



GEIST MONTESSORI ACADEMY

# **Family/Student Handbook**

## **2018/2019**

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## **Introduction**

On behalf of the administration and staff, we welcome you to the school year. We have a commitment to building a strong community, and we urge you to positively contribute to the best of your ability.

The information and rules in this handbook are written for you. A careful review of these regulations will help you make your years at Geist Montessori Academy a pleasant and meaningful educational experience. If you have any questions, please contact your Directors; Dr. Sue, Mr. Nik, Miss Molly, the school counselor, or any of our teachers.

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

### **1. Mission**

Geist Montessori Academy provides an academically and culturally rich educational environment that allows children to acquire knowledge in a non-competitive, individualized manner. We strive to prepare a school environment that encourages joyful learning and greater exploration of the community and the world. Character building and community awareness form a whole-child curriculum that prepares our students for life.

### **2. 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**
- **develop 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**

### **3. Montessori Foundations**

Geist Montessori Academy is charged to achieve its vision in the context of a grade K-8 public charter school. To do so, the board, administration, and staff commit to the following Montessori foundations:

#### **Public Montessori**

- Provide a free Montessori education enhanced to ensure alignment with the Montessori philosophy and the IDOE State Standards.
- Promote high levels of student achievement.

- Measure achievement and growth in multiple ways and use assessment data to inform instruction.
- Promote a school wide culture of respect, open and honest communication, high expectations, and continuous growth through self-reflection.
- Continuously prepare to serve learners with great diversity in cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, individual needs, and learning styles.

**Holistic Student Development**

- Give students meaningful and engaging work that excites and challenges.
- Engage students in activities that teach them how to be competent, caring contributors to our community.
- Model and promote Montessori values of grace, courtesy, respect, and responsibility.
- Teach cooperative learning, conflict resolution, and self-correction skills.
- Respect each student’s unique learning style by individually tailoring learning supports.
- Allow students to experience the intrinsic reward that comes from selection of work and its mastery.
- Encourage students to take ownership for their academic and personal development.
- Encourage curiosity, creativity, and exploration.

**School-strengthening Collaboration**

- Create teacher-parent-student partnerships to support student learning.
- Involve and vest parents, teachers, and students in the school’s decision-making process and volunteer efforts.
- Develop partnerships with local agencies, community service organizations, and businesses to enhance children’s health and learning (e.g. internships, service learning, etc.).
- Share information and best practices with other educators and community members, particularly Montessori practitioners.

**High Quality Staff**

- Educate all staff regarding Montessori philosophy in addition to GMA curriculum, culture, and processes.
- Maintain high standards for accomplished teaching and learning.
- Evaluate teaching staff regularly for achievement of GMA's vision for students.

**4. Principles 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, emotionally, and physically.

Maria 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 “works”) 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
- aware of the natural world and the human condition

### **The Montessori Uninterrupted Work Period**

The uninterrupted work period is fundamental to the Montessori approach, which recognizes and respects individual variations in the learning process. Within the Montessori environment, the children need to have time to work through various tasks and responsibilities at their own pace. This uninterrupted work period is vitally important, as that is when the building of coordination, concentration, independence and order, and the assimilation of information are able to occur.

- At the **Early Childhood level**, a 3-hour uninterrupted work cycle, 5 days per week, is optimal.. Schools provide large blocks of unscheduled time to ensure that individual children have the time to settle into a task that interests them and are not unnecessarily interrupted when they are engaged in a worthwhile activity.

During the work period, teachers observe the behaviors of the children and invite individuals and small groups to short lessons when they see opportunities to assist a child's progress. Optimally, the majority of each morning and afternoon is devoted to self-motivated work. This time may include individual- or self-chosen small group activities and short lessons by the teacher for children who have accepted an invitation to the lesson.

The uninterrupted work period does not include whole-class lessons or other activities such as adult-led group circle meetings for which participation of all children is required. Outdoor play time, specials, and enrichment classes for the whole group should not interrupt and are not included in the work period.

- At the **Elementary level**, a 3-hour uninterrupted work cycle, 5 days per week, is optimal. During the uninterrupted work cycle, one should see students engaged in developmentally appropriate work. The work should include Montessori hands-on materials that are appropriate for the individual needs of each student. The teacher will be working with students individually and in small groups, in hands-on engaging Montessori lessons. Students will be collaborating as they work on a task or research project together. Students are also managing work expectations. A contract, work plan, or work journal may be used to help with organization and time management skills.

At the Elementary level, full-class lessons should not take place during the uninterrupted work cycle. Rather, they should be presented before or after the uninterrupted work cycle. Outdoor play time, specials,

and enrichment classes for the whole group should not interrupt and are not included in the work period. Circle time should also be held before or after the uninterrupted work cycle.

