



2019-2020 HANDBOOK



MISSION

The mission of Miriam School is to encourage children with complex learning disabilities to recognize and successfully meet their potential.

The mission is accomplished through an individualized curriculum designed to meet the unique social, emotional, physical and academic needs of each student. Through a team approach, we provide an individually designed instructional program for students age four through Grade 8. We are committed to maintaining an environment that is positive and supportive to children, families and staff, and to fostering a relationship of mutual respect with our community.

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CREATING A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL AND PARENT PARTNERSHIP

Parents and staff of independent schools work together to create and sustain effective partnerships. The following principles of good practice describe the respective roles and responsibilities of both partners.

Parents Working With Independent Schools

1. Parents recognize that effective partnerships are characterized by clearly defined responsibilities, a shared commitment to collaboration, open lines of communication, mutual respect, and a common vision of the goals to be reached.
2. In selecting an independent school, parents seek an optimal match for the needs of the student, their own expectations, and the philosophy and programs of the school.
3. Parents are familiar with and support the school's policies and procedures.
4. Parents provide a home environment that supports the development of positive learning attitudes and habits.
5. Parents involve themselves in the life of the school.
6. Parents seek and value the school's perspective on the student.
7. When concerns arise, parents seek information directly from the school, consulting with those best able to address the concerns.
8. The school suggest effective ways for parents to support the educational process.

Independent Schools Working With Parents

1. The school recognizes that effective partnerships are characterized by clearly defined responsibilities, a shared commitment to collaboration, open lines of communication, mutual respect, and a common vision of the goals to be reached.
2. The school clearly and fully presents its philosophy, program, and practices to parents during the admission process and encourages dialogue that clarifies parental expectations and aspirations for the student.
3. The school seeks and values the parents' perspective on the student.
4. Teachers and administrators are accessible to parents and model candid and open dialogue.
5. The school keeps parents well informed through systematic reports, conferences, publications, and informal conversations.
6. The school defines clearly how it involves parents when considering major decisions that affect the school community.
7. The school offers and supports a variety of parent education opportunities.
8. The school suggests effective ways for parents to support the educational process.
9. The school actively seeks the knowledge it needs to work effectively with a diverse parent body.

The above principles are from the NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools) *Principles of Good Practice* that defines high standards and ethical behavior in key areas of school operations and helps guide schools in becoming the best education communities they can be.

GENERAL INFORMATION

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES AND SAFEGUARDS

Procedures

Arrival

THE SCHOOL DAY BEGINS AT 8:30 A.M. Arrival occurs between 8:20 and 8:30a.m.

Children should not come into the building before 8:20 a.m. unless a parent will remain with them. Staff members often have meetings at 8:00 a.m. and may not be available for supervision before this time.

Periodically, parents have requested and have been granted special consideration for arrival before 8:20 a.m. due to a scheduling difficulty. These requests are honored if possible, but the age and need for supervision of the children influence the decision. **Please contact the Head of School if you would like to make a special request. PARENTS WHO BRING CHILDREN AFTER 8:45 A.M. MUST PARK, ACCOMPANY THEIR CHILD INTO THE BUILDING, AND SIGN-IN IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE.**

Early Pick-up

If your child needs to be picked up early, please come to the school office and sign him or her out. The office will then call your child's teacher to request that the student come to the office for early dismissal.

Dismissal

THE SCHOOL DAY ENDS AT 3:30 P.M. Dismissal occurs between 3:30 p.m. and 3:45 p.m. Students must be picked up by 3:45 p.m. in order that proper supervision is available. **IF STUDENTS ARE NOT PICKED UP BY 3:45 P.M., THEY WILL BE PLACED IN EXTENDED DAY CARE. PARENTS WILL THEN BE CHARGED A ONE TIME EXTENDED DAY USE FEE.**

Safeguards

In order to be certain that children are safe and also to ensure that the drop-off and pick-up car lines move efficiently, the following safeguards must be observed:

