



GEIST MONTESSORI ACADEMY

# **Student/Parent Handbook**

## **2015/2016**

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## 1. Introduction

The information and rules in this handbook are written for you. A careful review of these regulations will help you make your years at the high school a pleasant and meaningful educational experience. If you have any questions, see your teacher, administrator, or any member of the staff.

The following pages describe many of the opportunities, privileges, and responsibilities available to you. Keep this guide, read through it, and refer to it often. Best wishes in this new school year.

## 2. Mission

The Montessori Academy at Geist provides an academically and culturally rich educational environment that allows children to acquire knowledge in a non-competitive, individualized manner. We recognize that many environmental factors act upon the development of the child, and seek to prepare a school environment that encourages joyful learning, and greater exploration of the community and the world. Academics integrate with character building and community awareness to form a whole-child curriculum that prepares our students for life.

## 3. Vision

Geist Montessori Academy, guided by the educational philosophy and curriculum of Dr. Maria Montessori, promotes the development of each child in a safe, carefully prepared environment that fosters curiosity, creativity, cooperation, and critical thinking. At Geist Montessori Academy, all school community members demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and the school environment.

At Geist Montessori Academy, our students are encouraged to:

- **love the process of learning**
- **achieve academic success at a natural pace**
- **have strong social skills**
- **possess positive work habits**
- **find purpose and value in work**
- **solve problems and correct errors themselves**
- **be confident and joyful**
- **work well independently and collaboratively**
- **feel strong in mind, body and spirit**
- **respect and appreciate community**
- **be curious and excited about the world around them**

## 4. Principles of Montessori Education at GMA

The Montessori Method of education was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in Italy at the turn of the century. The method is structured for the developmental instincts of children and encourages his or her growth as a whole individual - intellectually, socially, spiritually, and physically.

Montessori became Italy's first licensed female physician in 1896. She went on to obtain degrees in psychology and philosophy, and founded a school where she closely observed children's learning at different ages.

Based on her findings, Montessori created a distinct system of learning unique to each stage of a child's development characterized by:

- **a home-like environment geared to the child's perspective**
- **respect for each child as a unique learner**
- **a structured prepared classroom where children have freedom of choice within limits**

- **carefully crafted Montessori learning tools (sometimes called “apparatus”) that promote conceptual learning**
- **specially trained teachers**
- **a carefully integrated interdisciplinary curriculum**
- **multi-age classrooms**
- **ample work periods**
- **learning through mastery**
- **intrinsic vs. extrinsic rewards**
- **mutual respect with students, teachers and the community**

There are eight outcomes that we aim to see from children educated in a true Montessori setting. Such children are typically:

- **academically prepared for higher education and lifelong learning,**
- **intrinsically motivated to learn and engage in new activities,**
- **guided by internalized ground rules - to behave appropriately in the absence of an authority figure,**
- **socially responsible - sensitive to the needs of others,**
- **autonomous - self-directed and comfortable with being morally independent,**
- **confident and competent - not afraid of failure and willing to learn from mistakes,**
- **creative and original in thought - often taking great satisfaction in self-expression,**
- **Spiritually aware of the natural world and the human condition.**

#### **5. Growth Report: Adequate Yearly Progress**

As a public charter school, we are expected to meet Annual Yearly Progress. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) designations for Indiana school corporations and schools are determined by student performance and participation rates on the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+) assessments in English/language arts and mathematics and student attendance rates (for elementary and middle schools). Schools must make AYP in every student group in order to meet AYP. Go to

<http://www.doe.in.gov/accountability/ayp-information-archive> for more information on AYP.

The merging of our public school status with our Montessori school status has been challenging at times.

**Response to Instruction (RTI)** is one of the ways that we ensure we are meeting the requirements of the state. It is a school-wide system that involves screening or benchmarking of students, research-based interventions and curriculum (which is fully supported by the Montessori pedagogy and materials), progress monitoring, and data-based decision making. Benchmark assessments administered to all students in the fall, winter and spring allow teachers to look at student performance in relation to others of the same grade and/or the same classroom. Individualized interventions are created for students needing additional supports, and progress is monitored

#### **6. Special Education**

Geist Montessori Academy’s policies and procedures regarding the identification and evaluation of a student in need of educational services are derived from Article 7, Indiana Special Education Law. A referral for evaluation can be initiated by either the parent or school, and requires parental consent. The area of suspected disability is determined, which is based on the primary area(s) of concern at the time of the referral. Article 7 outlines the required assessments to be included in the evaluation report for each area of suspected disability requires specific assessments to be included in the evaluation report. The evaluation is completed by a school psychologist and any other necessary licensed school personnel identified as part of the multidisciplinary team in order to meet the requirements of the evaluation. Upon completion of the educational evaluation, the case conference committee must be convened to determine if the student is eligible for special education services,

and if eligible, the special education and related services necessary to meet the educational needs of the student. When determining eligibility, the case conference committee is responsible for considering all the information contained within the educational evaluation report while not relying on any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion for determining eligibility. Article 7 provides eligibility criteria for each area of suspected disability for the case conference committee to follow during the decision making process.

### **7. RESPONSE-TO-INSTRUCTION (RTI)**

RTI is a general education initiative designed to provide high quality instruction and interventions matched to student needs, and using learning rate over time and level of performance to make important educational decisions. The RTI model is based on a three-tiered model of service delivery with a focus on early intervention and prevention of academic and behavioral concerns. Data collected during this process provides valuable information regarding students' educational progress and response to interventions. Students who do not demonstrate a response to well implemented, scientifically-based interventions at the Tier 3 level would be referred for an educational evaluation to determine eligibility for special education.

### **8. Assessments**

At this time, the progress of an Indiana school is measured by student performance against the state benchmark on Indiana's state-standardized test, the Indiana Statewide Testing for educational Progress (ISTEP) which includes an alternate assessment for students with disabilities called the Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (I-STAR). Following the state requirements, our students will take the following tests during the school year:

- Grade 3: English/Language Arts & Math
- Grade 4: English/Language Arts, Math and Science
- Grade 5: English/Language Arts, math and Social Studies
- Grade 6: English/Language Arts, Math, and Science
- Grade 7: English/Language Arts, Math and Social Studies
- Grade 8: English/Language Arts, and Math

As a Ball State University charter school, we are also required to administer the Northwest Evaluation Association Assessment (NWEA Assessment). By using the NWEA Assessment, a norm-referenced test, and teachers are able to track student progress against the national population in subjects including, but not limited to, reading, math, and language usage. This assessment is administered to all students in grades K-8 and allows teachers and parents to look at student progress from the beginning to the end of the year as well as from year to year.

There are three benchmarks taken throughout the school year to measure the students understanding of math, language, and reading skills. This program falls in line with the state's expectations, and helps us track student growth as they prepare for NWEA and ISTEP.

### **9. Classroom Management**

GMA believes that all children desire to be productive and in control of themselves. We also believe that discipline should include acknowledging the child's contributions, respecting their achievements and praising their progress.

GMA practices a disciplinary approach that can best be defined as "freedom with responsibility". Equal responsibility is placed upon teachers and students alike. Conflict resolution is mediated by teachers. Through lessons of respect, responsibility, honesty, courage, compassion and tolerance each child develops and refines their behavior through learning to be a responsible member of their classroom community.

Beginning with orientation and throughout the school year, the children are made aware of appropriate and considerate behavior, and why these are necessary for the enjoyment and harmony of the group. In addition, our students are expected to help develop and sign a “Peace Agreement” each school year.

GMA staff members believe it is important that children clearly understand the rules and possible consequences for inappropriate and offensive behavior. Our staff members understand the need to help children without rejecting them as persons. Children need to understand why their behavior is considered inappropriate. All discipline will be based on the individual child’s needs and stage of development. Natural Consequences are an important part of life and help children to take responsibility for their actions and behaviors.

Our students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful of people and property. They will be given positive verbal reminders as necessary to encourage good conduct. They will be dismissed from the general activity area to a quieter place in the room when verbal reminders are not sufficient to change conduct, and they will return when good conduct and control are demonstrated.

If a child’s actions put themselves, others, or other’s property or person in jeopardy, he/she will be temporarily removed from the classroom, and parents will be expected to participate in a conference with the appropriate school personnel to determine effective consequence and solutions to the problem.

### **10. Nondiscriminatory Policy**

Geist Montessori Academy is a non-profit, 501(c) (3) organization. We value, welcome and celebrate a diverse population. The school treats all employees and applicants for employment without unlawful discrimination as to race, creed, color, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or disability in all employment decisions.

GMA is nondenominational and admits students of all races, religions, genders and abilities. We welcome your child to the Montessori environment, where building a positive attitude toward learning is the first step in charting a course for life.

GMA will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or ethnic origin in the hiring of its certified or non-certified staff.

