

**Little Explorers  
Montessori School**

**EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

**2023**

# Little Explorers Montessori School Employee Benefits and Work Policies

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## **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND WORK POLICIES**

### **1. EMPLOYMENT AT WILL**

Please remember that these benefits and policies are not all-inclusive and cover only some of the most basic questions that employees are concerned about. The information set forth is a general guide, not a legally binding contract with Little Explorers Montessori School. These policies, procedures, and benefits and any amendments or revisions in any other personnel material that may be distributed from time to time can and may be changed at any time by Little Explorers Montessori School in its discretion without prior notice.

Nothing in this Employee Handbook is intended to alter the "at-will" status of each employee's relationship to Little Explorers Montessori School. Either an employee or Little Explorers Montessori School may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause, and with or without prior notice. Little Explorers Montessori School also reserves its right to terminate any employment relationship without resort to the disciplinary guidelines set forth in this Employee Manual. To acknowledge this policy, each employee must sign a form to indicate their understanding of this policy and their agreement to it. No supervisor has the authority to offer, promise, or guarantee any other type of employment arrangement to an applicant or existing employee; the "at-will" employment policy covers all applicants and all employees.

### **2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT, AND NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES**

#### **Statement of Policy**

It is the policy and practice of Little Explorers Montessori School to provide and promote equal employment opportunities for all applicants and employees. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that the concepts of equal employment opportunity and non-discrimination are understood, abided by, and carried out by everyone at Little Explorers Montessori School.

It is the policy of Little Explorers Montessori School to hire, train, promote, compensate and administer all employment practices without regard to race, color, sex, age, marital status, religion, medical condition, national origin, veteran status, or disability unrelated to the ability to perform a job. Harassment of employees because they are members of any of the foregoing protected groups is prohibited. In addition, sexual harassment or harassment on any of the grounds stated in this policy is strictly forbidden. Little Explorers Montessori School will endeavor to undertake good faith efforts to fulfill the objectives of this policy. To that end, Little Explorers Montessori School will take all appropriate measures in response to any such incidents that come to the attention of Little Explorers Montessori School.

Little Explorers Montessori School believes that every employee has the right to work in an environment totally free of sexual harassment and ethnic, racial, discriminatory, or sex-oriented joking or epithets. Such conduct does not advance the purposes of Little Explorers Montessori School; it is also morally wrong, and may subject Little Explorers Montessori School to legal exposure. Consequently, any employee who engages in such prohibited conduct will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination.

#### **Conduct Constituting Prohibited Sexual Harassment**

For example, and without compiling an exhaustive list, the following are illustrative of the types of conduct that Little Explorers Montessori School condemns and prohibits under this policy:

- It is sexual harassment for any person to condition a benefit such as a certain salary or promotion on the granting of sexual favors or the establishment or continuance of a personal relationship, or to imply to an employee that an award of such a benefit is conditioned upon the granting of sexual favors or the establishment or continuance of a personal relationship.
- It is also sexual harassment for any employee to state or imply that another employee's performance is attributable in whole or in part to the sex of that employee.
- It is also sexual harassment for any employee to state or imply that any other employee's performance appraisal, salary, or promotion in the corporate hierarchy has resulted from the granting of a sexual relationship.

As an employee of Little Explorers Montessori School, you should be aware that the issue of whether conduct constitutes sexual harassment or discriminatory conduct might depend on how that conduct is viewed by the employee who is subjected to the conduct. Any employee who initiates or persists in this type of prohibited conduct assumes the risk that the person who is the object of the conduct may view such behavior as offensive. Thus, any employee who initiates or persists in this type of conduct may be subject to discipline even if such behavior might not have been intended as offensive.

### **Conduct Constituting Prohibited Ethnic, Racial, Discriminatory, or Sexual Joking And Epithets**

As examples, and without compiling an exhaustive list, the following are illustrative of the types of conduct Little Explorers Montessori School also condemns and prohibits under this policy:

- It is prohibited for any employee to engage in any conduct which has the effect of creating an abusive or offensive work environment due to a person's sex, race, color, ethnic background, age, veteran status, national origin, religion, marital status, or disability.
- It is prohibited for any employee to bring any item to the work premises for purposes of a racial, ethnic, discriminatory, or sexual joke or epithet.
- It is also prohibited for any employee to use School property, e-mail or communication systems, bulletin boards, or documents for purposes of a racial, ethnic, discriminatory, or sexual joke or epithet.
- It is also prohibited for any employee to utter or utilize any racial, ethnic, discriminatory, or sexual jokes or epithets at work, or when referring to or about any other person, be they an employee or a non-employee.
- It is also prohibited for any employee to harass anyone else due to their sex, race, color, ethnic background, age, veteran status, national origin, religion, marital status, or disability.
- It is also prohibited for any employee to deface School property or the personal property of anyone else for purposes of a racial, ethnic, discriminatory, or sexual joke or epithet.

