



# The River School Community Handbook

October 20, 2021

***This Handbook is not contractually binding. The River School reserves the right to amend policies or make changes to the rules and policies contained in this Handbook without challenge.***

# Social Compact

Please review The River School's Social Compact below and acknowledge receipt and acceptance of the terms through your [Magnus Health Portal](#). As a member of The River School community (i.e., student, family, faculty or staff), in order to participate in campus activities during the 2021-2022 school year, I agree to the following:

- 1) I have read and understand [The River School's Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year](#), including the importance of following best practices for coronavirus prevention, both at school and at home.
- 2) I understand that the coronavirus remains a very real health threat, and that my respect for best practices in addressing and mitigating the spread of the coronavirus is necessary to protect myself and others in River's community.
- 3) I understand that The River School will impose certain requirements on those coming to campus, including:
  - Daily Attestations (health checks) submitted by every family for their River student(s) through Magnus Health, each morning before school starts.
  - Adherence to River's health and wellness protocols outlined in the document, The River School Plan for 2021-2022 School Year, including but not limited to, following the quarantine protocols related to travel and pursuing vaccination for the seasonal flu to limit transmission of that illness, and vaccination for COVID-19 when it becomes available for those River School students of eligible age.
  - Continuity between school and home by reinforcing practices known to limit the spread of COVID-19, including frequent hand washing, mask wearing and social distancing. Serving as a role model among your social circles in support of these behaviors, knowing that we are each essential to the continued health of the River community.
- 4) I understand that my compliance with best practices more broadly outside of school is necessary to minimize the chances that I might become infected and infect others at The River School, and I understand the importance of keeping other members of River's community safe and healthy.
- 5) I agree that if I become aware of or have any reason to believe or suspect that I, my River student or a member of my household might be infected or has not been able to comply with The River School's coronavirus requirements, I will raise the issue with designated River staff before returning to campus.
- 6) I understand that failure to comply with The River School's coronavirus requirements may mean that I am not allowed to return to campus or participate in school activities until approved by the designated River staff.

# **The River School's Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year**

The following pages contain references to The River School's Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year. View the current document on [River's website](#).

## **The River School Mission Statement**

The River School's inclusive program challenges each child to work collaboratively, to think critically, and to develop the confidence to take risks, embrace their curiosity, and find their voice.

# The River School Pillars

## **Innovative Teaching**

From Mouth Time to Mindfulness, The River School creates new programs and develops evidence-based teaching strategies that draw from the best current research in education.

## **Co-Teaching and Personalized Education**

Our co-teaching model pairs a master's level educator with a speech-language pathologist in each classroom, a unique and effective combination for cementing strong language, literacy and social skills. Our low teacher-student ratios and small class sizes promote strong, personal relationships between teachers and students and allow educators to tailor teaching to each child.

## **Passionate and Highly-Qualified Educators**

Our teachers are energetic, creative, curious and committed. They model the qualities we hope children will develop: mindfulness, empathy, persistence, resilience, honesty and integrity.

## **Progressive Education**

By expanding children's opportunities for social, physical and creative development we enhance their personal and academic success. Our faculty includes specialists in the visual arts, music, science, physical education, drama and yoga.

## **Thematic Curriculum**

Themes provide a play-based, child-centered and cohesive context for learning, and inspire vocabulary development, experimentation, problem solving and the ability to make connections between different academic areas.

## **Inclusive and Diverse Classrooms**

For all students, diverse and inclusive classrooms provide the environment in which to develop enriched perspectives and a greater understanding of their world. At The River School, children with hearing loss learn alongside their hearing peers and provide an important source of diversity.

## **Active Learning**

Children at The River School engage in active learning; they work collaboratively in groups, solve problems, take mistakes and learn from them, and develop the confidence to take risks, share ideas, and speak up.

## **Social-Emotional Learning**

Our Social-Emotional Learning Program begins with teaching our youngest children to identify their own emotions and culminates in a social justice focus. Children learn to recognize and express their own emotions and to develop positive and empathetic relationships with others.