- At the **Secondary level**, the length of the work cycle varies by setting. Small programs with a single Secondary-credentialed guide will look different than large programs, particularly at the Secondary II level when course requirements and credits needed for diplomas are considered. The critical aspect is encouraging flexibility within extended blocks of time. You may see the following lessons presented: mini-lessons, impressionistic lessons, procedural lessons, small-group lessons using flexible grouping based on needs, and individual lessons. Student work periods vary in length each day. It is important that this large block of time is not divided into daily, one-hour class periods. Students are taught to use a checklist and to plan their worktime to be able to meet deadlines. This includes independent work, small-group work, self-checking work with controls or other methods, and project work by individuals or groups. The teacher/guide is working with/among students. Many teachers have a space in their classrooms for students to request lessons on topics they identify.

Brief, student-focused large-group activities (including mini-lessons, group initiatives/community building, solo/reflection time, seminar/discourse, etc.) may occur during the work cycle. These activities include the active engagement of the teachers. Whole-group activities are scheduled at natural transition times (e.g., beginning of the block, before or after lunchtime, at the end of the block/day) so that the work cycle can be preserved.

At the Secondary level, during the work cycle, there should be no lectures or presentations that last longer than 20 minutes. Individuals should not be removed from the class for services or programs.

## **5. State Accountability**

Indiana, like all other states, is engaged in numerous, substantive changes to its education system that are likely to have significant impacts in the coming years. These changes, often precipitated by state and federal policy include: The development and implementation of an A-F school accountability system that is measured by student growth, the adoption of state specific college and career readiness standards, the development and implementation of an educator evaluation system, and the transition of the ILEARN state standardized assessment to one based on Indiana State Standards.

For more information on state accountability, please log on to the IDOE website at:  
<http://www.doe.in.gov/accountability>

## **6. 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/>.

Lead teachers hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree from an accredited university, an Indiana state teaching license, an emergency permit, and/or they are will be trained in Montessori pedagogy, through a certification program approved by administration. 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.

## **7. School Board**

Our school board members are a vital link between the community and the classroom. Its primary role is governance, and 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.

## **General Information**

### **8. 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 or dismissal.

### **9. 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<sup>st</sup> through the first week of January. 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 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 a 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 returning student retention or promotion.

### **10. Kindergarten Entrance**

Indiana Law requires anyone between the ages of seven and seventeen to attend school. Indiana Law sets the age requirement that any kindergarten be age 5 on or before August 1<sup>st</sup> of that academic year. Geist Montessori is not currently accepting students that turn 5 after the August 1<sup>st</sup> cutoff date.

### **11. School Calendar**

Geist Montessori Academy follows a traditional calendar that begins in August and concludes in May. Our students attend for 180 days of school unless the state grants an appeal to schools for missed days. Our school day is 7 hours long, which allows for long periods of uninterrupted work time, an essential component of the Montessori pedagogy.

### **12. Office Hours**

Our office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the North Campus and 8:15-4:15 and the South Campus, 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 through email.

### **13. Classroom Instructional Hours**

- **Kindergarten**

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

- **Lower Elementary**

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

- **Upper Elementary and Middle School**

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

#### **14. Transportation**

Transportation to and from school is the responsibility of the parent. Each year at enrollment, the school will offer a sign-up sheet for parents interested in carpooling. Families may then contact one another to make carpooling arrangements. A copy of this document will be on file at the front desk should you become interested in carpooling at a later date.

#### **15. Arrival/Dismissal 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 park and accompany your child into the front office of the building and sign them in. **Children cannot sign themselves in late.** These students will be reported as tardy.

Likewise, students leaving before 3:30 p.m. at the North Campus or 3:45 p.m. 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 at each campus. 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.

To ensure that our parking lots are free for students and staff to use during the school day, no one is allowed to park in carline until after 3:00 p.m. each day.

#### **16. Arrival/Dismissal Procedures**

Students should be dropped off each morning at the school's front entrance at the designated times for each campus. 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). Students may only exit their vehicle once the appropriate staff member has signaled for them to do so. A staff member will greet them and assist them into the building.

At dismissal, your child will walk to your car when their number is called. Staff will be present to help ensure that all students are safely in their vehicle before the carline continues. Please refrain from lengthy discussions with teachers or staff, or from giving verbal messages at this time. We make every effort to provide a quick and efficient system of arrival and dismissal, and we appreciate your cooperation and assistance.

**EXTREME CAUTION IS ADVISED AT ALL TIMES! PLEASE WATCH FOR CHILDREN BEING ASSISTED TO OR FROM CARS. PLEASE DRIVE SLOWLY AND NEVER PASS ANOTHER CAR IN LINE. WHEN EXITING THE PARKING LOT, TO AVOID ACCIDENT OR DELAY, PLEASE BE SURE TO TURN RIGHT ON THE MAIN ROADS. ALSO, DO NOT USE YOUR CELL PHONES DURING CARLINE.**

#### **17. Walking/Biking**

Any child traveling to or from school in any way other than riding in a motor vehicle will need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian. They will also need to sign the child in and out at the front desk at the time of arrival or dismissal.