No words, acts or symbols of racial or gender discrimination will be allowed. Proven harassment because of an individual’s race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability or sexual orientation will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.\*\*

### **11. Grievance Procedure**

It is the policy of the Board to ensure that any constituent complaint related to operational matters be first directed in writing to appropriate school staff (classroom teacher, support staff, Executive Director, etc.) and that staff have the opportunity to respond. If that process has been exhausted and the matter remains unsettled or is considered unsatisfactory, the complaint may be directed in writing using the GMA Grievance Letter to Administration or the Board at the following address: \*[board.gma@gmail.com](mailto:board.gma@gmail.com).

### **12. Accreditation**

GMA is a publicly funded Ball State University charter school, and is fully accredited by the state of Indiana. For more information about Ball State Charter schools go to <http://www.bsu.edu/teachers/charter/>.

All lead teachers hold a minimum of a bachelor’s degree from an accredited university, an Indiana state teaching license or emergency permit and are trained in Montessori pedagogy, either in house or at a MACTE training center.

Each of our teachers has been selected for his or her love and understanding of children, a belief in the Montessori philosophy of education and a positive approach to the classroom environment.

### **13. Our Board**

Our school board members are a vital link between the community and the classroom. Its primary role is governance. They bear responsibility for the annual budget, ensuring accurate reporting, oversight of accountability plans, and much more. They are giving of themselves and care about every child in our school. They represent varying backgrounds in order to best represent and fulfill the needs of our school.

### **14. Admissions Policy**

GMA is a nondenominational, public education institution open to all children of all races, religions, genders and abilities.

The school accepts applications for each academic year from December 1 through January 1. All applications received will be accepted providing the applicant is the appropriate age for the grade level to which they are applying.

In the event that applications exceed the number of spaces available at any grade level, a lottery process will be initiated for that grade level. The lottery is supervised by an independent accounting firm and will adhere to current charter school admissions laws and precedents.

Applications subject to the lottery will be assigned a lottery number. A receipt for the application, the assigned lottery number and information regarding the date and time of the lottery will be given to the parent before the lottery takes place.

Regardless of an excess of applications at any level, the lottery will be conducted by grade level beginning with the highest grade. As the law provides for siblings of current or newly enrolled students, lottery slips of siblings will be pulled from the process and placed on the lottery board as older siblings are drawn.

Lottery slips will be pulled randomly and placed on the board until all available spaces are filled. Siblings of students on the board will be given preferential placement until all spaces are filled. **SIBLING PLACEMENT IS NOT GUARANTEED AT HIGHER GRADE LEVELS, AS THE LOTTERY BOARD WILL NOT BE ALTERED TO ACCOMMODATE THESE STUDENTS.**

Example: If all fifth-grade spaces are filled on the lottery board and the first-year student with a fifth-year sibling is drawn later, the first-year student will be included on the lottery board. However, there is no guarantee of automatic enrollment for the older sibling. This process will continue until all available spaces are filled. Afterwards, the remaining slips pulled will be placed in the order in which they are drawn onto a wait list for their respective grade level.

The results of the lottery, including information regarding student order on the wait list will be mailed to all participating families following the lottery. Families selected for enrollment will have deadline to return enrollment forms, signifying their intent to enroll in the academy. After this period, available space will be offered to families on the wait list.

Lottery results may be altered to accommodate student retention or promotion.

### **15. Class Change Policy**

At Geist Montessori Academy we believe the best way to achieve success in the classroom is through regular communication between the student, teacher and parent. Therefore, the following steps are required if and when there are issues between a student and his/her teacher, unless otherwise decided by administration:

- Parent, and/or student and teacher meet to identify and analyze the problem
- Issues are clarified
- Modifications are explored
- A plan, including timeline of at least three weeks, is developed and implemented

A copy of the plan agreed upon by the parent, student and teacher should be given to the student's assigned administrator.

If a consensus is not reached, or the plan implemented is not successful, parent request for class change should be directed to the appropriate administrator. Only after both parties have met and attempted to work through the issue will the class change be an option. All class changes are contingent on grade level availability, and if enrollment in the receiving class is appropriate.

All final decision on class changes and placement are determined by administrator.

#### **16. Office Hours**

Our office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Office staff will be available to speak with parents and answer questions throughout the day at (317) 335-1158. Voicemail will take your message after regular office hours. If you need to speak to your child's teacher, please allow a staff member to take your name and phone number, and your call will be returned during breaks or at the end of the school day. However, the best way to contact the teacher is email.

#### **17. Classroom Instructional Hours**

##### **Full Day Kindergarten-North Campus**

Monday-Friday  
8:30 AM-3:30 PM

##### **Lower Elementary-South Campus**

Monday-Friday  
8:45 AM-3:45 PM

##### **Upper Elementary and Middle School-North Campus**

Monday through Friday  
8:30 AM – 3:30 PM

#### **18. Kindergarten Entrance**

Indiana Law requires anyone between the ages of seven and seventeen to attend school. Indiana Code 20-8.1-3-17 sets the age requirement for school enrollment as follows:

Kindergarten – age 5 on or before August 1

First Grade – age 6 on or before August 1

If your child will have turned of age during the month of August, you may request that they take a kindergarten entrance test. The test must be requested 30 days prior to the start of school. Acceptance will be to the discretion of the Executive Director. We do not have an appeal process.

#### **19. Before School and After School Care**

Before and after school care is available through the YMCA. For more information, contact the YMCA Youth Enrichment Branch, 9093 Technology Dr., Ste 101, Fishers, IN 46038, (317) 577-2075, or go to the school's website at [www.gmacademy.org](http://www.gmacademy.org)

*For over 156 years, the YMCA movement has earned its reputation as a [mission-driven organization](#) that builds strong families. Over 20 million people across the nation belong or participate at a YMCA. The*

*YMCA is one of the few integrating forces in our community today. Our YMCA is a place where people of all ages, abilities and economic circumstances can meet and find a program, service or experience that enhances their well-being. In response to the needs of the community, the YMCA is the **largest provider** of school age programs in the Indianapolis area and surrounding communities. In 2009, we provided care to over 9,591 children. The YMCA is unique because your **program fees are based on total household income**.*

*Our program structure and hours are designed in order to meet the needs of the community. The YMCA currently offers programs from 6:30 AM until school begins; and upon dismissal until 6:00 PM. The YMCA provides care for all Professional Development Days, school delays, and holidays. Summer day camp, sports, and enrichment camps are also available.*

## **20. School Calendar**

Our students attend for 180 days per Indiana code 20-30-2. Our school day is 7 hours long. This is longer than most other public schools, allowing for longer periods of uninterrupted work time, an essential component of the Montessori pedagogy.

## **21. Arrival/Dismissal Procedures**

Students should be dropped off at the school's front entrance at the designated times for each campus each morning. Please have your child ready to exit the car independently when you pull up to the entrance (i.e., shoes and jacket on, lunch and backpack in hand). A staff member will greet them and assist them into their classroom.

## **22. Drop-off and Pick-Up Times**

Times are staggered to help provide a safe and efficient procedure for dropping off children and picking them up. Please arrive at your appointed time. Thank you in advance for staying true to our tight schedule! If you arrive after 8:30 at the North Campus or 8:45 at the South Campus, you must accompany your child into the front of the building and sign them in. Staff and children cannot sign themselves in late; it must be done by a parent or guardian. These students will be reported as tardy.

Likewise, students leaving before 3:30 p.m. at the North Campus or 3:45 at the South Campus must be signed out with a signature from the parent. The sign in/sign out form is located at the front desk. If someone other than the parent/guardian will be picking up a child, please contact the office and notify staff of the alternate person. They will need to present a valid driver's license or other valid picture ID, and sign the student out from the office.

All students should be picked up by 4:00pm at the North Campus and 4:15 at the South Campus. You will need to contact the school if you cannot make it by then. No staff members will be available to sit with your child, and special arrangements would need to be made. Thank you for understanding.

At dismissal, your child will walk to your car. Please refrain from lengthy discussions with teachers or staff concerning your child's progress, or from giving verbal messages at this time. We make every effort to provide a quick and efficient system of arrival and dismissal. We appreciate your cooperation and assistance.

**EXTREME CAUTION IS ADVISED AT ALL TIMES—WATCH FOR CHILDREN BEING ASSISTED TO OR FROM CARS. PLEASE DRIVE SLOWLY.**

## **23. Attendance Policy**

All students of Geist Montessori Academy are required to attend school for the 180 days of each school year.

Pursuant to IC 20---33---2---3.2, 'attend' means to be physically present: (1) in a school; or (2) at another location where the school's educational program in which a person is enrolled is being conducted; during regular school hours on a day in which the educational program in which the person is enrolled is being offered."

Students are permitted to miss school for excused absences only, until their number of absences reaches the level of chronic absenteeism. Chronic Absenteeism is reached when a student is absent from school, for any reason, 10% (18 days) or more of the same school year.

Once a student reaches a level defined as chronic absenteeism, they can be considered for possible grade retention. All decisions concerning chronic absenteeism are investigated by administration. All cases are reviewed on an individual basis, and each determination is at the discretion of administration.