## **Financial Aid**

Because we value a dynamic and socioeconomically diverse school community, we make a significant commitment to financial aid to ensure that all students can benefit from a River School education.

## **A Community of Learners**

Relationships between children and faculty are strengthened by collaboration among faculty, administrators and families. Professional development for faculty, graduate student training, parent-education programs, and family engagement all add richness and depth to the educational program.

# The River School Community Handbook

## ACCREDITATION AND MEMBERSHIP

The River School is accredited by and a member of the Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools (AIMS). The school is a member of The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), National Business Officers Association (NBOA), Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington (AISGW), Parents Council of Washington (PCW) and Palisades Citizens Association (PCA).

## AIMS PARENTS AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS STATEMENT

The Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools (AIMS) publishes advisory statements that articulate commonly-held beliefs among AIMS-member schools. The [\*AIMS Parents and Independent Schools Statement\*](#) says that to be successful, an independent school needs and expects the cooperation of its parents, who must understand and embrace the school's mission, share its core values, and fully support its curriculum, faculty and staff. When joined by a common set of beliefs and purposes, the independent school and its parents form a powerful team with far-reaching positive effects on children and the entire school community.

## ANNUAL FUND

Conducted each year, the Annual Giving Campaign is the foundation of philanthropy at The River School. The Annual Fund is the school's most important and reliable source of fundraising revenue and supports the operating expenses of our exceptional program. There are many opportunities to support the school, but the Annual Fund is the most important and we ask that it be the first gift you make each school year. The River School is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization incorporated in the District of Columbia and gifts are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

*Please review the Morning Arrivals and Afternoon Dismissals Section of **River's Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year Document** for more information.*

### Arrival and Dismissal Timing

- **Arrival:** 8:00 am - 8:45 am
- **Dismissal:**
  - Half-Day: 11:45 am - 12:15 pm
  - Full-Day: 2:45 pm - 3:15 pm

### Carpool

1. Stay in the right lane.
2. Turn on your hazard lights to alert commuters and school personnel.
3. Do not block local streets, walkways or driveways while in line.
4. Pull forward and follow the directional commands of the crossing guard.
5. **Do not get out of your car.**
6. Car seats should be installed on the right (curbside) to facilitate loading and unloading.
7. Never park in the drop-off area as this impedes the flow of traffic.

## **Car Seats**

In the District of Columbia, car seats are required for children under eight years of age or less than 80 pounds and children under 12 years old must be in the rear of the vehicle. We comply with this law and will not release a child without an appropriate car seat; this policy applies to children going home with other families. If you or your authorized person is picking up in a rideshare service, vehicles with car seats can often be requested.

School personnel are trained to properly buckle children into car seats on the curbside of the street. Car seats on the right (curbside) of the vehicle facilitate safe loading and unloading of children and an efficient carpool.

## **Walkers**

For those families within walking distance of the school, or for those who park their cars and escort their children to the entrance,\* you should plan on a quick goodbye at the drop-off point (marked with signage) in front of the school. River staff will help direct the children to their classrooms.

\*We strongly encourage all families to use the carpool line instead of walking up to the building, in order to limit foot traffic and volume of people.

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

A late fee of \$15.00 + \$1.00 for every additional minute is billed for late pick-ups. A fee is charged after 12:15 pm for noon dismissal; after 3:15 pm for full-day students.

## **ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE**

The school considers punctuality and regular attendance essential to the success of your child's school experience. Any child arriving after 8:45 am is marked tardy. Tardies are recorded on narrative reports. Punctuality and attendance are especially important for the Elementary Program where school attendance is monitored and reported to the District of Columbia.

Families must complete a health screening every day through Magnus Health, the secure, HIPAA-compliant portal. All students should have a current physical on file. Families will receive information about how to navigate the online health screening through the Magnus Health app. No child or faculty/staff member can enter our buildings without completing their daily health questionnaire.

## **ATTIRE**

School is a time for active and creative play. Children should be dressed in comfortable and washable play clothes that allow them to move freely and get dirty. Shoes should be of sturdy construction with non-slip soles, made for running and climbing on playground equipment. Shoes with wheels are not permitted. Flip flops, Crocs and clogs are unsafe for active play and are strongly discouraged.