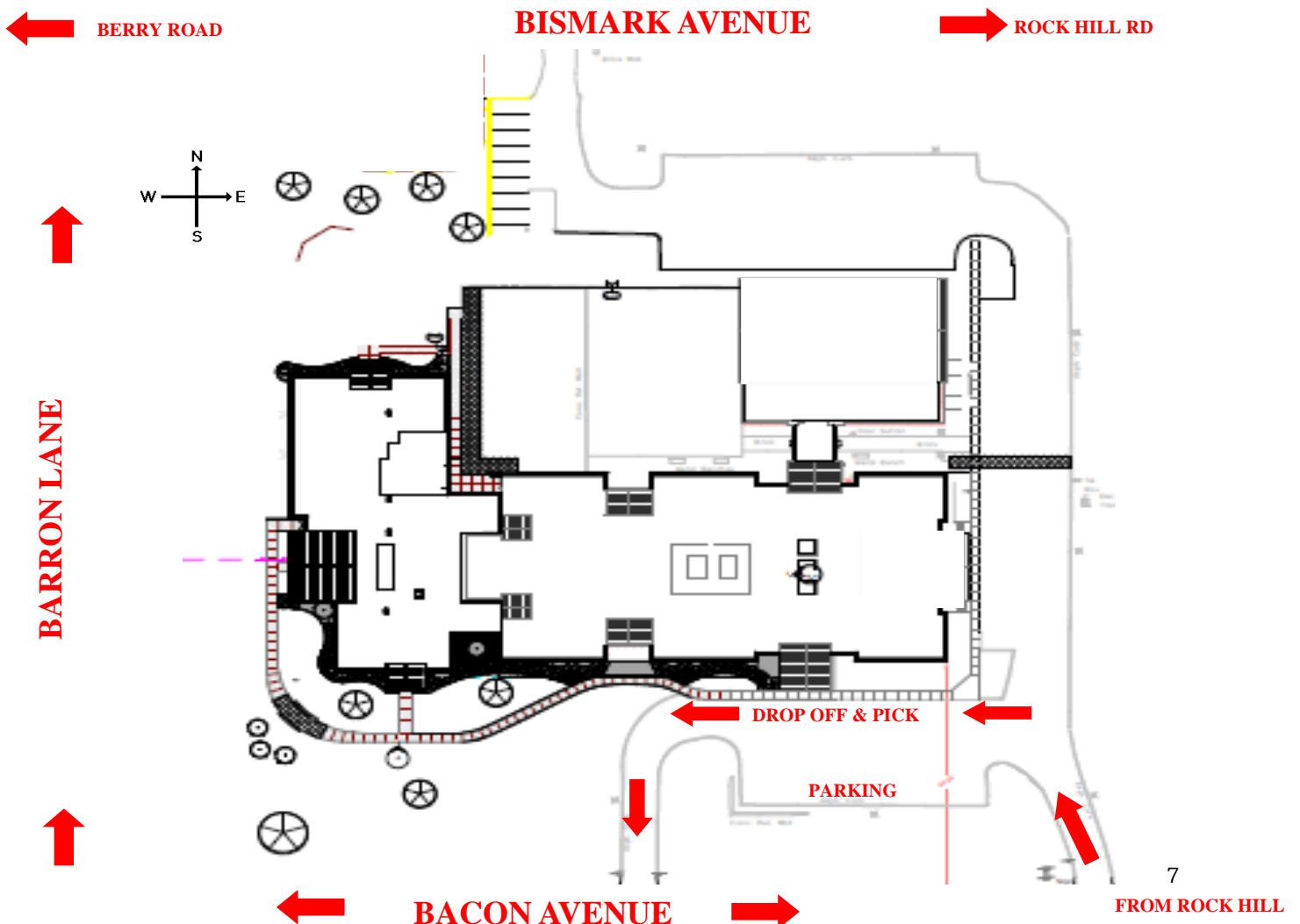
1. During **arrival time**, please follow the directions on the next page and always enter the school grounds from Bacon and exit from Bacon.
2. During **dismissal time**, please follow the directions on the page 8 and always enter the school grounds from Bacon and exit from Bismark.
3. Cars may not be parked unattended in the carpool line. If you need to come into the building, please use a designated parking spot on the school grounds or on Bacon Avenue.
4. The first car in the dismissal carpool line at the side entrance must not park beyond the brick walkway entrance.
5. Parents who park in the front parking lot must enter the building ONLY from the crosswalk.
6. Children may not walk unaccompanied into the building from a parking space.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES AND SAFEGUARDS (continued)

7. Afternoon dismissal time can be very crowded and hectic. If you would like to talk to your child's teacher, please call or make an appointment.
8. Do not pull out of the carpool line until the car in front of you has left. This is especially important in the afternoon as exiting drivers will need a clear view as they exit Bismark.

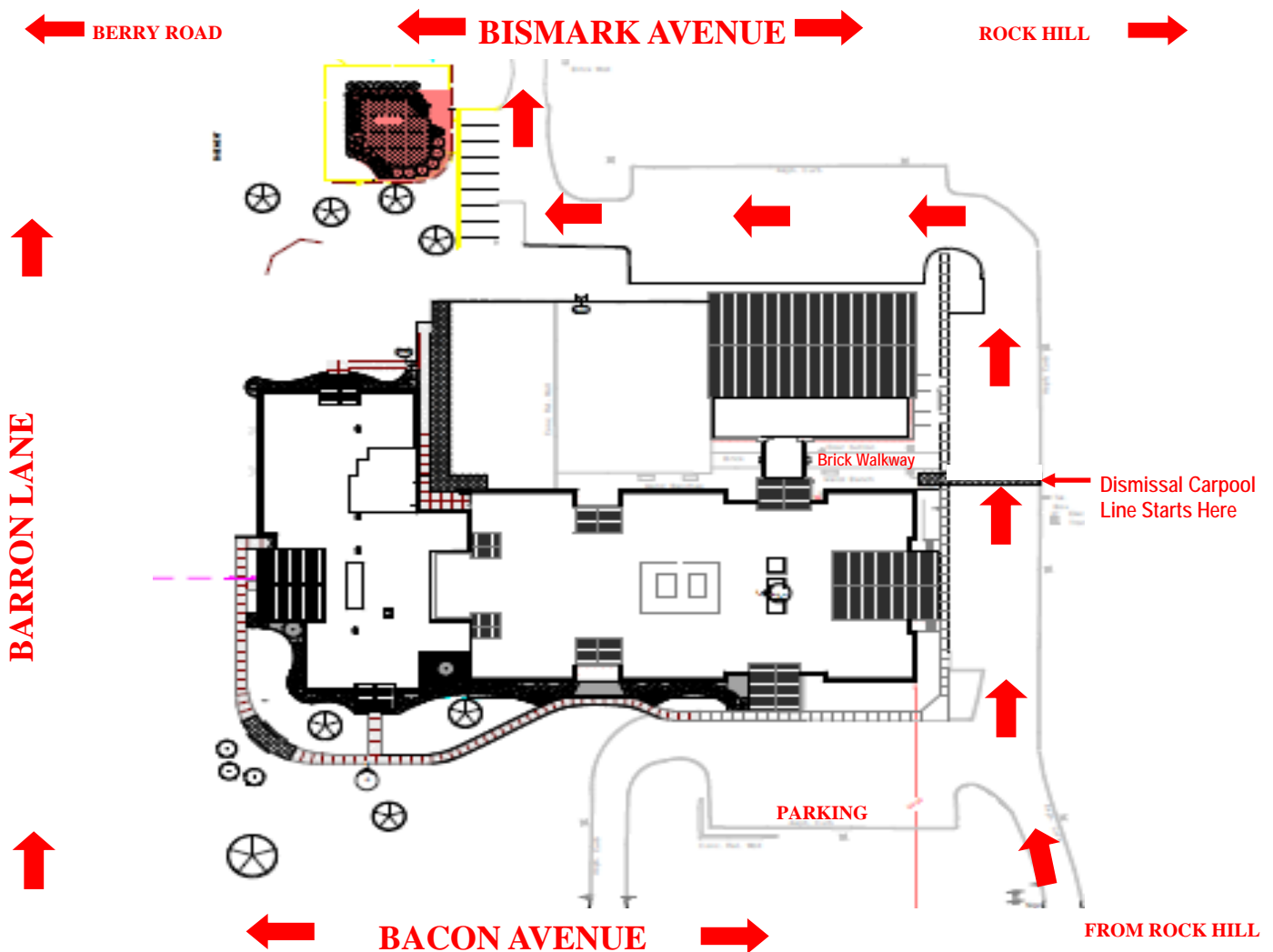
ARRIVAL DIRECTIONS

Enter the drive on Bacon and continue through the parking area in the front of the building. Drop off and pick up children in the indicated area in front of the building. Exit onto Bacon. **Please remember to park in a designated parking spot on the school grounds or along Bacon Avenue if you need to come into the school during arrival time. Please park only on the north side of Bacon Avenue so as not to impede the flow of traffic. This will make the arrival process run much more smoothly.**