#### **18. Transportation Change During the School Day**

Occasionally, parents must make unplanned transportation changes during the school day. All telephone calls must be received by 2:00PM. This is to allow enough time to accurately deliver messages to teachers, as well as time to confirm the change if necessary. Please do not call the school after 2:00PM to make a transportation change except in the case of extreme emergencies

#### **19. Late Pick Up**

All students must be picked up by 4:00pm at the North Campus and 4:15pm at the South Campus. In the event of an emergency, please contact the office as soon as possible so arrangements can be made. Parents and/or Guardians must come into the building to sign out their student. Late pick ups will be documented, signed by the Parent or Guardian, and initialed by the supervising staff member. If there are frequent late pick-ups that are deemed by administration to be non-emergency in nature, administration will take further steps to ensure timely pickups. First, administration will have a discussion with the family. If the problem persists, administration will hold a meeting with the family. Finally, if the problem does not improve and students are continually picked up after 4:00pm at North Campus and 4:15pm at South Campus, administration will contact Department of Child Services.

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

Before and after school care is available through the YMCA. For more information, contact the YMCA Youth Enrichment Branch at 317-484-9622, or visit them at 615 N Alabama Street, Suite 400, Indianapolis, IN 46204.

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. 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 at off site locations.

### **Parent/Family Information**

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

A student's entire family plays a vital role in their success at Geist Montessori Academy. They need 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 encouraged 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.

## **22. Parent and Guardian Role in Supporting Positive Behavior**

### **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.
- Parents can practice Montessori at home, by using resources from websites.

### **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 in all situations.
  - 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
  - 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 encouraged to take proactive responsibility in this area.
  - GMA provides a series of educational evenings that are designed to assist parents in building positive parenting practices, as well as increase 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. Dr. Sue 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 be 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.

### **23. Persistent Complaint and Harassment Policy**

We welcome feedback from parents, and will always try to resolve any complaints as quickly as possible. However, sometimes parents pursuing complaints or issues treat staff in a way that is unacceptable. While we recognize that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, teachers and administration will not accept threatening or unreasonable behavior, which may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Actions which are out of proportion to the nature of the complaint.
- Personally harassing or unjustifiably repetitious complaints.
- An insistence on pursuing unjustified complaints with unrealistic outcomes
- An insistence on pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner, such as; using abusive or threatening language, complaints in public...etc.

At Geist Montessori Academy we expect our parents and families to:

- Treat all school staff with courtesy and respect
- Respect the needs of the students and staff, and to avoid the use of violence or threatening behavior while on school property.
- Seek the help and guidance of school administration if any situations with a staff member have caused you to reach a point of frustration.
- Refrain from contacting staff to inquire about other students or staff members.

Geist Montessori Academy administration reserves the right to deem any parent actions as unreasonable, unjustifiable, or a form of harassment. They can and will take action as necessary to help protect their staff from threatening or harassing behavior.

### **24. 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 to the Board at the following address: [board.gma@gmail.com](mailto:board.gma@gmail.com). Complaints with regard to a student's IEP must be referred to the Director of Special Education.

## **25. 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.

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

## **26. 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 will 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 parent/guardian
- Illness verified by note from physician
- Family Funeral
- 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.

## **27. 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 at the North and South Campus.

Final approval for the absence will be made by the Dr. Sue. 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.

**Administration reserves the right to deny pre-arranged absences at any time, and will not be granted 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.**

## **28. Visitor's Policy**

The Montessori classroom is a very special place. The environment has been carefully designed to meet the developmental needs of children. A very delicate balance occurs between the child, teacher, and the environment as they work together to support growth and learning. The presence of visitors moving freely through the room can be distracting and at times confusing for the children. It can interfere with the atmosphere of independence and concentration in the classroom.

We ask that all visitors respect the children's learning time and the classroom environment. The teacher and/or designated staff member will guide visitors into appropriate areas to sit and observe. Visitors should remain seated and refrain from engaging in conversation or activity with the children.

In the case of parents, student teachers, and volunteers, the teachers will direct visitors to appropriate activities within the classroom where they can become involved such as sharing a special skill or cultural information during circle time, listening to children read, or directing a special project.

Geist Montessori Academy encourages parents and other citizens to visit GMA, and believes that there are many potential benefits that can result from increased interaction with the public. At the same time, Geist Montessori Academy has a legitimate interest in avoiding disruption to the educational process and protecting the safety and welfare of the children and staff. A balance must be achieved between the potential benefits and risks associated with the presence of visitors in our building.

Geist Montessori Academy administration shall have the authority to determine which visits are to be permitted as well as the discretion to set any appropriate conditions on the nature and extent of such visits. In exercising that discretion, administration shall consider the purpose of the visit, the impact of the visitor's presence and the relationship of any visitor to the students.

