

**The Handbook for
Local Ministers of
Children**

Kingdom of Meridies

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Credits

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Thank you, Ladies!

Preface - A Different Point of View

You've seen it all in the movies from the time you were very young: the romance and excitement of Robin Hood, the mystique and drama of the Arthurian legend, or even more recently, heart-pounding thrills in movies about famous Scotsmen or Vikings. You want a chance to relive it all, learn the truth behind the tales, and dress just like your heroes. This shouldn't be a problem, right? You've been in the SCA for years! But you loathe going to events. Why?

Well, for starters, there are so many restrictions. Due to a physical truth over which you have no control, you aren't allowed to fight heavy combat or rapier. You can participate in archery and equestrian, but only at off-times, if someone is willing to assist you. You try to attend classes, but the teachers look at you with suspicion, or simply won't allow your presence. Your family has explained all about issues like "safety" and "liability", and you understand...but it's still frustrating.

Finally, someone who doesn't mind the extra time and effort offers to host classes and workshops for you and those like you! But, what a disappointment - you find yourself coloring pictures all day, something you did years ago in pre-school, and something you could have as easily done it home, if you had really wanted to in the first place.

To make it worse, the other attendees who don't share your physical condition find your type annoying. You're too noisy (aren't the fighting and drumming noisy, too?). You ask for too much (well, who wouldn't complain after being expected to sit quietly doing nothing for hours on end?). Your mere presence, even when quiet, annoys some people. Therefore, you and your kind are sequestered away to the farthest distant location the autocrat can find. Out of sight, out of mind, right?

Now, by virtue of the above being printed in the Ministry of Children Handbook, it's pretty obvious who is being discussed. Try to imagine an adult saying it, though, explaining a situation caused by a state of being other than "youth". Children must have different rules and restrictions placed on them, obviously, but there is no reason for others to treat these **people** poorly (with bad locations, boring activities, or bad attitudes) just because they want to be a part of the SCA. It's their hobby, too!

The atmosphere in Meridies is bright and promising with so many new, wonderful activities for children available nowadays, and many of the issues above have all but disappeared. However, without our vigilance and efforts, it would be far too easy to slip right back into that sad, old modus operandi. Hopefully, this handbook will help keep us aimed towards progress with an eye on quality!

Please keep in mind the children's (and parents') wishes and needs when planning your activities, and if you don't know what they want, just ask them - they're always full of great new ideas!

Introduction

Welcome to the Ministry of Children!

Despite its seemingly innocent exterior, this lesser office could be one of the most difficult jobs you'll undertake, and the most fulfilling! Multi-tasking is vital, as you'll find yourself playing director of public relations, planner, teacher, accountant, so many different roles. However, you'll be providing an educational service that benefits children, families, and the Society at large (these are our future leaders, after all). You are about to participate in a highly noble quest, and the journey is just as rewarding as the destination!

We're glad you joined us!

Okay, now where do you start?

The very first thing you should do once your group has given you approval to conduct this office is *contact the Kingdom Minister of Children* with a **Letter of Introduction**. It need not be formal, but it should include your contact information.

Reports and Letters are by no means required, as this is a Lesser Office, but it only serves to benefit us all, if you choose to keep up the communications. We're all friends here, and tend to work as a team, with neighboring MoCs, across the Kingdom, and in some cases across many Kingdoms. Typically, we all share the same problems, and not only can we sympathize and offer help through strong communications, but we can often join forces to solve some of the larger issues we occasionally face. Networking can make a world of difference for you, and for all the other MoCs out there!

We'll go more into reporting in Chapter 3 and into networking and working with fellow MoCs in Appendix II: Resources.

Next, read the handbook! Remember, though, as soon as you're through - **put it in your files**. This handbook was created for your benefit, sure, but also for the benefit of your group and your successor. This goes for seneschals, too - if you're currently sans one Minister of Children, save it for the day when you do have one or so you may use it for reference for temporary planners who volunteer to run activities at your events.

Now, let's move on to the basics, starting with learning just what this office is all about.

Chapter One: Understanding Your Office

There are a few simple things to understand about this office that can be wrapped up in a nutshell. Kingdom Law provides a good description (provided in Chapter Four of this handbook), but I prefer layman's terms:

- You are not a babysitter; you are an educator. Read that sentence again. Please commit it to memory.
- Along those lines, you are not providing services for pre-school-aged children. You are providing classes and activities for the children who are emotionally and physically prepared to participate without their parents, being those ages five through sixteen. The current policy relating to the age requirements can be found as an appendix to the Seneschal's Handbook, on page 78. The following statement is included: "No children under the age of five should ever be left unsupervised by their parents/guardians, even at planned children's activities." (See <http://www.sca.org/docs/welcome.html> for the PDF file.)
- "Glue and Glitter" activities are not considered educationally enriching. They are "busy work". Once in a while, something mindless and fun is fine, but remember your office description, your goals, and your capabilities before relying on them too heavily. Don't sell yourself short and definitely don't underestimate the brilliant young minds around you.

Our School of Thought

Rule #1 - Youth Involvement

Children should receive the same opportunities for learning, entertainment, and belonging as adults strive to provide for themselves. The SCA isn't just a hobby for the adults - it belongs to the next generation, too!

Rule #2 - Family Involvement

For Ministers of Children and Activity Leaders, make sure the parents know what their children are doing and always let the parents know about the child's accomplishments and strengths. Involve the parents whenever you are able. Parents - we want your involvement and interest, too! Let us know your suggestions, ideas, and concerns, and feel free to attend sessions and/or activities with your child.