## **AUCTION**

The Scholarship Auction is an important fundraiser benefiting The River School Scholarship Fund which provides tuition assistance to families who depend on it in order to provide their children a River School education. The entire school community is involved in the Auction and parents are encouraged to support this effort to the best of their ability. This year's Auction will be modified, if necessary, and we will work to plan an alternative event format.

## **AUDIOLOGY**

Our Audiology Department provides services to the greater community including hearing screenings, hearing aid fittings, custom-fitted ear/swim plugs, and custom-fitted listening earphones. To learn more about these services contact [Emmie Robinson at River REACH](#).

## **BEHAVIOR**

The River School strives to achieve a culture of respect and safety where students can learn their best. River School teachers are skilled in using positive behavioral management techniques in the classroom. If a child's behavior affects their own safety or the safety of others, parents will be notified. If a child strikes or punches another classmate after being given a warning about their behavior, the child will be sent home for the rest of the day.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday at school, you may send a small treat to share in the classroom. A healthy snack or mini-cupcakes are encouraged rather than full-sized cupcakes or cakes. Non-food alternatives could include an art activity or small party favor. Please arrange in advance with the teachers and ask about class specific allergies/food restrictions. The school has a nut-free policy for foods.

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

At The River School, decision-making authority at the highest level resides in a volunteer Board of Trustees. The Board focuses on three areas critical to the success of any independent school. The Board selects, evaluates and supports the Head of School, to whom it delegates authority to manage the school; develops broad institutional policies that guide the Head of School; and is accountable for the school's financial well-being. The Board of Trustees does not manage school operations. In the conduct of its official business, the Board acts as a whole. Individual Trustees, including the Board Chair, have no authority to act unless specifically authorized to do so by the Board acting as a whole.

## **BUSINESS OFFICE**

The Business Office manages financial transactions, enrollment contracts, tuition payments and financial aid applications. If you have questions related to financial matters, contact [Chris Lopez](#), Business Manager.



## **CANCELLATION/DELAYED OPENING/EARLY CLOSING**

The River School makes closing/delay decisions independent of the District of Columbia Public School System. The decision to close or delay will typically be made by 6:15 am. To learn about a River School closing or delay:

- Check your mobile device for a message sent by SMS
- Listen to WTOP Radio stations: 103.5 FM, 103.9 FM, 107.7 FM
- [Check the WTOP website](#)
- Call The River School at (202) 337-3554 for a recorded message
- Check [The River School's website](#)
- Check [The River School's Facebook page](#)
- Check your email for a message sent by the school

As weather and subsequent road conditions can vary greatly for families based on geographic location, parents are asked to use their best judgment in determining whether it is safe to transport children, regardless of the school's decision.

### **One Hour Delayed Opening**

Morning drop-off begins at 9:00 am and classes begin at 9:25 am.

### **Two Hour Delayed Opening**

Morning drop-off begins at 10:00 am and classes begin at 10:25 am.

### **Early Closing**

If it becomes necessary to close school early, we will notify parents via email and the SMS texting system. Parents (or their emergency designees) are expected to pick up their children by the announced closing time. Regardless of the school's decision, during times of inclement weather, parents are asked to use their best judgment in determining whether it is safe to transport children.

## **CARPOOLING**

We understand the need for some families to carpool to and from school, but we recommend that you avoid them to the extent possible this school year.

Written parental permission is required for anyone not on the authorized pickup list. You must email your child's teachers, [Bob Jones](#) and [Nicky David](#) to ensure your message is received.

## **CLASS AND PARENT FUNDRAISING/SOLICITING**

Class fundraising by students within the context of a service-learning class project, community service or related cause/program is coordinated by faculty and authorized by the Administrative Team. Individual student and parent fundraising/soliciting for causes/businesses are not permitted at school or through contact information in the School Directory.

## COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLICATIONS

The River School uses electronic communication, printed materials, signage and social media to keep the school community informed about news and events including the following:

- **School Website**
- **Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube**
- **Currents & Community News:** Weekly electronic newsletter with announcements and event details
- **Community Handbook and Family Directory:** Online and printed versions available upon request
- **Teacher Communications:** Emails, weekly newsletters and Parent-Teacher conferences
- **Annual Report:** Report of gifts and school finances

## COMMUNICATION FROM PARENTS TO THE SCHOOL

Short, informal notes and emails facilitate communication between school and home and are effective in sharing relevant family news or information about progress. Teachers typically respond to emails at the end of the school day or within 24 business hours.

The school telephone is answered between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. During school hours, teachers are with children and cannot take calls from parents. Should you wish to leave a phone message, all classrooms have voicemail. If you have an important message to relay to the teachers, contact [Bob Jones](#), and he can deliver the message.

If you have a concern about your child and/or the program, contact your child's teachers. If your concerns require further attention, contact: [Meredith Ouellette](#), Assistant Head of School, [Marie Wright](#), Director of Educational Programs; or [Sharlene Ottley](#), Director of Early Childhood Research and Practice.

## CONTINUITY OF LEARNING/DISTANCE LEARNING

We endeavor to provide traditional classroom education. There are times, however, when in the best interests of the school community and due to conditions beyond the school's reasonable control, we may need to utilize alternative educational methods, such as Distance Learning. Should this be the case, the school will continue to ensure that students receive the best possible education and will not be liable to refund any payments made under the Enrollment Contract.

## DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

The Development Office handles fundraising, grant proposals, special events and alumni relations. The school's fundraising initiatives are crucial to the financial well-being of the school. Contact [Jen Lynch](#), Director of Institutional Advancement, with questions related to the Development Office.

## **DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

The River School was founded on the belief that inclusion is essential and the best practice of early childhood education.

We are a thriving, diverse community of learners in which human differences are respected, explored, and celebrated as vital reflections of the larger society and world.

We embrace human diversity as a rich, living educational resource and believe multiculturalism to be relevant and mutually beneficial.

How we think about a child's capacity affects that child's performance, and we believe in and are committed to high standards for all children.

**Our diversity includes individuals with hearing loss and the broad range of human variability, including dimensions of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender and gender expression, and socioeconomic status.**

Diversity is an ongoing process by which a school expresses its commitment to bring different peoples and perspectives into its community, curriculum and culture. We work to create a sense of connectedness so that our members feel safe to explore and challenge dynamic, multifaceted differences in open inquiry.

We understand that such a community is crucial for our students' future successful participation in the wider world. With this understanding, we engage in diversity, equity and inclusion work to nurture our understanding of others and ourselves.

## **FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS OR EARLY RELEASE**

The River School is a community of learners. Professional development time allows faculty and staff to keep current with the latest in education innovation by participating in specialized training.

## **ELEVATOR**

Children are only permitted to ride the elevator when accompanied by an adult.

## **ELEMENTARY PROGRAM SPRING PLAY**

This is a wonderful production—whether live or virtual—which brings the community together to celebrate the creativity and hard work of our Elementary students, teachers and Arts & Sciences faculty.

## **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT/SAFETY/SECURITY**

We take the safety of children, faculty, staff, and visitors very seriously and work closely with police, fire and emergency personnel to ensure a safe school community. Our Emergency and Crisis Plan and Team has been approved by security consultants and through Accreditation. Faculty and staff are trained each year in emergency, health, and safety procedures including CPR, First Aid and AED.

The River School hires retired DC police officers to assist with morning and afternoon carpool. All external doors are kept locked 24 hours a day. To enter the school, school personnel use a code that is changed frequently. Visitors enter through the main lobby door and must check in at the front desk. Live footage from video cameras enables us to monitor external doors at all times.

In an emergency teachers carry backpacks with contact information for families, a first aid kit and a cell phone to aid with communication. Portable two-way radios are also used to communicate.

We are prepared for an incident that would require us to shelter in place. We store an adequate amount of water, food, medical kits, and other supplies for such a situation. The gym is the designated location for sheltering in place.