### **Rules for Visitors to School**

- General Requirements for Visitors to Schools:
  - A visitor is defined as any person seeking to enter the school building who is not an employee of the school, or a student currently enrolled in that building.
  - All visitors shall report to the school office when arriving and/or leaving the school premises recording the date and time of arrival, purpose for visit, and sign out with a time of departure. All visitors shall be requested to wear an appropriate form of identification when on school premises.
  - Whenever possible, visitors should obtain authorization from administration in advance out of respect for the teacher and the learning environment. At the discretion of administration, such prior authorization may be required. Relatives or caretakers who are not the child's guardian will be allowed to visit the school if they are accompanied by a parent or guardian or if they have received permission in advance from the child's parent or guardian in the form of an email or letter. This form of communication must be given to the administration or the administrative assistants. If an individual is not listed on the emergency contacts and/or approved transportation list, the student(s) will not be released without consent from a legal guardian or parent.
- All school visitors must comply at all times with school policies, rules, and regulations.
- Exceptions to Visitor Requirements: Parents or citizens who have been invited to visit school as part of a scheduled open house, special event, scheduled performance by a class, during drop off and/or pick up

procedures, or other adult participants in organized and school approved activities are exempt from requirements in A. 1-4 above.

- Visitors to Classrooms or Other Instructional Areas:
- Access to classrooms or other instructional areas of the school may be restricted upon the recommendation of the teacher in charge or as otherwise deemed necessary by the administration.
- Because classrooms and other instructional areas are the most vulnerable to disruption, specific conditions may be imposed upon visitors, including but not limited to:
  - requiring that the visitor be chaperoned
  - limiting the duration of the visit to particular times or length of time
  - limiting the activities of the visitor to a particular purpose(s)
  - Designating particular routes of travel in the building or upon the school grounds.
- Visitors wishing to conference with teachers or director during the course of the school day are encouraged to make arrangements in advance whenever possible.
- Supervision and Monitoring of Visitors to GMA: All visitors and parents/guardians (visitors), whether or not that visitor has been cleared for involvement with the children through the formal background check process shall be supervised and monitored by the staff, teachers, or administration during the extent of the visit to GMA. Supervision is defined as having general oversight over, direction of, and regulation of the visitor's activities and interaction with the children at GMA. Monitoring is defined as watching and observing the visitor's activities and interaction with the children at GMA. Each classroom instructor or assistant shall be responsible for supervising and/or monitoring visitors in their classroom. All staff is responsible for supervising and monitoring visitors in their general vicinity, including the visitor activities en route to the classrooms.
- Special Situations: Both parents and guardians of a student have rights to visit the child's school and have unlimited access to their child unless a court order exists restricting such contact or it becomes a disruption to the learning environment.
- Student Teachers: Student teachers are exempt from the aforementioned provisions because they are subject to record checks and background clearance from their supervising institute.
- Furthermore, the director has the authority to exclude from the school premises any person who disrupts or who appears likely to become a disruption to the educational program. Any such individual shall be directed to leave the school premises immediately and law enforcement authorities shall be called if necessary.
- This visitor access policy shall be shared with parents, guardians, and custodians of all children who are enrolled at GMA in the Parent Handbook that is distributed each year.

## **29. 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, fundraisers, and by supporting the teachers through teacher grants, material 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 are required to have a criminal background check on file with the office before volunteering. Each volunteer is also required to sign a confidentiality agreement if they are working with students.**

- **Any volunteer or visitor that is found to be disrupting student learning, classroom instruction, or the peacefulness of the school community can be asked to leave the property at the discretion of school administration.**

### **30. Required Forms**

The following forms must be on file in the office before your child may attend classes:

- Enrollment Form
- Home Language Survey
- Records Transfer Form
- Medical Information/Consent Form
- Birth Certificate
- Immunization Records or Waiver
- Proof of Residency

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 if applicable:

- Parent Volunteer Form
- Criminal Background Check
- Free/Reduced Lunch Application (If applicable)

### **31. 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.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTO bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

For additional information, you may call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (voice). Individuals who use TDD may call 1-800-437-0833.

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202-8520

### **32. Materials Fee**

The materials fee is a vital part of the GMA community. They are used to provide all of our students with supplies for the entire school year. This fee is due at the beginning of each school year, no later than September 1st. 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 Karinda Holland at [kholland@gma.k12.in.us](mailto:kholland@gma.k12.in.us).

### **33. 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 business days, and must be paid by cash, money order or cashier's check.

### **34. Lost and Found**

The lost and found is located in an area designated by the office. Inquire at the office about its location. Unclaimed items are donated to charity at the end of each semester, December and May.

## **Classroom Information**

### **35. Teacher/Staff Expectations and Responsibilities**

There are certain rights and responsibilities that contribute to maintaining a positive school environment. Teachers at all age levels provide conduct strategies based on three key guidelines that are communicated in each room: Respect for Self, Respect for Others, and Respect for Environment. Teachers will model appropriate behavior in and out of classrooms to further enforce established classroom conduct.

Any issues that arise are handled individually with that person first. Out of respect for each student, these conversations are done privately, and it is not uncommon for one learner to be unaware of the consequences of another.

The staff at Geist Montessori Academy strives to develop students who make every effort to make good choices which can benefit the entire school. When discipline issues occur, students are given the tools to solve the problem and they are coached on ways to succeed in the future. When disputes arise, they are handled through peace table conversations, peer mediation, and conflict resolutions techniques that follow our Montessori philosophy.

