



New York City Montessori Charter School

Family Handbook

*Approved by:
New York City Montessori Charter School Board of
Trustees*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

PAGE

5

II. ABOUT THE NEW YORK CITY MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL	6
History	6
Charter school	6
Mission	6
Educational approach	7
III. ROUTINE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES	8
Schedule	8
Arrival	8
Dismissal	8
School closure because of Weather	9
Clothing	10
Belongings	10
Lost property	10
Birthday Celebrations	11
Field Trips	11
Homework	11
IV. SERVICES	11
Food	11
Transportation	12
V. POLICIES	12
Communication and Family/School Relationships	12
Open Door Policy	13
Family/Teacher Conferences	13
Family Participation	13
Confidentiality	13
Promotion	13
Discipline	14
Students with Special Needs.	15
English Language Learners	15
VI. STUDENT SAFETY AND HEALTH	16
Smoking	16
Emergency Information	16
Immunization and Health Examinations	16
Medications	16
Illness	16
Incident/Accident Reports	17
Suicide Threats	17
Mandated reporting of Child Abuse/Maltreatment	17
Fire Alarm Checks and Emergency Plan	17
APPENDIX 1 Grievance Policy	18
APPENDIX 2 Discipline Policy	18
APPENDIX 3 FERPA	20
APPENDIX 4 Code of Ethics	20
APPENDIX 5 Open Meetings Law (OML)	21
APPENDIX 6 Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)	22

I. INTRODUCTION

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Families,

Welcome to the New York City Montessori Charter School!

Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education.

We believe that parents and families make a very important contribution to their child's education and we look forward to a rewarding partnership with you over the next few years. We are sure that together we can provide your child with an education that will develop his or her individual talents and provide a strong basis for academic and personal success in the future. This is the thrust of our mission as a school.

This handbook should provide you with all the information you may need to understand the aims and methods of our school and the ways in which you can contribute to creating a safe, supportive and stimulating learning environment for your child. The handbook sets forth our policies and procedures, describes what happens in the everyday life of the school and explains how we deal with common problems. It indicates what we expect of parents and what parents can expect of us.

We look forward to a long, productive relationship with you and hope that this handbook is of use in forwarding that relationship. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the school and we will do our best to answer them.

Yours sincerely,

Abeku Hayes, Principal
The Board of Trustees of the NYCMCS
The Staff of the NYCMCS

II. ABOUT THE NEW YORK CITY MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL (NYCMCS)

History

The NYCMCS was created in order to offer the South Bronx community an innovative educational program adapted to the particular needs of its children and their families. This program is rigorous and has high expectations for student achievement, which creates a strong foundation for future academic success.

Charter School

The NYCMCS is a charter school. This means that it is a public school run by an independent group of educators. Admission is open to any student living in New York City and students do not pay tuition to attend. Enrollment is done through a lottery system.

Charter schools are public schools that operate according to a five-year performance contract with the State, or "charter." They are held accountable for students' academic performance and the specific goals set forth in their charter. Like all public schools, charter schools must meet state standards and the requirements of all state and federal laws regarding health, safety, civil rights, and student assessment.

The governing body of the NYCMCS is its Board of Trustees, which may have between 5 and 13 members. At least one seat on the board is reserved for a parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the school, as a non-voting member. The Family-School Association elects this parent each year for a term of one year that can be extended to two. The Board of Trustees meets monthly. Anyone interested may attend, in accordance with the Open Meetings Law. The Board's activities are guided by a Code of Ethics that stresses transparency and accountability. (Appendix 4)

Since the NYCMCS is a public school, admission is open to any interested student. We hold a lottery each year to admit new students. Students are accepted in the order in which their names are pulled from the lottery. Siblings of students already attending the school and siblings of students accepted in the lottery are automatically accepted, if there is a place available. Once all the places are filled, the remaining students are placed on a waiting list. After being accepted, students must formalize their enrollment by turning in the required documents. If accepted students do not enroll within a certain time, the next student on the waiting list is notified of the vacancy and invited to enroll.

Mission

The mission of the New York City Montessori Charter School is to empower children to be critical thinkers and creative problem solvers with strong social skills so that they can succeed in their world and continue to learn in their pursuit of higher education as they prepare for careers needed in the 21st Century.

Educational Approach

The New York City Montessori Charter School follows the educational approach developed by Maria Montessori. This is based on her observations of how children learn in diverse cultures. She observed that all children are naturally motivated to learn and that all children are different. They are interested in different things. Some know more, some know less. They learn in different ways. Some learn best by listening, others by watching and others by touching, building things, moving things around, smelling and even tasting them! Some learn quickly and others work slowly and deliberately until they master something.

On the basis of these observations, Maria Montessori's approach to education uses and stimulates children's natural motivation to learn. Montessori teachers respect and value the individuality of every child by preparing different learning activities for each one - activities that take into account the particular child's needs, interests, and learning style. At the same time, they give children the opportunity to progress at their own pace, regardless of ability level or age, until they achieve mastery of a topic. Research shows that the Montessori approach is successful with almost all kinds of learners, including English language learners, and children with special needs. Students in Montessori schools learn to be self-motivated, independent, and respectful of others, lovers of learning, hard workers, self confident, and critical thinkers.

Today, Dr. Montessori's ideas influence teachers in schools throughout the world. In the United States alone, there are 400 public schools and close to 5,000 private schools that follow the Montessori approach.

In the New York City Montessori Charter School, we apply the Montessori approach in all our classrooms. These are bright, inviting spaces filled with learning materials that appeal to all the senses and stimulate logical thought. Children are assigned work with these materials on their own or in collaboration with a friend. One teacher goes around the classroom observing and helping them as they work. Another teacher works with small groups of children to give them lessons on particular topics. Every day, both teachers make careful observations of their students' progress in order to decide what to teach next, introduce changes when necessary and ensure that all students are successful in reaching their educational goals.

