nichols with Safe Routes to School, saferoutes@fcgov.com, 970-416-2357 to help find a route.

Parking and walking a short distance, even once a week, will greatly assist in reducing car traffic, congestion, and air pollution at school. It also gives your child time for some energizing morning exercise, or the time after school to chat and reconnect with you. Try these park and walk locations:

- Riverbend Ponds Natural Area on the north side of Prospect. It is a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile walk on the sidewalk and/or Spring Creek Trail.
- East parking lot of Edora Park near EPIC (Riverside Ave & Prospect Rd). It is 20-minute walk on the Spring Creek Trail.

Carpool Program

A free resource for all currently enrolled Mountain Sage families, the Carpool Program is a way to connect with other Mountain Sage families interested in ride-sharing. Please visit the [Transportation page](#) of our website more information and to sign up.

Questions about this handbook? Please email us at connect@mountainsage.org.