Excused absences are defined as but not limited to:

- Up to 5 days for family vacations
  - Proper documentation must be signed by administration.
- Illness verified by note from parent/guardian
- Doctor/Dentist Appointments
- Illness verified by note from physician
- Family Funeral
- Maternity
- Absences related to military deployment and return.

Unexcused Absences

- An unexcused absence is any absence that is not covered under the list of excused absences.

### **24. Pre-Arranged Absences**

When a student is going to be out of school for a family trip, a parent/legal guardian must contact the school in advance of the absence. Under normal circumstances the contact must be at least two weeks in advance. Forms are available in the school office.

Final approval for the absence will be made by the Executive Director. Teachers will be notified of the absence and the student will be responsible for make-up assignments. These absences are excused with proper prior written notice and the fulfillment of all course work assigned during the absence.

No pre-arranged absences will be granted during the last five days of any semester, during standardized testing, when a student has accumulated ten absences in a given year, or when the requested days would exceed this number. Pre-arranged absences may be used only once per academic calendar year.

Application forms for pre-arranged absences are available in the school office. For further clarification, please contact the office staff.

### **25. Inclement Weather Policy**

GMA will follow Hamilton Southeaster for all delays or cancelation due to weather. You can tune into Fox 59 or WRTV Channel 6 to see any closures. You may also visit our website at [www.gmacademy.org](http://www.gmacademy.org).

We reserve the right to either cancel school or issue a two-hour delay whenever we feel it is necessary to ensure the safety of the students and staff. If such a situation should arise, we will contact all families via email.

### **26. Lunch & Snacks**

Students bring a sack lunch to school each day. We do not have a hot lunch program; however, the PTO provides a hot lunch option every Friday. Any families that want to participate in the hot lunch option need to have their order

in by 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday of each week. If your child requires a plate or tableware, please be sure to pack these each day. Students are also asked to bring bottled water and a healthy snack to eat each day.

In keeping with our studies of nutrition and health, we encourage you to pack nutritious lunches for your child. Canned pop, candy, or gum will not be permitted. Parents are welcome to eat lunch with their children.

### **27. Birthday Celebrations in the Classroom**

As with many Montessori schools, in our Kindergarten and lower elementary classes we do celebrate birthdays with a “Birthday Rotation”. For our upper elementary and middle school please check with your child’s teacher to see what they have planned for birthday celebrations. All families will also need to check with their child’s teacher on what falls in line with the current allergies in the classroom.

### **28. Field Trips**

During field trips, students are subject to the same rules, regulations, and behavioral expectations as observed at the school. The children will be transported by school-provided transportation. No child will be permitted to accompany his/her class on a field trip unless a permission slip has been signed, dated, and is on file at the school. **All students must accompany their class to and from a field trip.**

During field trips, a person trained in First Aid will accompany the students on all trips. A First Aid kit will also be available. Parents who wish to attend field trips as chaperones must have a current, criminal background check on file. Sometimes chaperone positions are limited on field trips. In these cases, we make every attempt to allow different parents the opportunity to serve as chaperones.

### **29. Student Withdrawal**

GMA’s admission procedure usually generates a “wait list” of students seeking admission for the upcoming school year. Should you decide to withdraw your child, please contact the school as soon as possible so that we may offer placement to a child on the wait list. This procedure is particularly important during the summer months, as families on the list have patiently waited throughout the spring and summer for placement.

Exit forms are available in the school office. Records will be transferred to the new school upon receipt of a transfer request from the school principal.

### **30. Returned Checks**

Checks written to GMA that are returned unpaid by your bank for any reason will be charged an additional \$25 fee. This fee, in addition to the amount of the original check(s) must be paid within seven days, and must be paid by cash, money order or cashier’s check.

### **31. Materials Fee**

The materials fee is due at the beginning of each school year. Any family needing to set up a payment plan must contact the Controller to set up a payment plan. Fees that are not paid by the designated final due date will be sent to collections. If you need to set up payment arrangements, please contact the Controller, Miss Karinda.

### **32. Lost and Found**

The lost and found is located in the office, and all valuables will be held in the at the front desk area.

### **33. Alcohol, Substance Abuse, & Tobacco Use**

The school is a non-smoking, alcohol, and substance abuse facility. Alcohol, substance abuse and tobacco use are prohibited anywhere on school property, inside or outside.

### **34. Required Forms**

The following forms must be on file in the office:

- **Enrollment Form**
- **Home Language Survey**
- **Records Transfer Form**
- **Medical Information/Consent Form**
- **Birth Certificate**
- **Immunization Records or Waiver**
- **SPED Records (if applicable)**
- **Free/Reduced Lunch Application (If applicable)**

These forms will be provided to families when you begin attending GMA and some are available in the school office.

Please also be sure to fill out and submit the following forms:

- **Parent Volunteer Form**
- **Criminal Background Check**

### **35. Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Parent/Teacher conferences are held twice during the school year. The second conference is a student led conference. These dates may be found on the school calendar. Notices will also be sent home in advance of conference dates to allow parents a sufficient amount of time to sign-up for a convenient time slot. We encourage you to contact the school, at any time, should you have questions or concerns regarding this process.

### **36. Communication**

Although phone calls are welcome, the use of email is preferred. Please be sure that your teacher(s) and the front office have your email, and if you do not have an email, make sure that everyone is aware of the best way to communicate with you.

### **37. Progress Reports**

Progress reports will be provided to parents a minimum on a quarterly basis. The progress report will provide an overview of the student's progress through the Montessori curriculum as well as achievement of state standards.

### **38. Classroom Observation**

We are aware that many parents would like to observe their child's adjustment to the Montessori environment, and to see firsthand what Montessori is all about. Classroom observations are available for parents and legal guardians only. All visitors must check in with office personnel before proceeding into the school. We realize that a Montessori classroom may seem confusing at first glance. Guidelines for observation are available to assist you. We ask that all visitors please maintain silence when observing. .

### **39. Parent Education Programs**

Parent Education Programs are scheduled throughout the school year. These programs are offered to parents to provide the opportunity to learn more about the philosophy, method, and materials used in the Montessori classroom. The gatherings are very informative and your attendance is highly encouraged. Please note that parents are strongly encouraged to attend as often as possible. We also ask that you attend PTO or school sponsored events, as well as volunteering as often as possible.

#### **40. School-Wide Volunteer Opportunities**

GMA believes in establishing and supporting parent partnerships. From student values and growth to school finances, families are the key in ensuring our future. To that end our school community supports the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The PTO focuses on building the relationships that make us a community through fun events and fundraisers and by supporting the teachers through teacher grants, materials making, and volunteerism in their classrooms.

We are a small community, and ALL parents are automatically members. Every family has something unique to offer our community, and we ask that you share your talents and your time. Please be sure to attend PTO meetings and/or contact your student's teacher directly about volunteering in the classroom.

**Please Note: Volunteers who work directly with students are required to have, on file, a criminal background check.**

#### **41. Student Records**

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
  - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
  - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
  - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
  - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
  - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
  - Accrediting organizations;
  - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
  - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
  - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

#### **42. Conduct Goals**

At Geist Montessori Academy our common goal is to help each student attain the independence and self-confidence needed to become self-disciplined. . Behavior is based on cooperation, logical and natural consequences, personal fairness, consistency, and the belief that we all have the ability to change and grow. As a community our common goal is to maintain a peaceful and safe learning environment for each student to reach their full potential.

#### **43. Student Expectations and Responsibilities**

The students at Geist Montessori Academy take an active role in implementing the conduct policy. They help develop the rules and expectations of their classroom which they will follow each school year. The children are given the opportunity to learn from their experiences to make positive decisions in the future. When students fail to meet expectations they are faced with natural consequences that are unique to each situation. The students are given the opportunity to be leaders in the classroom, and by modeling class and school expectations they can have a positive impact on the entire community.

**The students at Geist Montessori Academy are required to:**

- Take an active role in developing classroom expectations
- Model appropriate behavior outlined in classroom and school expectations
- Set a positive example for students of all ages
- Be a leader whenever possible and contribute to the school community
- Learn from their mistakes and grow as an individual

#### **44. Parent and Family Expectations and Responsibilities**

A student's entire family plays a vital role in their success at Geist Montessori Academy. It is recommended to support classroom and school expectations and act as a unified team with school staff. They can also support their child and the school by reinforcing positive behavior that is encouraged at GMA.

**The Parents and Families of Geist Montessori Academy are required to:**

- Understand and acknowledge school expectations
- Support their student's teacher by reinforcing classroom guidelines
- Model positive behaviors that coincide with GMA standards
- Work as a team with school personnel to support student's best interests.
- Address questions and concerns with classroom teacher when necessary.

#### **45. School Discipline Procedures**

Following Montessori philosophy, our policy is to assist children in arriving at inner discipline through concentrated work. Natural or logical consequences are used as a means of helping the child to develop inner limits.