In order to develop independence, all children in the NYCMCS are given freedom within limits. For example, we allow our students to choose between several equivalent follow-up tasks after a lesson, to participate in planning their day or week, to decide on the order of their tasks during work time, to choose the topics they will write upon within our writing units, and to select the topics they will investigate within class projects. We also believe it is important for children to do as much as they can all by themselves. They should only ask for help after they have tried on their own. This means we expect them to tie their own shoe-laces by first grade, carry their own backpacks, put on their own jackets, brush their own teeth, put their own dishes in the sink and washing up their own dish. They should clean up after themselves, help others in need, read to their classmates, and help organize materials. If a child is physically able, he or she can, and should, do it!

These freedoms help develop self-confidence and we encourage children to exercise them through encouragement and practice. At the same time, we expect children to respect one another and the environment and to follow the basic rules of polite behavior. We model and expect children to show grace and courtesy in their social interactions, for example, to say “please” and “thank you”, to push their chairs back under the table when they get up, to hold the door open for the next person, and to show kindness to others.

III. ROUTINE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES

Schedule

The NYCMCS’s schedule maximizes student learning. Children in Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grades benefit from an extended school day, from 7:45 a.m.- 2:30 p.m. Every Thursday, school for all Kindergarten- 5th Grade students ends at 12p.m.; and for Pre-K at 1:00pm, so that the teachers can attend full staff meetings and professional development workshops, or have extended planning time.

Arrival

Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade

Arrival is at 7:45 a.m. Children who arrive on the bus before 7:45a.m, will be escorted to the waiting area until breakfast is served. Parents who bring their children must stay with their child outside of the building until 7:45a.m, and the school doors are open. Parents cannot leave their children unattended or with the security guard.

Late arrivals

Classes begin after breakfast, at 8:15 a.m. If a child arrives after 8:15 a.m., this is considered a late arrival for official purposes. After 8:15 am, parents must sign their child in with security, and students are escorted upstairs to classrooms by office personnel. Parents are not allowed above the lobby floor after 8:15 a.m. If you are running late, please call the Main Office by 8:30 a.m., to notify office personnel of your expected arrival time.

Dismissal

Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade

Dismissal is at 2:30 p.m. except for Thursday’s, when it is at 12:00 p.m., for Pre-K, dismissal on Thursday’s is 1:00pm. Shortly before dismissal time, the children finish up what they are doing, put away their things, use the bathroom, and put on their outdoor clothing.

A bus leader escorts children leaving by bus to the proper bus. Children who will be picked up stay in their classrooms and wait for a parent/guardian/approved adult, for pick-up. *For the 23/24 SY, please follow arrival/ dismissal procedures in your welcome letter.

Pick-up

Children may be picked up only by a parent or guardian or one of the persons named on the child's blue card. If a parent wants their child to be picked up in the afternoon by someone not named on the blue card, they must inform the office staff **before 11 a.m.**, who will notify the classroom teacher of the authorized persons name.

In no case will a child be dismissed to an unauthorized person or to a person under the age of 15. All persons picking up children must show proper identification. No exceptions.

Late pick-up

We ask families to be prompt and pick up their children at the appropriate dismissal time. Late pick-up is unfair to teachers and staff; they must give up their time, stay beyond their working hours or neglect other duties in order to attend to children who are waiting. For this reason, there will be a 5-minute grace period after the hour of dismissal. After that, the school will charge a late fee of \$5 for every additional 10 minutes of lateness.

Early pick up

If a child needs to leave school early to go to a medical appointment, the parent or guardian must inform the office **before 11a.m.** However, we strongly advise families to avoid scheduling appointments during school hours, since this is disruptive to the child and to the class. NYCMCS reserves the right to ask for documentation for any absence. We ask parents to consider making appointments on Thursday's, when students are released early.

If a child becomes sick at school, the nurse will phone the family and ask them to come and pick the child up early, in the Main Office.

Attendance

The school is required to report attendances and absences each day to the Department of Education. If a child cannot attend school for any reason, the family must phone the office before 8:00 a.m. to explain why. **It is especially important that families inform us promptly if a child is absent because of a communicable disease (e.g. pink eye, strep throat, etc.).**

Absences

We ask parents to keep sick children at home in order to protect other children from infection. **If a child is absent from school because of illness, the parent or guardian must send the school a doctor's note.** If a child is absent and has not seen a doctor, the parent must send a note explaining the reason. If a parent knows that their child is going to be absent for any other reason, such as travel, they must contact the school to arrange for alternate education, and provide proper proof of travel to the Main Office.

Frequent absences

The school is obligated to be on the alert for frequent absences as this may indicate educational neglect, which must be reported to the authorities. If a child is frequently absent, the school will contact the family and request documentation or information regarding the student's absence. The parent may also be asked to come in for a meeting with staff to understand the situation and plan ways to improve it. If absences continue to be frequent and/or inadequately explained, the school may be obliged to consider this as educational neglect and report it to the Administration for Children's Services. Frequent absences also put children at risk for retention.

School closure because of severe weather

In the event of severe weather conditions, e.g., a snowstorm, freezing rain or high winds, families should listen to the radio or TV. If any announcement is made that New York City Public Schools will be closed, the NYCMCS will also be closed. A recorded message on the school's phone will also indicate that the school will be closed. Parents should update the Main Office with any changes to their home telephone number.

