

GETTYSBURG MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL

Inspiring a Love of Learning

2026-2027 Student Parent Handbook

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WELCOME/OVERVIEW

Gettysburg Montessori Charter School ("GMCS") offers an innovative, standards-based education that enhances the growth of student creativity and imagination through the arts while providing students with the skills and knowledge needed for their life in the 21st Century. Our aim is to provide a holistic learning environment and demonstrate that all children are natural and inspired learners who can achieve. To do this, we will use a "whole child" curriculum that is based on the Montessori educational philosophy.

Mission

Gettysburg Montessori Charter School is a K-6 public charter that embodies the theories of Dr. Maria Montessori while promoting a multifaceted, child-centered learning environment for Gettysburg and the surrounding area. Our Montessori trained, PA certified teachers provide children with a dynamic and engaging education using a holistic curriculum that blends the Montessori educational philosophy and the Pennsylvania State Academic Standards. Our mission is to develop the full diversity of human intelligence while nurturing the whole child and instilling a lifelong love of learning.

Vision

Our vision is to guide, inspire, and empower children. Our goal is to give them the tools and confidence to achieve their dreams, lead meaningful lives, and make positive contributions as world citizens in the 21st century.

Values

Hands-on learning
environment Independent
exploration "Whole child"
learning Freedom within limits
Grace and courtesy
Family and community partnerships
Self-regulation
Mindfulness
Intrinsic motivation
Sensitivity, respect, and compassion

Curriculum and Philosophy

"Our goal is to create students who love to learn." Maria Montessori believed strongly in the contributions that the child could make to humanity. She believed that to create peace, you must start with the child.

Maria Montessori developed her philosophy while watching children in their natural development. She found that children, when provided with a properly prepared environment, naturally guided themselves to success. In this process, students develop a sense of pride in their work and a love of learning.

The Montessori environment is specially designed to create a diversified environment that fosters a sense of peace in the child. The materials are key to instilling a sense of awe. Thereby, the child is compelled to complete work out of natural curiosity. As the child grows and moves into different areas of interest, classroom materials scaffold the learner from the concrete to the abstract. Research has shown that this

foundation of concrete learning done in a "hands-on way" allows the learner to have a better understanding of abstract ideas. In addition to materials, the environment is designed to create a community in the classroom where the children learn from each other.

In class children are given freedom to choose some of their own "work," depending on the level of freedom they have reached. They may choose to work with a group of children, individually, or with a partner. Children also are encouraged to help one another in multi-age classes, as older children tend to lead the younger. A Montessori-type environment encourages the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical growth of the child by following the child's natural developmental progression.

Since GMCS is a public charter school, children in grades 3-6 must also take part in Pennsylvania's testing program (PSSA). To assure student success on these exams, we blend Montessori curriculum with core standards, inspiring the love of learning and preparing students to become active and responsible community members. We also focus on the environment, incorporating environmental science in the classroom that supplements the state-prescribed science curriculum.

I. GOVERNANCE/ORGANIZATION

Board of Trustees

Meetings are open to the public, except for executive sessions. Executive sessions, if needed, begin at 6:00 and the public meetings begin at 6:30 P.M. Copies of meeting agendas, meeting times, schedule changes, and approved meeting minutes are posted on the webpage for public review. Please reference the school's website for scheduled dates.

Equal Opportunity

GMCS will provide every child with equal educational opportunities regardless of skin color, creed, sex, national origin, religion, age, economic status, or (dis)ability. No child will be excluded on such basis from taking part in, or having access to, programming, counseling services, extracurricular activities, or other school resources.

Excusal from Instruction on Religious Grounds

Parents requesting exemptions from specific instruction for their children which conflict with their religious beliefs shall complete a "Request for Exemption from Specific Instruction" form and submit this form to the CEO/Principal. Parents are recommended to consult the GMCS policy on Excusal from Instruction on Religious Grounds, which is available on the website.

Sexual Abuse and Molestation

GMCS prohibits and does not tolerate sexual abuse or molestation of children. GMCS actively works to prevent any incidents by obtaining background checks and clearances on all school staff members and volunteers. Staff members are apprised of their duty to report suspected abuse.

Racial Harassment

GMCS prohibits discrimination based on skin color and/or national origin (i.e., racial harassment). Any GMCS student or parent who believes that she/he has been subjected to racial harassment should report the alleged misconduct at once to the Chief Executive Officer ("CEO"). Appropriate corrective action may be taken, up to and including discharge of an employee or suspension of a student. The corrective process will align with GMCS's bylaws and policies about conflict resolution in full accordance with

due process rights. Parents are recommended to consult GMCS' Non-Harassment Policy, which is available on the website.

In the absence of a victim's complaint, GMCS will begin an investigation promptly, upon learning of or having reason to suspect the occurrence of any racial harassment.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment in its various forms is unacceptable. Sexual harassment includes an individual's perception of unwelcome behavior, such as inappropriate touching, verbal comments, sexual name calling, or spreading sexual rumors and/or pictures. This list represents a sample of unacceptable behaviors and is not exhaustive. Key to this definition of sexual harassment is the perception of unwelcome behavior by the recipient as opposed to the intention of the perpetrator.

Students believing that they have been subjected to sexual harassment, whether by an individual on school property or at school activities, should report the alleged misconduct at once to the CEO. Appropriate corrective action may be taken, up to and including discharge of an employee or suspension of a student. The corrective process will align with GMCS's bylaws and policies about conflict resolution in full accordance with due process rights. Parents are recommended to consult GMCS' Non-Harassment Policy, which is available on the website.

In the absence of a victim's complaint, GMCS will begin an investigation promptly upon learning of or having reason to suspect the occurrence of any sexual harassment.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

Arrival

Children must arrive between 8:00 A.M. and 8:30 A.M. if he/she will be getting breakfast. Breakfast is served from 8:00 to 8:30. All students must be in their classroom no later than 8:30 A.M. Students arriving after 8:30 A.M. are considered tardy. Please see more information and procedures for late arrivals below.

Parent Drop Off

Students are dropped off via the bus loop from 8:00am to 8:30am. Students arriving past 8:30am need to come through the front office. When you arrive in the bus loop, STAY in your car, staff will help assist your student into the school. All students MUST exit on the passenger side. No passing in the loop.

Any child who is being driven to school by his/her parents/guardians should arrive at school no earlier than 8:00 A.M. and no later than 8:30 A.M. No one may walk their children to their classrooms. Please remember that our teachers are focused on teaching, guiding, and supervising during school hours.

Bus Transportation

Children riding school district-provided busses arrive at different times based on the schedule established by each student's school district of residence. Typically, students from all school districts arrive at GMCS between 8:00 A.M. and 8:30 A.M. You should contact your home district transportation department for more information.

If a parent is not at the bus stop and parents do not respond to attempts to contact them (no more than three separate attempts will be made within 20 minutes), the transportation company reserves the right to contact local police to assume custody of the student until the parent is located.

Dismissal

Children riding a bus will be dismissed for their bus by their classroom teacher. Students will remain with the employees assigned to bus duty until they board the bus.

A student may be dismissed only to a parent/guardian or to the person so named on the emergency information card that is on file in the school. Car rider dismissal will begin at 2:50 P.M. from our main entrance. Car pick-up signs must be used to ensure safety. At 2:50 P.M, a staff member will meet you at the front doorsto begin the process.

You must walk your child(ren) from the school to your car. *Please note this is not the time to meet with your child's teacher. Our focus is on safety and supervision at that time. If you need to meet with a teacher or staff member, please call and schedule an appointment. We will be happy to meet with you at a scheduled time. This will ensure we always have sufficient supervision of our children.*

GMCS will not be responsible for holding staff past normal hours and pick up times to accommodate parent schedules. If a student is left at school past 4:00, and parents do not respond to attempts to contact them (no more than three separate attempts will be made within 20 minutes), GMCS reserves the right to contact local police to assume custody of the student until the parent is located.

Closings, Delays and Early Dismissal

GMCS will follow the delays, closings, and early dismissals established by the GASD. If GASD closes or delays opening school because of weather, GMCS shall be similarly delayed or closed. GMCS will not be responsible for additional notification other than that provided by GASD. However, we will implement the use of FACTS to communicate emergency information. Parents/guardians should have plans in place as early as possible for delays, early closings, and school closings due to inclement weather or other emergencies. There may be times in emergency that GMCS may need to close or dismiss early and GASD does not. Please follow instructions given via email or FACTS. If you need to call us and cannot reach us by phone, please email info@gettysburgmontessori.org.