Rule #3 - A Sense of Belonging

(Mostly to Planners) Not only should the children receive the same opportunities as mentioned in Rule #1, but their being a piece of the overall Society should be encouraged. Separating the children in an area where they are "out of sight, out of mind" is detrimental to our goal of making them a part of their hobby, and a part of the social structure which includes both adults and children. Separating the children *somewhat* is absolutely acceptable, and frequently necessary, to provide learning among their immediate peers and structured for their specific ages, but do make efforts not to hide at the back of any given event site. Also, strive to inform the non-parent adults about the children's activities and accomplishments if they have been apart all day (court or meetings provide a great opportunity for this).

There are many possible benefits for any child in the Society, including the intergenerational contact that so many are missing in modern society (substitute grandparents, neighbors, extended family), an opportunity to learn unique lessons in a unique environment, or a sense of history and personal identity within that context - you name it! The problem is simply that if adults disregard the three basic rules above and the potential for these positive elements I've listed, then the benefits start decreasing in number, rapidly. Too often children in the SCA have been segregated, "dumped", at children's activities as a means of babysitting, or treated as if their interests within our fine Society weren't quite as important as the adults' interests. It's time to change all of that.

We are working to:

1. Integrate children into the Society at large, at events, meetings, and in our hearts and minds,
2. Give the children a sense of belonging, in local groups, at events, within their Kingdom at large,
3. Foster parental involvement with regards to activities and learning for children by making those activities enjoyable for all, and welcoming parents,
4. Eliminate the "babysitter mentality" . . . that's not what the office of Minister of Children is all about (it *is* about education and involvement),
5. Get rid of "glue-and-glitter" activities! Some plain old fun activities are welcome - and even needed, but falling back on "busy work" *always* is a disservice to the kids,
6. And finally, we hope we can all (kids and adults, alike) learn, grow, and have a lot of fun doing it! Let's help develop that sense of pride in accomplishment, love of learning, responsibility, respect, and chivalry among our youth. After all, they will be running the show one day!

Guidelines for Running Children's Activities

The Ansteorran Ministry of Children Web Site seemed to state it best, so I will quote them here in discussing a few inherent problems of this office, which are key to understanding how best to remedy these problems through the following guidelines:

There does not appear to be a clear understanding as to the purpose and focus of Ministry of Children (MoC). The Ministry of Children sponsors children's activities at events to help educate and entertain the children attending. It is not for the parents' convenience, but exists solely for the children to learn about history, be "part of the game", and enjoy SCA events as much as their parents. It is NOT a baby sitting service where parents can foist their children on others while they go play.

The "Babysitter Mentality" has frequently led to premature burn-out and a readiness to give up the office in the Ministry of Children, thus diminishing our numbers to a mere dozen or so across the Kingdom (which directly and negatively affects the children). We hope to change that! Thankfully, Meridies has been very forward-thinking in this area, and the situation has improved and continues to do so. As more parents treat those who give their time and efforts to the children with gratitude and as more local groups recognize their MoCs as valid

officers, we move further towards our goals...and perhaps some basic guidelines will help nurture our ideas.

Currently, our guidelines are based on those posted on the Ansteorran MoC Page, though ours are a bit relaxed. Guidelines will remain suggestions only and stay this relaxed as long as kids' activities are not abused by the populace.

Times:

- It is recommended that activities not run for more than two hours per session, or three for larger events with volunteers readily available, with no more than two sessions in a day.
- Lunch breaks of at least one hour are necessary, to make certain children are fed and rested, and to ensure our MoCs and helpers don't run out of energy.
- Children's Activities shouldn't run any later than 5:00 pm, except in unusual circumstances.
- Parents must pick up their children promptly at posted ending times. MoCs have the right to turn over children who have been left at activities past the end of activities (with a 15 minute grace period) to the constable on duty, the event autocrat, or the seneschal of the group hosting the event.

Check-in:

- Children should be checked-in to activities by a parent. At smaller events, children may be accompanied to activities by an older sibling (as long as that sibling is 13 or older), at the local officer's discretion.
- Parents need to supply the child's name, parents' SCA and real names, home group, and allergy information, if applicable.
- Parents are encouraged to donate an hour of their time to activities. MoCs without assistants (or without enough) may require parental participation.
- Children's activities are for children 5 years of age and older. Children under this age require much more attention and normally do not have the attention span and motor skills for most children's activities. Children under 5 may participate if a parent is present at all times, at the local officers discretion.

Note: Checking children in and out of activities does not imply complete responsibility for your children falling on the MoC. While those managing kids' activities will look out for the safety of the children, the parents and children must be familiar with Kingdom Law regarding unattended kids if the child is under the age of 12. Additionally, children who are disruptive to activities (exhibiting violence or lewd behavior, for example) will be returned to their parents.

Activities:

- Activities should be geared to both educate and entertain the children, and should be age-appropriate. Activities should be goal oriented with stated objectives. "Glue and Glitter" activities or "Busy Work" should be avoided, except in small doses (during rest breaks, for example).
- The Ministry of Children does not serve meals. It remains up to the parents to ensure that their children are fed. This does not exclude beverages and light snacks such as cookies from being provided by a local MoC, if he or she chooses. This also does not exclude a local group or household from sponsoring a meal for the children in a separate

area, but the local officer will not be responsible for delivering, serving and/or retrieving the children.

Location:

- Children's activities should be located where parents can easily check on their children. For most events, this is near the list field. This serves a dual function, also, as children do not need to be isolated from the major happenings of an event - they like to feel they're a part of the overall picture just as the adults do.
- Children's activities should be located away from obvious safety hazards, such as vehicular traffic areas, creeks and other bodies of water, unprotected balconies, and electrical equipment.

Budget:

- Host groups should provide adequate tables and chairs of normal size for children's activities.
- Host groups should budget a suggested \$25, at least, for supplies. This may include consumable supplies and/or some supplies which may be used for future local events. This amount should be increased for events where large numbers of children are expected.