Clothing

Children should wear seasonally appropriate, comfortable clothing that allows them to move safely and easily. Young children should wear elasticized pants; we ask parents **not** to send Preschool children to school in pants with belts, since belts make it difficult for children to use the bathroom independently. Designs printed on T-shirts and sweaters should be age appropriate. All clothing should be labeled with the child's name.

Children should wear sneakers or other rubber soled shoes, preferably with Velcro fasteners. Flip-flops, high heels and backless shoes are not permitted. If children wear boots in winter, they should bring a pair of sneakers to wear in school.

As a precautionary measure, we ask all parents of Pre-K students to send the school a bag with a complete change of clothes for their child: socks, underwear, pants, T-shirt and shoes.

Belongings

All belongings that the child brings to school should be labeled with the child's name and go home with the child each day. Children should leave valuable jewelry, toys, games and electronic items at home, since such things are easily lost or damaged and are a distraction. The NYC Montessori Charter School is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Students should not bring the following items to school: balls, frisbees, chewing gum, glass containers, scooters or skateboards.

Lost Property

All misplaced clothing and belongings are placed in the Lost and Found bin. Parents should revise the bin when they come to parent-teacher conferences. Clothing that is not picked up will be donated mid-year and at the end of the school year.

The learning materials used in the NYCMCS are very attractive and children may be tempted to take small pieces home. We ask parents to be on the alert for any such pieces in pockets and backpacks, and to return them to the teacher, since incomplete materials cannot be used again for learning purposes.

Birthday Celebrations

We mark every child's birthday in some special way at school. Our celebrations are simple and quiet, with cupcakes and juice. The school does NOT allow balloons, decorations, goody bags, or packed food. We invite parents to get in touch with the Main Office to plan for birthday celebrations. We ask parents **not** to bring sugary snacks or candies for the celebration. Simple snacks such as muffins, cupcakes, or healthy foods such as fruit, or veggie dips are appropriate. The snacks **should not** contain tree nuts/peanuts or seafood (the NYCMCS is a nut and seafood-free environment) and parents should consult with the teacher to find out if they should avoid other foods that could produce allergies in their child's classmates.

Field Trips

Field trips are important learning experiences, and complement what the children learn in the classroom. For this reason, all children must attend all the fieldtrips arranged for their class. These range from walks in the neighborhood to visits to parks, museums and theaters. At the beginning of the year, we ask families to sign a general consent form for all fieldtrips and visits. The school will notify parents ahead of time of any field trip outside the neighborhood. In some instances, teachers may require that a family member accompany a child on a trip as a condition for his/her participation. Students are not allowed to be dismissed from a field trip; all students must return to the school for dismissal.

Homework

Children are expected to read every night with their parents. At first the parent reads the books aloud while the child follows along, but later on in the year the child takes home books to read to the parent. First and second graders continue to read with their parent every night and have limited amounts of other types of homework that increase a little each year.

SERVICES

Food

Allergies. The NYCMCS is a **NUT & SEAFOOD-FREE** environment.
Families must inform the school of any food allergies their children may have.

Meals. Each day students receive breakfast and lunch supplied by the Department of Education. Breakfast is light and lunch is a hot meal. Menus are posted each month on the DOE's website (<http://www.schoolfoodnyc.org/menusandrecipes/menus.htm>) and on the bulletin board in the school's kitchen area. Breakfast & Lunch is free for all children

as of September 2017. Parents are still required to fill out the Office of School Food's Meal Application Form.

Packed lunches. If a child has a special diet, or consistently refuses the school food, parents can send a packed cold lunch. Packed lunches should be balanced and not contain candies, peanuts, chips, snacks, cookies, cakes, sugary deserts, sodas or glass bottles. Families must seek prior approval from the teacher, the Assistant Principal of Operations, or the Principal to send packed lunches with the child. No school personnel are allowed to warm up/cook meals for children.

Transportation

The Department of Education provides bus services. It designs all the bus routes and gets in touch with eligible families in order to give them the information they need about bus stops, pick-up and drop-offs. The Assistant Principal of Operations provides families with information on transportation procedures.

V. POLICIES

Communication and family/school relationships

Families are partners with the school in the education of their children. It is essential for them to be well informed and involved in all aspects of their child's school experience. For this reason, the NYCMCS is interested in establishing close communication between teachers and parents and family members.

It is of the utmost importance that parents or guardians notify the office staff of any change of address and/or phone number, so that we can contact the family quickly and easily if necessary.

It is also extremely important that parents let the school know of any changes in the family situation that could affect the child, such as a parent being away from home, illness or death in the family, moving to a new home, the arrival of a new baby, etc. Even changes that may seem ordinary to an adult may be unsettling to a young child who has not had as many years of experience in dealing with change. Since such changes often lead to different behavior in the classroom, the more we know about them, the more understanding, supportive and helpful we can be to the child.

There are many opportunities for communication with the school staff. There is *informal daily contact* at the times of arrival or dismissal. In addition, parents and guardians are welcome to visit their child's classroom after arranging the visit with the Main Office. If it is necessary to talk at greater length about a child, parents can arrange a date in person, or by calling the Main Office. If a parent wishes to speak to a teacher on the phone, they should call the office and leave a message; the teacher will return the call when they are free.

Other opportunities for communication include *Family Information Sessions* at the time of the student's enrollment: these give an overview of Montessori philosophy and

methods and present the school's expectations for families in the life of the school and in their children's education. A *Curriculum Night* is held near the beginning of the year to introduce parents to the classroom routines. *Parent-teacher conferences* to discuss children's progress are held twice a year. In addition, the school hosts meetings throughout the year to discuss topics of interest to families and the Family Association organizes events that bring families and staff together.