Early Dismissal – Unscheduled

If it is necessary for a student to be dismissed from school before the end of the school day, parents/guardians must notify the school office in advance. Parents/guardians should inform the school of the specific time that the student will be picked-up and the person who will come for the student. Only adults who are listed on the school's records as being authorized will be allowed to take students from the school in these cases. The person who is picking up the student should report directly to the school office upon entering the building. A doctor's note is required for the early dismissal to be excused. The doctor's note must be received within three calendar days of the early dismissal. Unexcused early dismissals accumulate, similar to tardies.

Emergency Contact Form

It is critical for the school to be able to contact parents any time students are at the school. In case of an emergency, illness, or injury, GMCS must have the names and up-to-date daytime phone numbers of at least two people who are available and authorized to assume responsibility for the student if neither parent can be reached. Parents/guardians must complete emergency contact information in FACTS. GMCS must have the parent's current address and home, cell, and business telephone numbers. Emergency contact persons and their telephone numbers are needed in case a parent cannot be reached. This information is required at the beginning of each school year and whenever a change occurs with parent's address, telephone, or emergency contact information.

Homeless Students under the McKinney Vento Act

A. Definitions

1. *Homeless children and youths* are individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The categories of children who are "homeless" and entitled to the protections of the federal include (a) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals; (b) children and youths who have 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; (c) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; (d) *migratory children* who qualify as homeless under federal law because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (a) through (c) above. The term "migratory children" means children who are (or whose parent(s) or spouse(s) are migratory agricultural workers, including migratory dairy workers or migratory fishermen, and who have moved from one school district to another in the preceding 36 months, in order to obtain (or accompany such parents or spouses in order to obtain) temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work; and (e)*unaccompanied homeless youth* (i.e., a youth experiencing homelessness while not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian). This category of students could include youths who have run away from home, been thrown out of their home, or been abandoned by parents or guardians.

2. *School of origin* means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

3. *Supervised or licensed shelters* are those facilities which provide temporary shelter for a specified, limited period.

4. *Enroll and "enrollment* are defined as attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

B. Procedures

1. If space exists per the Admissions/Lottery Policy, GMCS will immediately enroll the homeless child or youth in school, even if the child or youth lacks records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical or immunization records, or proof of residency.

2. If space exists per the Admissions/Lottery Policy, GMCS will immediately enroll an unaccompanied homeless student without documents and without the help of an adult.

3. GMCS shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, as provided to other children and youths and shall, according to the child's best interest (a) continue the child's or youth's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or (b)for the remainder of the academic year, if the child or youth

becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or (c) enroll the child or youth in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

4. GMCS designates Leigh Gugliette (leigh@gettysburgmontessoricharter.org) as GMCS's Liaison for Homeless Children and Youths ("Homeless Liaison"). The Homeless Liaison or her designee handles the following. Identifying homeless children and youths with help by GMCS personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.

    a. Informing parents or guardians of educational rights and related opportunities available to their homeless children and provide them with meaningful opportunities to take part in the education of their children.

    b. Disseminating public notice of the educational rights of homeless students where children and youths receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act (such as schools, family shelters and food pantries).

    c. Mediating enrollment disputes following the Enrollment Dispute section.

    d. Informing the parent or guardian of a homeless child, youth, and any unaccompanied youth, of all transportation options, including to the school of origin, and help in accessing these transportation services.

    e. Ensuring that unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that might arise over school enrollment or placement.

    f. Aiding homeless children and youths who do not have documentation of immunizations or medical records to obtain necessary immunizations or necessary medical documentation.

    g. Understanding the guidance issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) for the education of homeless students and be ready to explain this guidance related to homeless education to GMCS staff.

    h. Getting to know the resources in the community to help families with referrals for things such as shelter, counseling, food, and transportation.

    i. Distributing information about homeless students and arrange staff development workshops and presentations for school personnel, including office staff.

    j. Supplying standard forms and information about enrollment procedures and key school programs to each shelter in the districts that GMCS serves.

    k. Becoming familiar with the various program materials that are available from PDE.

    l. Collaborating with GMCS's special education program to ensure that homeless children who are in need of special education and related services are located, identified, and evaluated. This is a requirement under the

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which mandates that highly mobile children with disabilities, including homeless children, be identified, and served. The Homeless Liaison should also ensure that homeless youth, who have or may have disabilities, have a parent or a surrogate parent to make special education or early intervention decisions. In the case of unaccompanied homeless youth, if a student is disabled or may be disabled and the youth does not have a person authorized to make special education decisions, the following people can be temporary surrogate parents: staff in emergency shelters; transitional shelters; independent living programs; street outreach programs; and state or child welfare agency staff involved in the education or care of the child. This rule applies only to unaccompanied homeless youth.

m. Identifying preschool-aged homeless children by working closely with shelters and social service agencies in the area. In addition, the Homeless Liaison should inquire, at the time they are enrolling homeless children and youths in GMCS, whether the family has preschool-aged children.

n. Identifying unaccompanied homeless youth while respecting their privacy and dignity by providing specific outreach to areas where eligible students who are out of school may congregate.

o. Ensuring that public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated in locations frequented by parents and guardians of such children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth.

p. Ensuring that unaccompanied youths are enrolled in school and have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as the state establishes for other children and youths, are informed of their status as independent students under Section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, and their right to receive verification of this status from the local liaison.

5. In determining the best interest of the homeless child or youth, GMCS shall (a) to the extent feasible, keep a homeless child or youth in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian; (b) provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, to the homeless child's or youth's parent or guardian, if GMCS sends such child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian; and (c) in the case of an unaccompanied homeless youth, ensure that the Homeless Liaison assists in placement or enrollment decisions under this subparagraph, considers the views of such unaccompanied homeless youth and provides notice to such youth of the right to appeal.

6. Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to those offered to other GMCS students including, but not limited to, transportation services; school nutrition programs; kindergarten programs; programs for students with limited English proficiency; and educational services for which students meet eligibility criteria, such as programs for disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities.

C. Homeless Students Residing in Shelters, Facilities, or Institutions

1. Children in temporary shelters and children who "lack a fixed, regular, adequate

nighttime residence" – homeless children – are entitled to free school privileges from either the school district in which their person or the shelter is located or the school district of origin.

2. Where there is an agency, supervised or licensed shelter, group home, maternity home, residence, facility, orphanage or other institution for care or training of children or adolescents located in the districts GMCS serves, GMCS shall admit school-aged children who are living at or assigned to the facility or institution.

D. Homeless Students Not Residing in a Shelter, Facility, or Institution

In order to maintain continuity and school stability for homeless children in compliance with law, homeless children are entitled to attend school in any school district where a parent, guardian, an adult caring for them or where an unaccompanied child (a) spends the greatest percentage of their time; or (b) has a substantial connection such as where they are (i) regularly receiving day shelter or other services involving any of the 16 McKinney-Vento Activities (42 U.S.C.A. 11433(d)) for individuals who are homeless; (ii) conducting daily living activities; or (iii) staying overnight on a recurring basis.

E. School/Health Records

1. GMCS should immediately enroll and begin to provide instruction to homeless children. GMCS may contact the school district of origin for oral confirmation that the child has been immunized. Oral confirmation between professionals is a sufficient basis to verify immunization with written confirmation to follow within 30 days. The instructional program should begin as soon as possible after the enrollment process is started and should not be delayed until the procedure is completed.

2. If the homeless child or youth needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, GMCS shall immediately refer the parent or guardian of the child or youth to the liaison who shall help in obtaining necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.

F. Transportation

1. If the homeless student continues to live in the area served by GMCS, GMCS must supply or arrange transportation on equal terms as it provides to other students. If the homeless student moves to an area served by another school district, though continuing his or her education at GMCS as the school district of origin, GMCS and the school district in which the student is living must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to GMCS. If GMCS and school district of residence cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs must be shared equally. Distance, time of year, options available, the effects of a transfer, etc. should all be addressed.