### **Procedure Upon the Occurrence of Prohibited Conduct**

Any employee who believes they have been subjected or exposed to sexual harassment, discrimination, or ethnic, racial, discriminatory, or sexual comments, jokes, or epithets has the right to have such activity terminated immediately. Complaints about such conduct should be made either to the Director of School

or the Board of Directors. Complaints should be made immediately after an employee believes that they have been subjected to any conduct prohibited by Little Explorers Montessori School's policy. Complaints will be treated in a confidential manner to the extent possible. An investigation will be made immediately concerning the allegations. If the investigation leads to a determination that the charges are true, corrective action will be taken immediately.

### **ADA Reasonable Accommodation Policy**

Little Explorers Montessori School stands committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Americans With Disabilities Act ("ADA") and all other applicable state and federal statutes governing the work place. It is the policy of Institute For Community to hire, train, promote, compensate, and administer all employment practices without regard to race, color, sex, age, marital status, religion, medical condition, national origin, veteran status, or disability unrelated to the ability to perform a job with or without reasonable accommodation. Discrimination against job applicants or employees because they are disabled is prohibited and will not be tolerated. Little Explorers Montessori School will endeavor to undertake good faith efforts to fulfill the objectives of this policy.

### **Procedural Channels**

In this respect, all employees are encouraged to advise Little Explorers Montessori School as to how Little Explorers Montessori School can accommodate their disabilities so that they will have equal employment opportunities in the work place. Employees should also advise Little Explorers Montessori School of any facilities which they believe need to be made accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities. Employees may contact the Director of School or the Board of Directors with this information at any time.

### **Complaint Procedure**

If at any time any employee believes that they have been discriminated against due to a disability, a complaint should be made either to the Director of School or the Board of Directors of Little Explorers Montessori School. Complaints should be made in writing (see Complaint Report Form) immediately after an employee believes that they have been subjected to any conduct prohibited by the Company's policy. Complaints will be treated in a confidential manner to the extent possible. An investigation will be made immediately concerning the allegations. If the investigation leads to a determination that the charges are true, corrective action will be taken immediately.

## **3. OPEN DOOR POLICY**

### **Purpose and Scope**

The purpose of the Company's Open Door Policy is to implement Little Explorers Montessori School philosophy that all employees should have free and immediate access to management to raise any type of work-related concerns.

Employees are encouraged to raise work-related concerns with their immediate supervisor as soon as possible after the events that cause the concerns. Alternatively, if an employee believes that their immediate supervisor is not the appropriate person with whom to raise such matters, the employee is encouraged to bring their concerns to the attention of the Director of School or Board of Directors of Little Explorers Montessori School

Employees are further encouraged to pursue discussion of their work-related concerns with the management official they have approached until the matters they have raised are fully resolved. Little Explorers Montessori School cannot guarantee that in each instance the employee will be satisfied with the result, but in each case an attempt will be made to explain the resolution of the matter to the employee, even when it is not the result that the employee sought. Little Explorers Montessori School believes that

such concerns are best addressed through informal and open communication. No employee will be disciplined or otherwise penalized for raising a good-faith concern. Little Explorers Montessori School will attempt to keep confidential all such expressions of concern, their investigation, and the terms of their resolution. At the same time, however, some dissemination of information to others may be appropriate during the process of investigating and resolving the employee's concerns.

### **Written Grievances**

Employees who conclude that their work-related concerns should be brought to the attention of Little Explorers Montessori School are also encouraged to submit their concerns in writing whenever such a problem cannot be resolved with the Director of School after an attempt to work things out through the "Open Door" policy. Employees who submit a written grievance or complaint under this procedure will not be subject to any reprisals. However, employees submitting a written grievance or complaint should do so in such a manner that will not disrupt or interfere with the work of any other employee. Any employee having a grievance or complaint that cannot be resolved initially should forward the grievance or a written complaint to the Board of Directors. Thereafter, the matter will be resolved promptly, or alternatively, Little Explorers Montessori School will conduct a formal investigation pursuant to the "Internal Complaint Review" policy described in this Employee Handbook.

## **4. INTERNAL COMPLAINT REVIEW POLICY**

### **Purpose and Scope**

The purpose of the Internal Complaint Review policy is to afford all employees with the opportunity to seek internal resolution of their work-related complaints. The Internal Complaint Review policy is intended to supplement the "Open Door Policy" set forth in this Employee Handbook. Little Explorers Montessori School will attempt to treat all internal complaints and their investigation in a confidential manner, while at the same time recognizing, however, that some dissemination of information to others may be appropriate in the course of investigating and resolving internal complaints. Little Explorers Montessori School will not discipline any employee who brings a complaint in good faith, regardless of whether or not the complaint is found to have merit.

### **Procedure**

#### **1. Filing of Complaint**

Employees should prepare a written complaint and direct it to the attention of the Board of Directors of Little Explorers Montessori School as soon as possible after the events that give rise to the employee's work-related concerns. The written complaint should set forth in detail the reasons for the complaint and the resolution sought by the employee. It should be signed and dated by the employee and then sent to the Board of Directors of Little Explorers Montessori School in a confidential envelope.

