



## **Attendance Policy**

### **Absence, Tardiness/Late Arrivals, and Early Departures**

At CMP, attendance is a priority and is crucial to your child's academic success. CMP is a school of choice. Families who actively choose to enroll their children in the California Montessori Project charter school have opted for an educational program, with all of its rich researched-based Montessori materials, lesson presentations and experiential learning. This cannot be duplicated outside the classroom environment, which makes your child's daily attendance even more critical for success.

Absence from school hurts not only the student but also the class. The success of the Montessori environment relies partly upon the strength of the learning community that is developed. When the student is not in school, (s)he is missing out on critical classroom experiences, and the student's classmates are missing out on her/his contributions to the classroom community.

As illustrated in the Academic Overview portion of this handbook, ***all portions of the school day are equally important to the student's growth and mastery of learning***. When students are late to school, they create classroom interruptions which in turn result in an unsettling experience and loss of learning for the student and her/his classmates. Early departures can also adversely impact the student's success and ability to be a contributing member of the learning community.

Finally, California is a compulsory education state. State law requires parents/guardians of children ages 6 to 18 to send their children to school. Parents who fail to meet this obligation may cause their child to be classified as truant, and the parents/guardians and student may be required to meet with CMP's Student Attendance Review Team (SART). Please note that all trancies must be reported to the California Department of Education. In extreme cases of truancy, the school may request intervention through the District Attorney's Office, as well as possible involvement of Child Protective Services.

CMP acknowledges the need for family time and for times of rest and rejuvenation. The administrative team has taken this into account in planning the school calendar and has included well-considered break times throughout the year. ***Please refer to the school calendar as a planning guide so that your child is able to be in school each day and receive the maximum benefits of regular participation in his/her Montessori classroom.***

If a family circumstance arises which impacts your child's ability to be at school, please let your child's teacher or principal know so we can work on a plan to support you and your child during this time.

Whether the absence is excused or unexcused, the state only provides daily funding to the school if a student is actually at school. With that said, below is a summary of CMP policies regarding absences, tardies, and early departures from school:

### Reporting Absences:

All absences and late arrivals must be called in by a parent/guardian prior to the start of the instructional day. When the student returns to school, (s)he should bring a written note for re-entry to class. The note should include the following:

- Notification date
- Student's full name
- Teacher's name and grade,
- Date(s) of absence
- Reason for absence
- Name, relationship and signature of the person notifying the school.

When arriving late or departing early, the parent/guardian must sign in through the school office and obtain a tardy slip to admit the child to class or an early release slip to indicate to the teacher that you have already signed the child out for the day. Once the child has been signed in, the child may proceed to class. To limit classroom disruption, once a child has been signed out, an office staff member will send for your student to meet you at the office.

Please note that CMP maintains a closed campus. Students *must* be signed in and out by a parent or guardian or by a responsible adult who has been pre-designated by the student's parent/guardian. CMP cannot allow children the liberty to leave campus during the instructional day without properly designated adult accompaniment.

### Absences Allowed by Education Code Law (Ed. Code § 46010, 48205)

Under California law, excused absences are only designated for:

- Student illness: A child is too ill to attend school if he or she has a contagious condition, a temperature of over 100, symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea, or written orders from a doctor to stay at home. If the child is ill 3 days or more, the school will require a note from a physician documenting the child's illness and the necessity of having the child stay home from school. Illness of *other* family members does not result in an excused absence for the student.
- Health/medical quarantine as may be designated by the school, county health department or medical professional.
- Medical appointments or services lasting all day.
- Failure to provide proof of immunization for school enrollment.
- Attending the funeral of an immediate family member to include the student's parent or legal guardian, sibling, grandparent, or any relative living in the household of the student. In such circumstances, one day is allowed; or three days are allowed for travel outside of a 300 mile radius of the child's home residence.

- Observance of a religious holiday or ceremony; or participation in certain kinds of religious exercises for a limited number of days per month when documented by a signed and pre-approved request for absence under this provision. Request shall be submitted in writing to the school principal for pre-approval. Principal shall have discretionary authority to consider the maximum allowable days of excused absences under this provision to include consideration for the student's total absences and student's academic performance. Attendance at religious retreats shall not exceed four hours per semester.
- Excused tardies are only designated for medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours.