### **36. The Geist Montessori Academy staff members are required to:**

- Develop reasonable classroom ground rules consistent with the mission and beliefs of Geist Montessori Academy.
- Post clearly established ground rules in each classroom that are developed with student input.
- Explain through group meetings, modeling, and dialogue what the values for behavior are for both the classroom and school.
- Maintain appropriate behavior in their classroom and the school through redirection and dialogue with the student and their family.
- Report and record school discipline situations to the required staff and family using the proper documentation.

### **37. Reporting Child Abuse**

It is a felony for school officials to fail to report suspected child abuse/neglect. Any school employee that suspects child abuse/neglect must report it to the proper authorities. School employees must notify administration immediately and complete the child abuse/neglect form located in the office of the Executive Director.

### **38. Classroom/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. Classroom guidelines are as follows:

- 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 service” 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 complete a “Think Sheet”, 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 a Discipline Referral Form. The teacher will also schedule a meeting with the parents at this time. Depending on the circumstances, administrators and/or appropriate staff members will join the meeting to discuss options to modify the behavior.
- If the child poses serious threat of endangering himself or others, staff will immediately intervene in as positive manner as possible.

### **39. 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 towards 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, 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 consequences and solutions to the problem.

### **40. School Counseling**

The school counselor is here to help students have a positive school experience. Our counselor talks with students individually or in small groups, as well as providing classroom guidance for all children. Consulting with teachers, parents, and other school specialists, our counselor helps facilitate and address children's needs as well as sponsoring school-wide programs that promote a positive school climate and support the school's character education goals. In addition, our counselor serves as a liaison between parents, the school, and community resources.

Often times, children face difficulties which may prevent them from working well in school. These could include upsetting events, such as divorce, job loss, a recent move, or a death in the family. Sometimes children have trouble adjusting to school or are having difficulty with their friendships. Please let our counselor know if there is a situation in which we can help your child.

### **41. Communication**

Although phone calls are welcome, the use of email is preferred. Please do not send notes to school in your child's lunchbox. Lunch boxes are your child's personal possessions, and are not routinely checked for correspondence, unless arrangements are made between a parent and teacher.

### **42. Progress Reports**

Progress reports will be provided to parents a minimum of four times per year, one time each quarter. The progress report will provide an overview of the student's progress through the Montessori curriculum as well as achievement of state standards. Please do not hesitate to contact your teacher(s) to ask questions about progress reports.

#### **43. 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 and must be arranged 24 hour in advance with the school office and teacher. 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. We ask that all visitors please maintain silence when observing. Observations are limited to 90 minutes.

#### **44. Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Parent/Teacher conferences are held twice during the school year, with the spring conference as a student led conference. These dates may be found on the school calendar. Sign-up information 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.

#### **45. 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:

- Parent and teacher meet to identify and analyze the problem.
- Issues are clarified.
- Modifications are explored.
- A plan is developed and implemented.

If a consensus is not reached, or the plan implemented is not successful, a request for class change should be directed to the Executive Director. 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 placements are determined by Dr. Sue.

#### **46. 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 ILEARN, which includes an alternate assessment for students with disabilities called the IAM. 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

Students in 3rd Grade will participate in the state-standardized test, the IREAD, and all English Language Learners will participate in WIDA testing.

As a Ball State University charter school, we are also required to administer the Northwest Evaluation Association Assessment (NWEA). By using NWEA, a norm-referenced test, the 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, middle, and end of the year.

#### **47. RTI**

The merging of our public school status with our Montessori school philosophy 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. If students fail to make progress, this system also serves as a means to help identifying students who may need to proceed to an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services.

#### **48. Lunch & Snacks**

We do not have a hot lunch program; our students bring a packed lunch to school each day. If your child requires a plate or tableware, please be sure to pack these as needed. Students are also encouraged 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 if it is pre-arranged with their classroom teacher and they have a background check on file with the office.

#### **49. 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". Please check with your child's teacher to see what they have planned for birthday celebrations. With regards to treats, all families will also need to check with their child's teacher on what falls in line with the current allergies in the classroom.

All celebrations **MUST** be set up ahead of time with the teacher. Usually, celebrations take place no earlier than 2:30 and no later than 3:30.

#### **50. Field Trips**

During field trips, students are subject to the same rules, regulations, and behavioral expectations that they have during a regular school day. 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, unless pre-approved by administration.**

All Teachers and Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid. A First Aid Kit will be available during field trips. 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.

### **51. 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, or other designated staff member. While the school uses these resources to enhance our students' education, 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.

## **Student Information**

### **52. 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

### **53. Conduct Goals/Discipline**

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, 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.

### **54. Student Due Process**

The procedures for administering student discipline and due process are provided by Indiana law. The Geist Montessori 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).

### **55. 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 is:
  - 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:

- Instructional disruptions
- 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.
- Drawing pictures of or performing and internet search of weapons or anything else deemed inappropriate by administration.
- 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, or attempting to steal someone else's property.
- 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 administration:

- Spend time away from their classroom
- Call the parent/guardian immediately to discuss the issue with the child present.
- Place the child in an in-school or out of 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.