2. The provision of transportation to the school of origin is based on a students' status as homeless. The provision to remain in the school of origin during the rest of the academic year is offered to support school stability. GMCS shall continue to provide transportation to and from the school of origin to formerly homeless students who have become permanently housed for the rest of the academic year during which the child or youth becomes permanently housed.

G. Dispute Resolution Process

Level 1 – A dispute may be raised with GMCS

a. If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the homeless child or youth involved must immediately be admitted to the school in which they are seeking enrollment, pending resolution of the dispute.

b. The parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth who initiates the dispute should contact GMCS liaison for individuals experiencing homelessness as soon as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. If the person initiating the dispute does not contact GMCS liaison directly, GMCS shall be responsible for contacting GMCS liaison about the dispute as soon as possible and referring the family or youth involved to the liaison.

c. GMCS liaison shall ensure that the homeless child or youth is immediately enrolled, explain the dispute resolution process to families and help them to use it.

d. GMCS shall issue a written disposition of the dispute within 20 business days after GMCS liaison is notified of the dispute. The disposition shall be provided to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth and shall explain the basis for the decision and advise the parent, guardian, or youth of the right to appeal.

e. NOTE: GMCS will use and maintain copies of PDE's "Notice of Procedural Safeguards" form which ensures that GMCS will (i) inform families of the basis of their decision regarding enrollment or school selection; (ii) notify families of their right to remain in their school of choice pending resolution of the dispute and (iii) explain the procedures for challenging the decision of GMCS.

2. Level 2 – A complaint may be filed with a McKinney-Vento Coordinator

If the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth is dissatisfied with GMCS's disposition of a dispute or would like to raise any issue of McKinney-Vento Act noncompliance, they may file a complaint or appeal with a McKinney-Vento site or regional coordinator or with the state coordinator.

H. Title I

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (reauthorized December 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act) mandates that funds be reserved to serve homeless children.

GMCS shall reserve such funds as are necessary to provide services comparable to those provided to children in schools funded under Title I to serve homeless children who do not attend participating schools, including providing educationally related support services to children in shelters and other locations where children may live.

The Business Manager will ensure that sufficient funds are reserved as are necessary to comply with the mandates of Title I.

Release of Student

To ensure child safety, GMCS maintains a list of individuals who may pick up students in attendance at GMCS. A student may not be released to any individual who is not the student's parent or guardian unless the individual's name appears on this list. Parents/guardians may submit a list of the individuals authorized to pick up their child(ren) from school. A parent/guardian may amend the list by submitting the changes in writing. We also request a photocopy of some type of photo ID.

Certified copies of any court orders or divorce decrees that restrict a parent's ability to seek the release of a child shall be kept in the office. The custodial parent has the obligation of providing the school with this information. If the person seeking release of a child shows an out-of-state custody order, the individual must first report to the office.

Anyone seeking the release of a child from school must call the office in advance of arrival at school. Instructions will be given regarding how pick-up will be arranged, including where and how you will present photo identification. Acceptable forms of identification include a valid state-issued driver's license, a state-issued photo identification card, or passport.

School Hours

GMCS follows the academic calendar established by the Gettysburg Area School District (GASD). GMCS classes are in session from 8:30 a.m. to 2:50 P.M., Monday through Friday. The Principal may alter the school day for emergency reasons and to protect the health and safety of students and staff members. The school's administrative staff is available by appointment.

Student Enrollment/Withdrawal

A student is formally enrolled in GMCS upon receipt of the Charter School Student Enrollment Notification Form and associated documentation. A student is formally withdrawn upon receipt of a Release of Records/Information from an alternate school or written notification from the parent/guardian. All Students currently enrolled in the school from the prior school year are exempt from the lottery process if the school has received a completed Re-Enrollment form by March 31. If students are not re-enrolled on or before March 31, they are subject to the lottery process. Parents are recommended to consult the GMCS policy on Student Enrollment, which is available on the website.

III. STUDENT ATTENDANCE, PUNCTUALITY, AND TRUANCY

The Board requires that students enrolled in GMCS attend school regularly following the laws of the state. The educational program offered by this school is based upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation. Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in this school during the days and hours that the school is in session, except that the Principal may excuse a student for a temporary absence when he/she receives satisfactory evidence of such mental, physical, or other urgent conditions which may reasonably cause the student's absence. Absences due to educational trips or religious holidays shall be following the Board policies listed on the School website.
*See Educational Trip Form

The Board considers the following conditions to constitute reasonable cause for absence from school: illness, death in the family, required court appearance, inclement weather which would be dangerous to the life or health of the student, legal quarantine, emergency conditions as determined by the Principal, and prior permission from the Principal and consent from the parent/guardian. The Principal shall require from the parent/guardian of each student who has been absent from school, a written statement of the reasons for such absence. The Principal reserves the right to verify such statements and to investigate the

cause of each absence of more than three days duration as well as repeated unexplained absence or tardiness.

The Principal or designee will report infractions of the law regarding attendance to a student's school district. In addition, the Principal may impose on truant students such incremental disciplinary measures as may be appropriate for infractions of school regulations, but no such penalty may have an irredeemable negative effect on the student's record beyond that which naturally follows absence from school activities.

The following procedures shall be followed in implementing the Board policy regarding student attendance:

Absences

1. Parents/guardians must contact the school office whenever a student will be absent from school. This includes any absence from Flexible Instruction Days. A written excuse from that parent/guardian must be presented to the teacher, within 3 calendar days from when the student returns to school.

2. If extraordinary circumstances require that the student be absent from school (e.g., a family emergency) a plan may be developed jointly by the teacher, the Principal, and the parent/ guardian. The plan shall define the length of the absence and how the student will make-up the work missed. All parties must sign the plan.

3. After three consecutive days of absence due to illness, including absence from Flexible Instruction Days, a doctor's note is required regarding the absence.

4. If a student receives one unexcused absence, the Principal/designee will send a letter or email to remind the parent/guardian of their legal obligation to make certain that the student attends school regularly, and to inform them that legal authorities will be contacted if another unexcused absence. On the third unexcused absence, the Principal/designee will notify the student's school district and thereafter of each next unexcused absence.

5. Students who miss ten consecutive school days shall be dropped from the active membership roll. This includes any days absent from Flexible Instruction Days. Students of compulsory school age, who have not followed compulsory attendance requirements, may be offered alternative education services or other provisions of education.

6. A maximum of ten days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification may be allowed during a school year. All absences beyond ten cumulative days will require an excuse from a physician.

Tardiness

1. Students arriving after 8:30 a.m. are tardy and must sign in through the school office. Tardiness is recorded in five-minute increments. Arrival after 11:00 a.m. counts as a half-day absence. Unexcused tardiness and early dismissals accumulate toward an unexcused absence when the equivalent of a full school day is reached

2. Students arriving after 11:00 a.m. will be considered to have missed a half day of school. When a full school day is accrued, it will count as an unexcused absence unless an approved excuse is provided. In this case, procedures for notifying parents/guardians of an unexcused absence will be followed.
3. Medical appointments resulting in tardiness or early dismissal require a doctor's note within three calendar days. Parents/guardians must arrange early dismissals through the office, and students may leave only with an authorized adult. Repeated unexcused tardiness or early dismissals may result in an attendance conference and SAIP.
4. Students absent for ten consecutive school days may be removed from the active enrollment roll. Exceptions include documented lawful absences, attendance enforcement proceedings, and applicable protections for students with disabilities.

5. If a pattern of absenteeism/tardiness develops, the Principal/designee will send a letter reminding the parent/guardian of their legal obligation to ensure regular and timely attendance. Continued unexcused tardiness, will result in a School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP).

IV. TRANSPORTATION

Bus Transportation

Bus transportation is provided by the student's school district of residence if your home district is within ten (10) miles of GMCS. Please contact your school district of residence for busing information and schedules.

In addition, please notify the GMCS school nurse and your district transportation coordinator of any student health conditions that could affect transportation needs.