DISMISSAL DIRECTIONS

Enter the drive on Bacon and proceed to the side of the school building. Pick up children in the indicated area in front of the building. Exit onto Bismark. **Please remember to park in a designated parking spot on the school grounds or along Bacon Avenue if you need to come into the school during arrival and dismissal times. Please park only on the north side of Bacon Avenue so as not to impede the flow of traffic. This will make the dismissal process run much more smoothly.**



ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS

Miriam School is required to have a 6½ hour school day in order to maintain approval from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The official start of the school day is 8:30 a.m., and children will be considered tardy if they arrive after that time.

PARENTS WHO BRING CHILDREN AFTER 8:45 A.M. MUST PARK, ACCOMPANY THEIR CHILD INTO THE BUILDING, AND SIGN-IN IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE.

All preplanned and unplanned absences and late arrivals must be phoned in to the office at the beginning of the school day. Parents must also call or send a written note to the school office if a child will be leaving during the school day. The child must then be signed out by a parent in the office at the time of departure.

CAFFEINATED/ENERGY DRINKS

Drinks such as coffee, lattes, Red Bull or other caffeinated energy drinks are not allowed at Miriam School.

CALENDAR - See Back Cover



CHANGE OF ADDRESS, TELEPHONE, EMAIL ADDRESS, GUARDIANSHIP, OR MEDICATION

It is essential that the school have accurate, updated information in order to contact parents or guardians in the event of an emergency. Current medication information is also essential in the case of a medical emergency. Please call the school office to inform school administration of any changes which occur and complete the forms on the school website.

CLASSROOM HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS AND BIRTHDAY INVITATIONS

Children in the Lower School — Rooms 1 through 3 may participate in Autumn/Halloween, Winter Holiday, Valentine parties and themed activities during the year. Room Parents in these classrooms plan special activities with help from the teacher and from other parents if needed.

Children in the Lower School — Rooms 4, 5, 6 and Middle School — Rooms 9, 10, 11 and 12 will not necessarily have formal holiday celebrations. Each of these classes may engage in holiday-themed projects and activities, as the age and maturity level of their students dictate.

Birthday treats are also permitted for children in their classrooms. Please notify the teacher prior to your child's birthday if you wish to celebrate at school.

Personal invitations to parties outside of school should be sent via regular mail or email. They should not be given to the teacher to send home in back packs.

DRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Dress standards at Miriam School have been established to promote an atmosphere conducive to a positive learning environment. Since not every aspect of a dress code can be written, the following list has been prepared as a general guideline for attire and personal items which are **NOT CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE** for the academic environment.

- **Hats or caps inside the building**
- **Cut, torn, or ripped clothing**
- **Tank tops, halters or any top that does not cover the stomach**
- **Shorts or skirts worn above mid-thigh**
- **Pants worn in a way in which underwear can be seen**
- **Clothing with inappropriate (such as drug/alcohol related) text or graphics**
- **Sunglasses worn inside the building**
- **Any attire that will draw undue attention to the student in a negative manner**

As with all general guidelines, individual student needs may supersede a particular dress issue. The child's age, sensory integration needs, etc., will be considered in the implementation of these recommendations.

If a staff member feels that a student's attire is not appropriate, that student's parents may be contacted to discuss needed future changes.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

Miriam School is committed to providing students access to digital media to support engaged learning while protecting them from harmful content. With these goals in mind, we have created the following policies for our students at school and in our Extended Day Program:

- Personal devices, including all cell phones, may only be used during the school day with the express permission of faculty.
- Personal gaming devices may not be brought to school.
- No personal electronic devices will be allowed during indoor recess.
- Students may not use any type of electronic device during arrival and dismissal.

All personal devices, including cell phones, must adhere to the Technology Use and Maintenance Policy. Failure to comply with the policy may result in confiscation of the device and/or loss of privileges at the discretion of School Administration.

Technology Use and Maintenance Policy

In order to keep Miriam School devices safe and fully functional, the following guidelines should be followed:

- When not in use, the devices should be stored in a designated area assigned by each teacher.
- Devices come with a protective case to help minimize damage and must remain in the protective case at all times. Cases must remain free of stickers, writing, painting, or any other forms of decoration.
- Each device is managed by Miriam School and has the ability to be remotely located. Modifying, disabling or attempting to disable the locator is a violation of the acceptable use policy.
- If devices fail to work or become damaged, the problem should be reported to the teacher who will contact the Director of Media Services for assistance.
- Students are not allowed to sign into personal accounts or to download or use any personal content on devices.

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in the suspended use of the device.

EMERGENCY CLOSING INFORMATION

Emergency closing of school will be called if the roads and/or weather conditions are considered hazardous or if building systems (heating, plumbing, electricity, etc.) are not functioning. The decision to cancel school will be based on safety considerations for children, parents and staff.

EMERGENCY WEATHER OR BUILDING SYSTEM FAILURE CLOSINGS:

If school must be cancelled prior to the start of the school day, all parents will be contacted at their preferred phone number(s) and by text and email by the School Messenger Emergency Notification System. Please enter your preferred School Messenger phone number(s) on the online Roster and Emergency Contact Information form.