Our plan includes procedures to evacuate the building if it is deemed unsafe. We have made arrangements with St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School on Whitehaven Parkway to house students and teachers during an emergency evacuation.

If an unsafe person should enter the school building, an announcement will be broadcast over the intercom. Everyone will exit the building as quickly and safely as possible and relocate to a secure location nearby. During emergency situations, we will communicate with families as we are able, with a priority on texts to mobile devices.

### **ENRICHMENT PROGRAM**

A variety of after-school enrichment classes provides students with the opportunity to gain new skills and delve deeper into their favorite subjects. With different friends and different teachers, students are able to expand their horizons within familiar surroundings. There are fall and spring sessions available for a fee. Contact [Capi Anderson](#) for more information.

### **FIELD DAY**

This is a fun-filled morning for Elementary students at Palisades Park in June. Blue and green teams compete in a variety of fun, physically-challenging activities that promote good sportsmanship.

### **FINANCIAL AID/SCHOLARSHIP**

The River School is open to all students who can benefit from its educational program. Although it is not possible to meet all requests for financial assistance, the school makes an effort to help as many families as possible. Grants are awarded based on financial need which is determined through financial analysis conducted by the school and School and Student Services (SSS) Final decisions are at the discretion of the FA Committee.

Families may apply for financial aid online or can request a printed financial aid packet. Online applications are processed through [SSS](#). The River School code is 2356. Copies of applications and current tax returns with schedules, W-2s and 1099s must be provided to The River School Business Office by February 4, 2022. Award notification occurs in March.

## **GRANDPARENTS AND SPECIAL FRIENDS DAY**

A highlight in the spring at The River School is Grandparents and Special Friends Day. We may not be able to have our usual event this year, but will plan something fun with the children to share with their grandparents and special friends.

## **HEALTH**

### **Healthy Child Documentation**

All Students must have a District of Columbia Universal Health Certificate, including immunization record and proof of screening for TB and lead poisoning on file. Students must be current and provide proof of all vaccinations required by the District of Columbia Health and Immunization Department in order to attend The River School. There will be no exemptions from this policy.

Physicals are valid for one calendar year from the date of exam. When your child has a physical or immunizations, have your physician complete the Health Certificate and upload it to their Magnus Health account or return to River's Nurse, Elizabeth McDermott, as soon as possible.

Children over three years of age must have a completed District of Columbia Oral Health Assessment Form on file. Dental exams are valid for one calendar year from the date of exam. These forms can be found in the Magnus Health Portal. If your child is found to be out of compliance, they will not be able to attend classes until all paperwork has been submitted.

### **Child Safety and Welfare**

An accident report is completed for an injury sustained at school. You will be contacted by your child's classroom teachers or the school nurse if the injury is serious. The District of Columbia requires school staff to report any observed unexplained injuries of children and any child reports of physical abuse including hitting by parents or other adults to Child and Protective Services. The Child and Protective Services policy prohibits the school from notifying the parents when such calls are placed.

### **Disclosure**

All families are asked to inform the school of all issues affecting their child including, but not limited to: learning, psychological, emotional, and medical issues; medications; and any other issues that impact the child's well-being. Full disclosure is in the best interest of your child. Information is placed in your child's file and remains strictly confidential.

### **When Children Become Sick at School or Home**

If a child becomes ill at school, parents will be contacted to discuss the condition and determine arrangements for your child. If parents cannot be reached, the emergency designee(s) on file will be contacted.

### **Lice**

We follow a nit-free policy for the control and prevention of head lice outbreaks. Children must be free of lice, eggs, and egg cases before returning to school.

## **Administration of Medication at School**

Prescriptions should be written to facilitate dosing outside of school hours. For emergency situations, such as anaphylactic allergies, a District of Columbia Health Medication and Medical Procedure Treatment Plan must be on file. This form must be signed by the parent and the physician and uploaded to the Magnus Health Portal. All medication must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name, physician's name, name of the medication, dosage, and when the medication should be administered. Please refer to the Magnus Health Portal section of this document for more information.