***All other absences or late arrivals are classified as unexcused, even if the parent notifies the school.***

Whenever possible, parents are encouraged to schedule medical/dental appointments and family business during intersession periods, school holidays, and other non-school times. In the event an absence from school cannot be avoided, the best course of action is to stay in close communication with your child's teachers, and provide an opportunity for the child to make up any missed assignments.

#### Verification of Illness

The statewide average absence rate for typical childhood illness is 5 days per school year.

**Anytime a child has a doctor's appointment and/or documentation that requires the child to stay home from school, documentation must be provided to the school office when the student returns to school. These absences will be recorded as "verified" and will be taken into account when reviewing the child's total attendance record.**

Students who are ill in excess of school guidelines may be required to bring verification of illness from a medical professional on their return to school for successive absences. If the child is under the regular care of a physician for a serious or chronic condition, or is directed to stay home by a medical professional, verification is to be provided to the school office at the time of the absence. Absences for excessive illnesses that are not verified with official documentation will be marked unexcused and may subject the student and/or parents to truancy review.

#### Chronic Illness

Personal illness which reoccurs on a frequent basis will require a doctor's certification.

If your child has a diagnosed chronic illness, you must provide a physician's authorization in order for these recurrent absences to be excused. Such authorization requires the treating physician to verify the diagnosis and list symptoms that would require the child to stay home from school but not necessitate an office visit. With this authorization, the parent may send a note when the child returns to school listing one or more of the symptoms identified by the physician's report. These absences will be considered verified. Please contact a campus administrator or attendance clerk for additional assistance.

### Missed Assignments and Tests

A student who is absent from class or scheduled instructional activities for allowable reasons may complete missed assignments or tests that can be reasonably provided and will not have his/her grade reduced or lose academic credit if the assignments or tests are satisfactorily completed within a reasonable period of time. In some cases, the teacher shall determine a reasonable equivalency in the tests and assignments provided, but not necessarily identical to, the tests and assignments that the student missed during the absence.

### Excessive Absence/Truancy Notification

While CMP maintains high expectations for student attendance, we also recognize that students may miss a few days/hours during the school year due to illness or family emergencies. For this reason, CMP has established guidelines for satisfactory student attendance. In the event that students fall short of these guidelines, written attendance letters will be sent to the student's parent/guardian.

These letters are to reinforce the parent/guardian's awareness of potential attendance problems and represent the first steps in the attendance review process. Subsequent portions of this process may include mandatory parent/teacher/principal conferences, development of an attendance action plan, and attendance contracts. If these remedies remain unsuccessful, the parent/guardian may be scheduled to meet with CMP's Executive Director and/or appear before the school's Attendance Review Committee, consisting of the Executive Director (or designee), a CMP principal, and a credentialed teacher. A law enforcement representative may be included at the discretion of the Executive Director.

### **Attendance guidelines have been established as follows.**

#### Unexcused Absences:

- If a student incurs 3 unexcused absences, the parent/guardian will receive a letter documenting the child's attendance. An appointment with the child's teacher will be requested to identify the cause of such absences and to discuss how the school can work with the family to support the child's success in school, including regular attendance.
- Upon incurring the 5<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence, the parent/guardian will receive a second letter documenting the child's attendance and will request an appointment with the child's administrator to discuss the child's continued absence and develop an attendance improvement plan for the student.
- Upon incurring the 7<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence, the parent/guardian will receive a third letter documenting the child's attendance. Upon recommendation of the principal, CMP's Executive Director will become involved in the review of student attendance, which may include a meeting with the student's parents/guardians.

#### Total Absences (excused for illness or unexcused):

- Once a student incurs 10 total absences, an initial letter will be sent to parents/guardians alerting them to their child's attendance record. The letter will request that

parents/guardians contact the Educational Specialist to discuss the reason for these absences and to develop a plan for attendance improvement.