- If a child is disruptive, off-task or has trouble settling into the class, the teacher will remind the child of the classroom ground rules and may be redirected to an activity.
- If the child is still unable to settle down, the teacher may have the child remain beside them until they are able to calm down and make respectful choices, or may be asked to work in a different area of the class or school, or may be given a "community improvement" task to perform.
- If the child is still unable to settle down after a reminder of the ground rules, being redirected and working in a new location, the student will be asked to reflect, detailing what happened and the better choices that could have been made (to be read, signed and returned the following school day). The teacher may also have a one-on-one discussion with the child at this time.

- When a serious incident occurs, or when disruptive off-task behavior becomes chronic, the teacher or staff involved will submit a summary of the incident on an Accident or Incident Report Form depending on the situation.
- Each incident is different and will be handled on an individual basis. Administration reserves the right to handle each situation differently as they see fit.

#### **46. Repeated or Severe Actions of Misconduct**

At Geist Montessori Academy we work to develop students that look at the big picture to see how their choices affect the entire school. We want them to learn from their choices through natural consequences to help them make positive decisions in the future. However, in some instances further action must be taken in the best interest of all students and staff. At Geist Montessori Academy we put the children first, and we want to maintain a positive learning environment where they can thrive as individuals. When student actions threaten that peaceful environment the proper measures must be taken.

- **Disciplinary Action applies to a student enrolled at Geist Montessori Academy that disrupts the instruction or climate:**
  - **On school grounds before, after or during school hours**
  - **Off school grounds at a school activity, function, or event**
  - **Traveling to or from a school activity, function, or event.**

The following are examples of situations that are considered grounds for Disciplinary Action; serious incidents are defined, but not limited to the following:

- Children showing disrespect for self, others or environment (misconduct or substantive disobedience)
- Any time misconduct results in physical injury to another person
- A learner that brings a firearm, deadly weapon, or destructive device to school or on school property or is in possession of any of the above on school property
- Swearing, using abusive language or sarcasm directed at another student, staff member or parent
- Intentional abuse and/or vandalism to school property
- Bringing on campus any pornography, or explicit photography or written material
- Physical harm to another person with the intent to do bodily injury, such as hitting, stabbing, poking, pushing, slapping, kicking
- Bringing on campus any illegal substances or prescription medications for unauthorized use
- Stealing
- Touching another person's private body parts or intentionally exposing one's self for the sole purpose of self-gratification or harming (emotionally or physically) another individual.

Depending on the frequency or severity of the misbehavior, the following actions may be taken at the discretion of the Director:

- Call the parent/guardian immediately to discuss the issue with the child present
- Place the child in "in-school suspension" for specified period of time
- Have the parent/guardian remove the child from school for a specified period of time and conditions will be set for the child's re-admittance

The following will be afforded to a learner prior to suspension unless misconduct requires immediate removal, in which case the following will take place upon the learners return:

- A written or verbal statement of the misconduct of the learner;
- If the learner denies the charges, a summary of the evidence of the charge;
- An opportunity for the learner to explain the misconduct.

#### 47. Bullying Policy

At Geist Montessori Academy we define “bullying” as overt, repeated acts or gestures, including: (1) verbal or written communications transmitted; (2) physical acts committed; or (3) any other behaviors committed; by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the other student.

Any reported cases of bullying are treated to each student and situation. They can be reported in person or anonymously through email, phone, or our reporting link on the school website. They will be handled on an individual basis with no two cases being resolved in exactly the same way. All reported incidents of bullying are taken seriously and investigated by staff personnel. Any students found bullying are subject, but not limited to, disciplinary actions outlined in the (**Repeated or Severe Actions of Misconduct**) section of the school conduct policy.

The Geist Montessori “bullying” policy apply when a student is: (1) on school grounds immediately before or during school hours, immediately after school hours, or at any other time when the school is being used by a school group; (2) off school grounds at a school activity, function, or event; (3) traveling to or from school or a school activity, function, or event; or (4) using property or equipment provided by the school. Bullying is taken very seriously at GMA and our policies are designed to create a positive environment for all students to succeed.

#### 48. Anti-Bullying Policy

The following policy has been established by Geist Montessori Academy regarding anti-bullying. The school counselor is responsible for implementing and educating the students about the anti-bullying policy.

- Policy Statement

Geist Montessori Academy prohibits acts of bullying of a student. The school board has determined that a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student’s ability to learn and a school’s ability to educate its students in a safe and disciplined environment. Since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers should demonstrate appropriate behavior; treating others with civility and respect; and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying.

- Definitions

- Bullying

- As defined by the school corporation, bullying means aggressive behaviors that involve unwanted negative actions that are repeated over time and involve an imbalance of power.
- As defined by IC 20-33-8-.2, bullying means overt, unwanted, repeated acts or gestures, including verbal or written communications or images transmitted in any manner (including digitally or electronically), physical acts committed, aggression, or any other behaviors, that are committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the targeted student and create for the targeted student an objectively hostile school environment that:
  - Places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to the targeted student’s person or property;
  - Has a substantially detrimental effect on the targeted student’s physical or mental health;
  - Has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student’s academic performance; or
  - Has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, and privileges provided by the school.
- This term may not be interpreted to impose any burden or sanction on, or include in the definition of the term, the following:
  - Participating in a religious event.

- Acting in an emergency involving the protection of a person or property from an imminent threat of serious bodily injury or substantial danger.
  - Participating in an activity consisting of the exercise of a student's rights protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or Article I, Section 31 of the Constitution of the State of Indiana, or both.
  - Participating in an activity conducted by a nonprofit or governmental entity that provides recreation, education, training, or other care under the supervision of one or more adults.
  - Participating in an activity undertaken at the prior written direction of the student's parent.
  - Engaging in interstate or international travel from a location outside Indiana to another location outside Indiana.
  
- Policy Provisions
  - Geist Montessori Academy will adopt discipline rules in compliance with IC 20-33-8-13.5 that prohibit bullying and include provisions concerning education, parental involvement and intervention. These discipline rules shall apply regardless of the location in which the bullying occurred when the bully and the targeted student are students at a school within the school corporation, or disciplinary action is reasonably necessary to avoid substantial interferences with school discipline or prevent an unreasonable threat to the rights of others to a safe and peaceful learning environment.
  
  - The director at each school shall implement procedures that ensure both the appropriate consequences and remedial responses for students who commit one or more acts of bullying, consistent with the code of student conduct, as well as the consequences and remedial responses for staff members who commit one or more acts of bullying. Appropriate consequences and remedial actions are those that are graded according to the severity of the offenses and consider both the developmental ages of the student offenders and students' histories of inappropriate behaviors, per the code of student conduct.
  
  - The director at each school shall be responsible for designating a member of his/her staff to receive all complaints alleging violations of this policy.
  
  - All school employees, volunteers and contracted service providers who have contact with students are required to verbally report alleged violations of this policy to the director's designee on the same day that an incident was witnessed or reliable information regarding the occurrence of an incident was received. A written report of the incident shall also be submitted to the school director's designee within one (1) school day of submitting the verbal report.
  
  - Students, parents and visitors of a school within the school corporation are encouraged to submit a written report of alleged violations of this policy to the director or (director's designee) on the same day that an incident was witnessed or reliable information regarding the occurrence of an incident was received. Such a report may be made anonymously. Formal action for violations of the code of student conduct may not be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
  
  - Any school employee, volunteer or contracted service provider who promptly reports an incident of harassment, intimidation or bullying, and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures of this policy, is immune from a cause of action for damages arising from any failure to remedy the reported incident.
  
  - Administration shall conduct a thorough and complete investigation for each report of an alleged incident of bullying received. The investigation shall be initiated by the director or the director's designee within one school day of the report of the incident. The director may appoint additional

personnel to assist them in the investigation. The investigation shall be completed and the written findings submitted to the director as soon as possible, but not later than five school days from the date of the report of the alleged incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. The director shall submit the report to the board of education on a quarterly basis during regularly scheduled board meetings.