## **HEARING LOSS**

The River School model includes children with hearing loss in each of our classrooms, alongside a majority of hearing peers. Hearing loss is one of the most prevalent medical conditions that can be identified at birth. One to six in 1,000 babies are born with hearing loss. As a result, hearing screenings are performed at birth for all babies. Research has shown that early language exposure for all children, especially those with hearing loss, leads to better learning outcomes. This is why The River School provides a language rich environment for all children in every classroom. Our curriculum strives to allow children to interact and learn from each other. The speech-language pathologist and educator in the classroom can help facilitate these interactions to further language development for all children. Over time, students with hearing loss at The River School typically catch up with their hearing peers in language, social and academic achievement. Soundfield speaker systems are used to provide all children with an enhanced ability to hear their teachers during instruction.

At The River School, we use child-first language. We refer to children who use cochlear implants and hearing aids as "children who have hearing loss" because we consider hearing loss as part of a medical diagnosis from our clinical team. How the children refer to themselves can vary (hard of hearing, Deaf, etc.). We strive to provide the children with tools to be able to determine how they identify themselves. We do not use the term "hearing impairment" because it suggests a negative outlook on the child's difference.

### **Hearing Aids**

Hearing aids digitally process acoustic sounds by amplifying them into a range that is audible based on the child's hearing loss. There are various styles of hearing aids but the most commonly used by children are worn behind-the-ear with an ear mold inside the ear.

### **Cochlear Implant**

When hearing loss is too severe for hearing aids to be beneficial, a child may receive a cochlear implant. Children with cochlear implants undergo surgery to have the internal portion inserted into their cochlea to bypass the damaged areas and directly stimulate the auditory nerve. A magnet is inserted under the skin to connect the external sound processor to the internal device.

## **Soundfield Speaker**

In each classroom, there is a Soundfield speaker, infrared sensor (black dome mounted to the ceiling) and amplifier. These systems provide an amplified sound similar to general speaker and microphone systems. When a teacher uses a microphone, their voice is amplified over other noises in the classroom. These systems are beneficial for all students because they provide better access to the teachers' voices by helping to overcome the effects of distance, noise and reverberation.

If you or your child have further questions, please do not hesitate to ask the teachers and/or the audiology department. For more general information about hearing loss in children, please visit [asha.org](http://asha.org).

## **HOMEWORK**

The River School follows the 10-minute per grade guideline, with a strong focus on project-based learning. Homework is thoughtfully assigned to give children the chance for reflection and creative problem-solving. We believe homework assignments should be developmentally appropriate, so any assignments sent home are meant to foster communication and independent thinking. Traditional homework will not be sent home daily, but reading (either with your child or independent reading) is encouraged daily.

## **JILL BAILEY CHENET'S RIVERWALK AND SPRING PICNIC**

Jill Bailey Chenet's RiverWalk at Carderock Park is a community-wide event followed by The River School Spring Picnic. RiverWalk is named in memory of our beloved teacher and friend who taught her students, and all of us, to love, laugh and celebrate life. If we are unable to come together next spring, we will plan a reimagined way to encourage getting outside and celebrating life in Jill's memory.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

The Lost and Found is traditionally located in the closet in the school lobby. Please be sure to label your child's items so they can be returned easily throughout the school year. At the end of the school year, unclaimed items are donated to a charitable organization.

## **MAGNUS HEALTH PORTAL**

The River School uses an online database health management system, Magnus Health SMR (Student Medical Record), for all student medical information and enrollment paperwork. As this is a web-based system, you will have continuous access to your child's health records, as well as the ability to make updates.

Timely submission of health information and other forms is vital so that records can be up-to-date prior to the first day of school. You will receive weekly reminders as long as there are outstanding items in your account. Please reserve 20 to 30 minutes per child, depending on circumstances. You will not have to re-enter this information each year; the data is securely stored and you update records as needed.

## Questions or Problems?

If you are having difficulty navigating the Magnus system, entering data online, or downloading the hardcopy cover sheets and forms, or if you have any other questions, please contact [customer support at Magnus Health SMR](#) or call 877.461.6831. You can also contact River's Nurse, [Elizabeth McDermott](#). Please feel free to consult the [Magnus Health Page for Parents](#) and [Privacy and Security Page](#).

## NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

The River School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious affiliation, gender, sexuality, ethnic or national origin in the administration of its education policies, admission policies, financial aid programs, and other school-administered programs.

## NUT-FREE POLICY

There are students and school personnel with severe peanut/tree nut allergies. This impacts lunches, cooking projects, parties, special treats/snacks, and items for class/school events. Please do not use nuts or nut products in any food items sent to school, and ensure store-bought products are nut-free. Food vendors providing items should be advised of our nut-free policy. The school requires an ingredient list for all items brought into the school for events.

## OUTPLACEMENT

For those families whose children stay through Grade 3, the school actively helps them with the process of identifying and applying to appropriate placements. (The school plans to expand River's program through Grade 6 in the near future which will give more options to families). The Outplacement Team works carefully with each family to determine the best fit for your child and serves as the liaison between The River School and outside programs.

If you are considering applying to other programs before third grade, please consider The River School as an option. [Meredith Ouellette](#), Assistant Head of School, [Sharlene Ottley](#), Director of Research and Practice, [Marie Wright](#), Director of Educational Programs and [Megan Campbell](#), Director of Admission, are available to discuss and provide a tour of the Elementary Program. If you are applying to other programs prior to third grade, please notify the Admission Office as early as possible.

When a child with hearing loss leaves the school to attend another school program, transition services are available to support a successful transition. This includes general information about hearing loss, assistive device use and care, and helpful classroom accommodations to maximize student success.

## PARENT INFANT PROGRAM

This free weekly program, for families and their children with hearing loss from birth to age three, is led by an educator and speech-language pathologist, who collaborate with the audiologist, psychologist and occupational therapist as needed. Parents are provided with functional tips and hands-on practice in helping their children develop listening and language skills during everyday activities. **The Parent Infant program will be held virtually for the time being.** For more information, contact the [Parent Infant Program](#).



## **PARENT PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASSROOM**

Healthy partnerships between home and school result in success for children, and parent participation is fundamental to this goal. **For this school year, we need to limit the number of non-essential visitors and adults in the building and will not be able to host parent visits in the classrooms.**

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

There are three Parent/Teacher conferences each school year. The first conference in the fall is a 20-minute conference about your child's first month at school and the ways in which each child can be challenged and supported. The two subsequent 30-minute conferences focus on the child's overall progress. A narrative summary detailing the child's progress is provided to parents prior to the second and third conferences. All Parent/Teacher conferences will be virtual this year.

## **PARENTS COUNCIL OF WASHINGTON DC (PCW)**

The River School is a member of PCW, an organization that promotes communication within the independent school community. PCW offers programming at no charge that aims to inform and foster dialogue in the fields of education, child development and parenting.

[Learn more at the PCW website.](#)

## **PARTICIPATION IN DAILY ACTIVITIES**

Outdoor play is a regularly-scheduled component of the school day and is a requirement of our licensing and accreditation. Even in inclement weather, children still spend a few minutes outdoors to get fresh air and exercise. Please be sure to dress them appropriately (e.g., jacket, hat, gloves).

## **RE-ENROLLMENT**

Re-enrollment contracts for the following school year are sent to families in February. Parents should notify the Business Office in writing if a student is not going to accept the re-enrollment invitation.

## **REST TIME**

In accordance with the District of Columbia Child Care health regulations, all children who attend school for more than four hours (and who are under six years of age) are required to rest following lunch. The length of rest time varies with the age of the child.

## **RIVER REACH**

River REACH is a fee-for-service program offering individualized educational tutoring and a variety of therapy services. River REACH serves children with learning differences, speech-language delays/disorders and sensorimotor delays. Services are offered to children from infancy to 18 years of age. Clients include River School students, as well as children in the broader community. To learn more about the program, contact [Emmie Robinson](#).

