



GEIST  
MONTESSORI  
ACADEMY

**Student & Family Handbook**  
**2022-2023**

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## **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 life-long 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.

## **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

## **State Accountability**

GMA is a tuition-free, public charter school for students in grades K-8. As such, we adhere to the same accountability practices as any traditional public school. Our students participate in IREAD-3, ILEARN, and WIDA assessments as required by the State of Indiana. As a recipient of state funding, GMA is required to report student attendance and demographic information on a regular basis.

## **Accreditation**

GMA is a publicly funded Ball State University charter school, and is fully accredited by the state of Indiana. 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 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.

## **School Board**

Our school board members are a vital link between the community and the classroom. The Board's primary role is governance, and they bear responsibility for the annual budget, ensuring accurate reporting, and oversight of accountability plans. 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.

## **Admissions and Enrollment**

### **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 or gender identification will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or dismissal.

### **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 the next academic year beginning in late January of each year. All applications received will be accepted providing the applicant is the appropriate age for the grade level to which they are applying. Students must be five years old by August 1st of the school year they wish to enroll in Kindergarten and six years old by August 1st of the year they wish to enroll in first grade. Families seeking early entrance into Kindergarten should contact school administration for information on that procedure.

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 a 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 waitlist for their respective grade level.

The results of the lottery, including information regarding student order on the waitlist will be sent 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 waitlist.

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

### **Immunizations**

At the time of enrollment, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide proof of their child's proper immunizations status in accordance with current Indiana Law. It is the policy of Geist Montessori Academy that a complete immunization record is to be on file in the school clinic before your child may attend school. The immunization record needs to be legible and complete with the day, month, and year that they were given. All immunization records received during registration will be reviewed, and you will be contacted if your child's immunization status does not meet the requirements for school entry. State-required immunizations are entered by the school into the school's database. This record will follow your child as he/she transitions from school to school. Records can be mailed, faxed or hand-delivered to the school. On the first day of school, any student who does not have a complete immunization record on file will not be allowed to attend. Indiana State Code provides the only acceptable criteria for immunization waivers are based on religious or medical reasons and must be renewed yearly. 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.

### **Documents Required for Enrollment**

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

- Enrollment Form
- Student Health Information Form
- Birth certificate
- Immunization records

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
- Over the Counter Medication Form
- Prescription Medication Administration Form

### **Materials Fees**

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 October 1st. Fees that are not paid by the designated final due date will be sent to collections. Material fees are non-refundable. If you need to set up payment arrangements, please contact our Operations Manager at (317) 813-4626 ext. 102.

*Pre-K materials fee: \$110*

*K-6th grade materials fee: \$230*

*7th/8th grade materials fee: \$300*

### **Homeless Students**

To the extent practical and as required by law, Geist Montessori Academy (GMA) will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless and will be assigned to the school serving those non-homeless students residing in the area in which the homeless child is actually living. Safeguards shall be established that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, and include students who meet any of the following criteria:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship, or similar reason;
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. Are abandoned in hospitals;
5. Having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
6. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings; or
7. Are migratory children living in conditions described above.

### ***Liaison***

The Executive Director will designate an appropriate staff person to be GMA's liaison for homeless students and their families. The Liaison will participate in professional development and other technical assistance activities as determined appropriate by the State Coordinator.

The Liaison will ensure that:

- Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
- Homeless children and youth are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed within the corporation;
- School personnel providing McKinney-Vento services receive sufficient professional development and other support;
- Homeless families and homeless children and youth receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
- Homeless families and youth have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible including through the Head Start Act, early intervention services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other preschool programs.
- School personnel, service providers, advocates working with homeless families, parents, guardians and homeless children and youths are informed of the duties of the liaison.

- Parents and guardians of homeless youth are informed of educational and related opportunities and are provided meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act.
- Parents and guardians of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school of origin and are assisted in accessing transportation services.
- Unaccompanied youths are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same state academic standards as established for other children and youths, are informed of the status of unaccompanied youths as independent students under section 40 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20U.S.C. 1087vv), and the rights of unaccompanied youths to receive verification of this status from the local liaison.

The homeless liaison will assist, to the extent feasible, the homeless students and their parent(s) or guardian(s) or unaccompanied homeless students in their efforts to provide documentation to meet State and local requirements for entry into school.

### ***Enrollment***

GMA shall remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless students. Homeless students shall be enrolled immediately, even if they do not have the necessary enrollment documentation such as immunization and health records, proof of residency or guardianship, birth certificate, school records, and other documentation. No homeless student shall be denied enrollment due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences. Moreover, GMA shall ensure that homeless children who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities including summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, or online learning.

GMA shall work with the homeless student's parents or guardian (or unaccompanied youth) to determine which school the student will attend based on the best interest of the student. School of Origin is defined as the school that the child attended when permanently housed, the school in which the child was last enrolled, including a preschool, or the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools when the child has completed the final grade served by the school of origin. In determining the best interest of the student, it shall be presumed the School of Origin is in the homeless student's best interest except when contrary to the request of the parent or guardian, or unaccompanied youth. Student centered factors shall also be considered consistent with federal law in determining the best interest of the student.

If the student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian, a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, will be provided to the homeless student's parent or guardian or the unaccompanied youth. These rights and the dispute process must be communicated to the parent or guardian of the homeless student or unaccompanied youth.

In addition to notifying the parent or guardian of the homeless student or unaccompanied youth of the rights described above, the School shall post public notice of educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness, and at locations frequented by parents or guardians and unaccompanied youths, in a manner and form understandable to them.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student will be immediately enrolled in the school in which

enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will be informed of GMA's decision and their appeal rights in writing. GMA's liaison will carry out the dispute resolution as provided by state law.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school will immediately enroll the student pursuant to GMA policies. If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student will be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the GMA liaison is directed to assist in this process. Records from the student's previous school will be requested from the previous school pursuant to GMA policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with GMA policies.

### **Services**

Homeless students will be provided services comparable to other students at GMA, including: education services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Title I, special education, bilingual education and programs for students with limited English proficiency, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs and school nutrition programs, and before-and-after care programs.