- After incurring 15 total absences, a second letter will be sent to parents/guardians requiring a meeting with an administrator. A plan will be established to improve the student's attendance, and any subsequent absences for illness will require a doctor's verification.

The principal can, at any time, request consultation and intervention by the Executive Director for habitual absence or truancy issues.

The Executive Director has jurisdiction to refer subsequent attendance issues to CMP's Student Attendance Review Team (SART) as described under "Students Classified as Truant".

#### Excessive Late Arrivals or Early Departures

- As indicated throughout this section, attendance is an issue CMP takes very seriously. Students who are regularly arriving late to school or leaving early are also at risk of poor academic performance. For students who are habitually missing a portion of the instructional day, notification letters will be sent as outlined above, following the thresholds outlined below: Students incurring 6 tardies will receive a letter requesting a meeting with the child's teacher.
- Students incurring 9 tardies will receive a letter requesting a meeting with the school's administrator.
- Students incurring the 12th tardy will generate the need for a review of parents' attempts to implement the attendance improvement plan as outlined by parents, teacher and principal. Upon recommendation of the principal, CMP's Executive Director will become involved in the review of student attendance, which may include a meeting with the student's parents/guardians.
- Subsequent attendance issues may be referred to CMP's Student Attendance Review Team.

Families are also reminded that the Montessori curriculum embraces a wide variety of integral subject matter and teachers spend a significant amount of time to ensure that *all portions* of the school day are equally important to the student's growth and mastery of learning. When a student leaves early, the student is missing out on integral learning experiences which adversely impact the student's success and her/his ability to be a contributing member of the learning community.

Accordingly, if a student develops patterns of early departure, parents will be scheduled to meet with the teacher, principal, CMP Executive Director and/or attendance improvement team to develop an attendance improvement plan.

Again, our goal is to have your child in school for each full day of instruction.

#### Students Classified as Truant

In accordance with California Education Code Section 48260 (a) “Any pupil subject to compulsory full-time education or to compulsory continuation education who is absent from school without valid excuse three full days in one school year or tardy or absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof, is a truant and shall be reported to the attendance supervisor or to the superintendent of the school district.”

Schools are required to report trancies to the California Department of Education, and CMP will inform parents/guardians of student trancies via attendance letters. Students who are habitually absent may be given a formal warning and referred to the Student Attendance Review Team, as described below.

**Student Attendance Review Team** (CMP Governing Board revision approved 10-10-11)

CMP has implemented a Student Attendance Review Team (SART) process to address attendance and tardy issues. This team is designed to meet with parents/guardians of students who have exceeded the allowable amount of unexcused absences. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the student’s attendance record and develop a plan for the student’s regular participation in school. The team shall include an administrator and a teacher from a different CMP campus than the student attends. All SART teams shall be chaired by the Executive Director or his/her designee.

**Procedures for Excessive Absences**

**STEP 1: Formal Written Notice**

When a student’s attendance exceeds seven (7) unexcused or fifteen (15) total absences, the parent/guardian will receive a Formal Written Notice alerting them to their student’s attendance record and follow-up requirements.

These requirements include, but are not limited to

- A meeting with the Campus Principal and CMP Executive Director to review the student’s attendance record and discuss next steps (e.g. SART referral). Note: The Executive Director will make the final determination of the appropriateness of a SART meeting.
- Review the Attendance Agreement as initiated during the Response to Intervention, Tier III, process
- Develop an Attendance Agreement if one has not previously been drafted

**STEP 2: Formal Written Notice – SART Meeting**

(Parent/Guardian and student attendance required)

When a student’s attendance continues to decline or meets the criteria as defined in the Attendance Agreement, the parents/guardians will be sent a formal notice to attend a mandatory Student Attendance Review Team (SART) meeting.

Parents/Guardians and the student will be required to attend the SART meeting during which time the SART will consider whether it is in the best interest for the student to remain enrolled in

California Montessori Project. This meeting shall be held as soon as possible. The parents/guardians may request one postponement, for good cause, not to exceed five (5) school days of the SART meeting.