Chapter Two: Planning Activities

Your group's event is coming up, and the planning has kicked into gear. You've been asked to run activities. Where do you start? Well, the first bit of advice I would give you, before throwing any tangible instructions to you, would be this: be vocal. It seems to be a tendency of MoCs to take what is given and never ask for anything more, even if they're in desperate need. Well, the autocrat can't understand your needs if you don't express them! So, be professional, courteous, friendly, and don't be afraid to ask for help or resources.

Let's begin with those resources I just mentioned. The first thing you need to know is what items, location, funds, and helpers are available to you. Here are some items to consider:

Location:

- What is the event site like, and where will you be located? Do you have access to an indoor classroom, and how close is it to bathrooms? Is there a playground on site? If you need electricity, are there outlets available?

- If you choose to do outdoor activities, can you position them near the field (for the parents' convenience and to ensure the children aren't excluded from the overall event)? If it's going to be hot outside, will you have shade? Is there drinking water nearby, or can it be made available?
- Watch out for dangers, too. How close are you to the parking lot? Are there natural hazards nearby? This is especially an issue in Meridies - we don't need to invite alligators to the party.

Creativity:

- Do you already have ideas brewing, or are you looking for inspiration? One item I've always considered a blessing is a theme since it adds cohesion and helps focus one's creativity. Does the event have a theme you can use? Do you have your own independent theme?
- Count on help, too. Use your MoC network, related MoC chat groups, or scour web pages for ideas. Remember, you're not just limited to other Children's Officers' pages; you can dig through history-related sites and come up with your own activities. The same goes for mundane education sites. Libraries are also fabulous resources.

Structure:

Are you planning on running a Pages' School session or block of classes, or do you want activities...or a mix of both? Consider there are many different vehicles for learning, and a blend of methods is more exciting to energetic young minds.

Remember, classes and activities can be taught different ways:

- Lecture-Style: Remind your teachers to be interactive - the kids *will* want to ask questions!
- Workshops: These provide a finished project to bestow on parents, plus it's "hands-on".
- Activity Centers: These allow children to move freely from one activity to another.
- Competitions: Great for outdoor games, or strategic games...and for parental involvement!
- Hunts/Quests: Hunts can be great methods for teaching historical facts or SCA anthropology.
- Field Trips: Rope in the folks running another area, and have them strut their stuff! This benefits BOTH areas, children's activities and the hosts.

Putting Ideas into Plans:

You've come up with a theme or ideas now and decided what classes you'd like taught, or what activities you wish to run. Make sure you write it all down! Keep in touch with your autocrat, and inform him or her of your plans and needs. Take that written outline of your plans with you to the event meetings. It helps to make copies.

Make sure your information will be included in the Kingdom newsletter advertisement, onsite booklet, Tavern Yard posts, or any other publications that post schedules and activity details. Ask frequently and meet deadlines! If you will be doing any of your own press (signs, handouts, booklets), note the date in your calendar for completing publications and making copies.

When it's your turn as a department head to discuss your plans at meetings, don't assume no one wants to hear them. And remember, the more interesting and unique your ideas, the more likely people are to listen. Of course, if you do feel you aren't being heard, don't get discouraged - you are still an officer and a part of the staff, so take your turn in the forum, anyway! Ask for feedback from the populace, and listen carefully to the ideas or concerns of others.

Enlist teachers for your classes. A teacher doesn't have to be an MoC or a parent. And even those who profess to have trouble relating to children can be given pointers or help in working with children, if you really hope for them to share their knowledge. Even those who are wary of running classes for kids often find it was as enjoyable as teaching adults - or even more so - if they give it a try.

As your teachers accept, make sure you know what their needs are so you can define your requisitions or purchases. Keep in contact with them before the event to stay on top of possible schedule alterations or requests for items needed.

Finally, just in case, you might plan to have some books or other activities on hand if the children run through two hours' worth of activities in a half-hour!

Confirming Plans:

Finalize your schedule; then, call your teachers, helpers, runners, autocrat, and anyone else working in your area to confirm. Let everyone else in your group know your final plans with appropriate verbal reports at meetings.

Make a list of what items from shire/barony property you'll need (not the things you're purchasing with your budget, but items your group keeps for events). Some groups use requisition forms, but you can create one by simply writing down that list to present to the autocrat (or quartermaster or whomever is handling site set-up). Write when (during the event) you'll need the item and where it should be at that time.

Make sure the herald is aware of any announcements for your area and knows to check in with you (or a runner) at the end of activities in case children were not picked up by parents. It's also a good idea to have the herald announce the end of activities about 15 minutes prior to closing them, so parents have a heads-up. You might also want to double-check with the constable to be sure you have a plan for getting kids who weren't picked up, if you normally handle the unattended children issue in this manner.

Keeping Notes:

Save your receipts! It often helps to keep notes on expenses, too. Fill out your reimbursement forms ahead of time, too, and make sure you know when your reeve needs them submitted.

Keep a list of all who assisted you, for thank-you notes and kudos following the event.

Things to Do Ahead of Time:

Make your purchases for any supplies you might need. Organize them as you buy, according to each activity. Some people bag supplies; I prefer off-brand storage totes, which are quite cheap at dollar stores (good for inclement weather, too). Keep an inventory as you go, which you can also tape to the inside lids of the totes if it helps keep you organized.

Make up sign-in sheets. If you're running Pages' School accredited classes, add a column for the child to mark whether he or she is enrolled. If it's a large event, you may want a column indicating the parents' camping area or where they plan to be during activities. Also handy is a space for noting allergies if you plan to serve snacks or drinks.

Finish up any signs, booklets, or handouts you plan to post or distribute onsite. Make sure you get them (and your sign-up sheets) copied in advance!

At the Event:

Set up early! Have activity supplies set out in proper places before the children arrive. Have fun and relax as best you can. If things don't go quite as you expected, ad lib. Children are flexible and will often come up with their own ideas if you just ask their opinion (which is handy if they speed through the activities).