At the request of the parent or guardian, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local homeless liaison, transportation shall be provided for a homeless student to and from the school of origin as follows:

- If the homeless student continues to live in the corporation in which the school of origin is located, transportation will be provided in accordance with the corporation policy/administrative guidelines.
- If the homeless student moves to an area served by another corporation, though continuing his/her education at the school of origin, the district of origin and the corporation in which the student resides must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin. If the corporations cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs must be shared equally.

All records for homeless students shall be maintained so that they are available in a timely fashion and can be transferred promptly as necessary. All records regarding a homeless student shall be treated as a student education record consistent with policy. Further, a homeless child's living situation shall not be deemed directory information.

*Legal Ref:*  
42 USC 11432

### **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 student be age 5 on or before August 1<sup>st</sup> of that academic year. Students who turn 5 years old on or before October 1 of that academic year may be admitted to kindergarten on a case-by-case basis as space is available in the program. Students seeking early entrance will be required to undergo a Kindergarten Readiness Screener with GMA staff.

## **Parent/Family Information**

### **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. As an independent charter school, our calendar does not always follow our neighboring school districts.

### **Office Hours**

Our office hours are 8:00am to 4:00pm Monday through Friday on days that school is in session. Office staff will be available to speak with parents and answer questions throughout the day at (317) 813-4626. Voicemail will take your message after regular office hours. Please allow a minimum of one school day for your call to be returned.

### **Transportation**

Transportation to and from school is the responsibility of the parent and family. GMA does not provide transportation to or from school.

### **Arrival/Dismissal Times**

Please help provide a safe and efficient carline for dropping off children and picking them up. Please arrive at your appointed time.

*PreK students are to be dropped off through the first carline between 8:00-8:10am. PreK students arriving after 8:10am should be signed in by a parent through the front office. Students in grades K-8 should be dropped off through the second carline between 8:15-8:35am. K-8 students arriving after 8:35am must be signed in by a parent through the front office. Children cannot sign themselves in late. These students will be reported as tardy.*

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

Due to parking lot restrictions during the afternoon carline, we ask that if you need to pick up early, please do so by 2:45pm. From 2:45-3:45pm the parking lot entrance is *one way*, you will have to join the carline and wait to leave through the exit with everyone else.

### **Arrival/Dismissal Procedures**

Students should be dropped off each morning at the school entrances 5 & 6 at the designated time. 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.

Please use extreme caution at all times during carline. Watch for children being assisted to or from vehicles. Please drive slowly and do not pass another vehicle in line. Please be sure your vehicle is in park when waiting during carline. *Cell phone use is prohibited during carline.*

### **Vehicle Idling**

The purpose of this policy is to eliminate all unnecessary idling by any vehicle on Geist Montessori Academy (GMA) property. Vehicle exhaust from idling vehicles poses health, environmental, and financial risks to the GMA community. This policy applies to the operation of every vehicle on GMA property.

Drivers of all public and private vehicles are to turn off the engine if the vehicle is to be stopped more than five (5) minutes in locations where vehicle exhaust may be drawn into the building or while on school grounds.

### **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 if outside of the normal arrival/dismissal times.

### **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.

### **Late Pick Up**

All students must be picked up by 3:45pm. 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, the administration will have a discussion with the family. If the problem persists, the administration will hold a meeting with the family. Finally, if the problem does not improve and students are continually picked up after 4:00pm, administration will contact the Department of Child Services.

### **Extended School Day Care**

Before and after school care is available through our extended care program, *The Grove*. For more information, contact the office at (317) 813-4626 or visit [www.gmacademy.org](http://www.gmacademy.org) and click on the the Parents tab at the top.

The program structure and hours are designed in order to meet the needs of the community. The Grove currently offers programs from 6:30 am until school begins; and upon dismissal until 6:00pm. The Grove provides care for all weather related school delays and closings, so long as it is reasonable and safe to do so. Care is also available on Early Release Days.

## **School/Family Partnership**

### **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. Address questions and concerns with the classroom teacher when necessary.

### **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
- Any legal changes of custody
- Change in family environment (separation, divorce, new partner, new baby)  
*This information will be strictly confidential.*

### **Parent /Teacher Communication**

- 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 conferences will be held in October to discuss the first quarter progress and NWEA scores. Student led conferences will be held in the spring for students to share their progress toward goals with their parents.
- Parent/Teacher discussions may be scheduled when needed with your child's teacher to exchange ideas and strategies for specific behavioral issues that may be impacting the student or family. Our Executive Director and Assistant Executive Director are also available to discuss educational and behavioral issues. Parents should reach out to the child's teacher directly to discuss concerns. Please allow two school days' time for a response.

### **Social Media Policy**

Social media has rapidly become a source of information and connection for many in our community. Geist Montessori Academy recognizes the important role that social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter play in the distribution of information. We encourage community members to utilize these sites to stay informed and to connect with other members of our school community.

GMA operates one official school Facebook page and one official school Twitter account, which can be found at [www.Facebook.com/GeistMontessoriAcademy](http://www.Facebook.com/GeistMontessoriAcademy) and on Twitter as @academy\_geist. Information posted on these pages, can be deemed reliable and accurate as it is posted by school leadership. Any other pages or groups using the name Geist Montessori Academy or GMA are not official school sanctioned pages, and the information is not always reliable or accurate. These pages and groups are monitored by members of our school community. Any inflammatory, inaccurate, or derogatory posts or comments on these pages will be reported and addressed by school leadership.

We ask that you respect the privacy and the feelings of others. Under no circumstance should offensive comments be made about students, parents, school personnel, or the school in general. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community.

These sites are not for letting the school know of:

- Student absences or health related concerns
- Classroom concerns, please contact your child's teacher directly
- Concerns regarding the school in general, car line procedures, policies, etc.

We encourage families and community members to go to the source for the most accurate and up-to-date information about GMA. If you have a question or concern about something school-related, please contact the school to discuss these things.

Inappropriate use of social media can have a detrimental impact on the school and potentially your child's education while not giving the school the opportunity to address concerns. GMA regularly monitors social media sites to protect the school community. Violations of these social media policies and guidelines may include removal of posts, removal from the forum/group, and could warrant a conversation about whether or not our school community is the best fit for your family.