### **56. 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.

### **57. Suspensions**

In some cases it becomes necessary to assign out-of-school- suspension. This is usually the result of a serious infraction, refusal to comply with lesser disciplinary penalty, or chronic misbehavior. Indiana law defines grounds for suspension or expulsion as "student misconduct or substantial disobedience". (I.C.20-33-8-14(a)). During such suspension, the student is in the care of parents. The student should not be present on school grounds without the permission of the school principal. Students are not to attend any extra-curricular activities while they are suspended out of school.

### **58. Corporal Punishment**

Geist Montessori Academy will not use corporal punishment as a method to correct misbehavior.

### **59. 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 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 created positive environment for all students to succeed.

### **60. Anti-Bullying Policy**

The following policy has been established by Geist Montessori Academy regarding anti-bullying.

- 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 be commended for demonstrating 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.

The staff 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.

Administration 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 administration or their 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 to administration's designee.

Students, parents, and visitors of a school within the school corporation are encouraged to submit a written report, or anonymous email, of alleged violations of this policy to administration or their 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 to administration.

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 or a designee shall conduct a thorough and complete investigation for each report of an alleged incident of bullying received. The investigation shall be initiated by the administration or the administrator's designee within a reasonable time from the date of the report of the incident. Administration may appoint additional personnel to assist them in the investigation. The investigation shall be completed and the written findings submitted to administration as soon as possible, but no later than five school days from the date of the report of the alleged incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

Each school shall record the frequency of bullying incidents in the following categories: verbal bullying, physical bullying, social/relational bullying and electronic or written communication bullying. Each school shall report this information to the school board and the Indiana Department of education. Information shall be submitted to the Indiana Department of Education by July 1 of each year.

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, unless the report is made anonymously. 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 administration'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.

Administration shall proceed in accordance with the code of student conduct, as appropriate, based on the investigation findings. As appropriate to the investigation findings, administration 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 administration or the 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.

Administration of each school is authorized to acknowledge and respond to instances of false reporting of alleged bullying incidents. Administration 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.

Administration of each school shall annually disseminate this policy to all parents who have children enrolled in a school within the school corporation. Administration shall post a link to the policy that is prominently displayed on the home page of the school corporation's website. Administration 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.

Source: This document is modeled, in part, on information provided through the following website:  
[www.state.nj.us/education/parents/bully.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/education/parents/bully.htm)

## **61. Non-Participation Policy**

RECESS— All students are expected to participate in recess each day. Recess will be held outdoors on all days in which weather permits. Therefore, students should dress appropriately on all days as they will be expected to go outside with their class. Students not participating may bring a note from home or their physician.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION— All students are required to participate in physical education. To be excused from participating, a student MUST have a doctor’s note stating why he/she cannot participate and for how long the student will be excused. If a student is injured and is waiting to go to a doctor, a parental note may be used. However, a parental note will only be good for one day. The student MUST have a doctor’s note to continue to be excused from physical education class.

## **62. Substance Abuse and Tobacco Use**

Students are to refrain from the use, possession, transmission, or being under the influence of, harmful drugs, any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, herbal incense, K2, “Spice”, synthetic marijuana, alcoholic beverage, non-alcoholic beer, stimulant, caffeine-based drug, or intoxicant of any kind, or items purported as such, on school property, at any school sponsored event or traveling to or from a school activity, function or event.

Students are forbidden from possessing anything resembling drug paraphernalia.

Students are to refrain from misuse of prescription medication. They are to refrain from possessing or using prescription medication for an unintended purpose or in an unintended manner.

Students are to refrain from use of inhalants. Students are forbidden to sniff, inhale, or otherwise ingest any substance when it is not the intended use of the substance.

Students are to refrain from the possession or use of tobacco or nicotine delivering devices such as electronic cigarettes and nicotine patches.

Students are to refrain from engaging in the selling of a controlled substance and/or look-alike substance, or engaging in an action that constitutes a danger to other students or constitutes an interference with school purposes or an educational function.

In any cases where illegal substances are observed or suspected, law enforcement will be notified immediately.

## **63. 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 administration. 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.

Geist Montessori Academy 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.

## **64. 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 conduct/discipline policy shall be followed.

Depending on the circumstances, administration may determine that another consequence is appropriate that may include, but is not limited to, suspension from school.

#### **65. Public Displays of Affection**

Inappropriate hugging, hand-holding, kissing, and other similar physical contact are not permitted. The consequences outlined in the conduct/discipline policy shall be followed should a student choose to not follow this guideline.

#### **66. 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 or weapons
  - 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 and anything deemed inappropriate by administration.

##### **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

##### **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.

#### **67. 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, Twitter, Wikipedia, YouTube), video-posting sites, or other similar networking sites not listed.
- Cyber-bullying occurring during OR outside school hours, on or off the school premises, on school or personal devices 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.
- 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.