Keep an eye out for drop-in volunteers and note who did what to help you. Thank your helpers!

If you're able, get on "court business" and tell everyone what the kids did that day. Hang or display their works of art in the main hall for all to see.

Following the Event:

Send in your report (within two weeks) to the KMoC and/or the GAMoC. If your group does "after-action" reports, submit that to the autocrat, seneschal, or appropriate person.

Turn in receipts and reimbursement forms to the reeve.

Spill all the details at your next meeting in a verbal report and thank all your helpers and teachers. You might also want to submit a thank-you letter in your local newsletter and/or write thank-you notes.

THLady Brianna Baptista Tsigane, the GAMoC, has a wonderful "Activity Timeline" available on our KMoC web site. While some people prefer to set their own planning schedule, her timeline is an excellent tool for folks wanting a little help staying organized or wanting to learn from an experienced MoC during planning.

Web resources are listed in the Appendix.

Chapter Three: Reports and Paperwork

As mentioned earlier in this book, the Ministry of Children is a Lesser Office, and therefore reports are not officially required. Thus, there are no penalties for failing to report. Likewise, this is not a required office, so many groups still do not have an MoC (and some do not need them). However, since reporting is mutually beneficial on so many different levels, I highly recommend it.

Another point to consider - if you do not report regularly, you are not kept on the KMoC's roster of ministers of children, thus making you "unofficial". Unofficial coordinators of children's activities plan such under the auspices of and with the permission of their seneschal. Official MoCs may work directly with the Kingdom Ministry of Children.

- **Reports are due quarterly to the KMoC and/or GAMoC.** Reporting dates for 2003 and beyond are the 21st of March, June, August, and December. Gleann Abhann reporting dates are the 7th of March, June, August, and December. The final (December) report is a year-end report. Make sure your seneschal receives a copy of the report.
- **Reports are also due following events, within two weeks following the final day of that event.** Check with your seneschal to see if a local event report is required additionally and to whom it is due.

Keep in mind that the SCA only considers hard copies sent through regular post as official correspondence. Because of this, your default practice should be to mail hard copy quarterly and event reports to the Kingdom and/or Principality MoCs. Talk to your officer, though, and find out what his or her preferences are, as some Kingdom and Principality officers will accept email reporting, especially in lesser offices.

What is Required in a Report:

Report forms are available in Adobe format on the Kingdom Web Page under "Minister of Children". If you don't have access to the web, you can use the form in Appendix I (though you will probably need to retype it to provide enough room for answers). These forms may be used "as is" for quarterly reports.

Event reports should include all the same contact information that is included in the quarterly report, but the following basic information should be substituted for the questions:

- Event name, date, and location

- Host group, mundane location of group
- Discuss Activities
- Note Attendance
- Expenses Incurred
- Problems
- Successes
- Credits

Remember, reporting is your opportunity to seek help, ask questions, or seek team members in solving common problems!

You also contribute to the big picture when you offer your feedback and help with overall solutions.

The Local MoC Files

If you're starting the office fresh, do yourself a big favor - purchase a plastic file box and some hanging files. Pull out the labels and mark separate spots for each of the following items that you should keep in the files:

Finances:

Keep an envelope handy within for receipts and keep with it reimbursement forms, expense charts, and any purchase notes you might have. It can be beneficial to make copies of receipts, too, for reference for the next year's event and to cover the "just in case" factor.

Articles/Handbooks:

Not only will you utilize this file for storing this handbook, but add relevant articles and updates to the handbook. A separate folder (or folders) within for other articles can be used for writings that inform how to teach specific classes or run certain activities, articles for parents, resource articles, etc. (not required, but definitely handy).

Correspondence:

Any letter you pen in your official capacity as MoC should be included in this file, starting with your letter of introduction. Keep a spot for incoming mail, too. You may also keep a spot for printed emails (remember, it's unofficial!) if you discussed scheduling, ideas, class notes, etc. online.

Reports:

Keep copies of your quarterly and event reports. If you write separate local reports or abbreviate reports for your newsletter, these can be filed in a "local" folder within this file.

Additional:

None of these are required to be stored in the local MoC files, but some the items may be helpful to you. Consider keeping:

- A calendar: Note when reports are due, when nearby events are scheduled (if you'd like to offer to assist neighbors), and when your group's functions and events are scheduled.
- A small phone/address book: Keep contact information on hand for the Kingdom/Principality MoC, your deputies (or helpers, or regular teachers), families with whom you work, and the officers of your group.
- Kingdom Law: If you don't have a copy of Kingdom Law, you can simply print a page with law and revisions relevant to children for quick reference.
- Event attendance notes: How many people attended? How many of them were children? Percentage break-downs can help if you use such things to determine budgets.
- Activity List: Keep good notes about activities you've tried, what worked and what didn't, and what is needed for each activity. You might also want to note activities you want to try. Obviously, this is good for your own reference, but it will also be beneficial to your successors.

Chapter Four: Kingdom Laws

Regarding Children's Attendance:

From Kingdom Law, May 2002: VII-107 Children

- (A) Children under the age of legal consent must attend any official Society function in the company of a parent or legal guardian or have a letter of parental consent which designates the adult responsible for the child, and consent for the child to be treated in the case of a medical emergency, as well as a signed standard waiver.
- (B) The adult in charge of the child is responsible for any and all acts of the child.
- (C) The child must be in the company of the adult specified by the letter of parental consent to attend any official S.C.A. function if the parent or legal guardian is not present at the event.
- (D) The adult, not the child, is responsible for the keeping of the consent form.
- (E) Such a letter must be presented to the autocrat and those at the registration area in charge of waivers and attendance records for their perusal before the child will be admitted to the site. The waiver must be retained by whoever is collecting such for that event.
- (F) Children should not be left unattended at events. Children under the age of 12 must be within the sight or voice range of a designated responsible adult or teenager at all times. Failure to do so may result in sanctions ranging from expulsion from site to notification of mundane authorities depending on the circumstances.