## **Guidelines**

As we all work together to create a school community that fosters kindness, respect, and responsibility for all people, we understand that social media provides individuals with increased opportunities to communicate, collaborate, and create connections with others. The following guidelines are meant to help individuals represent the GMA school community well in the digital world.

### Please:

- Use good judgment.
- Always treat others in a respectful, positive and considerate manner.
- Be responsible and ethical.
- Follow the same guidelines for respectful, responsible behavior online that you would follow face-to-face.
- Encourage positive, constructive discussion to use communicative or collaborative technologies.

- Alert your child's classroom teacher or other staff member if you see threatening/bullying, inappropriate, inaccurate, or harmful content (images, messages, posts) online.

Please don't:

- Share confidential information:
- No personally identifiable student information may be posted.
- Any discussion about a student or student behaviors, that is not your own student, is not appropriate. These discussions can take place with your student's teacher or the school office if there are any questions or concerns.
- Do not share confidential information about staff or families.
- Post private and personal information
- NEVER give out or transmit personal information of students or parents.
- Use social media in a way that could be personally or physically harmful.
- Engage in cyberbullying, harassment, or disrespectful conduct toward others – staff, students, or the school community.
- Use language online that would be unacceptable in your child's classroom.

If you make a mistake...

- Please be responsible to acknowledge any mistake or misstep made online.
- Apologize to all who may have been impacted by your actions.

**Netiquette**

- Always use the Internet and online sites in a courteous and respectful manner.
- Recognize that among the valuable content online there is unverified, incorrect, or inappropriate content.
- Users should not post malicious or fictitious comments about any member of the school community or the school itself.
- If necessary, please inform school leadership of any issue involving the sharing of confidential information.

**Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying and harassing of any kind will not be tolerated. Don't be mean. Don't send emails or post comments with the intent of scaring, hurting, or intimidating someone else. Engaging in these behaviors, or any online activities intended to harm (physically or emotionally) another person, will result in the posts being taken down and potential removal from the forum. In some cases, cyberbullying can be a crime. Remember that your activities are monitored and retained by others.

**Social Media Photo Policy**

Posting of pictures/videos of children is not allowed on the official school Facebook page and Twitter feed, except by school leadership with parental consent.

***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.

### **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 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.
- Refrain from using social media as an outlet to air grievances or complaints.

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.

### **Grievance Procedure**

The Board encourages students and parents to discuss their concerns, inquiries and complaints through informal conferences with the appropriate teacher, administrator, or other campus staff. Concerns should be expressed as soon as possible, and when possible in writing, to allow early resolution through Montessori methods such as peace tables with the appropriate contacts with immediate knowledge. If an informal conference requires additional leadership involvement, the student or parent may initiate a more formal process to the administration or board. Forms for initiating a more formal process are available on the school's website at [www.gmacademy.org](http://www.gmacademy.org). Even after initiating a more formal process, students and parents are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their concerns. A student or parent whose concerns are resolved may withdraw a formal inquiry at any time.

### **Right to Inspect Instructional Materials and Consent to Surveys**

The parent or guardian of a Geist Montessori Academy (GMA) student may inspect, upon request, any instructional materials which will be used in connection with a survey, a personal analysis, or an evaluation. Instructional materials include teachers' manuals, student texts, films, other video materials, or tapes.

The parent or guardian of a GMA student may inspect, upon request, a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed to the student. Requests may be made to the school building administration and will be processed within a reasonable period of time.

### ***Student Submission to Surveys, Personal Analysis, or Evaluations of School Curriculum***

No student shall be required, without prior written consent of the student's parent or guardian, to submit to a survey, a personal analysis, or an evaluation not directly related to the academic instruction which reveals information concerning:

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
- Religious affiliations, beliefs, or practices of the student or the student's parent;
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or his/her family;
- Sexual behavior or attitudes;
- Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating or demeaning behavior;
- Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom the student has a close family relationship;
- Legally recognized privileged or analogous confidential relationships, such as a relationship with a lawyer, physician, or minister; or
- Income (except as required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under a program).

Any consent form used in compliance with this policy will state the content and nature of the personal analysis, survey, or evaluation. Any survey or questionnaire designed to collect data or information for personal use of teacher, school employee or outside agency personnel, or that seeks information from the list outlined above (1-8) must be reviewed by the school administration and forwarded to the Executive Director for approval prior to administration of the survey.

The rights provided to parents and guardians under this policy transfer to the student when the student turns 18 years old or is an emancipated minor at any age.

*Legal Ref: IC 20-30-5-17; 20 USC 1232h(b)*

### **Student Promotion and Retention**

The Board delegates sole authority to Geist Montessori Academy (GMA) teachers and administrators to make determinations of academic grades and promotion or retention at a grade level, in the best interests of the children, ideally with parental consultation. The Board and/or Executive Director shall hear appeals or complaints regarding a student's grades or promotion/retention. A student will not be retained or promoted in a grade level for any purposes related to the student's participation in extracurricular programs, including athletic programs.

*Legal Ref:*

*5111.A.C6.1-5-10: 34 C.F.R.300.102(a)(3)(iii)*

### **Student Withdrawal**

GMA's admission procedure usually generates a waitlist 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 waitlist. This procedure is particularly important during the summer months, as families on the list have patiently waited throughout the spring and summer for placement. Material fees are non-refundable.

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.

## **Attendance Policy**

All students of Geist Montessori Academy are required to attend school for the predetermined 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."

Geist Montessori Academy (GMA) students are bound by the requirements of Indiana's compulsory attendance law. Detailed procedures regarding student attendance, including habitual truancy, will be printed in each school handbook.

Consistent with Indiana law, the Board directs the Executive Director to authorize and excuse students absent from school who meet the statutory criteria for permissible reasons including: service as a page or honoree of the general assembly; participation in an election; subpoena to appear in court; active duty with the Indiana National Guard; Civil Air Patrol participants, educationally related non-classroom activity; and State Fair Participation.

Legal Ref: I.C. 20-33-2 *et seq.*

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.