#### **2. Investigation**

The Board of Directors of Little Explorers Montessori School, upon receipt of a written complaint, will acknowledge to the employee that the complaint was received and that it is under review. The Board of Directors, or designee, will direct the investigation of the complaint. Where necessary, the investigation will include a face-to-face meeting with the employee and with others who are named in the complaint or who may have knowledge of the facts pertinent to the complaint.

#### **3. Resolution**

On completion of the investigation, the Board of Directors, or designee, will take action to resolve the complaint. In addition, the President or designee will discuss the resolution of the complaint

with the employee.

## **5. EMPLOYEE DEFINITIONS**

### Orientation Employee

Your first sixty days on the job are ones of learning and getting to know the people with whom you will be working. It is important to us, and to you, that you and your job are reasonably matched. Little Explorers Montessori School will make every effort to see that the transition into your new position is smooth.

### Full-Time Employee

An employee who normally works 40 or more hours per week is considered a full-time employee.

A salaried employee as designated by the Company is paid based upon a fixed annual salary, and is not paid on an hourly basis. A salaried employee can be classified as either exempt or non-exempt.

**Exempt:** Exempt employees are defined as Director, Administrators and Professional Teachers who are exempt from overtime laws.

**Non-exempt:** Non-exempt employees are defined as non-director, non-administrative, and non-teaching employees. Non-exempt employees are paid overtime based on the non-exempt classification pursuant to the Department of Labor's specifications.

### Part-Time Employee

Part-time employees work less than 40 hours per week and are paid an hourly wage for the hours worked. Part-time employees are excluded from other Little Explorers Montessori School benefits unless specified in the Benefits section.

## **6. HOURS**

The workday will normally consist of eight hours per day but can be vary.

## **7. OVERTIME**

Overtime, hours over forty worked in any one week, is compensated at one and one-half the non-exempt employee's regular hourly rate, unless otherwise required under applicable state and local laws.

Non-exempt employees will be notified as far in advance as reasonably possible when scheduled overtime is to be worked unless an emergency arises which precludes the giving of such notice.

Non-exempt employees are entitled to overtime pay or compensatory time off for more than 40 hours worked in any one week. Compensatory time for hours over 40 in any one week will be compensated at one hour off for every hour over forty. The non-exempt employee who desires compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay must complete a Request For Time Off form and must receive approval from his/her supervisor prior to taking compensatory time off.

## **8. PAY DAYS**

Employees are paid the 5<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> day of each month. Each salaried employee's paycheck covers the period from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the last day of the month and the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>, respectively.

Salary advances will not be given unless approved by the Head of School of Little Explorers Montessori School. Gross pay, deductions, and net pay information is provided on each employee's paycheck.

## **9. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND SALARY REVIEW**

The Director of School generally makes performance evaluations annually, although circumstances may require more or less frequent evaluations. Regular annual evaluations occur in June through a discussion with the employee and by the Director of School written report. This evaluation is an ongoing program to identify employee strengths and weaknesses and to assist the individual in personal development and growth. Additionally, it provides background knowledge to assist in the selection of candidates for special training and promotion.

Annual salary reviews occur simultaneously with the June performance evaluations. This review ensures that an employee's salary is commensurate with his/her contribution to the company and is appropriate in the judgment and discretion of the company.

Salary adjustments typically are effective on August 1st, however, may be granted at any time as a result of classification change, promotion or special circumstances. Increases are not automatically granted. Rather, each employee is reviewed and increases, if any, are commensurate with performance based on the assessment of the employee's immediate supervisor. Salary arrangements are a confidential matter between the employee and the employer. The employee is expected to maintain this confidence. Violation of this confidence may result in disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination.

## **10. VACATIONS**

Family vacations should be scheduled during holidays, Christmas vacation, spring break, and summer; not on school days.

## **11. HOLIDAYS and 5 PERSONAL/SICK DAYS**

Holidays are not paid for salaried or hourly employees. Five Personal/Sick Days during the school year are paid for salaried employees but not hourly employees.

## **12. LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

### **Medical Leaves of Absence**

Any regular employee who, as a result of a medical condition, becomes unable to perform the duties of his or her position, or any employee who becomes disabled due to pregnancy, may be eligible for a Medical Leave of Absence following exhaustion of the employee's Paid Leave (if applicable), for all or a portion of the period of the employee's medical condition as described below.

### **Short-Term Medical Leave**

#### **1. Commencement of Leave**

An employee becomes eligible to commence his or her medical leave on the day following exhaustion of his or her accrued Paid Leave or on the eighth day following the onset of his or her medical condition, whichever is later.

#### **2. Duration**

A short-term medical leave may extend for the duration of the medical condition up to a maximum of six (6) months, measured from the onset of the medical condition.