What does this mean to you?

At its core, the law means parents or “legally designated adults” (of the sort noted in the consent form, not someone you left your child with onsite with no paperwork exchange) are ultimately responsible for the actions of their child.

Parents may allow a responsible teenager or other adult to watch the child onsite (without the paperwork), as long as the parent is present at the event. Children must stay in sight or voice range of that designated person. Parents are still ultimately responsible for the actions of the child in this situation.

This does relate to children's activities, too, even though these laws fall under the responsibility of the Sheriff's office. As someone who works with the children, you are more likely to witness infractions. Make sure parents (or another adult/teenager as mentioned in the above paragraph) escort the children to and from activities and make sure these rules are understood. Post your rules in a highly visible location or in the event book.

Never release the children at the end of the day to go find their parents. If parents don't show up to pick up their children, enlist the help of a herald (to announce that the parents are needed at activities) or the sheriff/constable.

Make sure parents discuss your rules for attending activities with their children before dropping them off. Parents should ensure their children know, according to their age, whether or not they can come and go independently. For children under age twelve, a firm understanding that they should not leave activities without an adult is crucial.

Finally, be gentle. Remember that children will wander or sneak off on occasion. Likely, the parents will already be frantic in this situation - enlist help for finding their child and be

understanding. Consider scenarios like this one when reporting “lost parents”. Very few parents will blatantly disregard the laws; most are very diligent in their parenting.

However, if a parent is repeatedly leaving the child unattended, please report it to your sheriff/constable. Be aware of those with multiple and deliberate infractions.

Office Description

From Kingdom Law, May 2002: IV-202 Minister of Children

As a Lesser Officer of State warranted by the Kingdom Seneschal(e), the Minister of Children shall be responsible for the following:

- (A) Fostering the education of the children of Meridies between the ages of 5-16 on medieval activities and the Society.
- (B) Overseeing the children’s activities at Kingdom level events.
 - 1. The KMoC does not have to actually administer activities, but must see that they are done.
 - 2. The KMoC shall work to develop curriculum for, and administer, the Page’s School or shall assign a Deputy to oversee the administration.
- (C) The KMoC shall maintain files on all activities, productions, and personnel of the Minister of Children’s Office.
- (D) The KMoC may make recommendations to the Crown for the Order of the Cygnet and Rising Swan.
- (E) The KMoC shall maintain a roster of local ministers of children (not to exceed one per branch) to carry out duties similar to those of the KMoC, and as defined by the policy of the KMoC’s Office.
- (F) The KMoC shall report to the Consort and Kingdom Seneschal(e) four times per year giving the state of the office. These written reports shall be due two (2) weeks prior to Coronation and on July 1 and January 15.

What does this mean to you?

Your job is a variation on the above, in particular, the first point concerning fostering the education of Meridian children. Please note the ages and the focus of the studies.

Information concerning rosters and reporting affect you as well. Local Ministers of Children should write a letter of introduction so they may be added to the Kingdom roster. And of course, you’re encouraged to report.

Orders and Awards

From Kingdom Law, May 2002: II-220 The Order of the Cygnet

- (A) There shall exist within the Kingdom of Meridies an Order given, which shall recognize courtly behavior and honorable service rendered by the children of Meridies.
- (B) Holders of the Order shall be entitled to place the initials C.C. after their names.
- (C) The Award is non-armigerous, and shall carry no precedence.
- (D) The badge shall be Per bend sable and argent two swans naiant and a bordure counterchanged.

II-211 The Order of the Rising Swan

- (A) There shall exist within the Kingdom of Meridies, hereinafter referred to as Meridies, an Order which shall recognize outstanding service and achievement by the minors (age seventeen (17) and under) of Meridies above and beyond that of the Order of the Cygnet. This Order shall be call the Order of the Rising Swan, hereinafter referred to as the Order.
- (B) Election into this Order shall rest with the Crown.
- (C) Holders of the Order shall be entitled to place the initials C.M.R.S. after their names.
- (D) The Order's badge shall be: Fieldless, a swan roussant within and conjoined to an annulet argent.

II-236 The Order of the Cygnet's Nest

- (A) There shall exist within the Kingdom of Meridies an Order, which shall recognize those gentles who work tirelessly on behalf of the children. This award shall be known as the Order of the Cygnet's Nest.
- (B) Members of this order shall be entitled to place the initials C.C.N. after their names.
- (C) This award is non-armigerous and carries no precedence.
- (D) The Order's badge shall be Fieldless, A swan argent sitting in a nest proper within and issuant from an annulet argent.

What does this mean to you?

Just as you are more likely to witness infractions of laws regarding children by your regularly being in the children's company, you will also witness the brighter side of the Society. You will see children giving their time and energy serving the Kingdom, and you will see outstanding behavior and refined manners in the youngest of the Kingdom's subjects. Please take note! Write recommendation letters when you see consistent industry and good manners that you feel should be recognized.

The same goes for adults who work with children. Please pay attention to your helpers - never forget to pile on the praise for jobs well done, but also note outstanding service that seems worthy of being brought to the Crown's attention.

When you do write your letters, it is helpful to note a little about yourself, including the name of your office. It assists the Crown when you note that you are an MoC in a letter recommending someone for an award for or related to children. They know, then, that you are someone who spends a lot of time with these recommended individuals and that you have many opportunities to notice their endeavors.

Chapter Five: Programs

There are so many “program” options available to you for enhancing the education of the children, both under the auspices of this office, and under other offices! Let’s start with the one most familiar to this office:

Pages’ School of Meridies

Since Pages’ School does have its own handbook, web site, and deputy officers, we’ll only cover an abbreviated “mini-handbook” here. The school is a system of credits designed to provide more interaction in the child’s learning. While it seems much like a “scout” system, with merit badges and graduations and the like, its creation was prompted for other reasons (see below).

