STUDENT HANDBOOK

STERLING MONTESSORI

EST. 1997

The mission of Sterling Montessori is to create a diverse educational community, grounded in the Montessori philosophy and teaching practices, that fosters curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking in its students. We strive to empower each student to become life-long learners who respect themselves, others and their environment.

Sterling Montessori follows the philosophy and teaching practices based on the Montessori Method developed by Dr. Maria Montessori. Montessori education emphasizes learning through all five senses, and respect of self, others, and the environment.

Welcome

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Sterling Montessori follows the philosophy and teaching practices based on the Montessori Method developed by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870- 1952). Montessori education emphasizes learning through all five senses.

Children learn at their own pace with a goal of nurturing a natural desire for knowledge, understanding, and respect. A child's work at Sterling Montessori is an exciting process of discovery leading to concentration, motivation, self-discipline, and a love of learning.

Montessori classrooms have three-year multi-age groups (ages 3-6, 6-9, 9-12, and 12-15) together, forming communities in which the older children spontaneously share their knowledge with the younger children. The Montessori method of education is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children. Children develop physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively in order to thrive in the real world.

HISTORY OF STERLING MONTESSORI

In 1989, Andrea Faurot and Charles Uzzell founded the Cary Montessori School, which served children ages 3-6 years old. After several site changes to accommodate growth, the school settled into a building at 201 High House Road in Cary. As parents/guardians began requesting additional grades, a temporary site was selected to accommodate elementary children. The current campus was built in 1997.

In 1997 the state of North Carolina approved the first group of charter schools. Thanks to a generous contribution by Laura Holland Uzzell (LHU), the Sterling Montessori Charter was granted by the state in the spring of 1997. We held our first attendance lottery in April of that year. The school served approximately 200 children in its first year as a combination academy and charter school.

CURRICULUM AND EVALUATION

Sterling Montessori's curriculum is based on the philosophy of Maria Montessori. Sterling Montessori meets and exceeds state and national standards in all curricular areas. Teachers evaluate student progress in part through careful and constant observation, one cornerstone of the Montessori Method. This allows each student's education to be individualized.

HOW DO WE PROGRESS MONITOR AND ASSESS ALL STUDENTS?

- Formal and Informal Daily Observations
- Montessori Three-Period Lessons with Materials
- iReady diagnostic and growth monitoring
- Beginning of Grade (BOG), End of Grade (EOG) and End of Course (EOC) Tests
- DIBELS for K-Reading

EVALUATION AND PROGRESS

Individual progress is monitored by each teacher. This helps inform lesson planning based upon a student's mastery of skills. Progress is reported to parents/guardians throughout the year: during fall and spring conferences with parents/guardians, and through progress reports which are sent home in January and June.

Code of Conduct

Philosophy & Goals

At Sterling Montessori, we believe a safe, orderly, and welcoming school environment is essential for student learning. This Code of Student Conduct is intended to (1) create clear standards and expectations for student behavior; (2) promote integrity and self-discipline among students; (3) encourage the use of behavioral supports and interventions as alternatives to exclusionary discipline; and (4) provide clear guidance to teachers and administrators on how, when, and to what extent disciplinary actions may be taken if students violate conduct rules.

Consistent with these goals, Sterling Montessori endorses and adopts the following general principles relating to three key domains of student behavior and conduct.

Principle 1: Climate and Prevention
Schools that foster positive school climates can help to engage all students in learning by preventing problem behaviors and intervening effectively to support struggling and at-risk students.

Principle 2: Expectations and Consequences
Schools that have discipline policies or codes of conduct with clear, appropriate, and consistently applied expectations and consequences will help students improve behavior, increase engagement, and boost achievement.

Principle 3: Equity and Continuous Improvement
Schools that build staff capacity and continuously evaluate the school's discipline policies and practices are more likely to ensure fairness and equity and promote achievement for all students.

Roles of Staff, Students, Parents, and Community Partners in Promoting Positive School Climates

Positive school climates require ongoing support and collaboration among staff, students, parents, and the community at large. In particular:

- Students have the right to attend school in a safe and orderly environment and to have conduct rules applied fairly to them without regard to race, gender, religion, disability, or other defining characteristics. They also bear the responsibility to understand conduct rules, behave appropriately, and be individually accountable for their own actions and decisions.
- Parents or legal custodians have the right, in a reasonably prompt manner, to be informed of disciplinary actions taken with their children. They are encouraged to support their children in engaging in positive behaviors at school and to partner with teachers and administrators on effective strategies to correct misbehaviors within the parameters of this Code and other applicable policies.
- Teachers and administrators have statutory duties to maintain safety and order at school and are expected to reinforce and implement clear and consistent behavioral expectations consistent with this Code and other applicable policies. They are also expected to teach and encourage good citizenship and to communicate with parents regarding any serious or persistent behavioral issues. As an integral part of its educational mission, Sterling Montessori will identify school-wide behavioral expectations, make them known to students and parents/legal guardians, and link behavioral and social-emotional practices to core instruction.