Open Door Policy

The Principal and the Director of Instruction have an open door policy so families can contact them at any time. We welcome all questions and concerns, as it helps us to examine and improve what we do. To speak to the Principal or the Director of Instruction, parents should inquire at the Main Office to see if they are free or to make an appointment. They can also make an appointment by phoning the office or emailing us at information@nycmcs.org.

When a serious problem or disagreement comes up, families have the right to request a conference with the principal to have their grievance heard. The procedures of the NYCMCS's Grievance Policy are spelled out in Appendix 1.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

There are three scheduled individual parent-teacher conferences during the year for each child. At each conference, families receive the child's report card. Fall conferences are geared toward sharing expectations for the year. Midyear conferences are for reviewing the student's progress and making joint plans, if needed, to support the learning process. Spring conferences may be scheduled for certain children; these are aimed at reviewing progress and planning for summer supports. Before the midyear conference, parents should have visited their child's classroom at least once, so that they understand what their child's learning environment is like. All parents/guardians are expected to attend all parent-teacher conferences.

Family Participation

Families have the opportunity to participate in workshops organized by the NYCMCS on topics such as ways to support their child's education at home, nutrition or behavior management. Families also have opportunities to *volunteer* for many different activities, such as planning a special event, cooking for a community event, volunteering for school trips, visiting the class as a guest speaker or activity leader, or helping in the school office. The *Family Association* (FA) provides more formal opportunities for participating in school governance. One seat on the School Board is reserved for the parent/guardian of a child enrolled in the school, as an ex-officio non-voting trustee. The Family Association (FA) elects this member whose has a term of office of one year that can be extended to two years. The FA offers families the opportunity to discuss their concerns, make proposals or give suggestions for supporting or improving the school.

Confidentiality

In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (Appendix 3), personal information about individual students is considered confidential, as are

children's progress records and medical/health records, and parent or family information. These records are only available to those staff members who work with the students. This information is stored in student files that are located in a locked file cabinet. Files may not be removed from the building except when they are officially requested by another school.

A student's parent or guardian has the legal right to inspect and review their child's file upon written request to the Assistant Principal of Operations. Parents also have the right to representation during any review of their child's record. For the release of information to any organization, on-going school or an individual outside of the school, the parent's signed, written consent for release is required.

Conversations between teachers, administration, and parents/guardians about students, their specific educational concerns, or their past records are confidential. Information is not shared with staff members or school community members who are not directly involved with the student. If a parent believes that this confidentiality has been violated, he/she should inform the Principal. The Principal will review the situation and if she determines that a member of staff has violated the confidentiality policy, that person will be subject to disciplinary action.

Promotion

Families will receive three progress reports per year outlining the student's progress in literacy, math, other academic areas, work-study skills, and social skills.

In order to move successfully from grade to grade, students must demonstrate proficiency in the core subjects. The individualized instruction and system of continuous ongoing assessment and timely intervention in the NYCMCS are designed to ensure that all students have the opportunity to acquire grade level skills.

To be promoted, a child should meet grade-level knowledge and content standards. Assessment information, teacher recommendation, and principal approval are all taken into account. The school reserves the right to make a decision for promotion even when standardized test scores do not match achievement as measured by classroom assessments throughout the year, or when a child demonstrates potential for continued progress with additional supports.

If the school considers that a student may be incapable of dealing with the demands of the next grade, teachers will discuss the possibility of retention with the family in January, and then again in March. If a student is a candidate for retention he/she will be given a Learning Plan for the rest of the year; the school will provide additional academic support and will monitor the student's progress closely. If a student has to be retained, then the classroom teacher, principal, and family will meet to discuss ways to offer different and sufficient supports to ensure success in the upcoming year. If a child has an excessive number of absences, this is also a reason for retention.

Discipline policy

In order to work and learn in school, children must feel the desire to do so. To nurture this desire, the NYCMCS seeks to create a safe, attractive, comfortable, nonthreatening social and emotional climate where children feel accepted, understood, respected, and fairly treated. To this end, the NYCMCS's discipline policy is based on the following premises: prevention is better than cure; children need to be taught appropriate behavior; the most effective way to manage inappropriate behavior is through discussion and reflection rather than the imposition of arbitrary punishments; conflicts are a natural part of all human relationships and children can learn and need to be taught how to resolve them amicably. To these ends, all students receive ongoing training in social skills such as empathy, impulse control, social problem solving, emotion management, and conflict mediation.

The NYCMCS's discipline policy is based on the Montessori values of grace, courtesy, respect and responsibility. The code of conduct includes the following general rules:

All members of the school community will:

- treat all others with respect, kindness and courtesy
- maintain a tranquil working environment
- treat physical objects and the school's installations with care and responsibility
- assume responsibility for their actions

Phase 1 of the discipline policy corresponds to everyday classroom discipline. Here, teachers seek to promote compliance with the school's code of conduct by involving students in its recreation as their "own". To do this, each teacher guides and shapes discussions of the reasons why the students come to school (for example, "to learn," "to make friends") and what they need in order to do these things (for example, "listen to my teachers," "be kind to my friends"). From these discussions and discussions of conflicts that arise in class, the teacher leads the group to express appropriate rules in their own words. The school-wide code of conduct is gently but firmly enforced in a consistent way in all school venues (for example, halls, gymnasium, outdoor areas), and by all members of staff.

Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the discipline policy come into effect in more extreme situations where ordinary, everyday discipline strategies are repeatedly ineffective with a particular student. These phases are described in Appendix 2.

Students with special needs.