3. Verification of Condition  
Little Explorers Montessori School reserves the right to request at any time that an employee confirm the nature of their medical condition with a written verification from a licensed physician.
4. Paid Leave Accrual, Vacation Accrual, and Holiday Pay  
Neither paid leave nor vacation accrues during any period of absence on a medical leave in excess of five (5) calendar days. Employees on leave also do not receive holiday pay. Company- provided medical, dental, and other insurance benefits continue during any period of absence on medical leave.
5. Notice of Leave  
Employees whose medical leaves can be anticipated, i.e., leave for elective surgery or leave for pregnancy, must provide at least two (2) weeks advanced written notice of the anticipated start of their leave. The notice must be provided to the employee's immediate supervisor.
6. Verification of Ability to Return to Work  
Little Explorers Montessori School reserves the right to require written verification from a licensed physician that an employee's medical condition has ceased before permitting the employee to return to work.
7. Return for Part-Time Work  
An employee who has not fully recovered from his or her medical condition may request a return to work on a part-time basis. Such requests must be accompanied by a written release from a licensed physician indicating that the employee is capable of performing work on a part-time basis. If the employee returns to a part-time work schedule, their compensation will be adjusted accordingly.
8. Holding of Positions  
To the extent feasible, Little Explorers Montessori School will return the employee to the same position, or a comparable position for which the employee is qualified, at the end of the employee's medical leave. If no such positions are available, Little Explorers Montessori School will place the employee on lay-off status, during which time the employee will be given preference of employment to an opening in his or her same position for which he or she is qualified for a period of six (6) months. After the lapse of that period, the employee's employment with Little Explorers Montessori School will terminate.

### **Family and Medical Leave of Absence Policy**

At any Company location having fifty (50) or more employees, Little Explorers Montessori School will grant family and/or medical leave of absence to eligible employees on an unpaid basis for up to twelve (12) weeks per year. Such a leave of absence is one that is necessary for medical reasons or as a result of family circumstances as is specified in this policy. These leaves are available in addition to, and not in lieu of, other leave of absences allowed for vacations, paid leave, or sick leave. This policy is intended to comply with the requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 and the provisions of this policy will be interpreted in a manner consistent with the law.

### **Family and Medical Leave of Absence**

Little Explorers Montessori School will grant a Family and Medical Leave of Absence to any employee

who must cease work because of a serious health condition that prevents the employee from performing the functions of his or her position. Little Explorers Montessori School will also grant a Family and Medical Leave of Absence under certain circumstances that are critical to an employee's family: the birth of an employee's child; the placement of a child with an employee for adoption or foster care; or when the employee is needed to care for a child, spouse, or parent who has a serious health condition. A "serious health condition" for purposes of a Family and Medical Leave of Absence is an illness, injury, impairment or physical or mental condition that involves any period of incapacity or treatment requiring absence from work or other daily activities of more than three calendar days and continuing treatment by a health care provider, as well as a condition which if left untreated would likely result in a period of incapacity of more than three days. A "continuing treatment by a health care provider" for purposes of a Family and Medical Leave of Absence is treatment on at least two or more occasions for injury or illness or a single visit followed by a regimen of continuing treatment. Accordingly, there may be circumstances where a Family and Medical Leave of Absence is unavailable since the employee's condition is a short-term condition for which treatment and recovery are very brief. Thus, minor illnesses that last only a few days or surgical procedures that do not require hospitalization or have only a brief recovery period do not qualify as a "serious health condition" entitling an employee to a Family and Medical Leave of Absence under this policy.

#### **Eligibility for Family and Medical Leave of Absence**

To be eligible for a Family and Medical Leave of Absence under this policy, an employee must have been employed by Little Explorers Montessori School for at least twelve (12) months and must have worked at least 1,250 hours during the twelve-month period preceding the commencement of the leave of absence. Thus, probationary employees or part-time workers are not entitled to a Family and Medical Leave of Absence under this policy. A leave of absence taken pursuant to this policy may not exceed twelve (12) weeks in any twelve (12) month period. Little Explorers Montessori School has adopted a "rolling year" formula for determining the twelve (12) month period during which twelve (12) weeks of leave of absence may be taken; this means that an employee's particular twelve (12) month period is measured backwards from the time any leave is taken.

Any employee who desires a Family and Medical Leave of Absence pursuant to this policy must complete, sign, and submit an Application For Family and Medical Leave of Absence to his or her immediate supervisor. A sample Application Form for a Family and Medical Leave of Absence is set forth at Appendix D to this Employee Handbook. When the need for a Family and Medical Leave of Absence is foreseeable or anticipated, such as planned medical treatment or the need to care for a newborn child, the employee must make efforts to schedule leave so as not to disrupt Little Explorers Montessori School operations and must submit the Application For Family and Medical Leave of Absence not less than thirty (30) days before the date the leave is to begin. If the proposed leave of absence is foreseeable due to planned medical treatment, an employee is required to schedule the treatment so as not to disrupt the operations of Little Explorers Montessori School. If the need for leave was not foreseeable, the employee must submit an Application For Family and Medical Leave Of Absence as far in advance of the date the leave is to begin as is practicable.