## **RIVER SCHOOL PARENTS ASSOCIATION (RSPA)**

All River School parents are members of the RSPA and are encouraged to become active and engaged in the life of the school. The RSPA mobilizes parent resources towards enhancing the educational experience for every child at The River School. Traditionally, the RSPA:

- Conducts regular meetings for parents
- Supports classroom teachers through the Room Parent Program
- Coordinates faculty lunches during Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Promotes and organizes events, activities and volunteering
- Coordinates community service projects
- Hosts educational presentations for the *We Are The River School* Speaker Series
- Supports the Scholarship Auction and Jill Bailey Chenet's RiverWalk

This school year, we will work to adjust and reimagine these activities to foster community engagement. The RSPA can be contacted at [rspa@riverschool.net](mailto:rspa@riverschool.net).

## **SCHOOL PERSONNEL EMPLOYMENT POLICY**

Teaching faculty and staff at The River School are highly trained professionals. In order to maintain a professional environment, faculty and staff cannot be privately employed by River School families in any capacity, including but not limited to babysitting, driving students or house sitting. They cannot attend or host student parties, and will not develop personal relationships with individual parents.

## **SNACKS, LUNCH AND ALLERGIES**

Healthy snacks are provided to students mid-morning. If your child has a food allergy or dietary restriction, please provide a container of alternative snacks. Information about known food allergies should be relayed to your child's teachers in addition to being detailed on school medical and student emergency forms in the Magnus Health Portal. Full-day students bring lunch daily. Lunches must be ready-to-eat as teachers cannot leave the room to warm food. Our teachers work to instill independence and healthy eating habits for our students.

The River School is a nut-free school; do not use nuts or nut products in lunches, special treats/snacks or items to be brought into the classroom. If you provide a snack/special treat for a class, we encourage small healthy snacks rather than sweets/candy.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

The school maintains Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Parents are discouraged from "friending" school personnel on Facebook due to the nature of social media, the inherent conflicts of interest that may arise and/or the potential for the faculty or staff member feeling pressured to accept the request.

## **SOUND SUPPORT**

Sound Support is a group which is dedicated to providing parents of children with hearing loss a safe place to meet others, learn together and share experiences. The group is open to the families of children with hearing loss who attend The River School. For more information, email [soundsupport@riverschool.net](mailto:soundsupport@riverschool.net).

## **SUMMER CAMP**

The River School's summer camp, Camp River, is open to children ages 3 to 10 (rising Preschool through rising Grade 4), including children from the greater community. Campers enjoy a balanced schedule of creative, intellectual and physical activities which serve as an "educational bridge" for the summer months. Campers explore new topics and face exciting challenges, all focused on weekly themes. Contact [Capi Anderson](#) with questions about Camp River or visit the [Summer Camp webpage](#).

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Support services are provided to students as a component of The River School program. If comprehensive assessments or ongoing services are recommended, parents will be contacted and referral information provided.

### **Speech**

Our speech-language pathologists provide support in the classroom. Screenings are conducted as needed.

### **Audiology**

All River School students receive free annual hearing screenings, as well as periodic monitoring, as needed. Audiology services are offered onsite.

### **Occupational Therapy**

Our occupational therapist consults with faculty, provides support to children in the classroom, and oversees the Handwriting Without Tears program for PreKindergarten and Elementary students. Screenings are provided as needed.

### **Educational Psychology**

Our psychologists consult with faculty, provide support to children in the classroom and assist with academic assessments.

### **Developmental Screening and Evaluations**

Ongoing evaluation is an integral part of the school curriculum. Formal and informal methods are used to provide modification of goals and teaching strategies and to document progress over time.

## **TEACHER GIFT POLICY**

River School teachers are talented professionals and it is natural that families want to acknowledge them. Room parents coordinate a classroom teacher collection in December and June. Giving towards the classroom teacher gift is optional. If you choose to give your own gift, special cards and homemade gifts are treasured and appreciated. Please do not give extravagant gifts as this is unnecessary and can make

teachers uncomfortable. The school celebrates upcoming weddings and births for school personnel and asks that parents not organize any snack or gift collection in recognition of these types of events. Cards from your children are a nice way to recognize these occasions.