- The entire community has a vested interest in a safe and orderly school. Community organizations and individual members of the community are encouraged to offer support and assistance to teachers and administrators in the promotion of positive student behaviors at school and to provide feedback to school administrators on ways to improve school climates and help ensure fair and equitable discipline practices.

- Finally, everyone at Sterling Montessori uses **restorative practices** and **positive discipline** as a first step in addressing any and all student conduct concerns. As a staff, we encourage students to take responsibility for their actions and then work to repair harm. Restorative practices are built on a foundation of relationships: teacher-student, student-student, and teacher-teacher/administrator. Teachers will always work to proactively instill conflict resolution skills through peace education and positive discipline.

These rights, obligations, and restorative practices are interrelated, but they are also independent. Thus, for example, student failure to abide by specific behavioral rules do not excuse the failure of school staff to take reasonable measures to nurture and support a generally positive and supportive school climate. Similarly, shortcomings in administrator or parent efforts to support and encourage positive student behaviors do not excuse student violations of specific behavioral rules. To create and maintain the safe, orderly, and positive climate that the entire school community deserves, all stakeholders must work together while remaining individually accountable for their own actions and should strive for continuous improvement over matters within their respective control.

Applicability of Code

All Sterling Montessori students shall comply with this Code. This Code applies to any student who is on school property, who is in attendance at school or at any school-sponsored activity, or whose conduct at any time, place, or cyberspace, on or off campus, has or is reasonably expected to have a direct and immediate impact on the orderly and efficient operation of the schools or the safety of individuals in the school environment.

Corporal Punishment Prohibited

Sterling Montessori strictly prohibits all forms of corporal punishment. For purposes of this policy, corporal punishment is the intentional infliction of physical pain upon the body of a student as a disciplinary measure. It includes, but is not limited to, spanking, paddling, and slapping. No administrator, teacher, substitute teacher, or other employee, contractor, or volunteer may use corporal punishment to discipline any student. Violations of this prohibition may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Reasonable force that is necessary to protect oneself or others is not considered corporal punishment.

Interventions, Supports, and Responses to Behavioral Concerns

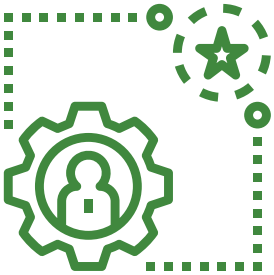
Multi-Tiered System of Support

Sterling Montessori teachers and administrators will utilize a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for behavioral interventions and responses to promote positive changes in student behavior. By utilizing MTSS, school staff engage in data-based problem-solving using academic, behavioral, and social-emotional data to identify reasons why particular students may be experiencing significant academic and/or behavioral challenges. Designated staff will provide ongoing training and support to school-based staff in the development, implementation, and monitoring of school-approved MTSS protocols.

Notification to Parents

When a significant behavioral intervention (beyond mere redirection or warning) is imposed, the school will attempt to notify the parent or legal custodian in a reasonably prompt manner. The school will also attempt to notify the parent or legal custodian of any in-school disciplinary consequence that results in removal from normal classroom or school activities. This includes in-school suspension, or suspension from school-sponsored extracurricular activities. For out-of-school suspensions, Sterling administration will provide formal written notice to parents or legal custodians.

Range of Interventions and Consequences



When student behaviors interfere with a safe, orderly, and respectful school environment where instruction and learning can flourish, schools should consider (consistent with MTSS protocols) a range of potential interventions and consequences to address the problematic behavior and reinforce positive behaviors. Sterling Montessori is committed to providing fair and equitable support to all of our students, when behaviors arise our first step is to always take into account the specific facts and circumstances of each individual case, and will work to implement non-disciplinary behavioral interventions. Non-exclusionary interventions are responses to problematic behaviors that attempt to support students in learning to make more positive choices, minimize exclusion from instruction and other normal school activities, and do not result in a loss of privileges. Examples of non-exclusionary interventions include, but are not limited to: 1) Using a variety of Montessori classroom management tools, strategies, and resources, 2) student-parent-teacher conferences 3) Section Director support 4) MTSS Core Team Support 4) behavior contracts 5) oral or written warnings 6) referrals to school counselors 7) peer mediation and 8) restorative justice practices.

Only when non-exclusionary interventions are, at the discretion of responsible school administration, deemed unlikely to be sufficiently effective to promote the goals outlined in this policy should disciplinary consequences be considered. Exclusionary discipline consequences are responses to problematic behaviors that expressly exclude a student from instructional time for more than a brief interval (as may be needed, for example, to question a student during a disciplinary investigation). Examples include in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and exclusion. Non-exclusionary discipline consequences are responses that result in a loss of privileges or imposition of other consequences that do not include exclusion from instructional time. Examples may include, when appropriate (1) school or community service or (2) restitution.

