

Revised 3/21/25

Note: This policy is publicly accessible via our internet website and is included in the student handbook, and, where applicable, posted where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted in the school, and is distributed annually to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired.

## **Community Expectations for Behavior**

### **Montessori Expectations**

Children and adults are expected to respect each other's concentration by using an indoor voice and walking feet and by minimizing all other disruptions (i.e. "If you see your classmate is busy working, wait to ask them about their weekend until lunch time").

The Montessori concept of discipline is that of inner-discipline. This inner-discipline comes from the child's interest in working with Montessori materials and established ground rules that are consistently and fairly enforced. These are guidelines that guarantee the freedom of and respect the rights of all the group members. By knowing limits, the child can modify his/her behavior to discipline himself/herself. Encouragement, positive reinforcement, and natural and logical consequences are used to help the child learn self-discipline.

Fighting and/or bullying by students or adults will not be tolerated. Above all, children and adults should strive to show respect towards all living creatures and plants, the materials and environment, and each other.

### **Interventions and Response to Inappropriate Behavior**

We use consistency with rules, recognizing appropriate behavior, re-stating expectations or ground rules, redirection, and brief cool down periods as part of our approach to discipline. Punishments are not given. However, there are natural consequences to certain behaviors. For most unwanted behaviors, children will be given a warning before a natural consequence is enforced. If consistent unwanted behaviors continue, a Directress may request a meeting with the family. We do not use corporal punishment.

Individual conferences and on-going open communication between parents and staff will address discipline problems that might occur, and staff members will work with parents on a plan for resolution. Any child who, after attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrates inability to benefit from the type of program that the Montessori School offers or whose presence is detrimental to the group, will be dismissed from the school. **These problems do not include those adjustment and developmental problems that fit within reasonable bounds.**

### **Anti-Bullying/Harassment/Sexual Misconduct/Discrimination Policy**

Harassment and bullying of students and school personnel, as well as sexual misconduct and discrimination in general, are against federal, state, and local policy, and are not tolerated by the MSCU board or MSCU Society in the school or school district.

The anti-bullying/harassment/sexual misconduct/discrimination policy is in effect while students, parents, or school personnel are on property; within the jurisdiction of the board; while on school-owned or school-operated vehicles; while attending or engaged in school-sponsored activities; and while away from school grounds if the misconduct directly affects the good order, efficient management and welfare of the school.

## **Definitions**

**“Community member”** includes persons employed by the School, on contract with, or volunteers in the school as well as board and family members.

**“Bullying”** includes "cyber-bullying" and means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- (1) Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
- (2) Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
- (3) Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
- (4) Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

**“Cyber-bullying”** means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication (including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature) transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectronic system, or photo-optical system (including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications). “Cyber-bullying” includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. “Cyber-bullying” also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section.”

**“Harassment”** means written, verbal, electronic or physical conduct that adversely affects the ability of

- (a) one or more students to participate in or benefit from the school’s educational programs, services, activities, or privileges provided by the school because the conduct is so severe, persistent or pervasive.
- (b) one or more school personnel/parents to participate in or benefit from the school’s educational programs, services, activities, or privileges provided by the school because the conduct is so severe, persistent or pervasive.

Harassment and bullying may include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors and circumstances:

- Verbal, non-verbal, physical, electronic, or written harassment, bullying, hazing, or other victimization that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim;
- Repeated remarks of a demeaning nature that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim;
- Implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, achievements, property, etc. that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim;
- Demeaning jokes, stories, or activities directed at the student that have the purpose or effect of causing injury, discomfort, fear, or suffering to the victim; and/or
- Unreasonable interference with a student's or school personnel's performance or creation of an intimidating, offensive, or hostile learning environment.
- Sexual harassment: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, electronic or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:
  - Submission to the conduct is made either implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of the student's education or benefits or a school’s personnel employment;
  - Submission to or rejection of the conduct by a school personnel is used as the basis for decisions affecting that person; or
  - The conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with the student's academic performance or school’s personnel by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive education environment.

In situations between students and school personnel who have direct contact with students, bullying and harassment may also include the following behaviors:

- Requiring that a student submit to bullying or harassment by another student, either explicitly or implicitly, as a term or condition of the targeted student's education or participation in school programs or activities; and/or
- Requiring submission to or rejection of such conduct as a basis for decisions affecting the student.

**“Sexual Misconduct”** includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (a) **Sexual Contact** includes any non-consensual sexual contact that is:
  - intentional sexual touching

- Intentional contact with the breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals, or touching another with any of these body parts, or making another touch you or themselves with or on any of these body part
- Any other intentional bodily contact in a sexual manner
  - however slight
  - with any object
  - by an individual or group upon an individual or group
  - that is without consent and/or by force

(b) **Sexual Assault** is non-consensual sexual intercourse.

- Any sexual intercourse
- Vaginal, anal, or oral penetration
- By a penis, object, tongue or finger, and copulation (mouth to genital contact)
- No matter how slight the penetration or contact 2
  - However slight
  - With an object
  - by an individual or group upon an individual or group
  - that is without consent and/or by force

(c) **Sexual Exploitation** occurs when one person takes non-consensual or abusive sexual advantage of another for his/her own advantage or benefit or to benefit or advantage anyone other than the one being exploited, and that behavior does not otherwise constitute one of the other sexual misconduct offenses. Examples of sexual exploitation include, but are not limited to: Prostituting another student; Nonconsensual video or audio-taping or photographing of nudity or sexual activity; Unauthorized posting or distribution of materials involving the sexual activity or nudity of another person(s), electronic or otherwise; Going beyond the boundaries of consent (such as voyeurism or secretly watching others); Intentionally or recklessly exposing one's genitals in nonconsensual circumstances; Tampering with birth control or condoms; Knowingly transmitting a sexually transmitted infection or HIV to another student.