The NYCMCS has a policy of fully integrating students with special needs within all learning activities. The particular personal strengths of students with special needs are incorporated into their Individual Work Plans in order to support their development in academic areas, and their plans take into account the provisions of their IEPs. Special service providers work with the children in the classroom or collect them to work in small groups in specially prepared environments.

English language learners

English language learners are taught academic content in English. The multi-age classrooms and Individual Work Plans used in the NYCMCS adapt easily to the needs of English language learners. They can also accommodate a variety of special instructional strategies for developing English language skills together with academic skills. The NYCMCS has several Spanish-speaking members of staff who can give Spanish-speaking students extra support, especially in the early years. English language learners are identified using a citywide test.

IV. STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY

The New York City Montessori Charter School is a NO SMOKING zone.

Emergency information

The NYCMCS needs to know how it can reach parents during the day, in case of any emergency. All parents or guardians must fill out the mandatory blue card, which provides us with the address and telephone numbers of their work, as well as cell phone and/or pager numbers. Families should let us know **immediately** of any change in these numbers. During the registration process, parents/guardians fill out a form indicating the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of several other people who can be contacted in case of any emergency at the school. Parents/guardians should let us know **immediately** of any changes in this list. During registration, parents/guardians also sign a form giving the school written permission to take their child to a hospital in the event of any emergency during school hours.

Immunization and health examinations

All students must be immunized in compliance with New York State Law. Students who do not have the proper immunizations will be denied access to the NYCMCS until the immunizations are administered. The Department of Health requires that the school keep records of the health examinations and required immunizations of each child. Every year, parents must give the school copies of their child's immunization record signed by the doctor.

Medications

The NYCMCS has a nurse on staff that is authorized to dispense prescribed medication if, and only if, the parent or guardian submits signed documentation from the doctor. Children with chronic conditions that require the attention of the nurse must obtain a 504 and have it filled out by their physician. If a doctor indicates that a child should receive periodic medication over a short period of time (e.g., an antibiotic) and the parent wants the school nurse to administer it, the doctor must complete and sign an MAF form (Medical Administration Form), which can be obtained from the nurse. The parent/guardian must also sign this form and hand it in at the school office. Students are not allowed to bring medications to school in their backpacks.

Illness.

If a child develops a fever or other signs of illness in school, the school will get in touch with the parent/guardian and asks them to come and pick up the child. If a child develops

a fever of 100⁰F he/she should not be sent back to school until the fever has gone down. If a child is severely ill or develops a fever above 104⁰F and a parent/guardian cannot be reached immediately, the school calls 911 and notifies the family as soon as they can be reached. A child with a communicable disease (ringworm, pink eye, etc.) must be kept at home until the doctor authorizes their return to school. The school follows the emergency procedures indicated on the form signed by the families.

Incident/Accident Reports

If a child is involved in any incident or accident, school staff completes an incident report form on its Student Information System (SIS), which is submitted electronically to our Assistant Principal of School Culture. Minor incidents are reported to the parent at the end of the day. Serious incidents are reported to parents as soon as possible after they occur. Copies of Incident or Accident reports are kept in the child's file in the nurse's office and are available on request.

Suicide Threats

If child threatens to commit suicide, the school will notify the parent and bring in a counselor to evaluate the case. If the counselor considers that the child is in danger or in crisis, he/she will contact the family and require that the child be remitted for psychological evaluation before returning to school. If deemed necessary, 911 will be called to assist the student. The counselor must provide written notice indicating that the child is no longer in crisis or danger. If the family does not cooperate, the counselor is obliged to report this immediately to the Administration for Children's Services.

Mandated reporting of Child Abuse/Maltreatment

All staff at the NYCMCS is required to attend the New York State Mandated Child Abuse course. They are "Mandated Reporters" in compliance with state law. This means that if they suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, they are obligated to report their suspicion to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). Signs of abuse or neglect that they must be alert to include but are not limited to physical traces such as bruises and cuts, children who repeatedly come to school dirty or unkempt, patterns of lateness to school and absence from school, and repeated late pick-up from school or the school bus stop. If the school calls 911 because a child is ill and a parent or guardian can't be reached, the school and/or the medical personnel are obligated to call ACS.

Fire Alarm Checks and Emergency Plan

The NYCMCS conducts regular fire drills with the children in accordance with the Regulations of New York State, as detailed in the school's safety plan and pursuant to commissioner's regulation 155.17. The emergency plan is posted in each classroom.

APPENDIX 1

Grievance Policy

Complaints should be submitted in writing to the Principal. Upon receipt of the complaint, the Principal will respond in writing or in person within ten business days. If this does not resolve the complaint, or if the complaint pertains to the Principal, then the individual or group may submit the complaint, in writing, to the Secretary of the Board of Trustees. Any individual or group may submit a complaint directly to the Board of Trustees of New York City Montessori Charter School.

If the complaint is submitted to the Board of Trustees five business days prior to a regularly scheduled Board meeting, the complaint will be addressed at that Board meeting. If the complaint is submitted fewer than five business days before a regularly scheduled Board meeting, the complaint will be addressed at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees. Emergency issues will be dealt with on an as-needed basis, with the Board responding at or prior to its next regularly scheduled meeting. The Board of Trustees shall render a determination in writing if appropriate or required.

The names of Trustees, including the Secretary of the Board, are included in this handbook. Board meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month at 4:00 p.m. The agenda is posted at the school before each meeting.

In accordance with Education Law § 2855(4), if after presentation of such a complaint to the Board of Trustees, the individual or group believes that the Board has not adequately addressed the complaint, that individual or group may present the complaint to the School's charter entity, the New York State Education Department, which shall investigate and respond appropriately.