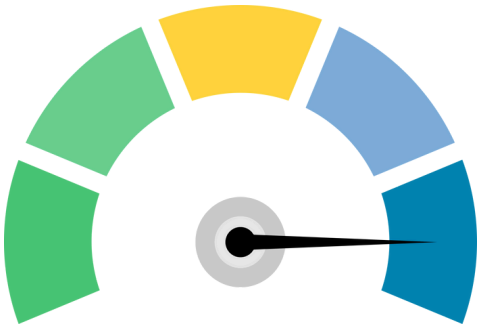
Recognizing that exclusionary discipline can exacerbate behavioral problems, diminish academic achievement, and hasten school dropouts, Sterling Montessori strives to use non-exclusionary measures when feasible and to reserve exclusionary discipline for more serious misconduct, such as behavior that threatens the health and safety of students, staff, or visitors or threatens to substantially disrupt the educational environment.

Special Requirements for Out-of-School Suspension and Exclusion

Out-of-school suspension and exclusion are allowed only if specifically authorized by this Code and the Board's "Due Process" policy. Except to the extent that North Carolina law requires school administrators to recommend a 365-day suspension for any student who violates Rule IV-1 Firearm/ Destructive Device K-12, this Code authorizes, but does not require, the use of out-of-school suspensions. Out-of-school suspensions of up to 10 school days may be imposed by section directors.

In addition to the notice and due process requirements set out in the "Due Process" policy, administrators must adhere to the following requirements before imposing or recommending any out-of-school suspension or exclusion:

- When deciding whether to recommend a long-term suspension (suspension of more than ten [10] school days) or determining the specific length of any short-term suspension or long-term suspension recommendation, the Executive Director may consider any relevant "aggravating" or "mitigating" factors of which they are aware. "Aggravating" factors are factors that tend to increase the seriousness of a disciplinary infraction. "Mitigating" factors are factors that tend to decrease the seriousness of disciplinary infraction. Aggravating and mitigating factors are "relevant" when, in the judgment of responsible school officials, they have a bearing on the student's level of responsibility for the behaviors in question. When both aggravating and mitigating factors are present, the Executive Director should exercise their discretion in weighing and balancing them.
- Suspensions of more than ten (10) days may be imposed only if they have been approved by the Executive Director or designee and the student has been offered the opportunity for a hearing under the Board's "Due Process" policy. Exclusion from school based on a recommendation of both the principal and the Executive Director must be approved by the Board.
- Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to conflict with state and federal laws governing students with disabilities.
- Students in grades PK-5 shall not be subject to long-term suspension except as required by law or in cases involving serious injury to students or staff or serious threat to safety or welfare of members of the school community.



Levels of Code

The Code of Student Conduct rules are leveled according to the seriousness of the behaviors and the range of potential disciplinary consequences.

LEVEL I: Level I rule violations can generally be addressed with non-exclusionary interventions or consequences. Examples of non-exclusionary interventions include, but are not limited to: 1) Using a variety of Montessori classroom management tools, strategies and resources, 2) student-parent-teacher conferences 3) Section Director support 4) MTSS Team Support 4) behavior contracts 5) oral or written warnings 6) referrals to school counselors 7) peer mediation and 8) restorative justice practices.

LEVEL II: Level II rule violations involve more serious misconduct that involve Administrative/MTSS team support and may warrant short-term suspension of up to five (5) school days when, in the judgment of Sterling Montessori administration, non-disciplinary interventions and non-exclusionary discipline consequences are insufficient to address the behavior and prevent its recurrence. Administration may impose a short-term suspension of six (6) to ten (10) days or recommend a long-term suspension of eleven (11) days or more based on one or more aggravating factor(s) regarding the severity of the violation and/or safety concerns, provided such aggravating factor(s) are listed in the written suspension notice.

LEVEL III: Level III rule violations are more severe in nature and involve Administration and other support staff and may warrant long-term suspension. The principal may impose a short-term suspension of ten (10) days or less or decline to impose any suspension based on mitigating factors.

LEVEL IV: Level IV is always extremely serious and treated as such. There is a statutory prohibition on the possession of a “firearm” or “destructive device” (as defined in the rule) on school property or at a school sponsored event. State law requires school leaders to recommend a 365-day suspension for all violations of this rule, for all children over 14 years of age.

LEVEL V: Level V allows for permanent exclusion of a student from Sterling Montessori, as long as they are over the age of 14 years. An exclusion is only considered if the following criteria are met: (1) the student is fourteen (14) years old or older; (2) both the Section Director and the Executive Director recommend exclusion (3) the Board, consistent with the Board’s “Due Process” policy, determines by clear and convincing evidence, that the student’s continued presence in school constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other students or school staff.

Additionally, any student who is registered as a sex offender under Article 27A of Chapter 14 of the North Carolina General Statutes may be excluded in accordance with these procedures.

Rules of Conduct

LEVEL I:

I-1 Compliance with Directives: Students shall comply with all lawful and reasonable directives of school employees, including but not limited to directives to identify oneself, to remove oneself from a dangerous or disruptive situation, or to report to a designated person or location.