Bus Safety, Conduct, and Discipline

Children behaving in unsafe or disrespectful ways on the bus will be reported by the bus driver to the school administration of the student's school district of residence. The information will be sent to GMCS, and the school leadership will address all concerns about bus transportation. Consequences such as losing bus privileges or assignment of a seat on the bus will be decided by the student's school district of residence transportation services and GMCS leadership.The following bus safety rules have been merged from all home districts:

1. Stay in your seat and out of the aisles (Back-to-back/bottom-to-bottom).
2. Hands to self
3. Stay seated
4. Whisper voices
5. Always listen and have respect for your bus driver

If a student fails to comply with these rules, the following protocol is in effect:

1st offense: verbal administrative warning and parent notification

2nd offense: lunch detention and parent notification

3rd offense: 3-day bus suspension

4th offense: 4-day bus suspension

5th offense: 5-day bus suspension

6th offense: 10-day bus suspension
7th offense: 15-day bus suspension
8th offense: Complete loss of bus privileges for the remainder of the school year

Riding the school bus is a privilege, not a right. To ensure the safety of all students, appropriate behavior is always expected while boarding, riding, and exiting the bus. Misconduct on the bus will be addressed through progressive disciplinary measures. However, severe, or dangerous behavior may result in accelerated disciplinary consequences, including immediate suspension from bus transportation.

Students who are suspended from the bus must be picked up promptly by a parent or guardian and must leave school property immediately upon dismissal. During the period of suspension, students are not permitted to remain on campus after school hours or use school facilities, including the playground.

Fairfield and Mt. Holly Springs Transportation Information

Boyo Transportation Services is available to provide bus transportation to and from GMCS for students residing near the Fairfield, and Mt.Springs areas. For more information on these stops, please contact the school's administrative staff.

A parent or guardian must be at the bus stop with students riding these buses. Please be sure that a responsible individual is at your child's bus stop on time! Students will not be dropped off at the bus stop if a responsible individual is not present. If the responsible individual is late to the bus stop, the bus company will contact the parent/guardian or GMCS with information about where and what time the student may be picked up. If Boyo Transportation Services cannot make contact with the parent, they will drop the student off at GMCS.

Changes to Transportation or After School Routines

To change a student's after school routine, including but not limited to being picked up by someone different or riding a bus versus being picked up, permission from the parent/guardian is required and must be delivered to the office via email or phone, no later than 1:00. The email notice of change must contain the date(s) on which the change will occur. Be sure to address the email notice of change to your child(ren)'s teacher and info@gettysburgmontessoricharter.org and gettysburgmontessori@gmail.org. *No changes will be allowed without prior notification as described above.*

V. STUDENT RECORDS

The CEO/Principal and designated staff person shall be the primary persons responsible for ensuring the confidentiality and management of educational and personnel records for all students, parents or guardians or caregivers, and staff at GMCS. The CEO/Principal and designated staff shall keep all records according to GMCS' Records Management, Acquisition, and Confidentiality Policies found on the School website, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), its implementing restrictions, and Pennsylvania law.

Notification of Rights under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

PPRA affords parents/guardians certain rights about the conduct of surveys, the collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to consent, receive notice, and opt out, and inspection, as described below:

Consent. The student or the student's parent/guardian must provide consent, before the student is required to submit to a survey that is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education and concerns one or more of the following protected areas:

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent/guardian

2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family
3. Sex behavior or attitudes
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior
5. Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships.
6. Legally recognized privileged relationship, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents
8. Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.

Notice and opportunity to opt out. A student or the parent/guardian of the student shall receive notice and be provided an opportunity to opt out of surveys, information collection activities or physical exams if any of the following circumstances apply:

1. Any other protected information survey, regardless of funding
2. Any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening needed as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under Pennsylvania law.
3. Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students or marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.

Inspection. A student or the parent/guardian of the student must be given an opportunity, upon request, to inspect the following types of materials or records prior to administration of the survey, information collection activity or physical exam, or prior to the use of the information obtained through the administration of the survey, information collection activity, or physical exam:

1. Protected information surveys of students
2. Instruments used to collect personal information from students for the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes.

Parents who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-5920

From time to time, GMCS may release certain information about students who take part in school activities, receive recognition, or distinguish themselves as school citizens for publication. Students also may be named and included in photographs and/or videos taken for publication and/or other educational and professional uses. Photographs and/or videos of students will not be used by GMCS unless consent is first obtained from the student's parent/guardian. Notice of your consent or refusal to allow GMCS to use photographs or videos of your child (ren) shall be given to GMCS on forms provided by the school no

later than 15 calendar days after the start of each school year or after the student's first day of attendance at GMCS, whichever occurs earlier.

Use of School Computers/Electronic Resources

The school's electronic resources supply open access to local, national, and international sources of information and collaboration vital to intellectual inquiry in a democracy. Internet resources are considered an extension of the classroom. Every school user has the responsibility to respect and protect the rights of every user in our community and on the internet. Account holders are expected to act in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner, in accordance with the missions and purposes of the networks they use on the internet, and the laws of Pennsylvania and the United States.

Using these resources is a privilege, not a right, and the privilege may be revoked at any time for unacceptable conduct.

Responsible use of computing and communications facilities and services requires that users:

1. Respect the legal protection provided by copyright and licenses to programs and data.
2. Respect the rights of others by complying with all policies and laws regarding intellectual property.
3. Respect the rights of others by complying with all policies and laws regarding sexual, racial, and other forms of harassment, and by preserving the privacy of personal data to which you have access.
4. Respect the privacy of others by not tampering with their files, tapes, disks, passwords, or accounts, or representing others when messaging or conferencing.
5. Use only computer ID's or accounts and communications facilities which you are duly authorized to use, and to use them for the purposes for which they were intended.
6. Respect the integrity of computing systems or data; for example, by not intentionally developing programs or making use of already existing programs that harass other users, or infiltrate a computer or computing system, and/or damage or alter the software components of a computer or computing system, or illegally gain access to other facilities accessible via the network.
7. Use computing and communications facilities in a manner which is consistent with the ethical principles set forth by the school and with accepted community standards.
8. Respect and adhere to any/all local, state, or federal law which may govern use of these computing and communication facilities in Pennsylvania and the United States
9. Protect their own safety by not releasing personal information and by reporting to their teacher any attempts by others to discover personal information about them.

GMCS provides laptops and related computer equipment ("Device") to its students to enhance their education. It is imperative to Parents/Guardians to stress to their children how important it is to take care of their issued Device and to behave appropriately when interacting with others digitally over the internet. By accepting possession of the Device from GMCS, the student and his/her parents/guardians must agree to the responsibilities and care of the Device detailed in the GMCS Device Agreement and Release.

Emergency Management Plan/Emergency Drills

Fire drills will be conducted to instruct children and adults in exiting the school building in an emergency in the shortest possible time with certainty and order. Fire drills shall include instruction on fire drill exits and fire alarm boxes as well as fire drill procedures. The exit route for each room is posted inside the room by the door. Children must stay with the teacher with whom they exited the building.

Following Pennsylvania law, lockdown drills are also conducted to instruct children and adults in staying safe in the event of a security breach or act of violence at the school. Lockdown drills include locating students in a safe area and staying quiet for the duration of the drill. The drills may not always include exiting the building.

Children are expected to cooperate with faculty/staff members during both fire drills and lockdown drills, and to leave the building in a quiet and orderly manner with the teacher to whom they are assigned at the time of the drill. Unsafe behavior during a drill will be subject to disciplinary actions.

Lost and Found

Parents/Guardians are asked to LABEL EVERY ITEM that comes to school. If an item is unlabeled and unclaimed, it will be placed in the school's Lost and Found. Parents/Guardians may call the office to inquire whether any item is in the Lost and Found. At the end of each quarter, any items remaining unclaimed will be donated to charity.

Policy and Procedure for Searches

GMCS is committed to providing a school free of drugs, alcohol, and weapons. GMCS actively works to protect its students, ensure school discipline, protect school property, and ensure the health of students while in the school environment. GMCS will not tolerate students buying or selling drugs, alcohol, or weapons on school property.

All storage areas provided for student use on school premises are still the property of the school, subject to inspection, access for maintenance, and search. No student shall lock or otherwise impede access to any locker or storage area except with a lock approved by the school in which the locker or storage area is found.

The CEO/Principal or designee may search any student storage area after notifying the student and giving the student opportunity to be present. However, where the administration has a reasonable suspicion that the area contains materials that pose a threat to health, welfare, and safety of the students at the school, it may be searched without warning.