### **68. Personal Items**

GMA does not accept responsibility for the personal items of students. Any personal items judged to be unsafe or inappropriate for the school environment, or interferes 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
- IPADS/Tablets
- PSPs
- GAMEBOYS
- VIDEO GAMES
- MP3 PLAYERS
- LASER PENS
- OTHER GAMING SYSTEMS OR MUSICAL DEVICES

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, and must remain in airplane mode. 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.

### **69. Backpack Policy**

Our students do not use textbooks or have other items that require daily transportation to and from school; we want our students to refrain from bringing a backpack to school with them. They may still bring a traditional size lunch box.

Although we will encourage a backpack free environment, we understand that students sometimes have additional items they need to carry. Should your student need to carry items to and from school, they must be brought in an all-clear backpack (no mesh bags allowed). Any student purses or other opaque pouches must be no larger than a small clutch-approximately 5 x 8 inches in size to carry personal/feminine items.

## **Special Education**

### **70. Special Education**

Our goal is to meet the needs of every student at GMA. If a student fails to make progress, even with additional supports and interventions in the general education classroom (RTI-see above), the next step may be a referral for evaluation. Sometimes the evaluation is conducted by the SLP if it is believed to be primarily a language or speech based difficulty. Other times the evaluation is conducted by a school psychologist. If a parent has questions regarding the process or would like to request an evaluation, please contact our Special Education Director, Molly Gregory at (317) 335-1158. For a complete copy of Indiana’s law governing special education services, go to:

<http://www.in.gov/legislative/iac/T05110/A00070.PDF>

To download a copy of Indiana's current Notice of Procedural Safeguards for parents, go to:

<http://www.doe.in.gov/specialed/laws-rules-and-interpretations>

## **71. 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. GMA will assist families through the Division of Special Education with the facilitation of impartial advocates and mediators to address student/family complaints if necessary.

The school may remove a student with a disability for up to ten (10) consecutive school days when the student breaks school rules as long as the same discipline would apply to a student without a disability who broke the same rule. The school may remove the student up to ten (10) consecutive school days each time the student breaks such rules. If the student is ever removed for only part of a day, it counts as a whole day of removal. After a student has been removed for more than ten (10) cumulative school days in the same school year:

- The administration or their designee must decide if this removal is a change of placement, and the school must provide special education services to the student during this and any future days of removal. The school must not have to provide any services to the student during the first ten (10) school days the student is removed.

A change of placement occurs when any of the following occurs:

- The student is removed for more than ten (10) consecutive school days in a row.
- The student is moved to an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for 45 school days for misconduct involving weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury.

Administration determines that a series of removals constitutes a pattern. This means that the administration or designee must look at all the removals and decide if there is a pattern or connection between them that, in effect, amounts to a change of placement for the student. Administration may also consider the student's disciplinary history, their ability to understand consequences, the supports provided to the student prior to the misconduct, and any relevant factors.

If the removal results in a change of placement, the school must immediately notify the parent(s) of the change and provide the parents with a copy of the Notice of Procedural Safeguards. Within ten (10) school days of the date of the change of placement for disciplinary reasons, the CCC must meet to decide if the student's behavior/misconduct is a manifestation of (caused by) the student's disability. Article 7 calls this a manifestation determination. If the CCC determines that the student's behavior/misconduct is a manifestation of the student's disability, the CCC must take further action and conduct a functional behavior assessment. If the CCC decides that the behavior is not a manifestation of the student's disability, the student may be removed or otherwise disciplined in accordance with the school's disciplinary policies for nondisabled students.

## **Health and Safety**

### **72. 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 and safety drills will be held for all staff and students.
- Fire and tornado safety information is posted in each classroom.
- Accident Reports will be completed should an accident or injury occur. The parent/legal guardian of the involved student(s) will receive one copy, and the office retains one copy.

All school staff is required by law to immediately notify the Department of Child Services if they suspect that a child has been abused or neglected. GMA upholds this law.

### **73. 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.

### **74. Emergency and Accident Policy**

If a student has an accident at school, school staff will contact the parent/legal guardian named on the registration form. If necessary, an Emergency Medical Technician will be called to give assistance. The student will be transported to the nearest hospital at their parent's expense. 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.

### **75. Seclusion and Restraint Plan**

#### **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 conducted by staff members who have received nonviolent 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.
- Mechanical or chemical restraints are not authorized in school.
- Prone (laid on back and face down) or Supine (laid on back and face up) 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 the student or others.
- 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 Geist Montessori Academy 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 and shall:
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - 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, pending the student's behaviors no longer pose a risk to themselves or others. They will be escorted to and from the restroom.
  - Students shall be provided water on request.
- Seclusion shall never be used as a punishment, or to force compliance with staff commands.