I-2 Mutual Respect: Mutual respect is expected between students and staff. Students will refrain from words (written or oral) and/or gestures that demean, degrade, antagonize, or humiliate a school employee, volunteer, visitor, or other student(s). Examples may include ridiculing, cursing at, or aggressively or angrily shouting at an employee, volunteer, visitor, or other student(s).

I-3 School/Class Attendance: Students will attend school each school day except in the case of excused absences. Students will be on time to school and on time to class, will refrain from entering unauthorized areas, and will remain at school and in the designated locations for the duration of each school day unless excused.

I-4 Appropriate Language: Cursing or use of vulgar, profane, or obscene language, oral or written, is prohibited. If such language is directed at a school employee, volunteer, visitor, or other student(s), such conduct should be treated under Rule I-2.

I-5 Student Dress Code: Student dress will adhere to the standards set out in the Student Dress Code policy.

I-6 Electronic Devices: School-issued technology devices (including, but not limited to, tablets and laptops) may be used by students for instructional purposes with the permission and under the supervision of the teachers in compliance with the Technology Responsible Use policy. The use of personal or school-issued technology devices to engage in misconduct (e.g., bullying, harassment, or threats) may result in consequences under rules in this Code. Malicious or intentionally destructive use of technology devices or resources (e.g., hacking, password theft, or introduction of viruses) may result in consequences under Rule II-3. The school assumes no responsibility for personal technology devices brought to school.

I-7 Trespassing: Students shall not be on campus without the knowledge and consent of the school. Students who remain at school after the close of the school day or come onto school grounds when school is not in session without permission will be considered trespassers. If the student does not leave when instructed to do so, he/ she may be prosecuted. A student under suspension from school is trespassing if he/she appears on the property or at any school sponsored activity during the suspension period without the express permission of the principal. Students who trespass on school property to engage in other forms of misconduct (e.g., fighting/physical aggression or theft) may be subject to consequences under other applicable rules in this Code, and the act of trespassing may be considered an aggravating factor.

I-8 Tobacco, Vaporizers, and Nicotine Products: Student health and well-being is of the highest priority. For this reason, no student shall use tobacco in any form on school property. Students are specifically advised that vaporizers and liquids used in vaporizers, even if they do not contain tobacco or nicotine, are prohibited.

I-9 Gambling: Students shall not participate in any unauthorized games of chance in which money or items of value may be won or lost.

I-10 Integrity: Students are expected to be honest and forthright with school staff and volunteers. Lying, intentionally misleading, and actively concealing the truth from staff and volunteers are prohibited. Dishonest acts or statements that violate other rules in this Code may result in consequences under those other rules. Integrity may also be considered as an aggravating factor in connection with other forms of misconduct.

I-11 Cheating: Cheating is an academic deception where a student intends in some way to receive or attempt to receive credit for work not originated by the student, to give or receive unauthorized assistance, or to give or receive an unfair advantage on any form of academic work.
Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student's examination, assignment, or other coursework with or without permission;
- allowing another student to copy work without authorization from a teacher or administrator;
- taking an examination, writing a paper, or completing any other assigned academic task on another student's behalf;
- using notes or resources in any form, including written or online, without authorization;
- sharing or accepting from another, without authorization, any examination content, questions, answers, or tips on an assessment or assignment through the use of notes, scratch paper, social media, or any type of written, oral, or electronic communication.

I-12 Plagiarism: Plagiarism is using passages, materials, words, ideas, and/or thoughts of someone or something else and representing them as one's own original work without properly crediting the source.
Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- copying text, images, charts, or other materials from digital or print sources without proper citation;
- intentional misrepresentation of work as your own by paraphrasing of items from digital or print sources without proper citation;
- using translation tools or resources to translate sentences or passages without permission;
- using a thesis, hypothesis, or idea obtained from another source without proper citation.

LEVEL II:

II-1 Falsification or Deceit: Intentional acts of falsification or serious deceitful misconduct that threaten the health, safety, or welfare of others, or that cause a substantial detrimental impact on school operations or other individuals, are prohibited.

II-2 Inappropriate Illustrations, Images, or Other Materials: The possession of illustrations, audio or video recordings, written materials, graphics, or other print or digital documents, media, or files which significantly disrupt the educational process or which are profane, pornographic, or obscene is prohibited.

II-3 Hacking and Unauthorized Computer Access: Students will comply with all state and federal laws and regulations governing access to computers, computer networks, stored data, passwords, and other technology systems and resources and will refrain from all forms of computer or network "hacking," whether criminal or not. Any willful or knowing effort to obtain unauthorized access; to steal; to maliciously alter, modify, or destroy; to introduce viruses; or otherwise to cause harm to any such computer, computer network, stored data, or other technology resource is a violation of this rule.

II-4 Substantially Disruptive or Dangerous Behavior: Students will not make oral or written statements or intentionally engage in conduct that, despite efforts by staff to intervene or redirect the behavior, (1) substantially disrupts the educational environment or (2) threatens the health, safety, or welfare of staff or students. Statements or conduct that "substantially disrupt" the educational environment may include, for example, intentionally blocking entrances or exits or obstructing the flow of traffic within or outside of the school building, intentionally interfering with or interrupting school activities such that teaching and learning are compromised, or engaging in loud or boisterous conduct that significantly distracts others from peaceable and orderly school activities.