The school does not dictate which classes a child must take, only a number of hours in each of three areas: service, chivalry, and arts and sciences. It is deliberately vague to allow children to pursue individual interests and to allow some freedoms for coordinators of classes and sessions who may not have some classes available due to lack of teachers in their geographic region (or conversely, who may have something available that’s not common to other groups).

The Kingdom school is merely an administrative body. We track credits, offer advice and resources to MoCs and coordinators, and offer our support to individual families and children via long-distance communication. We do not run sessions at local events, as we hope to see more local involvement from officers (yes, other than just the MoCs), Peers, parents, and teachers. Using the sink-or-swim method, while offering advice, experience, resources, and helpers, seems to compel groups to rely more on their own initiative and creativity (which usually ends up exceeding ours by leaps and bounds!).

The Pages’ School does offer sessions at Royal University’s Universitas Meridies in the summer and at Gulf Wars in March, traditionally. We also offer “checkpoints” for students who attend those events, but who take adult classes or serve during the course of the event. The checkpoints allow them to record credits onsite and to question our officers, if needed.

So, why was the school created?

- The school’s main intent, through heavy press and communication, was to raise the standard of activities in Meridies. Whether through healthy competition or through direct collaboration with the school, this seems to have worked in many areas. Locally, MoCs and coordinators are paying great attention to how educational their activities are, and in some places, “glue and glitter” or “coloring book” activities have been nearly eliminated (except for in small doses - it can be fun, right?).
- A side effect of “raising the bar” was that more local involvement and individualized learning seems available these days. MoCs and coordinators are less likely to be strangers to the children now, and that provides opportunities for long-term learning and direct attention for each student. While it was one of our areas to push, it seemed to happen more because of local initiative than because of anything we did.
- Another side effect is the amazing focus on creativity we’ve witnessed growing over time. Realizing the sky is the limit, many wonderful teachers and planners have gone the extra mile to find classes that are more exciting and more unusual than most. Blown glass, metal-smithing, Peer forums, and so much more are accepted as “typical” classes these days.

- The school was also formed to provide a vehicle for roping in a larger slice of the population. Having an official name on activities seems to compel more people to give teaching a try, including many experts in various fields who previously exclusively taught adult classes.

Implementing Pages' School or Complementary Programs Locally:

As we continually remind people, anyone with a sincere desire to educate the children can organize a Pages' School session at their event/meeting/social. The handbook, web site, and Dean of the School can all provide the necessary information to get started.

If your group wants a long-term program established locally, this is fairly simple, too, though it will require added effort. The Kingdom School will assist local branches of the school in getting started and establishing a strong and consistent program. This can be done officially or unofficially:

- Officially, branches are formed when the local coordinator or MoC creates a program either with the Dean or independently, sending it to the Dean for approval. The League of the Quintain in the Barony of Small Gray Bear is a good example of this - the local program is not identical to the Kingdom School, as the requirements are different, and it caters to the needs of **that group's children**. However, it is complementary with the Kingdom School, and children can receive credits for both programs through participation.
- Unofficially, some groups form in a manner akin to households. In the Sol Haven and South Downs area, there is such a group called the Company of Saint Margaret. It is small enough to allow for more individualized learning, but large enough to provide diverse interactions between the company members. Their classes are generally Pages' School accredited (which requires only a little advance notice), but they also go on outings/field trips, work on projects together, and write for their own newsletter.

Both types are supported by the Pages' School of Meridies upon request, and provided the coordinator maintains good communications with the Dean. An article, "Starting a Local Branch of the Meridian Pages' School", is currently available on the KMoC web page in the Pages' School section and will be added to the next update of the Pages' School handbook. It is also available upon request from the KMoC.

The Academy:

The Academy is fairly new and still has some rough edges at the time of this writing, but we hope it will become a strong program in coming years. It is an offshoot of the Pages' School, but designed for teens.

The courses are more intense, requiring research projects and RUM classes to gather credits, but it is highly rewarding for students. Students are encouraged, while being a part of the program, to "be paged" to a mentor, someone who is not a family member. Students also have a reading list to complete. The details of the program are currently available in the Pages' School section on the KMoC web page and will be added to the next update of the Pages' School handbook. This is also available upon request from the Dean.

This program is also more individualized. Students are encouraged to focus, as an apprentice in period would, on favored topics. Whereas Pages' School aims more at a well-rounded education, the Academy encourages working toward mastering specific arts and skills. The Dean is available to work more directly with these students and their mentors.

Youth Combat:

This program is not a function of the Ministry of Children, but instead is administered by the Earl Marshal's office. However, this office does tend to enjoy being involved or providing supplemental classes. Contact your local GYCM (Group Youth Combat Marshal) if you are also interested in collaboration.

To learn more about the program, contact your local marshal or GYCM, the Earl Marshal of Meridies, or visit the Kingdom's web site at <http://www.meridies.org>, and check the Earl Marshal's section (the handbook is available there).

Other:

What makes an activity an "adult activity"? In some cases, it's obvious - heavy combat and brewing classes are obviously not appropriate for children. However, did you know many activities in the Kingdom are available to both children and adults?

- Archery - Check with your local archery marshal about any age restrictions he/she might have first, but children often enjoy shooting targets. Some groups will schedule a time for a minors' shoot at events. There's even a minors' archery household in the Seleone area!
- Equestrian - There are a few rules and safety precautions to learn first, but children can participate in riding activities. Check with the Equestrian Marshal first to learn of age restrictions, equipment needed, and to obtain release forms. Some groups host equestrian activities at events and will schedule a time for the children to ride. Gulf Wars and Fools' War both traditionally have an afternoon set aside for this.
- Royal University Classes/A&S Classes - many teachers don't mind having children in the classroom if the material is not "adult only" or if there isn't dangerous equipment in use. Check with teachers at your event and ask for a cut-off age if they agree. Coordinate with your local A&S Officer or Provost. There's even a children's division for A&S competitions!