- Administration shall provide the parents of the students who are parties to the investigation with information about the investigation, in accordance with Federal and State law and regulation. The information to be provided to parents includes the nature of the investigation, whether the corporation found evidence of bullying, and whether consequences were imposed or services provided to address the bullying incident if the evidence of bullying was substantiated. This information is to be provided in an expedited manner.
- Any school employee, volunteer, or contracted service provider who receives a report of harassment, intimidation, or bullying from a student, parent, visitor or colleague, and fails to initiate or conduct an investigation, or who witnesses or observes a bullying incident and fails to take sufficient action to minimize or eliminate the harassment, intimidation, or bullying, may be subject to disciplinary action.
- Administration is authorized to define the range of ways in which school staff and the principal or the principal's designee shall respond once an incident of bullying is confirmed, according to the parameters described in the corporation's code of student conduct. The school board recognizes that some acts of bullying may be isolated incidents requiring that the school officials respond appropriately to the individuals committing the acts. Other acts may be so serious that they require a response either at the school corporation level or by local law enforcement officials. Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a student who commits an act of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.
- The director shall proceed in accordance with the code of student conduct, as appropriate, based on the investigation findings. As appropriate to the investigation findings, the director shall ensure the code of student conduct has been implemented, and provide intervention and/or relevant support services (i.e., refer to counseling, establish training programs to reduce bullying and enhance school climate, enlist parent corporation and involvement or take other appropriate action). Intervention and support implemented by the director or his/her designee should include follow up services to both the targeted student and the bully. The shall inform the parents of all students involved in alleged incidents, and, as appropriate, may discuss the availability of counseling and other intervention services.
- The director of each school is authorized to acknowledge and respond to instances of false reporting of alleged bullying incidents. The director is expected to respond with consequences and remedial actions regarding any person found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying as permitted under P.L. 285-2013 for:
  - Students – Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a student could range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.
  - School Employees – Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee or contracted service provider who has contact with students could entail discipline in accordance with corporation policies, procedures and agreements.
  - Visitors or Volunteers – Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a visitor or volunteer could be determined by the school administrator after consideration of the nature, severity, and circumstances of the act, including law enforcement reports or other legal actions, removal of building or grounds privileges, or prohibiting contact with students or the provision of student services.
- The director of each school shall annually make this policy available to all parents who have children enrolled in a school within the school corporation. The director shall post a link to the policy that is prominently displayed on the home page of the school corporation's website. The director shall ensure

that notice of the policy appears in the student handbooks and all other publications of the school corporation that set forth the comprehensive rules, procedures and standards for schools within the school corporation.

- Each school shall disseminate the anti-bullying policy and bullying prevention instruction to all students in grades k-8 within the school no later than October 15<sup>th</sup> of each school year. It is expected that anti-bullying information will be part of a more comprehensive bully prevention effort communicated to the students throughout the school year, and that the age appropriate, research based instruction for all students in grades k-8 be delivered by a school safety specialist, school counselor or other person with training and expertise in the area of bullying prevention and intervention.
- Each school shall provide annual training on this policy and bullying prevention and intervention instruction to corporation and school employees, volunteers and contracted service providers who have direct and on-going contact with students.
- The school board understands that the characteristics and resultant needs of each school within the corporation will continue to evolve, and that the existing base of knowledge regarding bullying prevention and intervention will continue to grow. Research on bullying prevention practices will continue to emerge, and the date on the nature of bullying behaviors will continuously change. It is essential that school administrators and school officials regularly review available bullying prevention and intervention data. Additionally, school administrators are expected to collect and analyze in-house data regarding bullying incident investigations, incident frequency and the effects of the efforts to address bullying behaviors. Through data-driven practice, administrators will be best qualified to determine the need for changes to policies and procedures and to institute improvements to prevention and intervention programs and approaches.

#### **49. Inappropriate Language:**

GMA defines inappropriate language as racial slurs, profanity, and any other language that is meant to degrade, taunt or slander another individual. Should inappropriate language be used, the consequences outlined in the handbook shall be followed.

Depending on the circumstances, the consequence, may be but is not limited to, suspension from school.

#### **50. Public Displays of Affection**

Inappropriate hugging, hand-holding, kissing, and other similar physical contact are not permitted. The consequences outlined in the handbook shall be followed should a student violate this policy.

#### **51. Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment in employment violates the provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any employee who is aware of any instance of sexual harassment should report the alleged act immediately to the Director. All complaints will be investigated promptly, impartially and discreetly and, upon completion of the investigation, the appropriate parties will be notified immediately of the findings.

The School will not tolerate any forms of discrimination and harassment by anyone. No one in our school community, which includes, but is not limited to students, parents, faculty/staff (regular or contracted), maintenance workers, and custodian, shall engage in sexually harassing behavior towards another member of our school community. Any employee who harasses another will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### **52. Student Due Process**

The procedures for administering student discipline and due process are provided by Indiana law. The Geist Montessori Academy Board adopts the Indiana Statutes as the official policy and administrative procedures of GMA unless applicable federal law requires otherwise (I.C.20-33-8). Indiana Legislature enacted PL224-1987. This statute requires school authorities to inform law enforcement agencies, in writing, when violations involving controlled substances occur within a school environment. Under Indiana law, a student bringing a firearm or destructive device to school or on school property or in possession of a firearm or destructive device on school property must be expelled from school for a period of at least one calendar year. (I.C.20-33-8-16(d)) Under Indiana law, a student bringing a deadly weapon, other than a firearm, to school or on school property or in possession of a deadly weapon on school property may be expelled for a period of not more than one calendar year. IC 20-33-8-16 (f)).

### **53. Student Information: Unlawful Activity**

A student may be suspended or expelled if the student has engaged in unlawful activity on or off of school property if the activity may reasonably be considered to interfere with the school's purpose or education function or if the student's removal is necessary to restore order and/or protect others on the property.

Indiana law prohibits students from bringing or possessing at school firearms, deadly weapons, or other destructive devices. The penalty under Indiana law is expulsion from school for at least one calendar year with the student's return at the beginning of the first semester after the one year period.

### **54. Student Information: Behavior Policy for Special Education Students**

As a public education institution, GMA strictly adheres to the guidelines of Article 7's Rule 29 (section 511 IAC 7-29-1 through 511 IAC 7-29-9) and Rule 30 (sections 511 IAC 7-30-1 through 511 IAC 7-30-6) as they relate to disciplinary procedures and mediation. Should a situation dictate GMA will assist families through the Division of Special Education in the facilitation of impartial advocates and mediators to address student/family complaints.

A special education student may be subjected to the same procedures as applied to all students, as long as the student is not removed from special education services, as specified in the student's IEP for more than 10 days per school year.

Repeat or violent offenses may require a consideration of change in placement for the student. In an effort to keep all of our student's safe, GMA administration with the input of our special education staff reserve the right to make the decision to call a case conference committee (CCC) meeting to address a student's offensive behavior.

Any consideration of change in placement for special education services (i.e., suspension from school for a period longer than 10 days, a more restrictive program at school, a reduced school day, placement in IAES (Interim Alternative Education Setting) or expulsion MUST FIRST be addressed within a case conference committee meeting that includes parents/guardians. The only exception to this rule is when a student's offense falls under any of the following categories:

- **Drugs brought to school**
- **Weapons brought to school**
- **ANY dangerous behavior that causes serious bodily injury to students or staff members**

In all other situations, the CCC meeting CANNOT be held without a parent/guardian present. Parents/guardians of the special education student MUST be notified of the CCC meeting in writing and presented with "Parental Rights" and "Procedural Safeguards".

## **55. Seclusion and Restraint Plan**

As a part of the emergency procedures in place in our schools, no student will be restrained and/or placed in seclusion by school staff unless the student's behavior poses an imminent risk of injury to him/herself or others. However, significant violations of the law including assaults on students and staff will be reported to the police. As soon as possible after any such use of restraint

### **USE OF RESTRAINT**

- Restraint shall only be used when a student is displaying physical behavior that presents substantial imminent risk of injury to the student or others.
- Restraint shall only be employed as a last resort after other methods of de-escalating a dangerous situation have been attempted without success.
- Restraint shall only be employed by staff members who have received crisis intervention training by the school in the use of restraint procedures with the following exceptions:
  - Other school personnel may employ restraint procedures only in rare and clearly unavoidable emergency circumstances when fully trained school personnel are not immediately available. Untrained staff shall request assistance from trained staff as soon as possible.
  - Restraint of a student shall be conducted in a manner consistent with the techniques prescribed in crisis intervention training program.
- Restraint shall last only as long as is necessary for the student to regain behavioral stability, and the risk of injury has ended, usually a matter of minutes.
- The degree of restriction employed must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident, the size and condition of the student, and the potential risks for injury to the student.
- Mechanical or chemical restraints are not authorized in school.
- Prone or Supine forms of restraint are not authorized and shall be avoided.
- Seclusion or restraint shall never be used in a manner that restricts a child's breathing or harms the child
- Every instance in which seclusion or restraint is used shall be carefully, continuously and visually monitored to ensure the appropriateness of its use and safety of the child, other children, teachers, and other personnel

### **WHEN RESTRAINT PROCEDURES SHALL NOT BE EMPLOYED**

- Restraint shall not be used unless there is imminent risk of injury to someone by the student.
- A verbal threat or verbally aggressive behavior does not itself indicate an imminent risk of injury, and shall not result in restraint.
- Destruction or damage to property does not constitute a risk of imminent injury unless in so doing a risk of injury to the student or others is created.
- When known medical or physical condition of the student would make the restraint procedures dangerous for that student (e.g. students with heart or circulatory conditions, asthma, etc.) they shall not be employed.
- Restraint shall never be used as a punishment, or to force compliance with staff commands.

### **USE OF SECLUSION**

- Seclusion shall only be used when a student is displaying physical behavior that presents substantial imminent risk to the student or others, and the threat could be diminished if the student was in a safe environment away from other students and staff.
- Seclusion shall only be employed as a last resort after other methods of de-escalating a dangerous situation have been attempted.
- Seclusion shall only be used as long as necessary and shall be discontinued when the student is no longer an imminent threat to others.
- Seclusion shall only be employed by staff members who have received specific GMA approved crisis intervention training in the use of seclusion procedures.