Communication

Communication is a two-way process. Your child's teacher is responsible to notify you when she/he believes that there is a genuine concern regarding your child's progress or behavior. Should parents/guardians have a concern about their child, or any circumstance involving the classroom or teacher, the parent must first contact the student's teacher directly to discuss any concerns. If the parent/guardian feels that the concern has not been addressed, it is then appropriate to reach out to the school leadership. If you would like to speak to a teacher, please send a note to school with your child(ren) or contact the school and we will relay the request to the teacher, to call you.

Guidelines for Email Communication

Staff and parents/guardians should keep in mind that while email is a quick way to send a message, it is not necessarily the best way to get a quick reply or resolve an issue. Parents/guardians are asked to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Email should *not* be used to discuss contentious, emotional, or highly confidential issues.
2. Using email as a communication tool is voluntary. Parents/guardians and staff must agree to use email as a form of communication.

3. Email should not be used for time-sensitive communication.

VI. SCHOOL COMMUNITY

A Safe Environment

Students attending GMCS have the basic constitutional rights guaranteed to all United States citizens. The school encourages the responsible use of these rights to develop good citizenship within the framework of an educational community and is committed to supporting children in becoming healthy, responsible, and productive members of our communities.

Everyone has a personal responsibility for reducing the risk of violence within our school. Steps to maintain an orderly and safe environment, to demonstrate mutual respect and caring for one another, and to ensure that children who are having difficulties getting needed support are taken daily. Research has shown that effective prevention, intervention, and crisis response strategies operate best in school communities that:

1. Convey the attitude that all children can achieve academically and behave responsibly, while at the same time appreciate individual differences
2. Involve families in real and meaningful ways
3. Develop links to the community at large
4. Emphasize meaningful relationships among children and adults
5. Discuss safety issues openly
6. Treat all members of the community with equal respect
7. Create ways for children to share their concerns
8. Support children in feeling safe enough to express their feelings
9. Have a system in place for referring children who are suspected of being abused or neglected
10. Promote good citizenship and character
11. Identify problems and assess progress toward solutions

Three components of a comprehensive approach to preventing violence and ensuring safety in schools are (a) prevention, (b) identification, and intervention for children at risk for having difficulty, and (c) effective responses once irresponsible behavior has occurred. GMCS focuses on basic prevention and the creation of a school climate that prevents school violence. Our approach to ensuring a safe school includes strictly prohibiting assault and battery of any kind, bullying, fighting, weapons possession, gambling, and the possession/use of narcotics, stimulant drugs, or alcoholic beverages. All alleged violations are to be reported immediately to a teacher or the school leadership. Appropriate corrective action may be taken, up to and including discharge of an employee or suspension of a student. The corrective process will align with GMCS's bylaws and policies regarding conflict resolution.

Act 110 of 2020: Students Convicted or Adjudicated Delinquent of Sexual Assault

Act 110 of 2020 added to the School Code Section 1318.1, 24 P.S. § 13-1318.1, titled "Students Convicted or Adjudicated Delinquent of Sexual Assault." The CEO/Principal must, for any student enrolled in the school who is convicted or adjudicated delinquent of committing a sexual assault upon another student enrolled in the school (1) expel the convicted or adjudicated student; (2) transfer the

convicted or adjudicated student to an alternative education program; or (3) reassign the convicted or adjudicated student to another school or educational program within the school.

The CEO/Principal may take action under Section 1318.1 for sexual assaults that occur outside of the school setting if the assault (1) was against another student enrolled in the same public-school entity; (2) has the effect of (a) substantially interfering with the victim's education; (b) creating or threating a hostile educational environment; or (c)substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

The CEO/Principal shall ensure the convicted or adjudicated student is not educated in the same school building, transported on the same school vehicle, or allowed to participate in the same school-sponsored activities at the same time as the victim. The CEO/Principal shall take all steps necessary to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

A student expelled, transferred, or reassigned pursuant to Section 1318.1 may return to school only if (1) the victim ceases to be enrolled at the school; or (2) the conviction or delinquency adjudication the expulsion, transfer, or reassignment was based is reversed and no appeal is pending.

The CEO/Principal may not take action under Section 1318.1 if (1) the convicted or adjudicated delinquent student was already expelled, transferred, or reassigned for the same sexual assault; or (2) the convicted or adjudicated student does not attend the same school as the victim.

Any student convicted of sexual assault upon another student enrolled in the school must notify the CEO/Principal of the conviction within 72 hours of such conviction.

Prior to admission to the school, the parent or guardian of a student must provide a sworn statement or affirmation stating whether the student was previously, or is currently, expelled, transferred, or reassigned pursuant to Section 1318.1.

Bullying

Bullying is intentional, repeated, aggressive behavior that is harmful physically, emotionally, or psychologically. *If you suspect that your child is being bullied, please notify the teacher immediately so he/she can complete an incident report. If it happens on the bus, please contact the Assistant Principal/Transportation Coordinator..* Parents should also refer to the GMCS policy on bullying, which is on the School website.

Peer Dating

At GMCS, the primary focus of our students must be educational achievement. GMCS does not support student/peer dating relationships of any kind at this age level. While GMCS is aware that it cannot control what happens outside of school, GMCS will not permit students to engage in physical touching or any other public displays of affection on school transportation, school grounds, or at school events. If a dating relationship is deemed disruptive to the learning environment, GMCS reserves the right to take such action as it deems necessary to maintain its educational focus, including separating dating peers during school hours and at school events.

Consequences for Negative Behavior

Maria Montessori recognized that when allowed the freedom of choice within clear, firm, and reasonable boundaries, children act in positive ways that further their development. Freedom is frequently misunderstood, and many people take it to mean that children can do whatever they want. Montessori believed that freedom without boundaries was abandonment (Montessori Northwest, 2017).

At Gettysburg Montessori, we strive to teach kindness and respect, and develop the good in everyone. However, we recognize that some days can be a struggle, and some students may require a little extra TLC. Our staff continuously models the Montessori methods of grace and courtesy in daily interactions. We have a schoolwide behavior plan that we utilize as a communicative tool between home and school. The behavior protocol is set in place to remind students of expectations, and to provide data in monitoring student behavior. This tool is found in FACTS, under the behavior tab, and if an event is added, it will be sent home from the FACTS portal via email.

Student behaviors of concern will be addressed first in the classroom and then by school administration utilizing appropriate Montessori methods. In a Montessori classroom, social skills are intentionally taught as part of the daily environment. Children are guided to develop respect, empathy, and cooperation through modeled behavior, group activities, and real-life social experiences. When challenges arise, redirection is often used as a gentle and respectful strategy. Staff help the child shift focus to a more appropriate activity or behavior, allowing them to regain control and make constructive choices. This approach supports self-regulation, conflict resolution, and a positive community atmosphere.

Parents will be notified if Montessori corrective efforts are unsuccessful at reducing undesired behaviors.

A **LEVEL TWO** behavior is a more serious offense, and includes behaviors such as, but not limited to, responding to staff in a disrespectful or defiant manner, not following safety procedures, cheating, physical and verbal aggression, unsafe use of objects, and bus misconduct. Disciplinary actions for level two behaviors include incident report documentation in FACTS, temporary removal from the classroom, immediate administrative referral involving meeting with the assistant principal (and staff involved), and parent notification. Other sanctions could be issued depending on the student and the infraction incurred.

A **LEVEL THREE** behavior is a major problem, and this level of negative behavior can result in violence and pose a threat to the safety and well-being of others. Serious behaviors, such as but not limited to, include fighting, deliberately inflicting harm to another, physical/verbal assault, threats, bullying, leaving the building without permission (eloping), possession of a weapon, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, major bus misconduct, vaping, or smoking. It is under the discretion of the CEO/Principal and Assistant Principal to designate discliplinary actions based on the infraction.

Disciplinary Actions for Level 3 will include any Level 2 Actions, and may include out of school suspension, action resulting in expulsion, action resulting in an alternative placement, reimbursement of property and damages, law-enforcement notification, and prosecution by outside agencies.

GMCS complies with IDEA protections when disciplining students.

With all of these supports in place, and open communication between home and school, it is our hope to develop each student to reach their fullest potential, while becoming kind and respectful members of our school community and society. We believe that developing the whole child, from academics to discipline, is a very important component of Montessori education.