A Family and Medical Leave of Absence pursuant to this policy may be taken by an employee on an intermittent (rather than on an uninterrupted) basis or on a reduced schedule if medically necessary as a result of an employee's serious health condition or that of his or her spouse, child, or parent. However, except as allowed by local law, a leave of absence pursuant to this policy may not be taken on an intermittent or reduced schedule basis when the reason for the leave is the birth of a child or the placement of a child for adoption or foster care.

### **Certification Procedure**

Every application for a Family and Medical Leave of Absence pursuant to this policy must include a written medical certification from an employee's licensed medical care provider (except when the reason for the requested leave of absence is the birth of a child or the placement of a child for adoption or foster care). An employee must submit their written medical certification in a timely manner. It is the responsibility of the employee to submit the written medical certification; it should be submitted as an attachment to the employee's Application for a Family and Medical Leave of Absence. A Health Care Provider Certification Form is available from the Payroll and Personnel Department. An employee's failure to provide such a certification may result in a denial or delay of leave of absence.

The written medical certification must state, among other things, information as to: (1) the date on which the serious medical condition commenced; (2) the probable duration of the condition; and (3) the appropriate medical facts regarding the condition and its duration. If the basis for a proposed leave of absence is an employee's own serious health condition, the written medical certification must also include a statement that the employee is unable to perform the functions of his or her position. If the basis for a proposed leave of absence is the serious health condition of a spouse, child, or parent, the written medical certification must also include a statement that the employee is needed to care for the spouse, child, or parent, as well as a statement of an estimate of the amount of time the employee is needed to provide the care.

In its discretion, and at its own expense, Little Explorers Montessori School may require a second medical opinion after an employee submits a medical certification. If the second medical opinion differs from the original medical certification, Little Explorers Montessori School may require the employee to submit to examination by a third physician, the identity of whom will be agreed upon by Little Explorers Montessori School and the employee requesting the leave of absence. Little Explorers Montessori School may require periodic re-certification by an employee's medical care provider when Little Explorers Montessori School in its discretion deems re-certification is warranted.

### **Conditions of Family and Medical Leave of Absence**

The following conditions apply to a Family and Medical Leave of Absence pursuant to this policy:

- In its discretion, Little Explorers Montessori School may require an employee taking an approved leave of absence to periodically report on his or her status and intention to return to work.
- An employee taking an approved leave of absence may not engage in other work or employment during the leave of absence. If an employee engages in other work or employment during the leave of absence, the employee will be considered to have violated the terms of the leave of absence, and to have voluntarily terminated his or her employment with Little Explorers Montessori School.
- If an employee is granted a leave of absence on an intermittent basis or on a reduced schedule basis, Little Explorers Montessori School may require the employee to temporarily transfer to an alternative position that accommodates the employee's recurring absences or part-time schedule.
- Where applicable, spouses that are both employed by Little Explorers Montessori School are entitled to twelve (12) weeks of leave in total, rather than twelve (12) weeks leave of absence each, if a leave of absence is sought for the birth or placement of a child for adoption or foster care or to care for a parent (but not a parent-in-law) who has a serious health condition.
- If at the time of applying for a Family and Medical Leave of Absence or during the leave of

absence pursuant to this policy the employee intends not to return to work or decides not to return to work after completion of the leave of absence, the employee will be liable to and required to reimburse Little Explorers Montessori School for the cost of payments made to maintain the employee's benefits during the leave of absence taken pursuant to this policy.

### **Status of Employee Compensation and Benefits During Family and Medical Leave of Absence**

Little Explorers Montessori School may apply any part of an employee's accrued paid vacation time, personal time, or any other paid leave toward any part of the twelve (12) week period allowed for an approved Family and Medical Leave of Absence pursuant to this policy. If a leave of absence is sought of the employee's serious health condition, the employee will be required to substitute any available paid sick leave for any part of the unpaid leave provided under this policy. The decision to compensate an employee for any part of an approved Family and Medical Leave of Absence not covered by accrued paid vacation time, personal time, or other paid leave is within the sole discretion of Little Explorers Montessori School. Nothing in this policy will result in an increase in the amount or type of paid leave, if any. Little Explorers Montessori School will communicate the decision on compensation pursuant to other policies to the employee prior to the start of the leave of absence.

An approved Family and Medical Leave of Absence pursuant to this policy will not, however, result in the loss of any employment benefits that may have accrued before the date the leave of absence started. During the period of any unpaid Family and Medical Leave of Absence under this policy, an employee must arrange with Little Explorers Montessori School's insurance carrier to pay the premium contributions for continuation of his or her group insurance coverages, if applicable.