- Seclusion must be used only when the student can safely be transported to the seclusion environment by trained staff members using appropriate techniques based on crisis intervention training.
- Time out procedures that do not constitute seclusion are permitted in school.
- All seclusion environments shall be inspected to the best of the schools ability:
  - Be of reasonable size to accommodate the student and at least one adult.
  - Be of reasonable size to permit students to lie or sit down.
  - Have adequate ventilation including heat and air conditioning as appropriate.
  - Have adequate lighting.
  - Be free of any potential or predictable safety hazards such as electrical outlets, equipment, and breakable glass.
  - Permit direct continuous visual and auditory monitoring of the student.
  - Permit automatic release of any locking device if fire or other emergency in the school exists.
  - If locked, shall be automatically released after five minutes or with any building wide alarm (such as fire, tornado or code red alarm).
  - Shall meet current fire and safety codes.

#### **WHEN SECLUSION PROCEDURES SHALL NOT BE EMPLOYED**

- When the substantial imminent risk of injury no longer exists.
- When known medical or physical condition of the student would make the seclusion procedures dangerous for that student (e.g. students expressing suicidal thoughts, students with heart or circulatory conditions, asthma, or other conditions).
- Seclusion shall never be used unless a staff member can continuously monitor the student for visual or auditory signs of physiological distress, and can communicate with the student.
  - Students shall be permitted to use the restroom upon request, and be escorted to and from the restroom in a safe manner.
  - Students shall be provided water on request.
- Seclusion shall never be used as a punishment, or to force compliance with staff commands.

#### **TIME-OUT:**

Time-out is a behavior reduction procedure in which access to reinforcement is withdrawn for a certain period of time. Time-out occurs when the ability of a student to receive normal reinforcement in the school environment is restricted. Time-out shall be both developmentally and behaviorally appropriate and shall be short in duration.

### **56. Student Information: Dress Code**

Geist Montessori Academy has adopted the following policy regarding student dress. It is our intent to have students dress in a manner that shows good judgment and does not distract or interfere with the educational climate. School administration reserves the right to determine if a student is wearing something that distracts or interferes with the educational climate, and will make determinations as needed. Their decisions will be based on, but not limited to, the guidelines listed below.

#### **General**

- Clothing and accessories shall not be worn if they display or suggest:
  - Profanity or Vulgarity
  - Obscene or foul language
  - Symbols of violence
  - Discriminatory messages
  - Gang or gang-like symbols
  - Sexually suggested symbols
  - Alcohol, tobacco or drug messages
- Clothes with rips, tears, and/or holes cannot have the rips/tears/holes above the fingertip level.

#### **Accessories/Headwear**

- Head coverings, including but not limited to caps, hats, wigs, bandannas, hair curlers, picks, combs, hoods and scarves, may not be worn inside the building unless authorized by the school administration.
- Sunglasses shall not be worn inside unless prescribed by a physician or authorized by an administrator.

#### **Footwear**

- Shoes with laces are to be laced and tied.
- Shoes manufactured with wheels are not permitted.
- Slippers/house shoes need to have a hard sole for foot safety
- Shoes or slippers are to be worn at all times.

#### **Pants/Slacks**

- Pants will be worn fitted to the waist with or without a belt, and they will not expose undergarments. If a student is “sagging”, the student will be asked to fasten the pants at his/her waist. A “tie” may be given to the student if he does not have a belt. If the student refuses to fix his/her pants the first time the request is made, the parent/guardian may be called to bring a proper pair of pants and/or a disciplinary referral may be written.

#### **Shirts and Tops**

- Clothing that exposes the back, torso, shoulders and/or cleavage, such as the following, is not allowed:
  - Tube tops/Halters
  - Tank tops/Spaghetti straps
  - Bare back or midriff clothing
  - Bathing suits
  - Shirts with slits above the waist
  - Basketball jerseys and similar tops (without another shirt on underneath)

The ‘Hand Test’ shall determine appropriate exposed skin on chest (index finger on collar bone with other three fingers resting on chest). Skin should not be exposed below the pinky finger. All shirts must have sleeves that cover the shoulders. Bra/undergarment straps should not show.

#### **Leggings/Shorts/Dresses/Skirts**

- These items should meet the fingertip test, meaning, “when arms are held relaxed at student’s sides, shorts/skirts/dresses should reach **below** the fingertips”. Skin should not be visible above the fingertips.
- Leggings may be worn but tops still must reach **BELOW** the fingertips all the way around the body. Any type of tight pants will be considered leggings unless there are back pockets. This includes “jeggings”.
- School officials have the right to make the decision on whether or not clothing is appropriate.

If there is a question as to whether or not any student’s apparel is inappropriate for school, school officials will be the judges. We reserve the right to send a student home or ask the parent to bring a change of clothing if the student’s clothing is not appropriate for the school setting. If an adult is not available to supply a change of clothing, the student may be given school clothing to wear.

### **57. Student Information: Personal Items**

GMA does not accept responsibility for the personal items of students. Items not necessary for the enhancement of education are expected to be left at home. Any personal items judged to be unsafe or inappropriate for the school environment, or interfering with a student’s education focus, will be confiscated and held in the office or with the retrieving staff member until a parent retrieves them. The school shall not be responsible for items lost or damaged while in its possession.

Students are not allowed to bring the following items to school:

- iPods
- PSPs
- Nooks
- Kindles
- CD PLAYERS
- GAMEBOYS
- VIDEO GAMES
- MP3 PLAYERS
- LASER PENS
- OTHER GAMING SYSTEMS

Exceptions to these rules may be made on an individual basis and must be accompanied by a written permission from the teacher.

Cell phones may be brought to school, but they may not be utilized during instructional hours without the verbal consent of a staff member. If the cell phone is utilized by a student or viewed by a staff member during the instructional day, it will be confiscated and held until it is retrieved by the parent.

### **58. Student Information: Technology Use & Internet Safety Policy**

All use of computers, furnished or created data, software, and other technology resources as granted by GMA are the property of GMA and are intended for school business and educational use only. Students are to use the computer network responsibly. The student is personally responsible for his/her actions in accessing and using the GMA computer network and the school's technological resources.

General Rules:

- GMA reserves the right to monitor, retrieve and review any data composed, sent, received, or stored using the GMA network or Internet connections, including email.
- GMA prohibits cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying involves deliberate or hostile behavior intended to defame, harm, threaten, harass, or intimidate students, staff members, or the school through the use of information and communication technologies, including email, text messages, blogs, instant messages, personal websites, online social directories and communities such as Facebook, MySpace, Wikipedia, YouTube), video-posting sites, or others not listed. Cyber-bullying occurring during OR outside school hours, on or off the school premises is prohibited.
- Use of profane, pornographic, obscene, abusive, or impolite materials or language is not permitted.
- Intentional circumvention of web-filtering is prohibited. Accidental access should be reported to the teacher immediately.
- Installing or downloading hardware, software, shareware, or freeware onto any media or network drives is prohibited. Downloading of non-work related files is permitted only with a teacher's permission.
- Copyright laws are to be respected, and copying of any person's work or intruding into others' files is prohibited.
- Users may not access the network without proper authorization.
- Users may not attempt to damage or destroy equipment or files. GMA makes no warranties of any kind, either expressed or implied, for the service it provides, and is not responsible for damage to any data.
- Users are to delete files and data no longer needed.

### **59. Internet Use**

GMA integrates the use of technology into student instruction, and internet usage is permitted only in the presence and supervision of a teacher, the child's parent, or other designated staff member. While the school uses these resources to enhance our students' educations, there are always potential risks of the student accessing other materials. We believe the benefits outweigh the risks, and while teachers are trained in the appropriate use of technology with students, parents and teachers share responsibility for conveying clear expectations regarding internet and technology use.

## **60. Social Media Comments and Participation Policy**

Comments to GMA-sponsored sites, such as social media sites, are welcome and encouraged, and we look forward to hearing from you. To promote respectful discussion within this forum, we request that you be courteous and productive and avoid comments that are profane, obscene, offensive, sexually explicit, inappropriate, inflammatory or otherwise objectionable. Blogs often foster debate of an issue; users are to engage in such exchanges with mutual respect for others' opinions.

For the privacy of users and their families, please assume that all postings to GMA sponsored sites will be publicly available on the Internet and therefore publicly accessible without limitation or protection of any kind. Please consider how much personal information to share, with the understanding that this information may be linked to your name and published on the Internet.

By posting a comment or other material to GMA-sponsored sites as outlined above, users give GMA the irrevocable right and license to exercise all copyright, publicity, and moral rights with respect to any content you provide, which includes using your submission for any purpose in any form and on any media, including but not limited to: displaying, modifying, reproducing, distributing, creating other works from, and publishing your submission. GMA reserves the right to review all comments before they are posted, and to edit them to preserve readability for other users.