GMA abides by a progressive attendance policy. The responsibility for ensuring children receive the full benefits of a Montessori education lies with the parent or guardian. GMA will make every reasonable effort to work with families to ensure that students are in attendance for school each day.

Once a student reaches three unexcused absences, the teacher will reach out to offer assistance.

Once a student reaches five unexcused absences, the school will reach out to the family to provide additional support.

Once a student has reached ten unexcused absences, an attendance letter will be sent home with the student and is documented in the student's file. After ten unexcused absences, a doctor's note will be required for every unexcused absence thereafter. Excuse notes written by a student's parent/guardian will not be accepted.

If a student reaches the level of chronic absenteeism, an attendance conference will be scheduled with the school administration.

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 a physician
- Religious observances
- 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 or an absence that is unreported by a parent/guardian.

#### ***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 front office.

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

*The administration reserves the right to deny pre-arranged absences at any time. Pre-arranged absences 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, unless otherwise specified by school administration.*

#### **School-Wide Volunteer Opportunities**

GMA believes in establishing and supporting parent partnerships. Every family has something unique to offer our community. Individual teachers will notify parents when and what volunteer opportunities are available.

#### *Please Note:*

- Volunteers are required to have a criminal background check on file with the office before volunteering. These must be completed annually.
- 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.

#### **Student Records**

Geist Montessori Academy (GMA) shall follow all state and federal rules and regulations regarding the release or retention of education records. Education records consist of all official records, files, and data directly related to a student and maintained by the school. Such records encompass all the material kept in the student's cumulative folder and include general identifying data, records of attendance and of academic work completed, records of achievement, results of evaluative tests, health data, and disciplinary records. Education records are the property of GMA.

Student medical records resulting from participation in school-based treatment services or



treatment services provided by an outside professional care provider contracted and paid for by the school are considered private. GMA must not share any reports or notes resulting from school-based treatment services with other school officials. Additionally, GMA will not maintain any reports, notes, diagnosis, or appointments resulting from a student's participation in outside treatment as described in this Policy in the student's permanent educational file.

The Board authorizes the Executive Director/designee to set forth guidelines for the implementation of this policy.

Legal Ref:

20 U.S.C. Section 1232g; IC 20-33-7; IC 20-34-9

### ***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, 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.

## **Classroom Information**

### **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.

*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.

### **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.

### **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 he/she 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 a serious threat of endangering himself or others, staff will immediately intervene in as positive a manner as possible.

### **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.

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 may be expected to participate in a conference with the appropriate school personnel to determine effective consequences and solutions to the problem.

## **Communication**

Although phone calls are welcome, the use of email is preferred. Please allow at least two school days' time for a response from staff.

## **Homework**

Homework should be viewed as an integral extension of, rather than a substitute for, classroom instruction. Homework, to be an effective aspect of student learning, requires combined and cooperative partnership efforts and attention of primarily parents and teachers. The partnership of teachers and parents working together in assigning and monitoring homework should help students to understand working at home expectations, to improve study habits and to assume ever increasing responsibility for the successful completion of assigned work. Homework can be a good way to extend or enhance learning beyond the classroom.

However, in a Montessori setting, a majority of the work should be completed in the classroom. Additionally, we believe that there are an infinite number of valuable learning experiences for children that are available outside of the classroom setting. Art/music lessons, community groups such as scouts, athletic teams, church groups, etc. all offer students an opportunity to explore and contribute to their community in a way that is meaningful to them. Family time is also a valuable piece of the education of the whole child.

Homework should be used as an extension of the learning that takes place in the classroom daily. From time to time, students may have projects or presentations that will require more time to be spent working at home in order to prepare for school. Additionally, especially in the older grades, students should begin to practice time management, organization, prioritization of tasks, and self-directed study time as they prepare for middle school and high school beyond GMA. Therefore, students in these grades should be prepared to have minimal homework such as reading, practicing math facts, using online programs such as IXL, studying for spelling or vocabulary assessments, etc. The assigning of homework is left to teacher discretion based on the needs of each individual learner.

Legal Ref:  
511 I.A.C. 6.1-5-9

## **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.

## **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 hours 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.

## **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

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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.

### **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(s) 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 decisions on class changes and placements are determined by the Executive Director.

### **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, ILEARN, which includes an alternate assessment for students with disabilities called 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, and Math

Grade 8: English/Language Arts, and Math

Students in 3rd grade will participate in the state's reading assessment, IREAD-3; 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). 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.

### **Response to Intervention**

Response to Intervention (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-informed 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 support, and progress is monitored. If students fail to make progress, this system also serves as a means to help identify students who may need to proceed to an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services.

### **Lunch & Snacks**

We do not have a hot lunch program or cafeteria. 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 *quick, healthy* snack to eat each day. Suggested snack items include fruit, yogurt, crackers and cheese, string cheese, or fresh vegetables like baby carrots or celery sticks.

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.

### **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 need to check with their child's teacher on what falls in line with the current allergies in the classroom and what the classroom policy on birthday treats is.

### **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.

### **Internet Use/Cell Phone 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. Most classrooms have students and parents sign a technology agreement. This reinforces the expectation of responsible behavior with technology in school.

### ***Cell phones belonging to students***

Personal cell phone devices must be kept in lockers or backpacks in airplane mode. Students may NOT use cell phones during school hours. If a call needs to be made to parents, students

should ask the teacher to use one of the building phones to call.

### ***Smart Watches***

Smart watches are not permitted to be worn or used by students during the school day.

## **Student Information**

### **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 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

### **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.

It is the policy of Geist Montessori Academy (GMA) to balance the rights of student expression with that of all members of the school community, with the interests of an orderly and efficient educational process, and with the needs of a school environment suitable for the healthy growth and development of all students.

Students are expected to demonstrate proper behavior as defined in student handbooks and are subject to disciplinary action when the rules are not followed. Students have the full protection of due process and appeal where applicable.