If a significant behavior occurs after 2:15 p.m. and it is deemed necessary to investigate further, students will be retained, and parents will be promptly notified. Administration is proactive in managing behaviors, and the student's safety is of the utmost concern. Parents will need to provide transportation if the student misses the bus due to the investigation of a behavior.

Care of School Property

Just as it takes an entire family to care for a home, all members of our community are vital in maintaining our school building and grounds. Children feel valued when they are allowed to make healthy

contributions. Therefore, all members of our school community are equally responsible for maintaining our school building. All persons are expected to show the same respect and care for school property as they do in nurturing individual relationships. If any individual witnesses damage being done by another person or sees something damaged at the school, a member of the staff should be notified. Willful destruction, damage, or defacement of school property will result in disciplinary action and may result in prosecution to the full extent under the law. If a person intentionally or maliciously damages school property, that person (including a minor's parents/guardians), shall pay the school the value of the damaged property to the limit of the law. Additionally, should a person lose any item belonging to the school, that person (including a minor's parents/guardians) will make restitution arrangements with the school.

Dress Policy

GMCS dress code requires appropriate clothing that would not be a distraction to the educational environment. Items including but not limited to: clothing that is too short or tight or exposes the midriff, shirts with logos referencing violence, drugs, or alcohol are not permitted.

Flip flops are not permitted at school. Shorts must be longer than the fingertips when arms are resting at the sides. A student who violates the dress code three times will lose the privilege of wearing shorts on campus.

Visitors

GMCS must know who is on the school grounds at all times. Visitors, including parents/guardians of a GMCS student must wear a visitor's badge. The visitor's badge must be worn and visibly always displayed while on the premises.

Parent Involvement/Volunteering

A significant factor of a successful learning environment includes adult facilitation and support. Within our learning environment, adults are critical for the processes of dialogue, brainstorming, problem solving, and resource location. Therefore, volunteers are pivotal to providing this kind of support.

As required by Pennsylvania law, prior to volunteering within the school, volunteers are required to submit copies of current clearance checks (i.e., criminal background check and child abuse clearance) to the office, which will be kept on file. Volunteers must sign in and sign out at the office every time they volunteer. Volunteers must always remain in their assigned classroom or location and are not permitted to access other classrooms or areas of the school without permission from the Assistant Principal. At all times, volunteers must honor the confidentiality of individual children, their families, GMCS employees, and the GMCS community. Volunteers are not permitted to take photographs of students and any time. Violation of confidentiality by anyone within the GMCS community will be addressed immediately by school leadership. Depending on the nature of the violation, the person may be asked to refrain from volunteering at GMCS.

Gettysburg Montessori School Student Rights & Responsibilities

The Gettysburg Montessori Charter School ("GMCS") recognizes that it has the responsibility to assure students the legal rights that are theirs by virtue of guarantees offered to all persons under the federal/state constitutions and statutes. In connection with rights are responsibilities that must be assumed by students.

It is the GMCS Board's belief that as part of the educational process, the students, and families of GMCS should be made aware of their legal rights and the legal authority of the GMCS Board of Trustees to make

or delegate authority to employees of the GMCS to make rules and regulations regarding the orderly operation of GMCS.

Student rights include, but are not limited to:

1. Civil Rights, including the rights to equal educational opportunity and freedom from discrimination
2. The right to attend free public schools
3. The right to due process of the law with respect to suspensions, expulsions, and unreasonable searches and seizures
4. The right to not be subject to corporal punishment
5. The right to free inquiry and expression which implies the right of a person to decline to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and salute the flag
6. The right to privacy, which implies the right of a person to dress and/or groom as he/she pleases within certain limits.

Student responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

1. The responsibility to attend school as required by law
2. The responsibility to observe school rules, regulations, and policy, as well as federal, state, and local laws
3. The responsibility to work with the CEO and GMCS staff to develop a climate within the school that is conducive to learning
4. The responsibility to respect the rights of CEO, staff, students, and all others who are involved in the educational process
5. The responsibility not to interfere with the education of other students
6. The responsibility to assist the school staff in operating a safe school
7. The responsibility not to discriminate against others
8. The responsibility to observe reasonable rules regarding free inquiry and expression
9. The responsibility to exercise proper care when utilizing public facilities and equipment.

VII. CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Field Trips

1. GMCS field trips support classroom learning and curriculum and require approval from the CEO/Principal. Families will receive information about the destination, purpose, date, departure and return times, transportation, cost, lunch arrangements, and appropriate clothing or footwear. A signed permission slip must be returned by the stated deadline for a student to attend. Families should notify the teacher of any concerns about participation so appropriate arrangements can be discussed.
2. Chaperone spaces are limited based on the needs of each trip. Chaperones will be selected by lottery from fully vetted volunteers whose required clearances have been verified by the school. Chaperoning one trip does not guarantee selection for the next trip. GMCS will make an effort to

give all fully vetted parents an opportunity to chaperone throughout the school year.

3. Before chaperoning a field trip, parents must review the school-provided chaperoning instructions and sign an acknowledgment confirming that they have reviewed and understand the responsibilities, safety procedures, and expectations. Chaperones must follow school instructions, supervise their assigned students, maintain student confidentiality, and follow all safety expectations. Students are expected to follow school behavior rules and directions from staff throughout the trip.
4. A nurse will accompany students on each field trip. Families must communicate medical needs to the school nurse in advance and identify relevant concerns on the permission slip. The nurse will coordinate necessary health information, authorized medications, and emergency supplies with attending staff. Parent chaperones may not carry or administer medications for other students. Any medication arrangements for their own child must be coordinated with the nurse before the trip.
5. Families should ensure students arrive on time and bring the requested lunch, clothing, and supplies. Staff will maintain student counts and emergency contact information throughout the trip. Families will be notified of significant delays or incidents involving their child.
6. Community learning opportunities and field trip experiences are an integral aspect of GMCS's learning environment. Parents/guardians will be informed in advance of any trips via email, teacher communication, etc. Some field trips are mandatory; if your child does not attend a mandatory field trip, they will have an assignment in lieu of the trip. Prior to a child participating in a trip, a specific permission slip will be sent home for a parent/guardian's signature. It must be signed and returned to the school prior to the beginning of the trip.

Homework

At GMCS, we believe that homework should be developmentally appropriate, meaningful, and supportive of our educational goals. We support the fact that homework develops student's study habits, initiative, and responsibility. We strongly feel that it is equally important for our students to unwind, reflect on the day, and pursue other activities of interest after the school day ends. However, students who do not complete work at school because of behavior, will be required to do their work at home as a "natural consequence." More information regarding homework will be given by each classroom teacher.

Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences are conducted in the fall and spring of each academic year. Additional conferences may be scheduled at the request of the parent or a child's teacher.

All meetings with GMCS staff and administrators must be prescheduled. If you believe that an emergent matter requires immediate attention, indicate that when you call to schedule a meeting. Due to increased security measures, parents without appointments will not be admitted into the school building.

Standardized Testing

Children in grades 3-6 will participate in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) as required by Pennsylvania law. The window of testing dates is outlined in the school calendar each year. The purpose of this testing is to both monitor student achievement and evaluate effectiveness of curriculum and instructional goals and objectives. A parent/guardian will be notified in writing when test scores are returned to the school. Parents/guardians should address questions about the standardized testing program and their child's test results to the school leadership. https://futurereadypa.org/

Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

The use of cell phones at school by students is not permitted. If a student does have a cell phone at school, it must be turned off and remain in their book bag during the entire school day.

The use of other electronic devices and video games is restricted to before and after school hours. Students should not play electronic games or use electronic devices during breaks or recess. These items are distracting during school hours and are best left at home.

If listening to music, headphones must be worn.

Students are strictly prohibited from viewing inappropriate content or using personal devices to record, photograph, or video others without explicit and written permission.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Management System

Maria Montessori recognized that when allowed the freedom of choice within clear, firm, and reasonable boundaries, children act in positive ways that further their development. Freedom is frequently misunderstood, and many people take it to mean that children can do whatever they want. Montessori believed that freedom without boundaries was abandonment (Montessori Northwest, 2017).