GMA further reserves the right to reject or remove comments for any reason, including but not limited to our belief that the comments violate this Comment Policy, to determine in its sole discretion which submissions meet its qualifications for posting, and to remove comments for any reason, including but not limited to our belief that the comments violate this Policy. Any submissions that fail to follow this Policy in any way or are otherwise irrelevant will be removed.

We also reserve the right to amend this Policy from time to time in our judgment to address issues that may arise and changes in our operations or the law.

In posting material on GMA-sponsored sites, you agree not to:

- Post material that GMA determines is threatening, harassing, illegal, obscene, defamatory, slanderous, or hostile towards any individual or entity.
- Post phone numbers, email addresses or other confidential information of students, faculty, or any other person other than yourself. If you choose to post your own contact information for any reason, please be aware that the information will be available to the public and is, therefore, subject to misuse.
- Post material that infringes on the rights of GMA or any individual or entity, including privacy, intellectual property or publication rights.
- Post material that promotes or advertises a commercial product or solicits business or membership or financial or other support in any business, group or organization except those which are officially sponsored by GMA, except in designated areas specifically marked for this purpose.
- Post chain letters, post the same comment multiple times, or otherwise distribute "spam" via the GMA-sponsored site.
- Allow any other individual or entity to use your identification for posting or viewing comments.
- Post comments under multiple names or using another person's name.
- GMA reserves the right to do any or all of the following:
  - Ban future posts from people who repeatedly violate this Policy. We may affect such bans by refusing posts from specific email addresses or IP addresses, or through other means as necessary.
  - Remove or edit comments at any time, whether or not they violate this Policy.
- User agrees to indemnify and hold harmless Geist Montessori Academy, its affiliates, directors, employees, successors and assigns against any damages, losses, liabilities, judgments, causes of action, costs or expenses (including reasonable attorneys' fees and costs) arising out of any claim by a third party relating to any material user has posted on GMA-sponsored sites.

- By posting a comment or material of any kind on a GMA-sponsored site, the user hereby agrees to the Policy set forth above.
- Post photos of GMA students.

## **61. PARENT/GUARDIAN'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE**

### **Modeling**

A parent is the most important teacher in a child's life. Children observe and imitate the behavioral responses that are used by the significant adults in their environment. Parents who are respectful and kind to others, especially their own children, are likely to see that same behavior develop in their children. Demonstrating a variety of healthy responses to frustration and set-backs, as well as modeling effective problem-solving techniques and non-judgmental communication are especially valuable to young children who are still learning to establish their own self-control.

### **Discussion**

While children absorb a great deal by observation, discussing ways to show respect, build trust, show empathy, manage anger, and practice forgiveness can help a child build successful relationships.

### **Reinforcement**

Montessori philosophy does not advocate external rewards for desired behavior, as this tends to reduce intrinsic motivation. However, acknowledging and praising positive behavior is always important and will help shape a child's behavior far better than criticism.

### **Teaching Values**

GMA is built on the concept of COMMUNITY. A community shares common values. Its members seek to give as much as they are able for the good of the whole, and take only what they really need. The community seeks to raise the level of the lowest members while keeping the entire community progressing forward toward a shared vision. At GMA, we value:

- Respect for ourselves, others and the environment;
- Honesty;
- Courtesy and exceptional manners;
- Empathy for others and respect for differences among people and cultures;
- Accepting responsibility for personal decisions and actions;
- Working cooperatively with others, which includes listening, sharing opinions, negotiating, compromising, helping the group reach consensus, and taking a stand;
- Seeking one's share of the work load;
- Creating a balance between the needs of individual students and families and the needs of the school population as a whole; and
- Pride in our school

### **Home/School Communication**

Changes in a child's home life may affect his/her behavior and performance at school. Please notify the office and your child's teacher if any significant changes occur, such as:

- Extended vacations or business trips by a family member;
  - Child staying somewhere other than home (relative/friend's house) for more than a day or two;
  - Loss of family member, including pets;
  - Moving; and
  - Change in family environment (separation, divorce, new partner, new baby);
- \* This information will be strictly confidential.*

### **Parent Education**

Acquiring the knowledge, skills, and patience to raise healthy, happy and well-adjusted children is an on-going process that requires a tremendous amount of effort, time, and diligence. Several resources are available and parents are expected to take proactive responsibility in this area.

- The school has a small library of helpful books and videos that can be checked out by parents. GMA can provide a recommended reading list that covers Montessori and other topics of education.
- Parents are encouraged to participate in parent orientation night and other parent events.
- GMA is developing a series of educational evenings that are designed to assist parents in building positive parenting practices, as well as increase the awareness of Montessori philosophy.
- Parent/Teacher discussions may be scheduled at any time with your child's teacher to exchange ideas and strategies for specific behavioral issues that may be impacting the student or family. The Executive Director is also available at to discuss educational and behavioral issues.

### **GMA is a SCHOOL OF CHOICE**

Students who are unable to progress or become responsible, independent, and productive members of the Montessori Community have the option to return to the school offered by their local public school district. Traditionally, public schools offer a more structured group approach to instruction and classroom set-up and this approach may more suitable for some children. Parent understanding and support of the expectations established by GMA is vital to each child's behavior and successful performance. As mentioned in much of our literature, this is a COMMUNITY EFFORT. While children should not be denied access to educational opportunities based on their parent's unwillingness to follow the strategies outlined for success, these same children cannot be permitted to interrupt the learning environment and process for others.

### **62. Safety Policy**

- No student shall ever be left alone or unsupervised.
- An adult will greet the student at the start of the day.
- Monthly fire drills will be held for all staff and students.
- Fire and tornado safety information is posted in each classroom.
- Incident Reports will be completed should an accident or injury occur. The parent/legal guardian of the involved student(s) will receive one copy, the office retains one copy, and a copy is kept in the student's file.

School staff is required by law to immediately notify the local public children's services agency if they suspect that a child has been abused or neglected. GMA upholds this law.

### **63. Health Screenings**

Each school year, vision screenings will be conducted for all students in grades K, 1, 3, 5 & 8 and all new students, and hearing screenings will be conducted for all new students. If a parent is concerned about a student's hearing at any time throughout the school year, he/she may request a screening by filling out a permission form obtained by our speech language pathologist.

### **64. Immunization Records**

Immunization Records: No student shall be permitted to attend school unless the student presents a written immunization record containing a method of immunization approved by the Department of Health. Parents may request in writing a medical or religious exemption from immunization requirements (form available in the office).

For the Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, within twenty (20) days after school starts, the state of Indiana requires that parents of female, sixth grade students provide the school a written statement on a prescribed form providing evidence that:

- The student has received or is receiving the immunization

- A decision has been made not to have the immunization
- The parent has decided not provide the information indicating whether the student was immunized.

#### **65. Health Policy**

We believe the following health policies are essential to the successful operation of our school and to the welfare of our children. A child may not be brought to school if he or she is sick. For the sake of the other children, the staff, and themselves, any child exhibiting any of the following symptoms must be kept at home:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Contagious skin infection
- Contagious eye infection
- Hacking or continuous cough
- Excessively runny nose
- Sore throat
- The child has not been fever free for 24 hours
- The child has not been vomit free for 24 hours.

#### **66. Communicable Disease Policy**

If the school determines that a child is ill, the parents will be contacted and asked to pick up their child. Symptoms for which a child shall be discharged from school include:

- Diarrhea
- Sever coughing which causes a whooping sound
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Labored or rapid breathing
- Conjunctivitis
- Temperature of 100 or more
- Untreated skin infection
- Stiff neck
- Sore throat or difficulty in swallowing
- Unusual spots or rash
- Evidence of lice infestation, scabies or other parasitic infestation
- Vomiting

If we cannot reach you by phone, we will attempt to contact the adult indicated on your emergency contact form. Every possible means will be taken to reach one of the designated adults so that the child can be taken home and made comfortable as soon as possible.

If your child has been sent home from school due to an illness, they may not return to school until:

- They are fever-free for 24 hours
- They have not vomited or had diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have taken a prescribed course of antibiotics for 24-48 hours.

Please be considerate of other students and staff when your child is ill.

#### **67. Head Lice**

##### **Head Lice Policy**

**Symptoms:** *itching, especially of the scalp.*

White nits, or eggs of the louse insect, attach to the hair shaft most frequently at the nape of the neck and behind the ears. The eggs cement to the hair shaft close to the scalp. A shampoo treatment with an insecticide shampoo will generally kill most head lice. A second treatment is necessary ten (10) days later with some brands of insecticide shampoo. Manual nit removal and environmental cleanup of the home by the parent is the key to successful head lice treatment. While head lice are a nuisance, **they do not spread disease and are not a health issue**. Should a case of head lice be brought to the school's attention, administrator will maintain confidentiality of the student's identity, verify the presence of an active infestation, and bring it to the attention of the child's parent/guardian.

A GMA representative will assess students for head lice who present with symptoms, notify the child's parents of a confirmed case, assist staff and parents with educational material, reassess a student with a confirmed case to monitor the effectiveness of treatment, and refer to a health care provider as needed. ***Students should not be excluded from school for having nits, as the management of the condition should not disrupt the educational process of the child.*** The need to send a student home from school will be determined on a case by case basis to protect the student's privacy. This protocol is supported by the National Pediculosis Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Association of School Nurses. Please contact your school nurse if further information or resources are needed.