It is the intent of the administration and teachers of GMA to follow the disciplinary procedures as outlined in the student handbook of each building. In addition to the actions specifically provided in each student handbook, the Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director, any administrative personnel, or any teacher of GMA shall be authorized to take any action in connection with student behavior which is reasonably desirable or necessary to help any student, to further school purposes, or to prevent an interference therewith, such action including but not limited to such matters as:

- Counseling with a student or group of students;

- Conferences with a parent/guardian or group of parents/guardians;
- Assigning students additional work or community service;
- Rearranging class schedules or;
- Restriction of extracurricular activity.

Students with disabilities are afforded additional protections when they are removed from their current educational placement due to violating a code of student conduct. GMA abides by all legal obligations espoused in Indiana's special education code ("Article 7") and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Legal Ref:

IC 20-33-8-12; 511 I.A.C. § 7-44 et. seq.; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

### **Student Due Process**

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

### **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
- Any time misconduct results in physical injury to another person.
- Drawing pictures of or performing an 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 oneself 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
- Loss of privileges
- In-school suspension
- Out of school suspension
- Expulsion

In the case of an out of school suspension, a re-admittance conference with the student, parent/guardian, and school administration is required before the student may return to school.

### **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.

### **Corporal Punishment**

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

### **Bullying**

Any reported cases of bullying are treated according 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 Anti-Bullying Policy applies when a student is: (1) on school grounds immediately before or during school hours, immediately after school hours, or at any other time when the school is being used by a school group; (2) off school grounds at a school activity, function, or event; (3) traveling to or from school or a school activity, function, or event; or (4) using property or equipment provided by the school. Bullying is taken very seriously at GMA and our policies are designed to create a positive environment for all students to succeed.

## ***Anti-Bullying Policy***

Bullying is prohibited at Geist Montessori Academy (GMA). Students who commit any acts of bullying are subject to discipline, including but not limited to suspension, expulsion, arrest, and/or prosecution.

### ***Definition***

“Bullying” is defined as 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 committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the targeted student, creating for the targeted student an objectively hostile school environment that:

1. Places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or property;
2. Has a substantially detrimental effect on the targeted student’s physical or mental health;
3. Has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student’s academic performance; or
4. Has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by GMA.

### ***Applicability***

GMA prohibits bullying in all forms. This policy may be applied regardless of the physical location in which the bullying behavior occurred, whenever the individual committing the bullying behavior and any of the intended targets of the bullying behavior are students attending a school within GMA and disciplinary action is reasonably necessary to avoid substantial interference with school discipline or prevent an unreasonable threat to the rights of others to a safe and peaceful learning environment. GMA prohibits bullying through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through any computer, computer system, or computer network.

Bullying behaviors based on the targeted individual’s race, color, national origin, sex, gender, religion, or disability may be investigated and processed according to the Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

### ***Education***

GMA will provide training and/or instruction on anti-bullying prevention and policy to all students, as well as employees, in accordance with Indiana law.

### ***Reporting***

Anyone who believes that a student has possibly been or is the victim of bullying is encouraged to immediately report the situation to an appropriate employee such as a teacher or administrator, including the Executive Director. All employees, volunteers, and contracted service providers who observe or receive a report of suspected bullying shall notify a designated school administrator in charge of receiving reports of suspected bullying within the same day. If an employee does not know who to make a report to, he or she should report directly to the Executive Director. Bullying reports to the Department of Child Services and/or law enforcement must be made as required by law, such as when an employee believes that a student is the victim of abuse or neglect. Any person who makes a report of bullying and requests to remain anonymous will not be personally identified as the reporter or complainant to the extent permitted by law. GMA will act appropriately to discipline employees, volunteers, or contracted service providers who receive a report of bullying and fail to initiate or conduct an investigation of a bullying incident, and for persons who

falsely report an incident of bullying. GMA will act appropriately to discipline students, employees, visitors, or volunteers who make false reports of bullying.

#### *Investigation*

Once a report of suspected bullying is received by the designated school administrator, an expedited investigation shall follow. The investigation should be facilitated by the designated school administrator or other appropriate school employees. Information relating to the investigation will be gathered using means including, but not limited to: witness interviews, request for written witness statements, record identification and review, and an assessment of whether bullying occurred. The investigation will be initiated within one school day of the report to the designated school administrator and will ordinarily be completed within ten school days.

#### *Intervention/Responses*

If a report of suspected bullying is substantiated through an investigation, then GMA shall take appropriate intervention and respond in alignment with school policy and procedure. GMA will take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to stop the bullying, remedy the bullying, and prevent the bullying from recurring. Interventions and responses include, but are not limited to: separating the bully and the target; follow-up school counseling for the target; bullying education for the bully; and prompt disciplinary action against the bully. These steps should not penalize the target of the bullying. Disciplinary actions against the bully may include, but are not limited to: suspension and expulsion for students. Also, if the acts of bullying rise to the level of serious criminal offense the matter may be referred to law enforcement. GMA shall inform the parents of all students involved in alleged incidents; and, as appropriate, may discuss the availability of counseling and other intervention services.

#### *Parental Involvement*

Parents are encouraged to be involved in the process of minimizing bullying. Parents should report suspected acts of bullying to an appropriate school official. In addition, parents of students suspected of bullying will be notified with a phone call or through other appropriate means of communication. Conversely, parents of students suspected of being the target of acts of bullying will also be notified with a phone call or through other means of appropriate communication. Parent notifications will occur in an expedited manner within two (2) school days after the designated school administrator receives the report of suspected bullying. Parents of students who are disciplined for acts of bullying will be involved in the disciplinary process consistent with the law and GMA policy.

#### *Reporting to IDOE*

GMA will record and report to the Executive Director or his or her designee the frequency of bullying incidents in the following categories: verbal bullying, physical bullying, social/relational bullying, and electronic/written communication bullying (or a combination of two or more of the above categories). The Executive Director or his or her designee shall report the number of bullying incidents by category for each school for each school term to the Indiana Department of Education by July 1.

Legal Ref:  
I.C. 20-33-8-13.5

### **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.

### *Special Area Classes (Art, Music, etc)*

All students are required to participate in Special Area classes. These classes provide students with valuable educational experiences that contribute to the education of the whole child. Students will receive grades in these classes at the end of each semester.