If, after presentation of the complaint to the NYSED, the individual or group determines that the charter entity has not adequately addressed the complaint, they may present the complaint to the Board of Regents, which shall investigate and respond. The NYSED and the Board of Regents shall have the power and the duty to issue appropriate remedial orders to the Board of Trustees of the Charter School under their jurisdiction to effectuate the provisions applicable under Education Law.

Contact information for the NYSED Charter Schools Office is prominently posted at the school.

APPENDIX 2

Discipline Policy

Phase 2 of the discipline policy comes into effect when a student repeatedly and continuously engages in antisocial behavior or flouts the code of conduct in such a way that his behavior endangers other students or impedes his learning or that of others. To address these behaviors, the school will adopt a preventive approach, nurturing positive behavior by research supported techniques such as appropriately delivered adult praise for positive behavior, reinforcement contingencies and time out. Other factors related to learning positive behaviors and reducing the level of aggressive behaviors are academic success and an orderly environment. The NYCMCS addresses both these factors in the Montessori approach of individualized instruction and continuous assessment, the prepared and predictable environment, and the direct teaching of work routines. The NYCMCS will deal immediately with all aggressive or bullying behavior, either through teacher mediated conversations between the students involved or through the application of previously agreed upon consequences. When a student repeatedly engages in disruptive or antisocial behavior, the teacher will keep records to chart changes over time.

When teacher interventions are insufficient to produce reasonable change, the teacher will involve families in designing home supports for behavioral change, in conferences that may include a social worker or guidance counselor. In cases where such parent conferences and guidance interventions are not effective and a student continues to engage in behavior that is substantially disruptive, the teacher will separate the student from the group for an hour or more and send him/her to a location within the school where they will receive continued educational services, including class work, differentiated instruction, ELL services (as needed) and homework.

Phase 3 comes into effect when repeatedly disruptive behavior continues once the student returns to the classroom or when a student displays any of the behaviors listed below. In these cases, the Principal will impose a short-term suspension of up to five days, unless he/she decides to make an exception on the basis of the individual circumstances surrounding the incident or the student's disciplinary record or use other disciplinary actions prior to suspension, such as exclusion from extracurricular activities. There follows a list of the behaviors meriting short term suspension:

- Engaging in conduct which endangers or threatens to endanger the health, safety, welfare, or morals of others
- Attempting to assault any student or staff member
- Using force or threats that reasonably place the victim in fear of imminent bodily injury
- Throwing things at others
- Engaging in acts of verbal or physical sexual harassment
- Making a false bomb threat or pulling a false emergency alarm
- Vandalizing school property causing minor damage
- Leaving the school premises without permission
- Engaging in insubordination or failing to comply with disciplinary sanctions
- Stealing, or attempting to steal, or possessing property known by the student to be stolen
- Repeatedly using obscene or abusive language or gestures
- Bringing tobacco or alcohol to school
- Committing any other act which school officials deem warrants short-term suspension

Phase 4 comes into effect in extreme cases. Unless the Principal decides that an exception should be made on the basis of the circumstances surrounding the incident or the student's disciplinary record, he/she will impose a long-term suspension (removal from the school for a period of more than five days) or expulsion (permanent removal of a student from the school) on any student who displays any of the behaviors of the infractions listed below:

- Assaulting any other student or staff member
- Intentionally causing physical injury to another person, except when student's actions are reasonably necessary to protect him or herself from injury
- Possessing, using, attempt to use, or transfer any firearm, knife, razor blade, explosive, mace, tear gas, or other dangerous object of no reasonable use to the student in school
- Committing, or attempt to commit arson on school property
- Vandalizing school property causing major damage
- Committing any other act which school officials deem warrants a long-term suspension

Due process will be followed for all disciplinary actions consistent with federal case law pursuant to *Goss v. Lopez* (419 U.S. 565). The student will have the opportunity to present his/her version of events to the Principal in person. Before imposing a short-term suspension, the Principal shall immediately notify the parents or guardian in writing that the student may be suspended from school. This notice will be in their dominant language and provide a description of the incident(s) for which suspension is proposed. It will inform the parents or guardian of their right to request an immediate informal conference with the Principal. The parents or guardian of the student and the student shall have the opportunity to present the student's version of the incident and to ask questions of the complaining witnesses indirectly through the teacher or the principal. The Principal's decision to impose a short-term suspension may be challenged by the parent(s) or guardian in accordance with the school's complaint process. Before any expulsion, the Principal will consult the Board and immediately notify the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) in writing, in their dominant language. Long-term suspensions or expulsions will only be imposed after the student has been found guilty at a formal hearing. The hearing shall include the principal, staff members involved with the incident, and the student with his/her parent(s) or guardian(s). The student shall have the right to be represented by counsel, question witnesses, and present evidence.

Federal and State law require the expulsion from School for a period of not less than one year of a student who is determined to have brought a firearm to the school, or to have possessed a firearm at School. The Principal may modify such expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis, if such modification is in writing, in accordance with the Federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (as amended). "Weapon," as used in this law means a "firearm," as defined by 18 USC§8921, and includes firearms and explosives. (New York Education Law §3214(3)(d) effectuates this federal law.) The Principal shall refer a student under the age of sixteen who has brought a weapon or firearm to school to a presentment agency for a juvenile delinquency proceeding consistent with Article 3 of the Family Court Act.

Discipline Provisions for Students with Disabilities

If a special education student violates the school's Disciplinary Code and is being considered for a suspension or removal, the school will ensure due process protections in accordance with Sections 300.530-300.537 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The school will make the provisions described below for students with special needs who engage in extreme behaviors meriting suspension or expulsion. Furthermore, a student who has engaged in behavior that violated the school's Disciplinary Code who has not been determined to be eligible for special education services

but qualifies under 34 CFR 300.534 as a student suspected of having a disability may request to be disciplined in accordance with these provisions.