#### **68. Medication Administration**

Only necessary medications that must be given during school hours will be administered. If your child requires medication, whether prescription or over-the-counter, during the school day, written permission from a legal guardian /custodial parent is required (forms available in office). The form must be renewed each year and/or upon any change in dosage. One of our trained staff members will handle the distribution.

For prescription medications, inhalers, epinephrine injectors, and self-administration of medication, a physician's signature is required, and a Prescription Authorization Form needs to accompany the medication. The medication also needs to be in the original pharmacy container labeled with the exact dosage. Parents, please hand the medication directly to a staff member. If a student's needs warrants additional information, please notify the school to set up a conference for asthma and/or epinephrine medications. Medication must come in the exact dosage prescribed so the person administering is not responsible for splitting pills. Any medication not picked up at the end of the year will be discarded.

If a parent is accompanying his/her child on a field trip, the parent will be required to administer his/her child's medication. All allergies need to be reported on your child's Medical Information Card. If there is any change during the school year, please notify us accordingly. Your child's teacher and assistant are made aware of reported allergies and any special needs that he/she may have.

#### **69. Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Intervention**

In compliance with Indiana Code 6.1-2-2.5, GMA has developed and implemented a comprehensive Safety and Crisis Intervention Plan for dealing with a wide range of crises and emergency events.

Routine drills and practice sessions are intended to teach students proper behavior and appropriate responses in an emergency situation. Students are expected to listen closely to teachers and school staff and follow their directions quickly and efficiently during all emergency drills.

#### **70. Emergency and Accident Policy**

If a student has an accident at school, school staff will contact the parent/legal guardian. If necessary, an Emergency Medical Technician will be called to give assistance. The student will be transported to the hospital indicated on the Medical Consent Form. A staff member will accompany and stay with the child until a parent/legal guardian arrives. The student's Medical Consent Form will also accompany the child to the source of care. If you have questions about this policy, please contact our office staff.

## **71. Pest Control Policy**

The school corporation is committed to providing students a safe environment. It seeks to prevent children from being exposed to pests and pesticides. While pesticides protect children from pests that may be found in the school and its surrounding grounds, under some circumstances they may pose a hazard to children. Therefore, pest control practices may involve a variety of chemical and non-chemical methods that are designed to control pests effectively while minimizing potential pesticide exposure to children.

This policy does not apply to the use of the following pesticides: 1) When used in normal cleaning activities: germ killers, disinfectants, sanitizing agents, water purifiers, and swimming pool chemicals; 2) personal insect repellents when self-applied; and 3) gel baits or manufactured enclosed insecticides when used where students and staff members do not have access to the insecticides.

Pesticides will be applied by certified pesticide applicators and when students and staff members are not present, such as during non-instructional time or school vacation periods.

The corporation will:

1. Inform annually parents and staff members of the corporation's pest control policy at the time of student registration [beginning of the school year or semester] by a separate memorandum or as a provision in the student handbook.
2. Provide the name and phone number of the person to contact for information regarding pest control. (Mr. Nik, [ngiant@gma.k12.in.us](mailto:ngiant@gma.k12.in.us) 317-335-1158)
3. Establish a registry of parents and staff members who want to receive advance notice of all pesticide use and provide such notice.
4. Provide notice of planned pesticide applications to parents and employees who have requested advanced notice.
5. Maintain written record for at least 90 days of any pesticide applications.

The corporation will provide notice at least two [school] days prior to the date and time the pesticide application is to occur. The notice will include the date and time of the pesticide application, the general area where the pesticide is to be applied and the telephone number to contact the school for more information.

In case of emergency pesticide applications because of immediate threat to the public health, the school shall give written notice as soon as possible.

### **Pest Control Regulations**

In an attempt to assure proper control of any pesticides that might be used on corporation premises, these procedures are established. "Pesticide" for application of these regulations only is defined as a fungicide used on plants, an insecticide, an herbicide, or a rodenticide. These regulations do not apply to the use of the following pesticides: 1) When used in normal cleaning activities: germ killers, disinfectants, sanitizing agents, water purifiers, and swimming pool chemicals; 2) personal insect repellents when self-applied; and 3) gel baits or manufactured enclosed insecticides when used where students and staff members do not have access to the insecticides. The intent of this regulation is to prevent exposure of staff members and students to pesticides.

1. Pesticides will be applied only by certified pesticide applicators or individuals operating under their supervision in school buildings or on school grounds.
2. When possible, pesticide applications will be done during non-instructional time or during vacation periods.
3. When inspections are conducted by an independent contractor, the contractor shall [should] contact the building administrator no later than 48 hours prior to the scheduled inspection to discuss any problems with pests so that the contractor may inform the building administrator what pesticides will be applied on the date of the scheduled

inspection. The building administrator will then implement the notification requirements of the pest control policy and its regulations.

4. An emergency application of pesticides is defined as when an application of pesticides is necessary to eliminate an immediate threat to human health and where it is impractical to obtain the services of a certified pesticide applicator provided such emergency application does not involve a restricted use pesticide. Restricted use pesticides may be used only by certified applicators or under their direct supervision.

5. The aforementioned notice shall include the (1) name of the active ingredient of the pesticides anticipated to be applied if part of a routine scheduled service, (2) location of the application, (3) date of application, (4) approximate time and length of the application and (5) name and telephone number of the school administrator or his/her designee who may be contacted for further information.

6. Any pesticide application is prohibited when children are in the room or on school grounds in or near the area to be treated.

9. If an emergency application is necessary to eliminate an immediate threat to human health, no person may enter the area of such application until it is safe to do so according to the provisions on the pesticide label.

10. A copy of the records of each pesticide application at a school shall be maintained for at least 90 days. The records will contain the following information:

- Date and time of the inspection and pesticide application;
- Pests found during inspection;
- Brand name and active ingredient of pesticide(s);
- EPA registration number of pesticide(s);
- Areas treated;
- Name of applicator; and
- Source for obtaining information on the pesticide label(s), material safety data sheet(s), and/or fact sheet(s) for end use concentrations.

12. The school principal upon request will make available the pesticide application information listed above for at least 90 days from the date of application.

13. Whenever practical, non-chemical controls shall be used. The least toxic formulations and safest methods of application will be selected when there is a choice of pesticide products with comparable effectiveness.

## **72. Geist Montessori Academy Volunteer Criminal Background Check Policy**

In an effort to keep our schools safe, all volunteers must submit to a criminal background check and be approved as a volunteer prior to volunteering. This form must be completed at least two (2) weeks prior to the event in which the volunteer chooses to participate in. Potential volunteers shall not be permitted to begin volunteering without a successful criminal background check.

Volunteer background checks are completed by the front office staff or school administration using the State of Indiana Police criminal records database and the sex offender database.

When evaluating volunteer criminal background checks, we evaluate them on charges filed and the disposition of the charges. If the following charges appear on a volunteer background check, the volunteer will not be permitted to volunteer in our schools:

- Murder
- Causing Suicide
- Assisting Suicide
- Voluntary Manslaughter
- Reckless Homicide

- Battery
- Aggravated Battery
- Kidnapping
- Criminal Confinement
- A Sexual Offense
- Carjacking
- Arson
- Incest
- Child Selling
- Neglect of a Dependent (within the past 10 years)
- Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor (within the past 10 years)
- Weapons Offenses (within the past 10 years)
- Controlled Substance Offenses (within the past 10 years)
- Relating to material or a performance that is harmful to minors or obscene (within the past 10 years)
- Any offense related to operating a vehicle while intoxicated (within the past 5 years)
- Any offense that is substantially equivalent to any of the offenses listed above

GMA also withholds the right to deny any volunteer for any of the following reasons:

- Any charge currently pending;
- Any misrepresentation on the volunteer requestor criminal background check (either orally or in writing)
- Any other charge not mentioned above, but determined to be a risk to the students or safety of our school.

Volunteer criminal background checks are evaluated and valid until the end of the school year. Volunteers will be required to complete a new volunteer background check form and their status as a volunteer will be reconsidered at the start of each school year or when the volunteer applies in the next school year.

If a volunteer is not permitted to volunteer in our schools due to pending charges, at the time the pending charges are resolved, the volunteer's status will be re-evaluated.

The following are a few examples, not an inclusive list, of when a volunteer criminal background check is required:

- Attending or assisting with class parties
- Assisting school staff in the classroom or school building
- Having lunch at the school building with a student
- Chaperoning a field trip.

Volunteer criminal background checks are NOT required for events in which all parents are invited to attend, such as:

- Open Houses
- Ice Cream Socials
- School Pic-Nics
- School festivals/carnivals
- The Talent Show
- Transition Ceremonies

If the volunteer is charged with an offense listed above during the course of their volunteering, the volunteer shall inform GMA immediately.