GMCS uses "Student of the Month" as part of our PBIS award system.
Montessori philosophy develops the whole child and as a part of that process the staff at GMCS tries to recognize students displaying desired characteristic traits. The following traits are focused on monthly:

August/September: KINDNESS
October: RESPECT
November/December: GRATITUDE
January: LEADERSHIP
February: COMPASSION

March: RESPONSIBLE
April: PERSEVERANCE

Staff and students will nominate two deserving student from each classroom monthly for the "Student of the Month" award. Students displaying these traits will have a special lunch and activity in the Assistant Principal's office, and their photo and name will be displayed on a bulletin board near the entrance of the school.

Levels of Independence

In Montessori classrooms, expectations are clear, and children experience the natural and logical consequences of the choices. Freedom within limits allows for the natural development of self-regulation within the society of the classroom, as well as mirroring behaviors expected by society in general (Montessori Northwest, 2017).

GMCS identifies student levels of independence. As translated from Montessori's native language, Italian, the levels are 1: Beginning to seek normalization 2. Progressing towards normalization, and 3: The normalized child.

Level 1: Beginning to Seek Normalization "This level refers to the first stage in the development of self-discipline when the child finds it challenging to almost impossible to do something requested by someone else unless it happens to correspond with what the child wants to do." (North American Montessori Center, Elementary 6-12 Classroom Guide 2016)

Level 2: Progressing Towards Normalization "This level refers to the state in the development of self-discipline when the child is capable, for the most part, of understanding someone else's wishes and carrying them out." (NAMC, 2016)

Level 3: The Normalized Child "This level refers to the final stage in the development of self-discipline, when the child has truly developed self-discipline. When the child is asked to do something and can see value in the request, the child carries out the request. This involves the capability to assess the request and its implications." (NAMC, 2016)

Student Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use & Academic Honesty

GMCS prohibits students from using artificial intelligence (AI), including generative AI, for any school-related activities, assignments, projects, research, assessments, or other academic work, whether on school or personal devices. Students are expected to complete their own work, develop independent thinking and problem-solving skills, and properly credit sources. Students may not share personal or school-related information through AI platforms or use AI to create misleading or inappropriate content. GMCS may provide instruction about AI, digital citizenship, and responsible technology use without permitting students to use AI tools. Violations will be addressed according to GMCS academic integrity, technology, and student conduct policies. AI-detection results alone will not be used to determine academic dishonesty.

See the full Artificial Intelligence Use Policy and amendments in the GMCS Board Policy and Procedure Manual.

Bullying and Cyberbullying

Gettysburg Montessori Charter School (GMCS) is committed to providing a safe, respectful learning environment for all students. Bullying and cyberbullying are strictly prohibited, including conduct involving social media, electronic communication, and artificial intelligence (AI)-generated or modified content. This policy applies to incidents occurring on school property, during school activities, on school transportation, and outside of school when the conduct substantially impacts a student's education, creates a threatening environment, or disrupts school operations.

Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to report suspected bullying or cyberbullying to the Assistant Principal, CEO/Principal, teacher, counselor, Safe 2 Say, or any GMCS employee. All reports will be taken seriously, promptly investigated, and addressed in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and applicable Pennsylvania law, including Act 20 of 2026. Retaliation against anyone who reports bullying or participates in an investigation is prohibited. When bullying or cyberbullying is confirmed, parents/guardians of all students involved will be notified as soon as possible. Appropriate disciplinary action, interventions, and student supports will be implemented based on the circumstances. Consequences may include suspension or expulsion.

GMCS will review bullying prevention, reporting procedures, and student expectations annually. The complete Bullying and Cyberbullying Policy is available on the GMCS website under the Board Policy and Procedures Manual.

VII. STUDENT SERVICES

GMCS provides student services in Personal/Social Counseling, Academic Counseling, Career Counseling, Health Services, Social Work Services, Response to Intervention, and Special Education. For more information, see our Student Services Plan at GettysburgMontessoriCharter.org/Student-Services-Plan.

Response to Intervention (RtI)

RtII in Pennsylvania refers to the use of a standards-aligned, comprehensive school improvement, multi-tiered system of support for implementing Pennsylvania's Standards Aligned System (SAS). RtII combines high-quality instruction, assessment, and evidence-based interventions to meaningfully identify and remediate learning to improve instructional quality for all students. When classroom teachers are concerned with a student in their class, they may attempt several strategies to see if the problem can be resolved within the classroom, called Level I of RtII. These strategies may include meeting with the child, extra help, simplified assignments, parent conferences, peer tutoring, etc. Parents also are an important part of this process.

If Level I strategies are not effective, your child will be referred to Level II of RtII, which may include additional in-class techniques. If your child is referred to Level II, you will be contacted and asked for your input and to update you on your child's progress.

If Level II strategies are not effective, your child will be referred to Level III. You will be contacted to have a meeting with the RtII team so we can make plans to meet your child's needs.

Special Education

The purpose of the Special Education Program at GMCS is to provide a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities. If you have any questions regarding the special education services, please contact our Student Services Coordinator.

VIII. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Nutrition and Snacks

As educators, we can encourage and reinforce healthy eating habits and choices with our students. We believe that breakfast is the most important meal of the day and enables children to concentrate, cooperate, and learn better! We encourage all students to eat a healthy breakfast before school.

Snack time provides your child with an opportunity to eat something nutritious that can replenish energy and support his or her concentration throughout the day. We seek your help in eliminating unhealthy snacks, (i.e., soda and sweets) and ask that you send healthy snacks to school with your child. If you need healthy food suggestions, please contact the school leadership or the classroom teacher or go to https://www.healthiergeneration.org. *Candy is not permitted.*

Celebrations and Rewards

At GMCS, we prioritize the health and well-being of our students. In alignment with our Wellness Policy, we have established guidelines for celebrations, rewards, and snacks that are brought to school. These guidelines are designed to ensure that all foods offered at school meet or exceed the USDA Smart Snacks and school nutrition standards.

Celebrations and Parties

To maintain a healthy school environment, all celebrations and parties must adhere to the following guidelines:

Non-Food Celebrations: We encourage families and staff to celebrate birthdays and special events with *non-food items*. A list of non-food celebration ideas is available to help you plan enjoyable and inclusive activities.

Classroom Snacks

Classroom snacks must adhere to the following:

Smart Snacks Standards: All snacks should comply with the Smart Snacks nutrition standards. Our school provides a list of approved smart snacks to guide your choices.

No Candy: Candy should not be sent to school for snacks, lunch, or special events.

Rewards and Incentives

We promote healthy and constructive ways to reward students:

Alternative Rewards: Teachers and school staff will use non-food rewards to recognize student achievements. A

list of alternative reward ideas is available for reference.

By following these guidelines, we can work together to create a healthy and supportive environment for all students. Thank you for your cooperation and commitment to the well-being of our school community.

Lunch

Children and staff alike are asked to bring a nutritious lunch and snack to eat at school. For safety reasons glass bottles are discouraged. Please include your student's name on all parts of lunch containers (box, bag, thermos, etc.).

No fast food is permitted to be brought in for student lunches. This includes but is not limited to: McDonald's, Sheetz, Burger King, etc.

Ordo provides lunches for GMCS under the guidelines of the National School Lunch Program. Detailed information on how lunches will be ordered and distributed will be sent to each family.

Health Services

Pennsylvania law requires all school-age children to have minimum health care at certain chronological ages. These include dental and physical examinations and immunizations. Additional health services required by law include scheduled screenings (vision, hearing, growth, and scoliosis) and nursing services. PA law requires compliance and documentation of immunization before the 1st day of school for all students/grades. GMCS continues to stress the importance of immunizations for all children when available. PA law does not require parental consent for mandated health screenings. If you wish to "opt out" of mandated health screenings, please provide a written statement, signed and dated."

Illness

Maintaining health and preventing the spread of illness is a responsibility shared by families, friends, and staff of GMCS.

During school hours, when a suspected illness occurs parents/guardians will be contacted and informed of the need to exclude their child from school. Typical signs/symptoms which indicate the necessity of exclusion include but are not limited to fever greater than 100.4 degrees F., vomiting, or diarrhea. Once the determination that exclusion is in the student's best interest; parent/guardians and/or their designated emergency contacts are responsible and expected to pick the child up from school within one hour. While waiting to be picked up, the ill child will be provided a space to lie down and rest under the supervision of an attending adult.