If school must be cancelled prior to the start of the school day, the following TV and radio stations will also announce and post on their websites Miriam School closing information:

Television stations:	FOX 2	(myfoxstl.com)
	KMOV 4	(kmov.com)
	KSDK 5	(ksdk.com)
Radio station:	KMOX 1120 AM	(kmox.com)

If forecasts indicate that the weather will improve throughout the day, a **SNOW SCHEDULE** will be put in place rather than school cancellation. If a snow schedule is in effect, there will be **no Morning Extended Day**. **Students may arrive at 9:20 a.m. and school will start at 9:30 a.m.** The day will end at 3:30 p.m. as usual, and afternoon Extended Day will be open.

School Messenger and the radio and TV stations will indicate whether school has been cancelled or a snow schedule is in place.

If an early dismissal is required, you will be contacted by the school. If you cannot be reached, the individual you listed to be contacted in case of an emergency will be called.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PROCEDURES

Since 2001, our country has been placed on high alert several times. In the event of a true national, state, or community emergency, we ask that parents come to the school to pick up their children as soon as possible. As phone lines may be jammed, we ask that parents come directly to the school rather than call us. We also encourage parents to put a family plan in place so that everyone is organized and prepared in advance.

FACULTY AND STAFF

Head of School	Mary Cognata	mcognata@miriamstl.org
Director of Admissions	Megan Gibson	mgibson@miriamstl.org
Director of Media Services	Mary Bless	mbless@miriamstl.org
Extended Day	Jamie Perry	jperry@miriamstl.org
Classroom Teachers	Sara Barnes Candi Chiburis Leslie Lockett Emily Manninger Casey Matthes Jenny Menke Maria Piazza Andrea Rosenfeld Emily Starkey Jan Waters	sbarnes@miriamstl.org cchiburis@miriamstl.org llockett@miriamstl.org emanninger@miriamstl.org cmatthes@miriamstl.org jmenke@miriamstl.org mpiazza@miriamstl.org arosenfeld@miriamstl.org estarkey@miriamstl.org jwaters@miriamstl.org
Teacher Assistants	Karen Beard Karen Hacker Keith Lamb	kbeard@miriamstl.org khacker@miriamstl.org klamb@miriamstl.org
Occupational Therapy Staff	Jessica Gremaud Lori Lamb Cindy McFarland	jgremaud@miriamstl.org llamb@miriamstl.org cmcfarland@miriamstl.org
Speech/Language Staff	Leann Carruthers Jill Guilfooy Linda Mercer	lcarruthers@miriamstl.org jguilfooy@miriamstl.org lmercerc@miriamstl.org
Art	Keith Lamb	klamb@miriamstl.org
Executive Assistant	Jane Colt	jcolt@miriamstl.org
Director of Finance and Administration	Cyndi Ludwinski	cludwinski@miriamstl.org
Staff Accountant	Susan Bennett	sbennett@miriamstl.org
Secretary	Judy Ruhland	jruhland@miriamstl.org

FACULTY CONTACTS

If you have general school-related questions, please call the school office at 314-968-5225. The secretary will answer the phone personally if possible. Please note that information which requires immediate attention, such as medication or pick up changes, should continue to be given directly to the school office.

Individual faculty may be reached through a voice mail system. Faculty will check voice mail at least once daily. For parents and faculty who prefer to use email, each faculty member's email is located after his or her name in our Faculty and Staff listing. Faculty also check email at least once daily.

HEALTH AND FIRST AID

Below are some guidelines on when to keep your child at home.

1. **Fever:** If a child has a fever of 99.6 by mouth or 99° axillary, the child should stay home. Students must remain fever free for 24 hours before coming back to school. This is for your child's well-being, as well as to decrease the spread of contagious diseases.
2. **Flu Symptoms:** If a child has flu-like symptoms, including fever, aches, sore throat, cough, headache, chills, upset stomach and/or fatigue, he or she must be kept at home. The flu is considered contagious as long as signs and symptoms persist.
3. **Rash:** A rash of unknown cause should be seen by a physician to determine the diagnosis. Students should remain home until the cause is determined and a physician releases the child in writing to attend school.
4. **Sore throat, cold or cough:** Children should stay home until symptoms are mild.
5. **Head lice:** Children must stay home and be treated with a special shampoo and may return to school when they are nit free.
6. **Ringworm:** Children can come to school once treatment is started.
7. **Hepatitis A:** If diagnosed, a student should have a physician's permission to attend school.
8. **Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye):** The student is excluded from school until treatment is given by a physician.
9. **Diarrhea:** The child should remain at home until free of diarrhea.
10. **Herpes Simplex II:** Fever blisters, "cold" sores around the mouth, lips, sometimes near or in nostrils—a child should stay home until a physician releases the child to attend school.
11. **Vomiting:** This may be a symptom of a serious disease. **Children should stay home for 24 hours after the last vomiting episode. If a child vomits at school, a parent is required to pick-up the student.**

Miriam School is equipped to provide minor first aid care for children. Please notify the school office of any health problems that might be a concern for your child at school. If a student does not feel well during the school day, he or she can rest in the health room for a brief time period. The student's temperature will be taken, and a parent will be contacted if there is a fever, or if a condition merits parent consultation. **Parents will be contacted and requested to assume responsibility for any health care that goes beyond first aid or for any condition deemed to be potentially contagious.**

INSURANCE THERAPY STATEMENTS

If your child has a **formal medical or educational diagnosis in writing**, some medical insurance plans provide coverage for speech/language therapy and/or occupational therapy. If your child is receiving either or both of these services from Miriam School, you may wish to submit a claim to your insurance company. At your request, the school will provide the needed information to submit with your claim.

Some companies reimburse for occupational or speech/language therapies on the basis of “medical necessity.” This means that they may require a written statement or “prescription” for these therapies from your doctor. In order to expedite payment of your claim, it would be advisable to contact your doctor about this prior to submitting your first claim.

Therapy statements of services are issued to parents for submission to their insurance companies. **We do not mail therapy statements directly to individual insurance companies.**

Requests for therapy statements for therapies provided at Miriam School must be made by OCTOBER 1 of each academic year or within one month of enrollment. We are not able to fulfill requests for backdated therapy statements.

LOST AND FOUND

Parents are asked to put a label or name tag on items such as coats, jackets, gloves, boots, lunch boxes, etc. Please write your child’s first and last name on all of his/her belongings.