At the SART meeting, the parents/guardians and student shall be informed of the reason for the conference and presented with the evidence of the student's violations of this policy. If the parents/guardians do not attend the SART meeting, the SART will review the relevant information and make a determination in their absence.

The parents/guardians shall be given the opportunity to present information and/or witnesses to the SART orally and/or in writing during the meeting. The SART shall consider any and all information presented by the parents/guardians and student when determining whether to recommend that the student be placed on an attendance contract and subject to disenrollment upon further violation of this policy. Additional factors to be considered include, but are not limited to, the following:

- student's progress in the curriculum
- disruption to other students
- teacher observation/feedback
- student's grades at the time of the evaluation
- standardized testing data

The SART's decision shall be provided in writing to the parents/guardians within three (3) school days following the meeting.

The SART may:

- Place the student on probation and require that an attendance contract be signed by both the parents/guardians and the student acknowledging that any further unexcused absences or tardies shall be cause for another hearing in front of the SART which may result in disenrollment from CMP
- Place the student on attendance probation to be evaluated again at a later time if the student's truancy patterns continue
- Use other alternatives to improve attendance
- Disenroll the student from CMP
- Refer parents/guardians and student to the District Attorney.

### Appeal of Disenrollment

If a student is disenrolled from CMP by the SART, the parents/guardians and student may appeal the SART decision to the CMP Governing Board.

The Executive Director or designee shall schedule the appeal to be heard within thirty (30) school days. The Executive Director or designee shall send out written notice of the date, time and location of the meeting to the parents/guardians.

The appeal shall proceed as follows:

- a. The Governing Board shall review the attendance records and any documents submitted by the parents/guardians. The Governing Board shall also review all records considered by the SART.
- b. The parents/guardians and student may address the Governing Board regarding the matter.
- c. The Principal or SART representative may address the Governing Board regarding the student's attendance.

The final decision with regard to continued enrollment at CMP shall be made within ten (10) school days following the conclusion of the appeal hearing. The parents/guardians shall be informed in writing of the Governing Board's decision.

**The decision of the Governing Board is final.**

#### Referral to the District Attorney

If a student's attendance does not improve after the SART meeting, or if the parents/guardians fail to attend a required SART meeting, the parents/guardians and the student may be referred by CMP to the District Attorney's office for prosecution through the court system. Students 12 years of age and older may be referred to the juvenile court for adjudication.

#### Options for Students Unable to Attend School

Students who are unable to attend school for an extended period of time due to serious injury or illness may be eligible to receive individualized academic assignments during the period of absence when approved in advance by both principal and Executive Director. Please note that attendance credit is not issued and the sole focus of such assignments is to support the student to stay current on his/her academic studies. The principal may request verification of students' condition by a physician. Students with mental health conditions must present verification from a physician *and* a treatment plan from their therapist. In such cases of medically related extended absence, the principal and the Executive Director will meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine the appropriateness of long-term individualized assignments (5 days or more of foreseeable absence).

Children who are absent due to shorter term illness should rest and recuperate so that they may return to school as soon as they are able. When reasonable, parents are encouraged to work with teachers to support the student's completion of missed work within a practical period of time.

Independent Study is not an option for replacing a student's attendance and participation at school. CMP has determined that a packet of measurable work does not adequately replicate the Montessori classroom experience. Instead, the administration and teaching staff wish to emphasize to our students and parents the importance of being at school every day. While families are asked to arrange for vacations and non-medical absences during school intersessions, holidays, and other non-school periods, if you know your child *must* be absent, please contact the teacher or principal in advance for assistance in obtaining makeup schoolwork for your child.

If your child is regularly unable to attend school or participate in scheduled classroom activities for reasons that are not health related, a conference should be scheduled between parent and principal to determine if CMP is the most appropriate academic placement for your student.



### Attendance Questions or Assistance

We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at any time to discuss any concerns or questions you may have about your child's attendance.

It is the goal of CMP to team with families to support each child's academic success. Daily attendance is a key component to this success and sends a message to your child that their education is a priority and is valued.