Table - Exclusion/Re-admission Guidelines

DISEASE	SIGNS/SYMPTOMS	EXCLUSION/READMISSION
Fever / Suspected Undiagnosed Illness	Fever greater than 100.4 degrees F, change of behavior: "not feeling good," "not acting like themselves," tiredness	Exclude until child has untreated normal temperature for 24 hours e.g., NO "fever reducers" acetaminophen / ibuprofen given.
Diagnosed Illness Antibiotic Therapy	Earache, headache, fever, etc. Health care provider orders antibiotic treatment	Exclude until 24 hours after 1st dose of antibiotic given, child is symptom free, OR doctor's note stating when child may return to school [re: not contagious/infectious].

"Stomach Flu" Norovirus	Watery diarrhea (2 or more episodes), stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue	Exclude 24 hours after last episode of diarrhea or vomiting. Best practice is 72 hours-to help prevent spread of disease.
Strep Throat or Scarlet Fever	Fever, exudative tonsillitis or pharyngitis and tender cervical nodes. Scarlet Fever has fine-red rash.	Exclude 24 hours after antibiotic started or symptom free, or per Dr. note
Respiratory Infections (Including Covid-19)	Fever greater than 100 degrees F, headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches.	Exclude for 24 hours after antibiotic started, or fever free without fever reducing medication, or per Dr. note
Pink Eye Conjunctivitis	Redness of eye involving tearing, irritation, swelling, and white/yellow discharge, goopy or matted shut eyes after sleeping and/or until judged not infective; that is, without a discharge	Exclude from End of day/parent notification. Recommended Health Provider examination. Return 24 hours after treatment has begun and parent/Dr. note.
Fifth Disease	Facial "slapped-cheek" rash with "lacy" rash on trunk and limbs. Note: Once the Rash appears, the child is no longer contagious.	No Exclusion unless child has fever. Return 24 hours fever free without fever reducing medication.
Pediculosis Lice	Main symptom is itching of scalp. Lice (or eggs) can be found by close examination of scalp.	Exclude from End of day/parent notification Return after lice treatment; supply OTC or RX label, and Nurse Inspection. RN Recheck scalp 7-10 days post treatment.

Ringworm	Itchy small red bump or papule that spreads outward, taking on the appearance of a red scaly outer ring with a clear center.	Exclusion from End of day if suspected area can be covered Return after treatment started and 'weeping' lesions are covered.
Scabies	Itching and blister-like sores in the burrows of the skin	Exclude 24 hours after treatment started

Parents/guardians are reminded that students should not return to school until they are symptom free, or the school has been provided with a note from a physician stating that the student is not contagious. We ask that parents/guardians honor the guidelines for returning a child to school following an illness.

Allergies

Parents/guardians are asked to provide a list of all known food and substance allergies for each child in attendance at GMCS. Allergy information must be provided to GMCS upon enrollment and no later than within the first week of attendance at the school or whenever a child's allergy information changes. This list should include the name/age of the child along with known allergies, known manifestations of the known allergy (e.g., rash, difficulty breathing, etc.), possible antidotes for countering the allergic reaction, and a description of emergency treatment as needed. Parents/guardians of children with severe allergies should consider keeping medication on site per the medication policy.

Medication, Administration and Management

The health needs of individual students may necessitate the administration of medication during school hours. To ensure the safety of all students, an adult must bring all medications in a brown paper bag with the student's name on it to the nurse's office for storage. All medications must be in their original labeled container. Children may not carry any prescription or non-prescription medication [even cough drops] during school hours.

If your child needs medicine while at school, please contact the school nurse for forms related to daily, long-term, or short-term [acute] administration of medications.

PA Law requires (1) A PA Licensed Care Provider's order with the name of the medicine [prescription and/or over the counter], the dosage, the time intervals, duration of treatment, side-effects, and any other pertinent information [or valid pharmacy label] and (2) Parent/guardian consent.

The school health clinic stocks some over-the-counter medication. The school nurse has doctor's instructions and "standing" order covering these medicines. Parental/guardian consent for OTC medicines is given by completing and signing the emergency and student health history forms.

We recognize that life threatening conditions require swift action and intervention. The school nurse, GMCS trained staff, and approved self- administer students may give specifically identified Emergency Medications such as epinephrine auto-injectors, rescue inhalers, insulin, and glucagon.

The Pennsylvania Public School Code, Section 1414.2(g) allows parents/guardians to request an exemption to the administration of an epinephrine auto-injector for their student. To request this exemption, contact the school nurse to make an appointment to discuss this decision. Parents/guardians are to review and sign the opt-out form in the presence of the school nurse.

Emergency First Aid/Injuries

When a child experiences a minor injury (e.g., scratch, superficial cut, bump, bruise, insect bite) while at the school, first aid procedures will be administered. An accident report will be completed and kept on file in the nurse's office. Documentation of the injury and care given will be recorded and parent notification will be made. Except in the instance of a minor injury, the school nurse, child's teacher, or office staff will typically contact parents/guardians about the injury by the end of the day. Should a child become injured seriously while at school (e.g., suspected broken bone, dislocated shoulder, deep cut, eye injured), the school nurse will administer to the child's immediate needs and make arrangements to transport him/her to the hospital. Attempts to notify parents/guardians of the injury and subsequent medical care will be made immediately using the information on the child's Emergency Contact Form.

In case of a medical emergency, in accordance with Pennsylvania law, the school will call 911, and the child will be transported to the nearest hospital. GMCS staff will make continued attempts to contact the student's parents/guardians without delaying life or limb-saving care.

Student Health Services

GMCS provides required health screenings, illness and injury assessments, first aid, medication administration, and support for students with ongoing medical needs. Qualified personnel provide care within their training and legal authority. Student health records are confidential and shared only as permitted by law with personnel who need the information to support the student's education or safety.

Family Responsibilities: Parents/guardians must provide current health information, required immunization and examination records, emergency contacts, and prescribed medications or equipment.

Report health changes promptly and contact the School Nurse about chronic conditions, severe allergies, or needs requiring an individualized health or emergency care plan. Missing required documentation may result in exclusion when required by law or policy.

Illness and Return to School: Students should remain home when illness prevents safe participation or may spread infection. Symptoms requiring exclusion may include a temperature greater than 100.4°F, vomiting, diarrhea, rash with fever or behavioral changes, signs of contagious illness, severe pain, or unusual lethargy. When notified that a student must leave school, families must arrange pickup within one hour.

Students may generally return when symptoms have improved, they can participate safely, and they have been free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for at least 24 hours without medication to suppress those symptoms. Required treatment must begin when applicable. Medical clearance may be requested. GMCS follows current

public-health guidance, which may change return requirements or require additional outbreak precautions. GMCS does not have a "no-nit" policy; students with head lice may generally return after appropriate treatment begins, subject to School Nurse review.

Medications: An adult must deliver medication in its original pharmacy-labeled container or manufacturer's packaging. Written health care provider orders and parent/guardian consent are required before administration. Students may not carry medication, including cough drops, unless specifically authorized. Approved rescue or diabetes medications may be carried or self-administered when required authorizations and safe-use requirements are met. Families should coordinate medication needs for field trips and school activities with the School Nurse and retrieve unused or expired medication by the stated deadline.

Allergies and Emergencies: Families must report known allergies and provide current emergency instructions and prescribed medication. GMCS takes reasonable precautions but cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment. Students may not share food, beverages, or utensils unless staff permit it. Suspected anaphylaxis or another serious medical emergency may require authorized emergency medication, a 911 call, and emergency transportation. Families will be notified, but care will not be delayed while staff attempt contact. Contact the School Nurse about the legally available exemption from school-stock epinephrine.

Dental Services: GMCS provides advance notice of school dental visits. All students are scheduled for a basic screening unless a parent/guardian submits the event-specific opt-out form by the announced deadline. No registration is needed for the basic screening; optional services such as cleanings and x-rays require separate provider registration. Required school screenings are free. Students subject to mandated screening requirements must have completion documented through the school screening, an accepted private dentist report, or an applicable written religious objection. Submit dental records directly through a method that confirms receipt; do not send them with students. Families will receive notice when follow-up care is recommended.

Refer to the full GMCS Student Health Services Policy or contact the School Nurse for additional information.