There is a lost and found cabinet in the school office, and students and parents are encouraged to look through the items if an item is lost.

LUNCH

Students bring their lunch and eat in the school Multi-Purpose Room. Faculty and staff are always present during the lunch period to provide assistance and supervision. **Please put your child’s name on the front of his or her lunch box for ease of identification during the lunch period.**

Students may bring food which requires refrigeration, and there is an optional milk program available.

Students may also bring microwaveable foods. Staff will be available during each lunch period to operate the microwave ovens. **Due to time constraints, students may bring only microwaveable food which can be heated in under three minutes. This policy will be strictly enforced.**

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS AND IMMUNIZATIONS

Each child must have a medical examination form completed upon entering Miriam School and every three years thereafter. These forms are provided to all parents upon enrollment and as they become due.

All children must have the required immunizations prior to attending school.

Children's immunization records remain on file at the school per standards set forth by Missouri State Law.

PARENT COMMUNITY

2019-2020 Programs and Events for Parents and Families

Each year, Miriam School and Miriam School Parent Association sponsor a variety of educational, social and support programs for parents. Following is an overview of the programs for the 2019-2020 school year:

- **Summer 2019 New Parent Orientation:** 9:00 – 10:30am on August 2, 2019
- **Meet Your Teacher:** 9:00—10:30am on August 9, 2019
- **First Day of School Parent Coffee:** 8:30 – 10:00am on August 14, 2019
- **Parent Welcome Night:** 6:30 – 7:30pm on August 29, 2019
- **Miriam Night at the Ballpark:** 7:15pm game on September 13, 2019
- **Curriculum Night:** 6:30pm on October 17, 2019
- **The Scholastic Book Fair** will be held from December 11 through December 19, 2019, with the **“Grand Lunch”** event on December 17, 2019
- **Miriam Trivia Night:** 6:00 – 10:00pm on February 22, 2020, with all proceeds benefitting the Miriam School Scholarship Program
- **Miriam School Annual Spring Picnic:** 12:00 – 2:00pm on May 2, 2020
- **“Miriam Empowers through Education”** Speaker Series: Three evening parent educational seminars and one morning program are offered (at a reduced price) to Miriam School parents, as well as (at the full price) to parents and educators from the St. Louis Community through the Miriam Learning Center
- **Parent Coffee and Association Meetings:** 8:30 - 10:00am on October 4, November 1 and December 6, 2019; January 10, February 7, March 6 and April 3, 2020
- **Last Day of School Parent Coffee:** 8:30 – 10:00am on May 20, 2020.

These parent programs are scheduled on a variety of days and evenings throughout the school year, so that they will be available to as many parents and families as possible and additional programs may be included as the year progresses. Miriam School Parent Association events and activities are also scheduled during the school year.

PARENT VISITS AND OBSERVATION BOOTH GUIDELINES

Parents are welcome to visit Miriam School at any time during the school day to use the observation booths. In order to observe the most accurate picture of the day's structure, it is best to come between 8:45 a.m. and 3:15 p.m.

Observation Booth Guidelines:

- Be sure to sign in when you come into the building so that the office is aware of who is in the building.
- There is a speaker system located on the wall of each observation booth. Turn the volume up to listen and please turn the volume off before exiting the booth. **It is important that no one (visitors, parents, or staff) be in the observation booth when there are no students in the room. Teachers and therapists often discuss confidential information at these times and we want to protect the privacy of your child and of other children.**
- No one should be in the booths after school hours since no students are in the room and this is also a faculty consultation time.
- All information you gain from observing the other children in our school is confidential. We are very fortunate to have observation booths in our building and we want to make sure that they are used for their intended purpose.

PRESCRIPTION AND NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS

Prescription medication permission forms are available on the School Forms page under the School Life menu of the Miriam School website. There is a **Medication Dispensing Release for Home Form** and a **Medication Dispensing Release for School Form** and both forms must be submitted even if your child does not receive medication. If medication changes occur or a child begins a new medication after the school year begins, new forms must be submitted to the school office.

When a prescription medication is to be administered by the school, **it must be in its original container** with the proper pharmacy label displayed that includes the; 1) name of the child, 2) name of the medication, 3) dosage, 4) schedule of administration, 5) expiration date and 6) physician's name.

Non-prescription medications or supplements must be in the original container. **Medication boxes with the day of the week will not be accepted.** A note signed by the parents with specific instructions must include the; 1) child's name, 2) name of the medication, 3) dosage, 4) schedule of administration and 5) expiration date.

PRESCRIPTION AND NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS (continued...)

All medications must be brought directly to the office. Please do not give medications to your child's teacher or allow your child to carry his or her own medication. Parents who use Extended Day may leave medications with the Extended Day Coordinator.

Non-prescription medications and supplements, including Tylenol, Advil, Benadryl, vitamin supplements, etc., must also be brought only to the school office with specific instructions written and signed by parents.

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTATION

The Miriam School faculty is often asked to prepare documents for, or to participate in, due process hearings, court proceedings, or other events which do not relate directly to the school's program. While we understand parents' need for our input regarding these events, your tuition dollars do not cover the administrative or faculty time that these services require. The following fee schedule has been developed as a guide to assist you in requesting our professional consultative services:

- Phone or in-person consultation for non-Miriam related matters (e.g., court proceedings, due process, etc.) \$300/hour
- Preparation of materials for use in due process or legal proceedings, etc. \$300/hour
- Participation by the administration or faculty in legal or due process procedures \$300/hour

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

School supply lists are sent home with class placement lists at the end of July.

STUDENT RECORDS RETENTION

Student Records that include progress reports, achievement tests, Individual Learning Plans, and evaluations are kept as a permanent record. If a student transfers to Miriam Academy then the permanent student record is kept by Miriam Academy. In accordance with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, records retention schedules for special education, records are maintained for three years after the last date of enrollment.

TAX DEDUCTION INFORMATION

Parents of children with disabilities may be able to take advantage of a number of tax deductions on both state and federal income taxes. To make the most of the tax advantages that are available to you, keep in mind the following hints:

1. Keep Good Records

Record all expenses related to your child's disability, from medical care to travel and equipment expenditures. Make sure to note:

- date of payment
- name and address of the service provider
- a brief description of the service provided
- the amount paid

As a general practice, keep all cancelled checks, bills and receipts related to deductible expenses.