Official programs aside, remember that there are established guilds and offices in the Kingdom that will often include children. At larger events, it isn't unheard of for Middle Eastern groups to host teen competitions and classes in dance and music, for Coursing and Falconry groups to host field trips and demonstrations, or for heraldic consultation groups to run classes in heraldry for the children. Look around you at other "interest areas" and see where the youth might be able to get involved, and don't be afraid to ask!

Appendix I: Forms

Meridian Ministry of Children Quarterly Local Report

- Your SCA and mundane name

- Your membership number
- Your contact information (address, phone, email)
- Your group's name
- Today's date
- Deputy's name and contact information

Please answer the following:

- Are you subscribed to MOC_Meridies (Yahoo group)?
- How long has your group had a Minister of Children? How long have you served as Minister of Children?
- How many children/minors (under 18) do you currently have in your group?
- How many age 0-5? How many age 6-9? How many age 10-12? How many age 13-16?
- How much time do you devote to your office on a daily basis? On a weekly basis? On a monthly basis?
- Does your group have a provision in their budget for supplies for your office?
- How many events has your group held in the past quarter?
- What are the (approximate) dates of those events?
- Did your group host any Kingdom/Principality events this past quarter?
- Does your group have a newsletter? If so, do you publish a regular letter to the populace in the newsletter? Does your group publish a children's section in the newsletter?

Please answer the following in detail. Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary:

1. What problems have you had (if any) in the following areas: planning activities at events; communication with parents; communication with Kingdom/Principality; reporting requirements; child participation in activities at events; maintaining discipline during children's activities?
2. What are your three main goals for improving your office in the next quarter?
3. What areas of the Kingdom Minister of Children's office do you think need improvement (e.g., communication, reporting, planning, etc.)?

Appendix II: Resources

BOOKS

Medieval Games by Salaamallah the Corpulent, no ISBN. A publication by a Laurel in the East Kingdom. A very good resource for outdoor games for kids, as well as board games for older kids (8+ years).

Scholastic World History Program -- The Age of Europe by Scholastic Press, Inc., ISBN 0-590-34737-3. An old textbook, with amazing period art and architecture pictures. See also Scholastic World History Program -- The Ancient World, ISBN 0-590-34735-7.

Days of Knights and Damsels -- An Activity Guide by Laurie Carlson, ISBN 1-55652-291-6. If you don't get any other resource book, get this one. Sold by the SCA Stock Clerk's office, this book is full of activities based on medieval crafts and ideas.

Art for All Seasons by Susie Alexander, ISBN 1-55734-676-3. Seasonal crafts, not all historical but many are, like plans for masquerade masks, an apple pomander ball, a marshmallow menorah, a clay dreidel, a Chinese dragon puppet, and naturally dyed eggs.

Creative Crafts for Clever Kids by Loralyn Radcliffe, ISBN 1-55734-678-X. A really handy craft book for kids. Some great ideas include a flower wreath for the head made out of paper, a marbled paper portfolio, a "stage necklace" for finger puppets, dyed rice mosaics, mud bricks (a very dirty craft, but very historically accurate!), finger puppets and beads made from salt clay or bread clay, and too many more to list. A very good resource.

Catherine, Called Birdy (ISBN 0-06-440584-2) and The Midwife's Apprentice (ISBN 0-06-440630-X) by Karen Cushman. Two historical novels about young people set in the Middle Ages. Most details are accurate, and the stories are entertaining.

The Sign of the Chrysanthemum by Katherine Paterson, ISBN 0064402320. A historical novel set in period Japan. Good depiction of the master/apprentice relationship, as well as the feudal system of Japan.

Step Into Ancient India by Daud Ali, ISBN 0754806588. A really awesome book on India in period. Has crafts and activities to go along with each section.

Pirates! Raiders of the High Seas by Christopher Maynard and Harriet Griffey, ISBN 0751357146. One of the amazing reference books from the British publisher Dorling Kindersley. Great pics. For older elementary school kids.

Viking Times (If You Were There) by Anthony Mason, edited by Andrea D. Pinkney, ASIN 0689811985. An awesome Viking picture book. Lots of good drawings of artifacts, good historical info.

The following book list is provided by milady Ymilia of Vulpine Reach, who is mundanely a teacher of elementary school gifted children. She may be reached through Lady Cynwise at Sceaduwode at cynwise@sceaduwode.org for any parent/MoC questions. In general, the following books are suitable for late elementary school (4th or 5th grade) on up.

Good Times Travel Agency: Adventures in the Middle Ages by Linda Bailey, Niagara Falls, NY: Kids Can Press, 2000, ISBN 1550745409. When three children visit the Good Times Travel Agency, they tumble through time and land in the Middle Ages.

Anna of Byzantium by Tracy Barrett, New York: Delacorte Press, 1999, ISBN 0440415365. In the eleventh century the teenage princess Anna Comnena fights for her birthright, the throne to the Byzantine Empire, which she fears will be taken from her by her younger brother John because he is a boy.

The Book of the Lion by Michael Cadnum, New York: Viking, 2000, ISBN 0142300349. In twelfth-century England, after his master, a maker of coins for the king, is brutally punished for alleged cheating, seventeen-year-old Edmund finds himself traveling to the Holy Land as squire to a knight crusader on his way to join the forces of Richard Lionheart.

*Matilda Bone by Karen Cushman, New York: Clarion Books, 2000, ISBN 0440418224. Fourteen-year-old Matilda, an apprentice bonesetter and practitioner of medicine in a village

in medieval England, tries to reconcile the various aspects of her life, both spiritual and practical.