### **Return From an Approved Family and Medical Leave of Absence**

Employees are expected to return to work when the reason for the leave has terminated. Upon returning from an approved Family and Medical Leave of Absence pursuant to policy and granted as a result of an employee's own serious health condition, an employee must present written medical certification from his or her medical care provider stating that he or she is able to perform the essential functions of his/her job. An employee's failure to provide such certification at the time the employee attempts to return to work may result in a delay or denial of job restoration. After an employee complies with this requirement (if applicable), Little Explorers Montessori School will place the employee in his or her former position. In the event the former position is not available, the employee will be placed in a substantially equivalent position with substantially equivalent compensation and benefits.

If an employee does not return to work on the agreed upon date after expiration of a Family and Medical Leave of Absence, the employee will be considered to have voluntarily terminated his or her employment. Under no circumstances will a Family and Medical Leave of Absence be approved for longer than a period of twelve (12) weeks.

With respect to "highly paid" or "key" employees, there may be circumstances where no positions are available upon the expiration of his or her leave of absence. In such circumstances, the employee may be denied reinstatement. If so, the "key" or "highly paid" employee will be notified of Little Explorers Montessori School decision to deny reinstatement, and at that time such employees will be given an opportunity to return to work promptly upon receiving such notice. A "key" or "highly paid" employee is a salaried employee who is among the highest paid 10% of those employees working within seventy-five (75) miles of the Little Explorers Montessori School location at which the employee is assigned.

### **Further Information**

Employees wanting further information regarding this policy should consult with the Payroll and

Personnel Department.

### **Other Leaves of Absence**

1. **Civic Absences**  
Employees will be granted a leave of absence without pay as required by law for the purpose of fulfilling any required legal or military obligation, *i.e.*, jury duty, appearance as a witness in a legal proceeding, or military reserve duty. Employees are required to provide reasonable advance notice of any need for such leave and are expected to return to work each day that they are not selected for jury duty or called as a witness.
2. **Time-Off To Vote**  
Employees who do not have sufficient time outside of their regular working hours to vote in a statewide election may request time-off to vote. If possible, employees should make their request at least two (2) days in advance of the election. Up to two (2) hours of paid time off will be provided, at the beginning or end of the employee's regular shift, whichever will allow the most free time for voting and require the least time off work.
3. **Family Bereavement Leave**  
An employee who experiences a death in his or her immediate family is granted paid bereavement leave of up to three (3) working days. Compensation is paid at the employee's normal rate of pay for the actual time lost. The term "immediate family" for purposes of this policy includes an employee's spouse, children, parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, and parents of the employee's spouse. If extenuating circumstances require that an employee seek additional time off, the employee's supervisor may grant unpaid leave. An employee's accrued, unused vacation time also may be used for this purpose.
4. **Personal Leaves**  
Little Explorers Montessori School will grant personal leaves of absence for personal reasons for up to thirty (30) days. Personal leaves must be requested and granted in advance and are unpaid.

### **Termination During Leave of Absence**

An employee may be subject to termination during a leave of absence for reasons including but not limited to the following:

- Failure to keep Little Explorers Montessori School informed of their status or, medical status if on a medical leave, including maternity-pregnancy related leave; or,
- A medical determination that the employee is physically unable to return to work or to return to work without imminent and substantial risk of injury or further injury to himself or herself or significantly greater risk to others; or,
- Falsification of reason for or status of the circumstances surrounding the leave of absence.

Little Explorers Montessori School reserves the right to require an employee on any medical leave, including maternity or pregnancy related leave, to be examined at Little Explorers Montessori School expense by a Company-selected physician prior to their return to work. If business conditions require a reduction in force, employees on an approved leave of absence will be considered for lay-off and treated as active employees.

### **Neutral Leave of Absence Policy**

Little Explorers Montessori School will allow an employee to take advantage of all applicable leave of absence benefits that Little Explorers Montessori School administers through its personnel policies. Little Explorers Montessori School will exercise its discretion, however, to terminate any employee who is perpetually unable or unwilling to work or to return to work due to alleged medical reasons. Thus, while Little Explorers Montessori School will allow an employee to take advantage of all applicable leave of absence entitlements, if an employee has not returned within nine (9) months after exhausting all paid and unpaid leave of absence entitlements, Little Explorers Montessori School reserves the right to terminate any employee who has not returned to work by that time unless federal or state law requires otherwise.

### **13. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Little Explorers Montessori School encourages employees to take additional courses and seminars related to and for the betterment of their positions. To qualify, an employee must have been with Little Explorers Montessori School for at least six months and must receive written approval from his or her immediate supervisor prior to taking a course. Pending this approval, the employee pays all tuition and supply costs up front and completes a Purchase Order for such course. When evidence is submitted to your supervisor that the course has been satisfactorily completed and subject to these policies, reimbursement of 100 percent of the tuition cost will be made, up to the budgetary limits per employee per year.
2. Only educational courses that the company in its discretion determines will improve the employee's job skills and are related to the employee's present or potential future value to the company will be approved for reimbursement.
3. If the School pays for any training including a Teacher training program, the employee commits to employment at Little Explorers Montessori School for a 3-year cycle. If employee leaves the school employment before that time period has passed, employee with pay back tuition paid based on prorated expense over 3 years.
4. The Head of School shall approve attendance at seminars.
5. Within the school year of completing the course or seminar, the employee is encouraged to present the materials to their co-workers for their mutual benefit.