Words or conduct that would otherwise be a Level I violation (e.g., failure to comply with directives or unacceptable language) may also constitute a violation of this Level II rule if they (1) persist directly following attempts by staff to intervene or redirect the behavior and substantially disrupt teaching, learning, or the orderly conduct of school activities or (2) inherently threaten the health, safety, or welfare of staff or students. Examples include, but are not limited to, continuing to shout or use profanity directly after intervention or redirection, continuing to engage in disruptive rough-housing or horseplay directly after intervention or redirection or in a manner that is reasonably likely to cause injury, or throwing objects directly after intervention or redirection or in a manner that is reasonably likely to cause injury.

II-5 School Transportation Disturbance: Any physical or verbal disturbance which occurs on a school transportation vehicle and which interrupts or interferes with the safe and orderly operation of the vehicle or otherwise puts others at risk of harm is prohibited.

II-6 False Fire Alarm or Reported Emergency: Smoke and fire alarms and other emergency systems are vital for the safe operation of schools and must not be tampered with. No student shall set off, attempt to set off, or aid and abet anyone in giving a false fire alarm. No student shall interfere with or damage any part of a fire alarm, fire detection, smoke detection, fire extinguishing system, or emergency escape system.

II-7 Fire Setting/Incendiary Material: Fires and fire-setting materials pose a risk of harm to everyone in the school environment. The possession of any incendiary material (including but not limited to matches, lighters, or lighter fluid) or the use of any material reasonably likely to result in a fire on school property is prohibited.

II-8 Property Damage: Students shall not intentionally damage or deface or attempt to damage or deface any school property or the personal property of another.

II-9 Theft: Students shall not steal, attempt to steal, or knowingly be in possession of stolen property.

II-10 Extortion: Students shall not obtain or attempt to obtain money, property, or other items of value or compel another person to take action or refrain from action against that person's will by means of force, intimidation, or threat.

II-11 Indecent Exposure/Sexual Behavior: Students shall not engage in behavior, whether consensual or non-consensual, which is lewd, indecent, or of a sexual nature.

II-12 Harassment/Bullying: Students shall not engage in conduct prohibited by the Board's "Prohibition against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying" policy.

II-13 Sexual Harassment: Students shall not engage in conduct prohibited by the Board's "Prohibition against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying" policy.

II-14 Threat/False Threat: Students shall not make any threat through written or verbal language, sign, or act which conveys a serious expression of intent to cause harm or violence. Furthermore, no student shall make a false threat of harm or violence, even jokingly, which causes or is reasonably likely to cause fear or a disruption to school activities.

II-15 Physical Aggression/Fighting: Physical aggression toward and fighting with students, staff, or visitors are prohibited. A student who is attacked may use reasonable force in self-defense, but only to the extent necessary to get free from the attack and notify proper school authorities. A student who exceeds reasonable force may be disciplined even though someone else provoked or initiated the fight.

The prohibition on fighting and physical aggression includes, but is not limited to:

a. Choking, hitting, slapping, shoving, scratching, spitting, biting, blocking the passage of, or throwing objects at another person in an aggressive, confrontational or dangerous manner.

b. Taking any action or making comments or writing messages that might reasonably be expected to result in a fight or physical aggression.

II-16 Report Firearm or Destructive Device: Any student who has reason to believe that another student possesses or intends to bring a “firearm” or “destructive device,” as defined in Rule IV-1, onto any school campus or to any school activity shall report this information to school or law enforcement authorities immediately.

II-17 Hazing: No group or individual shall require a student to wear abnormal dress; play abusive or ridiculous tricks on him or her; or frighten, scold, beat, harass, or otherwise subject him or her to personal indignity as a condition of inclusion in group or as a ritual associated with group membership. Hazing is prohibited even if the person hazed consents to the conduct.

II-18 Search and Seizure: Students may not refuse to allow and may not seek to impede any search or seizure of their person or belongings.

II-19 Aiding and Abetting: Students shall not assist or facilitate others in violating any Level II, III, or IV rule in this Code.

II-20 Repeated / Willful Violations of Level I Rules: A student may be subject to out-of-school suspension of up to two (2) days under this Rule for repeated, willful violations of any Level I rules, but only if (1) the school has documented at least three prior violations of the same Level I rule prior within the same academic semester; (2) appropriate MTSS non-exclusionary interventions have been attempted and documented with each of those last three violations; and (3) school administrators have contacted the student and parent to warn them of the possibility of out-of-school suspension before the final incident that leads to the suspension.