The Door in the Wall by Marguerite De Angeli, New York: Doubleday, 1989, ISBN 0440402832. A crippled boy in fourteenth-century England proves his courage and earns recognition from the King.

Max and Me and the Time Machine by Gery Greer, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983, ISBN: 0833519751. Steve buys a time machine at a garage sale and takes his friend Max to the year 1250, where they land in the middle of a jousting match, with the fierce Sir Bevis as an enemy.

The Minstrel's Tale by Berit I. Haahr, New York: Delacorte Press, 2000, ISBN 0385327137. When betrothed to a repulsive old man, thirteen-year-old Judith runs away, assumes the identity of a young boy, and hopes to join the King's Minstrels in fourteenth-century England.

*Parsifal's Page by Gerald Morris, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001, ISBN 0618055096. In medieval England, eleven-year-old Piers' dream comes true when he becomes page to Parsifal, a peasant whose quest for knighthood reveals important secrets about both of their families.

*The Squire, His Knight, and His Lady by Gerald Morris, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1999, ISBN 0395912113. After several years at King Arthur's court, Terence, as Sir Gawain's squire and friend, accompanies him on a perilous quest that tests all their skills and whose successful completion could mean certain death for Gawain.

The Making of a Knight: How Sir James Earned His Armor by Patrick O'Brien, Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 1998, ISBN 088106355X. Traces James's journey during the Middle Ages in England from inexperienced page at the age of seven to knighthood at the age of twenty-one.

The Magic Treehouse: The Knight at Dawn by Mary Pope Osborne, New York: Random House, 1993, ISBN 067982412X. Eight-year-old Jack and his younger sister Annie use the magic treehouse to travel back to the Middle Ages, where they explore a castle and are helped by a mysterious knight.

Castle Diary: the Journal of Tobias Burgess, Page by Richard Platt, Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1999, ISBN: 0763604895. As a page in his uncle's castle in thirteenth-century England, eleven-year-old Tobias records in his journal his experiences learning how to hunt, play games of skill, and behave in noble society. Includes notes on noblemen, castles, and feudalism.

Happily Ever After by Anna Quindlen, New York: Viking, 1997, ISBN 0613178068. When a girl who loves to read fairy tales is transported back to medieval times, she finds that the life of a princess in a castle is less fun than she imagined.

*The Ramsay Scallop by Frances Temple, New York: Orchard Books, 1994, ISBN 0531068366. At the turn of the fourteenth century in England, fourteen-year-old Elenor finds her betrothal to an ambitious lord's son launching her on a memorable pilgrimage to far-off Spain.

*Adam of the Road by Elizabeth Gray Vining, New York: Puffin Books, 1987, ISBN 014032464X. The adventures of eleven-year-old Adam as he travels the open roads of thirteenth-century England searching for his missing father, a minstrel, and his stolen red spaniel, Nick.

The Executioner's Daughter by Laura E. Williams, New York: Henry Holt, 2000, ISBN 0805062343. Thirteen-year-old Lily, daughter of the town's executioner living in fifteenth-century Europe, decides whether to fight against her destiny or to rise above her fate.

*Recommended highly

CATALOGS: Materials

Creative Schoolhouse, Inc., 3001 W. Loop 250N., Ste E115, Midland, TX 79705, (800) 628-5448

Creative Educational Surplus, 9801 James Circle, Ste C, Bloomington, MN 55431, (800) 866-6428

Dick Blick Art Materials, P.O. Box 1267, Galesburg, IL 61402-1267, (800) 828-4548,
<http://www.dickblick.com>

Oriental Trading, (800) 875-8480, <http://www.oriental.com>

E-LISTS & YAHOO GROUPS

Internet Disclaimer: Please remember to check out these sites for yourself before sharing them with children. While safety and age-appropriate content is easy to establish on "official" servers (i.e., Meridies.org), some independent sites (i.e., personal Yahoo pages) may have links to other sites, or may not be deemed appropriate by parents. The Ministry of Children of Meridies has no control over these sites, with the exception of our own, and only offers these URLs as a courtesy.

MoC Meridies: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MOC_Meridies

SCA Youth Issues: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SCA-YouthIssues>

Meridies Parents: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/meridies-parents>

SCA Parents: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SCA_Parents

SCA Kids Newsletter: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SCAkids-Newsletter>

WEB SITE RESOURCES

SCAKids, Lady Sireena de Artopeous: <http://www.geocities.com/scakids/>

Camping Games: http://www.corpcomm.net/~gnieboer/xtra_games.htm

Games for Heralds and Non-Heralds Alike: <http://www.rdrop.com/users/tierna/hgames.html>

Medieval Crafts and Party Ideas: <http://www.childfun.com/themes/medieval.shtml>

Medieval Games Site, Baron Modar Neznanich:

<http://www2.kumc.edu/itc/staff/rknight/Games.htm>

Games, Pastimes, and Toys, Link from the MOAS in Atlantia:

<http://moas.atlantia.sca.org/topics/game.htm>

Dagonell's Research Book, Lord Dagonell the Juggler. Rules to many different games:

<http://www-cs.canisius.edu/~salley/articles.html>

Stefan's Florelegium, group of articles on Toys in the Middle Ages:

<http://www.florilegium.org/files/CHILDREN/Toys-in-th-MA-art.html>

Medieval and Renaissance Games, Justin du Coeur: <http://www.waks.org/game-hist/>

Ministry of Children Activities: <http://www2.kumc.edu/itc/staff/rknight/MoC.htm>

Teen SCA (in the kingdom of Caid): <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Cyprus/7838/>

The Medieval Teen (kingdom of An Tir):

<http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Palladium/3792/>

Medieval Studies Theme Page: <http://www.cln.org/themes/medieval.html>

Foolery Page, about fools and jugglers: <http://www2.kumc.edu/itc/staff/rknight/Fool.htm>