### **Substance Abuse and Tobacco Use**

GMA is a smoke/tobacco free environment. The Board prohibits the use of tobacco in any form and the use of e-cigarettes or vaping in any building owned or leased by GMA; on GMA property or grounds (including parking lots, athletic facilities, etc.); in vehicles owned, leased, or operated by GMA; and during GMA events, even if held outside of GMA property (for example, field trips). This policy applies to all employees (including employees of services contracted by GMA), students, parents, patrons, vendors, visitors, and all third parties at all times.

The law prohibits smoking in any public place or place of employment, or within 8 feet of a public entrance to a public place in the state of Indiana.

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.

## **Student Drug/Alcohol Testing Policy**

### ***Individualized Suspicion***

All students, regardless of age, who exhibit behavior which leads GMA authorities to have reasonable suspicion to suspect the student is under the influence of a controlled substance, may be immediately required to submit to a drug/alcohol screen administered at GMA's expense. Furthermore, GMA may subject items in said student's possession to testing to determine if those items contain drugs or alcohol. GMA may pay for such testing of items in the student's possession.

Factors which the administration will consider may include, but are not limited to:

- Odor of alcohol/marijuana/smoke;
- Glassy, dilated, bloodshot eyes, or dark circles under eyes;
- Appears dazed, giddy;
- Staggering walk;
- Slurred or rapid speech;
- Incoherent thought processes;
- Disruptive, aggressive, physically threatening, out of control, or unusual behavior;
- Bragging or talking to other students about alcohol or drug use;
- Noticeable withdrawal from favorite activities and friends, or
- Physical indicators from an objective assessment by the school nurse or health care representative.

If the test is positive, all future drug tests will be done at the parent/guardian's expense.

Refusal to submit to a drug test will be considered an admission of being under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. This is a violation of school rules and will be dealt with according to the student discipline procedures outlined in the handbook.

The administration will make a reasonable attempt to apprise the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the situation.

### **Gun Free School**

No student shall possess any weapon, including a firearm, ammunition, or knife, in any building owned or leased by Geist Montessori Academy (GMA) on GMA property or grounds (including parking lots, athletic facilities, etc.); in vehicles owned, leased, or operated by GMA; and during GMA events, even if held outside of school property (for example, field trips). In addition to being subject to criminal charges, any student who violates this policy shall be subject to expulsion or suspension.

No student shall possess any object which is either intended, or may in fact be used as, or looks like a weapon or other instrumentality which could cause harm to any other person in any building owned or leased by GMA.

This includes during GMA events, even if held outside of school property (for example, field trips).

Such objects include, but are not necessarily limited to, knives, batons, night sticks, brass knuckles, bombs, fireworks, electronic stun weapons, tasers, stun guns, or chemicals. In addition to being subject to criminal charges, any student who violates this policy shall be subject to discipline, up to and including suspension or expulsion.

Anyone who has reason to believe that any individual is violating the law or this Policy shall immediately report the alleged violation to an administrator or law enforcement officer. GMA administration will immediately report any suspected violation of the law to law enforcement. GMA may take any necessary steps to exclude an alleged offender from GMA property or events for safety concerns.

### **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.

### **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.

The use of inappropriate language by parents, guardians, or other guests will not be tolerated. In the event that a guest at GMA chooses to engage in the use of inappropriate language, they will be asked to leave the property. Further action may be taken as deemed necessary and appropriate by school administration.

### **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.

### **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 or symbols
- Symbols or messages of violence or weapons
- Discriminatory symbols messages
- Gang or gang-like symbols or messages
- Sexually suggestive symbols or messages
- Alcohol, tobacco, or drug messages or images
- 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*

- Caps, hats, bandannas, hair curlers, picks, combs, hoods 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.

#### *Shirts and Tops*

Clothing that exposes the back, torso, and/or cleavage, such as the following, is not allowed:

- Tube tops/Halters
- Spaghetti strap style tank tops
- Bare back or midriff clothing
- Bathing suits
- Shirts with slits above the waist
- Basketball jerseys and similar tops (without another shirt on underneath)
- Tops that do not cover the undergarments or bra straps

#### *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.

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.

### **Technology Use & Internet Safety Policy**

All use of computers, furnished or created data, software, accounts 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 at any time without notice.
- 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, Instagram, Twitter, Wikipedia, YouTube, video-posting sites, discords 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, discriminatory, inflammatory 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.

GMA employees, students, and visitors must remember that when using electronic technologies, including accessing GMA wireless internet, all communications can be reviewed at any time.

A User shall never use another User's password, or account, even with the permission from the User.

GMA has taken steps to ensure that some technology protection measures have been implemented to monitor and/or block obscene or pornographic materials. A certificate of such a measure is required under the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).



## **Student and Staff Use of Social Media and Personal Websites**

GMA employees and students use social media, networking websites, personal websites, blogs, and similar internet sites and applications on their personal time, but these activities may affect the educational environment. As such, GMA employees and students shall abide by the Acceptable Use of Technology administrative guidelines regarding social media use. Employees and students who violate the administrative guidelines may be subject to discipline.

## **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 that distracts 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
- Video gaming devices of any kind
- Devices used to play music
- Laser pointers/pens
- Other devices that may distract from the learning environment

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

Cell phones may be brought to school, but must remain in airplane mode in a backpack/locker. 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.

Smart watches are not permitted to be worn or used by students during the school day.

## **Special Education**

Geist Montessori Academy follows a full-inclusion model for special education services. This means that students spend the vast majority of their time in the general education classroom with their peers. In accordance with our Montessori philosophy and approach to education, our teachers differentiate instructional lessons and assignments for each student regularly. When a student struggles to make appropriate academic progress with the resources and supports available to all students, our team will initiate the Response to Intervention (RTI) process to determine next steps.

## **Evaluation Process**

Our goal is to meet the needs of every student at GMA. If a student fails to make progress, even with additional support and interventions in the general education classroom through the RTI process, the next step may be a referral for evaluation.

Evaluations are conducted based on the needs of the student and the Case Conference Committee's recommendation. Case Conference members include; parents, school administrators, classroom teacher, special education teacher, and related services including speech/language, and occupational therapy. A school psychologist, speech and language pathologist, and/or

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occupational therapist conducts this testing.