LEVEL III:

III-1 Narcotics, Alcoholic Beverages, Controlled Substances, Chemicals, and Drug Paraphernalia: Drugs and alcohol present serious risks of harm to all persons, especially adolescents, and drug and alcohol overdoses and abuse result in well over 100,000 deaths each year in the United States alone. Addiction can start slowly and take hold before a person realizes he or she is addicted. It can destroy relationships, shatter dreams and ambitions, and lead to imprisonment, brain damage, disfiguring injury, and death. Students who are struggling with addiction or who are tempted or feeling pressured to use intoxicating drugs or alcohol are urged to seek help immediately from a parent, teacher, counselor, administrator, or other trusted adult. No student will face disciplinary consequences for coming forward, proactively, to seek help while not in possession of or under the influence of contraband.

That said, the Board has a solemn duty to adopt policies that are reasonably designed to keep its school and students safe. To that end, the Board strictly prohibits all narcotics, alcoholic beverages, unauthorized prescription drugs, and similar substances at schools and school-sponsored activities. Specifically, no student shall possess, use, distribute, sell, possess with intent to distribute or sell, conspire or attempt to distribute or sell, purchase, or be under the influence of any narcotic drug, opioid, hallucinogen, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana or cannabis product, anabolic steroid, controlled substance, alcoholic beverage, drug paraphernalia, counterfeit substance, unauthorized prescription drug, or any other chemical or product with the intention of bringing about a state of exhilaration, euphoria, or of otherwise altering the student's mood or behavior. The proper use of a drug authorized by valid medical prescription from a legally authorized health care provider shall not be considered a violation of this rule when the drug is taken by the person for whom the drug was prescribed.

The following definitions apply to this rule:

a. Possession: Having the prohibited substance on the student's person or in another place where the student, either alone or jointly with others, has control over it. This may include, but is not limited to, possession of a prohibited substance in an automobile, locker, book bag, or desk.

b. Use: The consumption, injection, inhalation, ingestion, or absorption of a prohibited substance into a student's body by any means.

c. Under the influence: Having used a prohibited substance such that it continues to influence a student's mood, behavior, or learning to any degree.

d. Counterfeit Substance: Any substance that is described or presented with the intention of deceiving another into believing that it is a substance prohibited under this rule.

e. Unauthorized Prescription Drug: Any prescription drug or medication that is used or possessed by someone other than the person for whom the prescription was written.

f. Drug Paraphernalia: Objects that are used or intended to be used for ingesting, injecting, inhaling, or otherwise introducing a substance prohibited by this rule into the body, including but not limited to pipes, vaporizers, rolling papers, and syringes. Relevant evidence may be considered in determining whether an object is drug paraphernalia.

g. Conspiracy: An agreement by two or more persons to commit an unlawful act in violation of this rule.
h. Sell: To exchange a substance prohibited by this rule for money, property, or any other benefit or item of value.

i. Possess with Intent to Distribute/Sell: Intent to distribute or sell may be determined from relevant evidence such as the amount of the prohibited substance found; the manner in which it was packaged; the presence of packaging materials such as scales, baggies or other containers; and the statements or actions of students.

j. Distribute: To transmit a prohibited substance to one or more other students, with or without compensation. For purposes of this definition, a student has not "distributed" a prohibited substance (but may be guilty of "possession" or "use") if the student's sole involvement is to share or pass a prohibited substance with other students in the course of using it, so long as the student was not the one who brought the prohibited substance onto school property or otherwise made it available to other students.

When a first infraction of this rule involves solely possession, use, conspiracy to possess or use, and/or being under the influence of a substance prohibited by this rule, and a long-term suspension recommendation for violation of this rule is not supported by any other rule violations that independently support long-term suspension, an alternative to long-term suspension, such as referral to their base school, shall be offered.

III-2 Gang and Gang Related Activity: The Board believes that gangs and gang-related activities pose a serious safety threat to students and staff members of Sterling Montessori Academy and Charter School and can significantly disrupt the educational environment. Even actions that are not innately dangerous, such as displaying hand signs, wearing items of particular colors, and speaking with special jargon can substantially increase the risks of criminal activity and physical injury when those signs and signals are used to support, signal, promote, or encourage gang activity or affiliation. Students who feel pressured to participate in or condone gang activities are urged to seek help from teachers, administrators, parents, and law enforcement officers.

a. No student shall participate in any gang-related activities. For purposes of this rule:

1. A gang is any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal acts, and having a common name or common identifying sign, colors or symbols.
2. Gang-related activities are any activities engaged in by a student on behalf of an identified gang; to perpetuate the existence of an identified gang; to promote the common purpose and design of an identified gang; or to represent gang affiliation, loyalty, or solidarity.

b. Conduct prohibited by this rule includes:

1. Wearing, possessing, using, distributing, displaying, or selling any clothing, jewelry, emblems, badges, symbols, signs, visible tattoos and body markings, or other items, with the intent to convey or promote membership or affiliation in any gang;
2. Communicating either verbally or non-verbally (gestures, handshakes, slogans, drawings, etc.), with the intent to convey or promote membership or affiliation in any gang;
3. Tagging, or otherwise defacing school or personal property with symbols or slogans intended to convey or promote membership or affiliation in any gang;
4. iv. Requiring payment of protection, money or insurance, or otherwise intimidating or threatening any person in connection with gang-related activity;
5. Inciting other students to intimidate or to act with physical violence upon any other person in connection with gang-related activity;
6. Soliciting others for gang membership;
7. Committing or conspiring to commit an illegal act in connection with gang-related activity.