2. Doctor's Prescriptions

Be sure to have a written doctor's diagnosis, as well as prescriptions for equipment, medications and necessary treatments.

3. Explain Your Claims

Write a letter explaining your child's disability and the deductions you are claiming and attach this letter to your income tax return (Reprinted in part by PLUCK News).

All or part of Miriam School tuition MAY be tax deductible depending upon the interpretation of current IRS regulations. We will furnish current families with a letter that describes why your child is enrolled at Miriam School. The letter includes those diagnoses for which we have written documentation. We will also indicate that these diagnoses interfere with learning in a traditional educational environment and require special education and therapy interventions. You will receive this letter by January 31, 2020.

TECHNOLOGY, BOOKS AND SUPPLY FEE

There is a \$300.00 technology, books and supply fee for each student. This fee supports the technology program, curriculum program and supplies for classroom lessons and activities.

VIRTUAL PARENT RESOURCES

Miriam School uses our website, www.miriamstl.org, to help us communicate important information to parents throughout the school year. Under the **School Life** menu on the school's website we have the following informational pages

- **School Calendar**
- **School Handbook**
- **School Forms** – Student forms must be completed online. All required forms can be found on this page and will remain available throughout the year to allow for changes to important information.
- **Parent Community** – An overview and schedule of the current year programs for parents and families as well as resources for at home learning are located on this page.
- **Wednesday Folder** – The virtual Wednesday Folder is available each week to provide parents with important information from the school office, classrooms, parent community and development. All Wednesday Folders are archived on this page, so they can be accessed as needed.

If you have questions regarding our website or individual pages, please contact Mary Bless, Director of Media Services, at mbless@miriamstl.org.



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

ART

The mission of the art program is to help students develop knowledge of art history and artistic principals, as well as to experience and appreciate a variety of artistic media. Formal art classes are held once a week. These experiential classes explore a wide variety of artistic skills and are individualized according to students' fine motor and visual perceptual abilities.

EXTENDED DAY SERVICES

Miriam School offers a before-school and after-school program during the academic year. The goals of this service are to provide a structured recreational environment which promotes children's social and developmental learning. This program is implemented by an extended day coordinator and maintains a one-to-ten staff/student ratio. Parents may use this service on an as-needed basis as well as on a fixed schedule. Extended Day opens at 7:00 a.m. and ends at 5:30 p.m.

GUIDELINES FOR CLASSROOM PLACEMENT

The following variables are considered in determining classroom placement for Miriam School students:

Academics

- Will the student feel academically comfortable rather than academically isolated?
- Are there curriculum areas in which the student may be able to take a leadership role?
- Will math and reading be homeroom based?
- Will there be opportunities for peer tutoring?

Social

- Are there proven or potential positive peer role models?
- Are there students with whom potential friendships may be formed?
- Will the student have opportunities to take leadership roles in different areas?
- Will the student be able to respond to the social expectations of the class either independently or with direction?
- How difficult are transitions for the student?

Speech/Language and Occupational Therapies

- Are the student's language skills commensurate with the group norm?
- Are the student's motor skills commensurate with group norm?
- Is the amount of pull-out therapy commensurate with the group norm?

Additional Considerations

- Are the student's age, grade and maturity levels compatible with the other students in the room?
- Has a teacher-student relationship been established that should be maintained for another year?
- Parental perspective

HOMEWORK PHILOSOPHY

Homework Guidelines

At Miriam School we believe that a successful academic program reflects a school philosophy of high expectations for all and a respect for students' innate desire to learn. Staff are skilled in providing a strong and comprehensive program founded in the acquisition of academic and social skills and practiced within the school setting. Miriam School homework guidelines emphasize the nightly practice of reading, an essential skill that enables students to be successful.

Homework Program:

Lower School

Rooms 1, 2, 3 Read

Rooms 4, 5 and 6 Reading, Math

Middle School

Reading, math and content area projects as they connect with classroom learning. In addition, middle school students work on study skills and assessment preparation both during the school day and as part of their homework assignments. Each student will keep a daily agenda book. Eighth grade students will also complete an independent long term homework project during the second semester of the school year.

Online resources are available for families who want to work on academics at home. These resources are posted on the Miriam School website.

Summer Reading Program:

This year, for the first time, students who were in rooms 4 through 12 were given summer reading assignments. At the end of the school year you will be sent the reading program for next summer.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAM

The mission of the Occupational Therapy Program is to evaluate and improve fine/gross motor and sensory delays in order to help maximize each students' independence. Each child is evaluated by a registered occupational therapist upon enrollment unless a recent outside agency assessment has been completed. This evaluation includes the use of standardized measurements, anecdotal information, and clinical observations to assess fine and gross motor skills development and sensory integration needs. The results of this evaluation determine the need for therapy and provide a starting point for establishing goals and objectives.

The Occupational Therapy Program is based on a sensory integrative and developmental approach. Children are seen individually and in small groups, as well as in the classroom setting, depending on the nature of treatment and the location of the use of the targeted skill.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL FITNESS

The goals of the Physical Education Program are to improve physical fitness, to help students learn rules and develop skills for common age-appropriate games; to help improve social skills; and to enhance self-esteem. Activities are selected, and expected skill levels are evaluated, based upon each child's individual abilities.

SELF-ADVOCACY

Miriam School administration and faculty believe that students must have strong self-advocacy skills in order to be successful in the classroom, in their social interactions and in the world at large. Miriam School faculty teach lessons about specific disabilities and learning styles in every classroom through formal and informal lessons that are appropriate to each student's maturity and abilities. Students are guided in the use of this information to successfully advocate for themselves in positive ways. The ultimate goal is that Miriam School students grow to understand themselves and be able to advocate academic and social situations.

SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The directed development of good social skills and positive self-esteem are integral components of the educational program. Children with disabilities often miss or misinterpret essential environmental information which would allow them to function confidently and effectively in interpersonal relationships or within larger social situations. Each classroom uses a variety of formal and informal curricula, as well as in-the-moment opportunities, to teach the use of successful social and interpersonal strategies and to promote positive self-esteem.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

The school is comprised of ten ungraded classrooms with a low teacher-to-student ratio. Each student's classroom placement is determined through a review of current diagnostic information and consideration of input from faculty, parents, and outside professionals. In order to maximize individual progress, as well as to promote group learning opportunities, each student's age, developmental/maturational level, academic skills, and social skills learning style are considered in determining classroom assignment.

As the classrooms move from youngest to oldest, there is a progression from teacher-directed instruction to more independent learning. As students progress through the program, they are also encouraged to assume greater responsibility for their academic success and for their social competence. A variety of instructional methodology and materials designed to enhance students' learning styles is used within this progression. Students participate in small and large group instruction, cooperative learning groups, independent work, and self-directed learning activities.

FUTURE READY SKILLS AND PROJECT BASED LEARNING

At Miriam School, children are taught the essential Future Ready Skills of critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, creativity, and innovation by participation in Project Based Learning (PBL). PBL is a process by which students engage in extended inquiry in response to a complex question, problem or challenge. Students learn essential academic content and practice Future Ready Skills using PBL. Additionally, PBL is inherently differentiated, thereby affording each student opportunities to learn in ways that are meaningful to them and that give them the means to construct answers and to acquire essential knowledge and to progress academically and socially.

SPEECH/LANGUAGE PROGRAM

The mission of the Speech/Language Program is to assess and treat communication concerns so that students can become more effective communicators. Every child who is enrolled at Miriam receives an evaluation of his or her speech and language skills unless a recent outside agency assessment has been completed. This evaluation includes the use of standardized tests and informal language sampling to measure articulation, vocabulary, sentence construction, and verbal interaction. A hearing screening is also provided along with other auditory tests which assess discrimination, sequencing, and memory. The results of the communication evaluation determines the need for therapy and provides a starting point for establishing goals and objectives.

Students receive speech and/or language therapy based on assessed need. Students may be seen by the therapists to monitor developing skills as well as to remediate mild, moderate, or multiple communication difficulties. Children are seen in individual, small group and classroom settings to facilitate speech and language development. These situational variations allow students to practice skills in different communication environments. Therapists are then able to monitor the development and use of speech and language in progressively more natural situations. Therapy may occur in the therapy room or classroom, on the playground, or in the lunchroom depending on the needs of the student and his or her individual goals.

TECHNOLOGY FOR FUTURE READY STUDENTS

Miriam is committed to providing teachers and students the tools they need to experience dynamic, personalized learning. We offer a variety of tools including iPads, MacBooks, Chromebooks and SMART Interactive Displays in each classroom. The purpose of integrated technology is to give students greater access to content, experience and expertise with ever-changing tools and authentic choice in how they will demonstrate their learning.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

EDUCATIONAL EVALUATIONS

As students initially enroll in Miriam School, they are required to have a current (within the previous three years) public school or private agency evaluation. As we are an independent school, an updated evaluation is not required after this time to receive services at Miriam School, unless parents, teachers, and/or therapists want additional information in order to optimally program for each student.

Since federal and state guidelines for special education services may change without prior notice, Miriam School faculty strongly recommend that students' public school evaluations are updated every three years. If a student's current public school evaluation expires during the school year, the Head of School will notify parents in writing. Parents will be asked to respond to this notification and the current evaluation and reevaluation process will be explained. Parents will only be notified during the year their child's evaluation requires updating. After that time, parents assume the responsibility for initiating the reevaluation.

If you are considering transition to a new school or if your child will graduate from 8th grade at the end of the current year, please read the following information:

- Public schools require a current (within the previous three years) public school evaluation in order for children to receive special education services. **If you are considering transitioning to a public school at the end of the current school year, please contact the Head of School by November 1st in order to ensure that the evaluation process will be finalized in a timely manner.**
- Private schools have evaluation requirements that are specific to their needs, and they may require either a public or private agency evaluation. The Head of School serves as the resource for information concerning private evaluations.

In addition to programming, services qualification and enrollment requirements, participation in the routine three-year public school evaluation process documents a continuous need for special education services and accommodations. This documentation may be required for ACT and SAT accommodations as students make post-high school plans.

LEARNING PLAN (LP)

The “What” and “Why” of the Learning Plan

The Learning Plan (LP) is the “benchmark” used to guide each student’s program. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have their basis in federal law and are required for all students who receive special education services in a public school. Miriam School supports this mandate in both spirit and practice through our Learning Plans. The Miriam School LP serves as a means for developing a partnership between family and school personnel. It provides the foundation for programmatic decisions and helps determine curriculum, teaching strategies and preferred progress measurements based on students’ individual strengths and weaknesses. It assures that differing abilities are addressed within an understandable and consistent structure while providing for the tracking of students’ knowledge acquisition in a variety of settings. The Miriam School LP is not a legal contract but it is a “good faith” agreement between school and parents.

The “Who” of LPs

The Miriam School LP team is comprised of parents, teachers, and therapists. It may also include any other individuals who have information that would be helpful in planning for the child. This could include, but is not limited to, therapists, administrators, previous school personnel or extended family members. Classroom teachers chair each LP meeting and are responsible for coordinating all aspects of the process from scheduling the meeting to completing the actual plan based upon participants’ input.

The “When” of LPs

It is standard practice for faculty to work with a new student’s existing IEP if applicable, with reviews and revisions as needed. If a new student does not enter school with a current IEP, the Miriam School faculty and parents meet to write an LP during October, November or December of the student’s first year. All subsequent annual LP meetings will be held near the anniversary date in order to best serve the needs of our students.

Learning Plan (Continued...)

The “How” of LPs

The focus of the Miriam School Learning Plan meeting is the sharing of information by all participants and the summation of this information into statements which translate into an understandable educational plan for each student. Present levels of performance are established in the areas of academic skills, classroom performance, sensory-motor development and speech/language skills. Formal and informal assessments, in conjunction with parent input and teacher observation, are used to determine this information. The LP team summarizes the areas of strengths and weaknesses and develops goals and objectives to address specific weaknesses.