Questions regarding our Special Education Department or the evaluation process should be directed to our Assistant Executive Director at (317) 813-4626, ext. 101.

### **Students with Disabilities and Least Restrictive Environment**

Geist Montessori Academy shall provide special education as mandated by state and federal statute. GMA is committed to educating students with disabilities consistent with applicable federal and state law.

#### ***Least Restrictive Environment***

GMA shall ensure, to the maximum extent appropriate, that students with disabilities are educated with nondisabled students and that students are removed from the general education environment only when the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes using supplementary aids and services cannot be satisfactorily achieved. GMA shall ensure that a continuum of services is provided in order to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities, including supplementary services to be provided in conjunction with general education placement. In selecting the least restrictive environment, consideration shall be given to any potential harmful effect on the student or quality of services needed.

### **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.

### **Service Animals**

Geist Montessori Academy (GMA) is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to accommodate individuals with disabilities accompanied by a service animal in its GMA buildings, classrooms, and at school functions. The following policy applies to all service animals utilized by students and adults in GMA:

#### ***Definitions***

- A "service animal" is a dog, or in special circumstances a miniature horse, that is individually trained to take specific action or perform tasks to assist an individual with a disability. The tasks performed by the dog must be directly related to the person's disability. A "service animal" does not include any species of animal, whether wild or domestic, other than a dog or miniature horse.
- A "companion animal" is an animal that provides solely emotional support, well-being, therapy, comfort, or companionship. A "companion animal" does not meet the definition of a "service animal."
- An "individual with a disability" is a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.

- A “tether” is a harness or leash.

### ***Policy***

- GMA permits the use of a service animal by an individual with a disability. Individuals with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal in all areas of GMA facilities and school functions where the individual is otherwise permitted to be. The work or tasks performed by the service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability.
- Prior to bringing the service animal to school, a Service Animal Registration Form must be completed for all individuals with a disability who wish to be accompanied by a service animal. GMA requests the Form be completed and delivered at least one (1) week in advance of bringing the service animal to school in order to prepare other staff and students for the service animal’s arrival. In completing the Service Animal Registration Form, the individual or his/her parents shall explain that the service animal is required because of a disability and what work or task the service animal has been trained to perform.
- GMA requests that the individual with a disability and/or his/her parents provide documentation supporting that the service animal is required because of a disability and that the animal has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks to assist an individual with a disability.
- GMA is not responsible for the care or supervision of a service animal. At all times, a service animal shall be under the control of its handler. If the person accompanied by the service animal is unable to handle the service animal appropriately, the parent shall provide for care and supervision of the animal (either by the parent or a third party individual accompanying the animal). The parent or third party individual accompanying the animal shall be subject to all GMA policies and procedures.
- A service animal shall have a harness, leash, or other tether, unless either the handler is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash, or other tether, or the use of a harness, leash, or other tether would interfere with the service animal’s safe, effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the service animal must be otherwise under the handler’s control (e.g., voice control, signals, or other effective means). “Under control” also means that a service animal shall not be allowed to bark repeatedly in a quiet place. The handler may not allow the service animal to wander away from her and must maintain control of the animal, even if it is retrieving an item at a distance from the handler.
- If a service animal is not housebroken, if the service animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it, if the service animal behaves in a way that poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others or has a history of such behavior, or if the service animal’s presence would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity, GMA may request that the animal be removed from the premises.

- The handler is responsible for caring for and supervising the service animal, which includes toileting, feeding, watering, grooming, and veterinary care. The handler should encourage the animal to use marked toileting areas. GMA is not responsible for the care or supervision of a service animal.
- Service animals must be kept free of fleas and ticks. Service animals must be appropriately clean and groomed.
- Companion animals are not permitted in GMA facilities.
- All persons are prohibited by Indiana Code 35-46-3-11.5 from knowingly or intentionally interfering with the actions of a service animal or striking, tormenting, injuring or otherwise mistreating a service animal while the service animal is engaged in assisting an impaired person in navigation, assistance in performing daily activities, or alert signals regarding the onset of the person's medical condition.
- The owner and/or individual accompanied by a service animal is liable for any damage, harm, or injury caused by the service animal to other students, staff, visitors, and/or property. An individual with a disability may be charged for damage, harm, or injury caused by his/her service animal.
- Service animals are subject to local animal control and public health requirements regarding vaccines, licenses, and registration. To protect the health, safety, and welfare of other students and adults, the individual with a disability and/or his/her parents must provide the GMA annual proof of common vaccinations for dogs.

## **Health and Safety**

### **Safety Policy**

- No student shall be left unsupervised.
- Required 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 are required by law to immediately notify the Department of Child Services if they suspect that a child has been abused or neglected.

### **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.

GMA shall conduct periodic emergency preparedness drills during the school year in compliance

with state law and regulations. School administration shall file a certified statement that all drills have been conducted as required by state law

### **Emergency and Accident Policy**

If a student is involved in an accident or experiences a medical emergency at school, school staff will contact the parent/legal guardian named on the enrollment 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.

### **Use of Seclusion and Restraint with Students**

It is the policy of the Board that all Geist Montessori Academy students are to be treated with dignity and respect and to be free from abuse. The Board supports the promotion and training of appropriate student behavior as part of GMA's curriculum. It is the policy of the Board to use prevention, positive behavior intervention and support, and conflict de-escalation to eliminate or minimize the need for the use of seclusion or restraint with students. This policy applies to all students, regardless of the existence of a disability.

Any behavioral interventions must be consistent with a student's right to be treated with dignity and respect and to be free from abuse.

Any behavioral intervention used must be consistent with the student's most current individualized education program (IEP) and with the student's behavior intervention plan (BIP), if applicable.

Every effort must be made to eliminate or minimize the need for the use of seclusion or restraint with a student, including the use of prevention, positive behavior intervention and support, and conflict de-escalation prior to the use of seclusion or restraint, except in the case of an emergency, as defined below.

Seclusion and restraint are to be used only: 1) as a last resort safety procedure employed after another, less restrictive procedure has been implemented without success; and 2) when there is an imminent risk of injury to the student, other students, school employees, or visitors to the school.