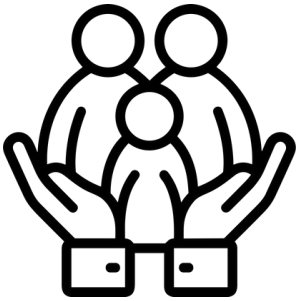
c. When a first infraction involves only the wearing of gang-related attire, the student shall receive a warning and be allowed to immediately change or remove the attire as an alternative to disciplinary action.

d. The Executive Director or Executive Director's designee shall regularly consult with law enforcement officials to identify examples of gang-related items, symbols and behaviors and shall provide each principal with this information. Parents and students shall be notified that such information is maintained in the office, that it is subject to change, and that the office may be consulted for updates. In providing this information for parents and students, the school acknowledges that not all potential gang indicators connote actual membership in a gang.

III-3 Weapons/Dangerous Instruments/Substances: No student shall possess, handle, or transmit any weapon, facsimile of a weapon, dangerous instrument/substance or other object that can reasonably be considered or used as a weapon or dangerous instrument/substance. This does not apply to any student who finds a weapon or dangerous instrument/substance on school property or receives it from another person on school property and who immediately reports the weapon or dangerous instrument/substance to school or law enforcement authorities.

The following definitions apply to this rule:

a. Weapon: Any firearm, BB gun, stun gun, air rifle, air pistol, ammunition, power loads, fireworks, knife, slingshot, leaded cane, blackjack, metallic knuckles, razors, razor blades except cartridge razors used solely for personal shaving, box cutter, mace, pepper spray, and other personal defense sprays, and any sharp-pointed or edged instrument except instructional supplies, unaltered nail files and clips and tools used solely for preparation of food, instruction, and maintenance.



b. Dangerous Instruments/Substances: Any object or substance that is possessed, handled, transmitted, or used for the purpose of causing or attempting to cause physical injury.

c. Facsimile of a Weapon: Any copy of a weapon that could reasonably be perceived to be a real weapon.

Note: Refer to Level IV: Rule IV-1 for violations involving Firearms/Destructive Devices.

III-4 Assault on a Student: No student shall cause or attempt to cause serious physical injury to another student. For the purposes of this policy, serious physical injury shall refer to any significant or aggravated bodily injury, including but not limited to broken bone(s), loss or chipping of teeth, loss or impairment of vision, loss of consciousness, internal injuries, scarring or other disfigurement, significant bleeding, lacerations resulting in sutures, significant bruising, severe or prolonged pain, any injury requiring hospitalization for any period of time, and/or any injury resulting in medical treatment beyond simple first aid procedures.

III-5 Assault on School Personnel or Other Adult: No student shall cause or attempt to cause physical injury to any school employee or other adult.
Note: If a teacher is assaulted or injured by a student and as a result the student is reassigned to their base school, long-term suspended, or excluded, the student shall not be returned to that teacher's classroom unless the teacher consents.

III-6 Assault Involving Weapon/Dangerous Instrument/Substances: No student shall assault another using a weapon, dangerous instrument, or dangerous substances.

Note: Refer to Level IV: Rule IV-1 for violations involving Firearms/Destructive Devices.

III-7 Bomb Threats: No student shall make a bomb threat or hoax by making a false report that a device designed to cause damage or destruction by explosion, blasting, or burning is located on the school premises or at the site of school activities, or by placing or concealing an object or artifact on school property or the site of school activities so as to cause any person to reasonably believe the object or artifact to be a bomb or other destructive device.

III-8 Threats of Mass Violence: No student shall, by means of communication to any person or group, threaten to commit an act of mass violence on educational property or at a curricular or extracurricular activity sponsored by a school. For purposes of this rule, “mass violence” is physical injury that a reasonable person would conclude could lead to permanent injury (including mental or emotional health) or death to two or more people.

III-9 Sexual Assault, Sexual Offense, and Rape: The Board believes that all students have the right to learn in a safe environment. All students should respect the physical boundaries of other students, and under no circumstances should consent for physical contact be presumed. The Board acknowledges the long-term negative impacts and significant trauma caused by sexual assault, sexual offense, and rape, and strictly prohibits the behavior described in this section.

a. Sexual Assault: A student is guilty of sexual assault if they, for the purpose of sexual arousal, sexual gratification, or sexual abuse, engages in sexual contact with another person by force and against the will of the other person, or if the person being assaulted is mentally disabled, mentally incapacitated, or physically helpless and the person performing the act knows or should reasonably know that the other person is mentally disabled, mentally incapacitated, or physically helpless.