Measurable criteria for achieving the goals and objectives are recorded as part of the document. Examples of classroom goal areas may include task focus, adult and peer interaction, reading, math, and written language skills. Occupational therapy and speech/language therapy goals address motor and communication skills and are also incorporated into the total educational plan when weaknesses are evidenced in these areas.

Goals and objectives are written to be attained by the end of one year. They can be achieved at any point prior to the end of the year or, if not achieved within the annual time frame, rewritten for completion during the next LP period. If at any time during the LP year the team determines that goals and objectives need to be changed to better address the student's needs, this revision is accomplished through an established LP amendment process. A change in a student's diagnostic label may also result in the revision of the LP, if necessary, to address new areas of concern. At the conclusion of the LP period, the team meets to complete a formal review of the previous plan and to develop a new one.

PARENT CONFERENCES

There are two formal parent conferences held each year. Your child's teacher will contact you prior to these dates to schedule a specific meeting time. Speech/language therapists and occupational therapists will also be available during conference times for parents who wish to confer with them.

Specific conference dates are listed on the school calendar on the back cover of this handbook. Please note: The Extended Day Program will conclude 5:30 p.m. as usual on the evenings when parent conferences are held.

Parents are always encouraged to meet with teachers or therapists outside scheduled conference times if specific questions or concerns arise.'

PROGRESS REPORTS

The Miriam School faculty reports student progress on a trimester basis. Progress is reported in two ways: The Progress Report and the LP Goal Reporting Forms.

Parents will receive the first and second trimester Progress Reports prior to fall and winter parent conferences. The third trimester report will be sent home at the end of the school year. It is important to note that each student is receiving instruction at his or her academic level. Coursework and grades may be modified to support the individual learning needs of each student.

The LP Goal Reporting Forms are included with the trimester Progress Reports. These goals, and the objectives related to them, are set at the annual Learning Plan meeting with parents, teachers and therapists. Progress in goal areas for each student's current LP, whether written at Miriam or for new students written at a former school, is reported on these forms.

Miriam School faculty hope to strengthen the understanding between parents and teachers through our progress reporting process. We believe our collaboration with parents is essential for each child's maximum development. If you have a question about your child's progress at any time during the school year, please call or set up a conference with your child's teacher or therapist.

STUDENT CONDUCT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students at Miriam School are expected to demonstrate:

- Respect for themselves
- Respect for others
- Respect for school facilities

It is the responsibility of each student to:

1. Respect and comply with requests and direction from faculty.
2. Be diligent in study, which includes:
 - completing assigned work on time
 - paying attention to the teacher
 - exhibiting good citizenship
 - doing the caliber of work consistent with the student's individual ability
 - cooperating with teachers and other students
 - regular and punctual attendance

The faculty is aware that students do not always begin attendance at Miriam School with the ability to successfully assume all of these responsibilities. During each child's educational experience, the faculty and staff will work cooperatively to help them achieve this level of competence.

TRANSITION SERVICES

Transition Prior to Eighth Grade

As students leave Miriam School, administration and faculty offer individual guidance to help families with transition planning and implementation. Readiness to transition to a less specialized school environment or the need to transition to a different type of program are determined through discussions among administration, faculty and parents. These discussions may occur at any time during the school year as staff or parents begin to consider a different educational choice for the following school year.

The Head of School coordinates the transition program and helps parents begin the process of researching and discussing possible educational options. Teachers and therapists also provide valuable input concerning specific student needs and program requirements during the initial steps of the transition process. As parents and staff narrow the field of possible choices to those that are most probable, parents begin to contact and make preliminary visits to schools. At this time, faculty may also fill out requested written information or talk with receiving school personnel. Faculty also continues to discuss pertinent issues and

recommendations with parents during this exploratory period. Once a tentative selection has been determined, faculty may visit the future program or host a meeting/observation with prospective school personnel. Faculty may also participate in specific educational planning or IEP meetings with the future school.

If you are considering transitioning to a new school at the end of the current year, please read the following information:

Public Schools require a current (within the previous three years) public school evaluation in order for children to receive special education services. **If you are considering transitioning to a public school at the end of the current school year, please contact the Miriam Head of School by November 1st in order to ensure that the evaluation process will be finalized in a timely manner.**

Private Schools have evaluation requirements that are specific to their needs, and they may require either a public or private agency evaluation. The Head of School serves as the resource for information concerning private evaluations.

If you are considering transition at the end of this school year, please contact the Head of School or your child's teacher to discuss the specific details of your circumstance and the ways in which Miriam School administration and faculty may assist you with the transition process.

TRANSITION SERVICES (continued...)

Transition to High School

As graduating students leave Miriam School, the Head of School and Middle School faculty offer guidance to help parents with the transition to high school. The families of eighth grade students will work with the Head of School and Middle School faculty for general guidance and follow-up regarding the transition to high school. In cooperation with the Head of School, each student will also be followed by their classroom teacher to closely monitor current year progress and attend to important issues related to the transition to high school.

During the month of September, parents should schedule an appointment with the Head of School or their child's classroom teacher to go over their individual situation and to begin the process of high school investigation and selection. Specific parent and student needs will be clarified and school choices will be discussed and narrowed during this meeting. Time-lines, application/enrollment procedures, evaluation requirements, etc., if known, will also be discussed. In general, applications to private high schools are due earlier than public school enrollment forms, so this will be considered during the meeting. After general information is exchanged, parents will then be directed to contact and make preliminary visits to potential schools.

As choices are narrowed further, faculty may also fill out or send requested written information or talk with receiving school personnel. Faculty also continues to discuss pertinent issues and recommendations with parents during this exploratory period. Once a tentative selection has been determined, Miriam School faculty may visit the future program or host a meeting/observation with prospective school personnel. Faculty may also participate in specific educational planning or IEP meetings with the future school once a final selection has been determined.

General Transition Information

Receiving schools contact Miriam School throughout the year and at the end of the third trimester to request educational information and final transcripts. **Transcripts will be forwarded only if all outstanding tuition and fees have been paid.** This is especially important for graduating students, so that a smooth transition to high school is ensured.