Seclusion and restraint may be used only for a short period of time or until the imminent risk of injury has passed.

Any instance of seclusion or restraint must be documented and reported annually to Ball State University Office of Charter Schools and the Indiana Department of Education as required by Indiana law.

Regular training of appropriate school employees/staff members on the proper use of effective alternatives to seclusion and physical restraint and the safe use of seclusion and physical restraint in situations involving imminent danger or serious harm to the student, school employees or others is required.

Seclusion and restraint must not be used as a means of punishment or discipline, coercion or retaliation, or as a matter of convenience.

Seclusion and restraint must never be used in a manner that restricts a child's breathing.

The student must be monitored by a staff member at all times during the use of seclusion or restraint to ensure the appropriateness of its use and the safety of the student or others.

### **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:

- 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 school emergency medical procedures.
- School staff will supervise the student to ensure their safety, and they will escort them to a designated safe area.
- Staff will move all other students out of the immediate area as soon as possible.
- Staff will immediately notify administration or school safety team regarding in-school suicide attempts.
- An administrator will contact the student's parent or guardian.
- The school will engage and assess whether additional steps will be taken to ensure student safety and well-being.

#### ***Return to School Protocols***

For students returning to school after a mental health crisis, administration or designee will meet with the student's parent or guardian, and if appropriate, meet with the student to discuss the student's return to school and appropriate next steps to ensure the student's safety and wellbeing at school.

- The Wellness Coach or other designee will be identified to coordinate with the student, their parent or guardian, and any outside mental health care providers.
- 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 as well as any Safety Plan documentation from a medical provider.
- The Wellness Coach or other designee will periodically check in with the student to help the student readjust to the school community and address any ongoing concerns.
- Parents/guardians will be kept informed of any concerns once the student has returned to school.

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

If school is cancelled due to inclement weather, students will participate in remote learning with their teacher and classmates.

Geist Montessori Academy will announce all closing and delays on the major local news stations. During severe weather check WTTV 4, WRTV 6, WISHTV 8, WTHR 13, or FOX 59 for the all the latest updates on GMA closing and delays. GMA will also use the school's webpage, Facebook page, and mass communication service to contact families with school delays and closings.

GMA will make every attempt to make a decision regarding school closures or delays as early as possible to allow families ample time to make appropriate plans for children. As an independent

school not affiliated with any school district and not providing school transportation, the decision to close or delay school is unique.

As a general rule:

- If *either* Mt. Vernon Community Schools *or* Hamilton Southeastern Schools are delayed or cancelled, GMA will evaluate our local conditions including parking lots and side roads to determine if a delay or cancellation is necessary.
- If *both* Mt. Vernon Community Schools *and* Hamilton Southeastern Schools are delayed or cancelled, GMA will follow suit.

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

### **Student Illness Policy**

The Student Illness Policy will be strictly enforced for the health, well-being, and safety of all concerned. Under no circumstances may a parent bring a sick child to school, if the child shows any signs of illness as defined below, or is unable to participate in the normal routine and regular school day.

In the event a child becomes ill and needs to be picked up, the parent(s) will be called and are expected to come pick the child up within one hour (60 minutes). If the parent(s) cannot be reached, or have not arrived within an hour, the emergency contact person will be called and asked to come pick the child up. In the event a child complains about not feeling well during the school day, the parent will be contacted. Parents are the most knowledgeable about their child's health and school staff depend on their rapport and information to best care for the child; therefore, school staff may contact the parents to help guide decisions regarding the best way to care for the child.

#### *Symptoms Requiring a Student to be Out of School*

- **Fever** - Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100.4°F taken orally. A child must be fever free *without the use of fever-reducing medication such as Tylenol or Advil* for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school.
- Fever AND sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, irritability, or confusion.
- **Diarrhea** - runny, watery, bloody stools, or 2 or more loose stools within a 4 hour period. A child should not be brought to school if they have had diarrhea for any reason within the last 24 hours
- **Vomiting** - A child should not be brought to school if they have vomited for any reason within the last 24 hours
- **Respiratory Symptoms** - Breathing trouble, sore throat, swollen glands, loss of voice, hacking or continuous coughing.
- **Itching** - Frequent scratching of body or scalp, lice, rash, or any other spots that resemble childhood diseases, including ringworm, or a contagious eye infection.
- Child is irritable, continuously crying, or requires more attention than we can provide without hurting the health, safety or well-being of the other children in our care.

**COVID-19 Related Illness**

COVID-19 continues to be a very fluid situation with new information and guidance provided to schools frequently. GMA will follow all guidance from the local and state health departments and the CDC. Families will be kept up to date with the most recent information and protocols via mass communication and school newsletters.

**Medication Administration**

Only necessary medications that must be given during school hours will be administered. All Over the Counter (OTC) medications will be supplied by the family and stored in the clinic. If a child has a signed Over the Counter Medication form on file, then those medications can be administered. Medications will only be administered if the clinic staff or other school personnel determines a need for the medication after assessment. The clinic staff or other school personnel will contact the parent prior to giving any OTC medication to ensure it is safe for the child to have it, and to ensure that the child has not already received medication prior to coming to school.

For prescription medications, inhalers, epinephrine injectors, and self-administration of medications, a physician's signature is required in order for these medications to be given. The medication needs to be in the original pharmacy container with the label visible and intact. Parents must hand deliver all medications to the school clinic, unless prior arrangements have been made. Medications of any sort are not to be sent to school in the child's backpack to maintain safety for all students. Any medication not picked up at the end of the year will be discarded.

*Field Trips and Medication Administration*

We encourage parents of those children with emergency medications and action plans to attend all field trips. If a parent is accompanying his/her child on a field trip, the parent will be required to administer his/her child's medication. All allergies need to be reported on the Student Health Information form. If there is a change during the school year, please notify the school accordingly. Your child's teacher and assistant are made aware of reported allergies and any special needs that he/she may have and will do their best to ensure safety for every student. The clinic staff or designated personnel will gather all medications that need to be transported on the field trip and will provide instructions for staff who may need to administer these medications.