For a student whose behavior merits suspension or expulsion and who is either identified as a student with special needs under 20 USC §1400 et seq. or qualifies as a student suspected of having a disability under 34 CFR 300.534, the school will:

- Provide a free and appropriate education in accordance with 20 USC §1400 et seq. to students who are suspended or removed for disciplinary reasons for more than ten school days (as defined in 34 CFR 300.536);
- Address behaviors that result in suspensions or removals for more than ten school days (as defined in 34 CFR 300.536) by providing functional behavioral assessments and behavioral intervention plans in accordance with 34 CFR 300.530;
- Conduct a manifestation determination review in accordance with 34 CFR 300.530 to determine the relationship between the behavior and the student's disability when a suspension or removal would result in a disciplinary change of placement;
- Provide the parent of the student a copy of the procedural safeguards notice in accordance with 34 CFR 300.530 and 34 CFR 300.504;
- Expedite the resolution of disagreements between parents and the school regarding certain disciplinary actions;
- Ensure protections for students who qualify under 34 CFR 300.534; and
- Expedite evaluations of students suspected of having a disability during the suspension period.

The school will work closely with the Committee on Special Education to establish clear guidelines for communication and decision-making on disciplinary matters. The school will maintain written records of all suspensions and expulsions of both general education students and special education students. These records will include the name of the student, a description of the behavior, the disciplinary action taken, the names of staff members involved in the incident, and the number of days a student has been suspended or removed for disciplinary reasons. Student records will be stored in locked cabinets and a record access log will be maintained listing all persons who reviewed the information and when such information was reviewed.

Alternative educational services. The NYCMCS will ensure the provision of alternative educational services to any student who has been suspended or expelled, to the extent required by applicable law. Instruction for suspended students shall be sufficient to enable them to make adequate academic progress, and shall provide them with opportunities to complete assignments, learn the curriculum and participate in assessments, and it will take place in a suitable site. For a student who has been expelled, the school will provide alternative instruction to the extent required by applicable law for suspended students, until the student enrolls in another school or until the end of the school year, whichever comes first.

APPENDIX 3

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Under FERPA, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, a parent or eligible student has a right to inspect and review the student's education records and to seek to have them amended in certain circumstances. A parent or eligible student must also provide a signed and dated written consent before an educational agency or institution discloses personally identifiable information from education records.

APPENDIX 4

Code of Ethics

The Board of Trustees recognizes that sound, ethical standards of conduct serve to increase the effectiveness of school board trustees and their staff as educational leaders in the community. Actions based on an ethical code of conduct promote public confidence and the attainment of school goals. The Board also recognizes its obligation under the General Municipal Law to adopt a code of ethics consistent with the provisions of the General Municipal Law, setting forth the standards of conduct required of all school trustees, officers, and employees.

Therefore, every officer and employee of the New York City Montessori Charter School, whether paid or unpaid, including Board Trustees, shall adhere to the following code of ethics:

1. *Gifts:* The Board welcomes and encourages the writing of letters or notes expressing gratitude or appreciation to staff members. Gifts from children that are principally sentimental in nature and of insignificant financial value may be accepted in the spirit in which they are given.
2. *Confidential information:* An officer or employees shall not disclose confidential information acquired by him or her in the course of his or her official duties or use such information to further his or her own personal interest. In addition,

he/she shall not disclose information regarding any matters discussed in an executive session of the Board, whether such information is deemed confidential or not.

3. *Representation before the Board:* An officer or employer shall not receive or enter into any agreement, express or implied, for compensation for services to be rendered in relation to any matter before the school board.
4. *Disclosure of interest in matters before the Board:* A member of the Board of Trustees and any officer or employee of the school, whether paid or unpaid, who participates in the discussion or gives official opinion to the Board on any matter before the Board shall publicly disclose on the official record the nature and extent of any direct or indirect financial or other private interest he or she has in such matter. The term "interest" means a pecuniary or material benefit accruing to an officer or employee.
5. *Investments in conflict with official duties:* An officer or employee shall not invest or hold any investment directly in any financial, business, commercial or other private transaction that creates a conflict with his or her official duties.
6. *Private employment:* An officer or employee shall not engage in, solicit, negotiate for or promise to accept private employment or deliver a service when that employment or service creates a conflict with or impairs the proper discharge of his or her official duties.
7. *Future employment:* An officer or employee shall not, after the termination of service or employment with the Board, appear before the Board or any panel or committee of the Board, in relation to any case, proceeding, or application in which he or she personally participated during the period of his or her service or employment or that was under his or her active consideration. This shall not bar or prevent the timely filing by a present or former officer or employee of any claim, account, demand or suit against the school on his or her own behalf or on behalf of any member of his or her family arising out of any personal injury or property damage or for any lawful benefit authorized or permitted by law.

Distribution of Code of Ethics

The Principal shall cause a copy of this Code of Ethics to be distributed at the beginning of each school year to every officer and employee of the school. Each officer and employee elected or appointed thereafter shall be furnished a copy before entering upon the duties of his or her office or employment.

Penalties

In addition to any penalty contained in any other provision of law, any person who shall knowingly and intentionally violate any of the provisions of the Board's code of ethics may be fined, suspended, or removed from office or employment, as the case may be, in the manner provided by law.

APPENDIX 5 POLICY & PROCEDURES FOR COMPLIANCE WITH OPEN MEETINGS LAW

Meetings of the NYCMCS's board of trustees, including committee meetings, shall be open to the general public.