### **14. NEPOTISM**

Close relatives of employees (spouses, children, brothers, sisters, parents, or in-laws) may be employed on the same site pending Director of School and Board of Director approval.

### **15. INSURANCE BENEFITS**

Not provided.

### **16. AUTO INSURANCE**

During the course of your employment with Little Explorers Montessori School, you may be asked to use your car or motor vehicle to perform certain aspects of your job. Should an accident occur while you are using your vehicle on company business, it is expected that your property and liability insurance will be primary to cover any and all damages on claims.

### **17. SAFETY AND SECURITY**

All employees are expected to practice good safety habits. Employees should always know the layout of the building and/or property including location of fire exits and first-aid kits. It is important that we provide a safe and secure environment for both our members and employees.

## 18. **EMPLOYEE RULES OF CONDUCT**

### **General Policy**

The rules of conduct set forth in this section of the Employee Handbook are intended to provide employees with examples of Little Explorers Montessori School expectations as to the conduct of employees. Obviously, any set of rules cannot identify all types of unacceptable conduct or behavior. Therefore, employees should understand that conduct not specifically listed below also might result in disciplinary action if it adversely affects or is otherwise detrimental to the interests of Little Explorers Montessori School, other employees, or customers.

The list of examples provided is not meant to be all-inclusive, and various circumstances not stated in this policy may arise and require discipline or immediate termination. In addition, this section of the Employee Handbook is not intended to be a substitute for the good judgment, common sense, and discretion of company personnel and management.

### **Unacceptable Job Performance**

Employees may be disciplined up to and including discharge for poor job performance as determined by Little Explorers Montessori School. Poor job performance includes but is not limited to the following:

- Below-average work quality or quantity
- Poor attitude, including rudeness or lack of cooperation
- Unacceptable or unexcused absenteeism, tardiness, or abuse of break and lunch privileges
- Failure to follow instructions or Little Explorers Montessori School procedures
- Failure to follow Little Explorers Montessori School equal opportunity, anti-sexual harassment, and non-discrimination policies

### **Misconduct**

Depending on the severity of the misconduct, employees may be subject to discipline, up to and including immediate termination, for any of the following:

- Dishonesty
- Theft
- Discourtesy
- Misuse or destruction of Company property or the property of another on Company premises
- Violation of conflict of interest rules
- Unauthorized use or disclosure of confidential or proprietary information
- Falsifying or altering Company records, including misrepresentation or omission of information on the job application or employee forms
- Unauthorized alteration of time cards or punching or signing of another employee's time card
- Interference with the work performance of others
- Fighting with another employee
- Discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment, of another employee
- Being under the influence of, using, manufacturing, dispensing, distributing, possessing, or selling alcohol, drugs or controlled substances on Company property or while conducting Company business
- Dishonesty of any kind in your relations to Little Explorers Montessori School or its customers and clients
- Accepting cash or kickbacks from customers, clients, or entities that do business with Little Explorers Montessori School
- Sleeping on the job or leaving the job without authorization
- Possessing a firearm or another weapon on Company property or while conducting Company

business

- Being convicted of a crime that indicates unfitness for employment or raises a threat to the safety or well-being of Little Explorers Montessori School, its employees, customers, or property
- Failing to report to Little Explorers Montessori School, within five (5) days, any conviction under a criminal drug statute for a violation occurring in the workplace

Disciplinary action may be taken for other work-related misconduct as well.

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

In addition to the general rules stated above, in order to serve Little Explorers Montessori School customers and maintain an efficient and productive operation, each employee must adhere to Little Explorers Montessori School standards on attendance and punctuality. Employees may be disciplined, up to and including discharge, for failure to adhere to Little Explorers Montessori School standards on attendance and punctuality.

With respect to punctuality, Little Explorers Montessori School requires all employees to report to work on time, observe the limits for rest and lunch periods, and not to leave work early without prior approval from their supervisor. Employees are required to obtain their supervisor's permission prior to leaving designated work areas. When an employee leaves the premises for any reason, the employee must punch out on the time clock.

With respect to attendance and absenteeism, Little Explorers Montessori School requires all employees to give timely notice to Director of School whenever they will be absent or tardy. If an employee is unable to report to work or anticipates that they will be tardy, the employee must personally report the nature of their absence or the fact that they will be tardy. If the employee is under the care of a physician, this information should also be provided. The employee must make this report to their immediate supervisor in a person-to-person conversation (*i.e.*, leaving a message with a co-worker or leaving a phone mail message is not acceptable), and as far in advance as possible. It is requested that employees provide twenty-four (24) hour notice of the absence or tardiness, but in no case later than fifteen (15) minutes after the employee's scheduled starting time. If an employee's absence continues through the end of the workday, the employee should call their supervisor to personally notify their supervisor as to the probability of the employee's return to work the next day or their inability to do so. An employee is required to make this notification each day that they are absent. An employee's failure to do so will be interpreted by Little Explorers Montessori School as indicative of the employee's abandonment of their position and the voluntary resignation of their employment.