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

#### **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.

#### **76. Suicide/Self Harm Policy**

### **IN-SCHOOL SUICIDE ATTEMPTS**

In the case of an in-school suicide attempt, the health and safety of the student is paramount. In these situations:

1. The authorities and first responders will be notified, and first aid will be rendered until professional medical treatment and/or transportation can be received, following district emergency medical procedures.
2. School staff will supervise the student to ensure their safety, and they will escort them to a designated safe area.
3. Staff will move all other students out of the immediate area as soon as possible.
4. Staff will immediately notify administration or school safety team regarding in-school suicide attempts.
4. An administrator will contact the student's parent or guardian.
5. The school will engage and assess whether additional steps will be taken to ensure student safety and well-being.

### **RE-ENTRY PROCEDURE**

For students returning to school after a mental health crisis (e.g., suicide attempt or psychiatric hospitalization), administration or designee will meet with the student's parent or guardian, and if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss re-entry and appropriate next steps to ensure the student's readiness for return to school.

1. The school counselor or other designee will be identified to coordinate with the student, their parent or guardian, and any outside mental health care providers.
2. The parent or guardian will provide documentation from a mental health care provider that the student has undergone examination and that they are no longer a danger to themselves or others.
3. The designated staff person will periodically check in with student to help the student readjust to the school community and address any ongoing concerns.

### **77. Inclement Weather Policy**

Geist Montessori Academy will announce all closing and delays on the major local news stations. During severe weather check WTTV 4, RTV 6, WISH TV 8, WTHR 13, FOX 59 for the all the latest updates on GMA closing and delays.

We reserve the right to either cancel school or issue a delay whenever we feel it is necessary for the safety of the students and staff.

All outdoor activities will be postponed if lightning is witnessed anywhere in the sky, and/or if thunder is heard. Once there has been an absence of lightning for a period of 20 minutes, outdoor activities can resume at the discretion of administration.

### **78. 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

### **79. 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
- Severe 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.

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.

### **80. Health Screenings**

Vision screenings will be conducted for all students in grades K, 1, 3, 5, 8, and for any student suspected of having a visual defect. An MCT (Modified Clinical Technique) vision screening will be performed by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist for students in Kindergarten. Hearing screenings will be conducted for all students in grades 1, 4, 7, and 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.

### **81. Immunization Policy**

Students in all grades are required to meet the minimum immunization requirements. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian of a student to provide proof of proper immunization in accordance with current Indiana law. A student without proof of proper immunization is considered in violation of Indiana law. A waiver may be granted due to religious or health reasons as allowed by law. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian of a student to provide proof of a medical exemption or a religious objection. The school will maintain an immunization record of all students and will submit a required State Health Report to Ball State University on an annual basis.

### **82. 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.

For prescription medications, inhalers, epinephrine injectors, and self-administration of medication, a physician's signature is required, and a Medication Permit form needs to accompany the medication. The medication also needs to be in the original pharmacy container labeled with the exact dosage. Parents, should hand the medication directly to the front desk staff or administration. An emergency care plan is required from the physician 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. In the event that medication is needed on a field trip, and the student's parent is not in attendance, the medication will be administered by the student's teacher.

All allergies need to be reported on your child's Medical Information form. 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.

### **83. Sunscreen Administration**

Sunscreen may be applied at school only if a parent or guardian has filled out a Medication Permit form that can be obtained at the front desk of both campuses. Students may carry and apply themselves, non aerosol sunscreen.

### **84. Head Lice**

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 necessary to a 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, the administrator or designee 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.

### **85. 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. 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.
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. 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.

Should a pesticide application need to occur during the school year, Geist Montessori Academy 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.
- 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.
- In cases of an emergency application, prior notice is not required. Notice will be given to those persons who have previously requested notice of pesticide applications as soon as possible after such application.

## **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.

1. Pesticides will be applied only by certified pesticide applicators or individuals operating under their supervision in school buildings or on school grounds.

The training must include:

- A review of the corporation's pest control policy;
- A review of the label instructions for the pesticides to be used;
- Methods to determine when an application of a pesticide is necessary;
- How to minimize potential pesticide exposure to students, teachers and staff;
- What activities are prohibited; and
- Written documentation of the training.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. At the beginning of each school year or semester, the Board shall provide the staff members of each school and the parents of each child enrolled in each school with a written copy of the Board's policy on pesticide applications, the name and telephone number of the school contact person for pest control information, and a request form to be placed on a list for advanced notice. This information may be given in the form of a memorandum or as a provision in the student and/or staff handbook. This information shall also be provided to the parents of any child who transfers into a school during the school day year.

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.

7. 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.

8. Storage of pesticides will be kept to a minimum. All pesticide label storage instructions will be followed explicitly. All such products and the application equipment will be stored away from food products or occupied rooms in a locked area clearly marked as containing pesticides.

9. All pesticide products will have complete label instructions, will remain in the original container be readily available to any employee who must handle such materials or who may have been exposed to the product. This

information shall also be available to any member of the public upon request. All applications of pesticides will be made in strict compliance with label instructions.

10. School corporation employees responsible for handling and applying pesticides shall follow the application directions that are provided.

11. Administration or their designee shall be the contact person for providing information regarding pesticide application activities at the school site, including but not limited to giving oral and written notification, supervising the sending of notifications as required by school policy and regulations and maintaining records of pesticide applications.