(a) Public Notice

1. A calendar of all board meeting dates will be posted at the NYCMCS at all times.
2. The school will provide notice of the time and place of any board meeting that is *scheduled at least one week in advance* to the news media and shall conspicuously post such notice in one or more public locations at least 72 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting.
3. The school will provide notice of the time and place of any board meeting that is *scheduled less than one week in advance* to the news media (to the extent practicable) and shall conspicuously post such notice in one or more public locations at a reasonable time in advance of the scheduled meeting. To the extent possible, the school will publicly post notices of board of trustees meetings immediately after each meeting date is determined.
4. Trustees may participate in board meetings in person or by videoconferencing. The board of trustees shall provide an opportunity for the public to attend at any site where a member participates. If videoconferencing is to be used, then the public notice must say so, identify the locations from which members will participate, and state that the public has a right to attend at any of these locations.

(b) Minutes of Meetings

1. The secretary of the board of trustees will take minutes at all open meetings. All minutes will contain the date of the meeting, a summary of all motions, proposals, resolutions and any other matter formally voted upon as well as a record of how each board member voted.
2. Minutes from open meetings will be made available to the public within two weeks of the meeting date. Minutes will be available at the school.

(c) Executive Sessions

The school shall conduct all executive sessions as part of an open meeting; they are not considered separate meetings per se. An executive session may be called via motion and majority vote by the board of trustees to enter an executive session. The motion must specifically identify the general area or areas of the subjects to be considered. All board members may participate in executive sessions, and the board may authorize others to attend as well. An executive session shall only be conducted by the board of trustees for one or more of the following matters:

1. Matters which will imperil the public safety if disclosed;
2. Any matter which may disclose the identity of a law enforcement agent or informer;
3. Information relating to current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense which would imperil effective law enforcement if disclosed;
4. Discussions regarding proposed, pending or current litigation;
5. When such law applies to charter school employees, collective negotiations that are within the scope of Article 14 of the Civil Service Law;
6. The medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation;
7. The preparation, grading or administration of examinations; and
8. The proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition of securities, or sale or exchange of securities held by such public body, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value.

In no case shall public funds be appropriated during an executive session.

Exemptions

The following matters are exempted from the Open Meetings Law and therefore need not be discussed at open meetings:

1. Judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings (for example, suspension hearings and employee grievance hearings); and
2. Any matter made confidential by state or federal law (for example discussions regarding a particular student's records or children with handicapping conditions in violation of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act).

Enforcement

Any individual wishing to assert a violation of the New York State Open Meetings Law has standing to bring a proceeding in accordance with Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules and/or action for declaratory or injunctive relief.

APPENDIX 6
Freedom of Information Law
POLICY & PROCEDURES FOR COMPLIANCE WITH
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW (FOIL)

It is the policy of New York City Montessori Charter School (the "School") to allow the public access to information and records where required by the Freedom of Information Law ("FOIL"), Article 6 of the Public Officers Law ("POL").

PROCEDURES

- I. Requests for public information must be in writing and submitted to the School's Records Access Officer who shall be designated by the Principal (Director of Operations). Upon the receipt of a request, the School will be respond in the following manner: Within five business days of receipt of a request, the School will, depending on the requested information, either make the information available at the School during normal business hours to the person requesting it, deny the request in writing, or provide a written acknowledgment of receipt of the request that supplies an approximate date for when the request will be granted or denied.
- II. If the School determines to grant access to the requested information, and if circumstances prevent disclosure to the person making the request within twenty (20) days of the acknowledgement of receipt of the request, the School shall state in writing both the reason for the delay and a date certain, within a reasonable period of time, depending on the circumstances, when the request will be granted in whole or in part. Failure to conform to the provisions detailed above shall constitute a denial of the request for information.

- III. If the person requesting information is denied access to a record, he or she may, within 30 days, appeal such denial to the secretary of the board of trustees. Upon timely receipt of such an appeal, the school will, within 10 business days of the receipt of the appeal, fully explain, in writing, the reasons for further denial or provide access to the record(s) sought. The Charter School also will forward a copy of the appeal, as well as its ultimate determination, to the New York State Committee on Open Government.
- IV. In the event an appeal for records is denied, the person requesting the information may bring a proceeding for review of such denial pursuant to Article 78 of the Civil Practice Law and Rules.

The School may deny access to requested records for one or more of the following grounds:

- Such records are specifically exempted from disclosure by state or federal statute;
- Such access would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
- Such records, if disclosed, would impair present or imminent contract awards or collective bargaining negotiations;
- Such records are trade secrets or are submitted to the School by a commercial enterprise or derived from information obtained from a commercial enterprise which if disclosed would cause substantial injury to the competitive position of such enterprise;
- Such records are compiled for law enforcement purposes and, if disclosed, would meet the conditions set forth in Public Officers Law § 87 (2)(3);
- Such records, if disclosed, would endanger the life or safety of any person;
- Such records are computer access codes;
- Such records are inter-agency or intra-agency materials that are not statistical or factual tabulations of data, instructions to staff that affect the public, or a final policy or external audits.
- Such records constitute examination questions or answers

Acknowledgement

Every parent or guardian has the responsibility of reading the NYCMCS Family Handbook in order to understand the school's policies and procedures. *If parents have more than one child attending the school, they should complete one of these acknowledgement forms for each child and return it to the school.*

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PLEASE PRINT

Today's Date / /

Child's name : _____

Grade the child is entering _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Telephone Number of Parent/Guardian _____

E-mail Address of Parent/Guardian _____

I, the undersigned, hereby acknowledge that I have received the *New York City Montessori Charter School Handbook for Parents* and understand that it is my responsibility to read it.

Signature _____