"Sexual contact" is the touching of the sexual organ, anus, breast, groin or buttocks of any person or a person touching another person with their own sexual organ, anus, breast, groin, or buttocks.

b. Sexual Offense: A student is guilty of a sexual offense if the student engages in a sexual act with:

(1) a victim who is a child under the age of 13 years and the defendant is at least 12 years old and is at least four years older than the victim, or

(2) with another person by force and against the will of the other person, and

(a) employs or displays a dangerous or deadly weapon or an article which the person reasonably believes to be a dangerous or deadly weapon,

(b) inflicts serious personal injury upon the victim or another person, or

(c) the person commits the offense aided and abetted by one or more other persons.

The difference between a sexual assault and a sexual offense is that a sexual assault involves forcible and intentional touching without penetration, and a sexual offense involves penetration of a sex organ or anus by any object, or touching another’s mouth or anus by the male sex organ.

c. Rape: A student is guilty of rape if that person engages in vaginal intercourse with another person by force and against the will of the other person, or if the person being assaulted is mentally disabled, mentally incapacitated, or physically helpless and the person performing the act knows or should reasonably know that the other person is mentally disabled, mentally incapacitated, or physically helpless. Statutory rape is vaginal intercourse committed on a child under the age of 16 by a person who is at least 12 years old and at least 4 years older than the victim, regardless of whether the victim consented.

LEVEL IV:

IV-1 Firearm/ Destructive Device K-12: As required by state law, any student in grades K-12 shall be recommended for suspension for 365 calendar days for bringing a "firearm" or "destructive device" onto school property or to a school-sponsored event off school property, or for possessing a "firearm" or "destructive device" on school property or at a school-sponsored event off school property. School property includes any property owned, used, or leased by the school. The Executive Director is required to refer to the law enforcement system any student who brings a firearm or weapon to school.

The following definitions apply to this rule:

a. Firearm: A weapon, including a starter gun, which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; the frame or receiver of any such weapon; or any firearm muffler or firearm silencer. The term does not include an inoperable antique firearm, BB gun, stun gun, air rifle, or air pistol.

b. Destructive Device: An explosive, incendiary, or poison gas bomb, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, mine, or device similar to any of the devices listed in this definition.

Violation of this rule shall result in suspension from school for 365 days unless modified by the Executive Director or Board on a case-by-case basis.

The 365-day suspension does not apply to any student who finds the firearm on school property or receives it from another person on school property and who delivers the weapon, immediately, to school or law enforcement authorities.

LEVEL V:

Level V is the most serious level in this Code. While there are no separate Level V rules, the violation of one or more Level II, III, or IV rules in this Code becomes subject to Level V sanctions – meaning that a student may be permanently excluded from Sterling Montessori Academy and Charter School – if all of the following criteria are met: (1) the student is fourteen (14) years old or older; (2) both the Section Director and the Executive Director recommend exclusion; (3) the Board, consistent with the Board's "Due Process" policy, determines by clear and convincing evidence, that the student's continued presence in school constitutes a clear threat to the safety of other students or school staff.

Sterling Montessori will follow all North Carolina state law requirements regarding the specific rules and due process relating to serious disciplinary matters, short- and long-term suspensions, and expulsions under Article 27 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes. The school will follow these rules in such instances.

Additionally, any student who is registered as a sex offender under Article 27A of Chapter 14 of the North Carolina General Statutes may be excluded in accordance with these procedures.

Select School Policies and Procedures

DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

Bullying is conduct meant to harm, intimidate or coerce another person. Bullying can take many forms. Our policy prohibits bullying of any kind.

Sterling Montessori recognizes the impact that bullying has on health, welfare, safety and the learning environment. Bullying is prohibited on Sterling Montessori property, activities, field trips and events.

All administrators, teachers, staff and students share the responsibility to ensure that bullying does not occur at Sterling Montessori or at any Sterling Montessori-sponsored activities or events.

Our complete policy on the Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying (P. 3) can be found in the Comprehensive Policies document.

CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The student use of cell phones and other electronic devices is prohibited while students are on campus. This ensures that lessons and student work will not be interrupted, safeguards students against cyber bullying, and prevents theft of such devices. *Our complete policy on Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices (P. 36) can be found in the Comprehensive Policies document.*

RESPONSIBLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Sterling Montessori intends that students and employees will remain within the bounds of safe, legal and responsible use of technology. The parent/guardian and student must consent to the student's independent access to the Internet and to the monitoring of the student's Internet activity and e-mail communication by school personnel. *Our complete Use of Technology Policy (P. 10) can be found in the Comprehensive Policies document.*

USE OF PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY ON STERLING MONTESSORI PROPERTY

Sterling Montessori assumes no responsibility for personal technology devices brought to school. To prevent the introduction of malicious code and protect the integrity of Sterling Montessori's information resources, Sterling Montessori's technology team may restrict the use of any hardware or software it deems inappropriate.

DRESS CODE

The purpose of this policy is to make sure students are dressed appropriately in clothes that allow for safe movement, independence and the possibility of getting dirty. We discourage distracting clothing such as those with lights, or which squeak, etc. Certain attire is prohibited on school grounds. If a student is found in violation of the Dress Code they may be asked to change or be sent home. *Our complete Dress Code (P. 38) can be found in the Comprehensive Policies document.*