**“Discrimination”** means “the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics including, but not limited to, race, gender, age, religion, disability, national origin, or sexual orientation.

**“Electronic”** means any communication involving the transmission of information by wire, radio, optical cable, electromagnetic or other similar means. "Electronic" includes but is not limited to communication via electronic mail, internet-based communications, page service, cell phones, electronic text messaging or similar technologies.

The board prohibits harassment, bullying, hazing, sexual misconduct, or any other victimization, of students, and school personnel, for example based on any of the following actual or perceived traits or characteristics, including but not limited to, age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic

status, or familial status. This also includes association with a person or group with one or more of the abovementioned characteristics, whether actual or perceived.

### **Reporting Bullying/Harassment/Sexual Misconduct/Discrimination**

*Please report any suspected cases of bullying, cyber-bullying, or harassment to Head of School, Kerry Rossow, at [hos@montessorischoolofcu.org](mailto:hos@montessorischoolofcu.org) or by calling the school at 217-356-1818.*

Any person who promptly, reasonably, and in good faith reports an incident of bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct, and/or discrimination under this policy to a school official, shall be immune from civil or criminal liability relating to such report and to the person's participation in any administrative, judicial, or other proceeding relating to the report. Individuals who knowingly file a false complaint may be subject to appropriate disciplinary or legal action.

Retaliation against any person, because the person has filed a bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct, or discrimination complaint or assisted or participated in a related investigation or proceeding, is also prohibited. Individuals who knowingly file false complaints and any person who gives false statements in an investigation shall be subject to discipline or legal action by appropriate measures, as shall any person who is found to have retaliated against another in violation of this policy.

- Any school employee found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, termination of employment.
- Any parent, school volunteer, or board member found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, exclusion from school grounds and termination from the Board of Directors.

### **Violations of the Bullying/Harassment/Sexual Misconduct/Discrimination Policy**

The MSCU school will promptly and reasonably investigate allegations of bullying or harassment implementing the following procedure:

#### **Student to Student Misconduct**

- If there is an allegation of any of the above kinds of misconduct between peers, it should be promptly reported to the lead teacher at which time, the teacher will notify the Head of School. An incident report shall be placed in said student's file.
- Within 7 days, the victim's parents, with the victim, shall meet with the teacher and, if appropriate, the Head of School regarding the incident(s).
- Within the next 7 days, the lead teacher shall request a meeting with the perpetrating child and their parents to discuss the incidents and potential consequences including suspension or expulsion, if appropriate.
- The lead teacher shall work on an action plan and communicate it with both parents and children, to facilitate a peaceful relationship between the children.
- If additional incidents of related misconduct occur, the administrator will use disciplinary actions up to and including termination of the child's contract at the school.

- If the incidents involve a spouse or child of the Head of School, the Assistant Head of School will manage this decision.
- Disciplinary actions for bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct may include, but are not limited to: warnings; counseling; loss of opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, school social events or graduation exercises; loss of school bus transportation; community service; in-school suspension; short term suspension; or transfer to another school among others. The specific consequences should be consistent, reasonable, fair, age-appropriate and match the severity of the incident.
- If necessary, counseling will be provided for the target and/or the student perpetrating the misconduct.

#### Adult to Student Misconduct

- If a student believes s/he has been on the receiving end of any of the above types of misconduct by an adult, either the student or their family should report it to the Administrator or any other trusted adult school personnel, absent a conflict.
- A proper investigation will be made within 7 days of the incident report.
- If, after an investigation, a school personnel is found to be in violation of this policy, the school personnel shall be disciplined by appropriate measures up to, and including, termination. If after an investigation a board member is found to be in violation of this policy, the board member shall be disciplined by appropriate measures up to, and including, dismissal from the board.
- If the incidents involve a spouse or child of the Head of School, the Assistant Head of School will manage this decision.
- Documentation shall be made in all personnel files.

#### Adult to Adult or Student to Adult Misconduct

- If a Community Member believes they have been on the receiving end of any of the above types of misconduct, they will report it to the Head of School, absent a conflict. If a conflict is present, then they may report the incidents to the Assistant Head of School.
- A proper investigation will be made within 7 business days of the incident report.
- If after an investigation a school personnel is found to be in violation of this policy, the school personnel shall be disciplined by appropriate measures up to, and including, termination. If after an investigation a board member is found to be in violation of this policy, the board member shall be disciplined by appropriate measures up to, and including, dismissal from the board.
- If the incidents involve a spouse or child of the Head of School, the Assistant Head of School will manage this decision.
- Documentation shall be made in all personnel files.

### **Bullying Incident Notification and Support Policy**

In accordance with federal and state laws governing student privacy rights, the school is committed to promptly notifying the parents or guardians of all students involved in any alleged

bullying incident. Notification to affected student families will be made within 24 hours after the school administration becomes aware of the students' involvement. Families will first be notified of any behavior outside of the norm with an incident report. This can be a written form or an email. This policy ensures timely communication and supports the safety and well-being of all students.

The school will make diligent efforts to contact the parents or guardians, using all available and reasonable means of communication, including phone calls, emails, and any other contact information on file. Additionally, the school will discuss, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, and other interventions, including restorative measures, to support the students involved.

All individual instances of bullying, as well as all threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying, will be reported to the parents or legal guardians of those involved.

### **Policy Evaluation Process**

This policy will be evaluated on an annual basis in order to assess the outcomes and effectiveness. Evaluation of this policy will consider factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation.

MSCU may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in the policy evaluation. The information developed as a result of the policy evaluation will be made available on the Internet website of the school. If an Internet website is not available, the information will be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.