An employee's tardiness during the first hour of work will be penalized as double paid leave time. For example, if an employee is ten (10) minutes late to work, the employee's paid leave time will be reduced by twenty (20) minutes. Paid leave time is covered under the policy "Paid Leave". Excessive tardiness may lead to further discipline, up to and including termination.

### **Non-Fraternization Policy**

In order to promote the efficient operation of Little Explorers Montessori School business and to avoid misunderstandings, complaints of favoritism, problems of supervision, security, and morale, and possible claims of sexual harassment, managers and supervisors should refrain from dating and engaging in sexual relationships with employees whom they directly or indirectly supervise.

### **Ethics Policy**

Little Explorers Montessori School is a professional, responsible, and law-abiding business entity. It also



devotes considerable time and expense projecting itself as such. The conduct of every employee contributes to that image. Little Explorers Montessori School policy requires every employee to agree to take no action or engage in any conduct that would cause Little Explorers Montessori School or any of its employees embarrassment or humiliation, that creates the appearance of impropriety, or otherwise causes or contributes to Little Explorers Montessori School or its employees being held in disrepute by the general public, or Little Explorers Montessori School clients, customers, or employees.

### **Personal Visits and Telephone Calls**

Little Explorers Montessori School recognizes that employees must sometimes be contacted at work by non-employees for personal reasons. Nevertheless, such personal contacts can cause disruptions in the workplace. Telephone messages will be taken for personal phone calls; however, personal visits by non-employees are discouraged and are subject to the approval of the employee's supervisor.

## **19. DRUG, ALCOHOL AND WEAPONS POLICY/DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE**

Little Explorers Montessori School is committed to maintaining a drug-free workplace and employing a drug-free work force. To achieve these goals, it is the policy of Little Explorers Montessori School that illegal drugs and controlled substances are not permitted on the premises of Little Explorers Montessori School for any reason. This guideline does not apply to any employee using prescription medication on the orders of a physician. Any employee found selling, buying, possessing, passing, using, or under the influence of illegal drugs or controlled substances on Little Explorers Montessori School premises will be suspended, and breach of this policy may result in discipline, up to and including termination. Likewise, any employee under the influence of alcohol while reporting for work or while at work will be deemed in violation of this policy. Each employee must agree to the terms of this policy on a separate acknowledgment form. This acknowledgment form also verifies that each employee pledges to make Little Explorers Montessori School a drug-free workplace.

### **1.0 POLICY**

- 1.1 The illegal use, sale, or possession of narcotics, drugs, alcohol or controlled substances while on the job or on School property is prohibited and is a dischargeable offense. Any illegal substance will be turned over to the appropriate law enforcement agency and may result in criminal prosecution.
- 1.2 Possession of weapons including, but not limited to firearms and non work-related knives, presents the possibility of danger in the workplace and therefore is in violation of our safety policy. The possession of such articles is proper cause for administrative or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
- 1.3 Off-the-job illegal drug use which could adversely affect an employee's job performance or which could jeopardize the safety of others, the public, or school equipment, is proper cause for administrative or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
- 1.4 Employees who are arrested for off-the-job drug activity may be considered to be in violation of this policy. In deciding what action to take, management will take into consideration the nature of the charges, the employee's present job assignment, the employee's record with the School and other factors relating to the impact and circumstances of the employee's arrest.
- 1.5 From time to time throughout the year, there may be company-sponsored events at which alcohol may be served. Legal consumption at said events may not be considered a violation of this policy.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVE**

- 2.1 The safety of our employees and facilities, as well as the safety of the general public and our ability to fulfill our obligations under the Drug-Free Work Place Act of 1988, are of paramount concern.
- 2.2 While the School has no intention of intruding into the private lives of its employees, the school does expect employees to report for work in a condition to do their duties. The School recognizes that employees' off-the-job, as well as on-the-job, involvement with drugs, alcohol and weapons can have an impact on the workplace and on our ability to accomplish our goal of a drug, alcohol and weapons-free work environment.

## **3.0 DEFINITIONS**

- 3.1 Under the Influence - For the purpose of this policy, being under the influence means that the employee is affected by a drug or alcohol or the combination of a drug and alcohol in any detectable manner. The symptoms of influence are not confined to those consistent with misbehavior, nor to obvious impairment of physical or mental ability, such as slurred speech or difficulty in maintaining balance.
- 3.2 Illegal drug - Illegal drug means any drug (a) not legally obtainable or (b) legally obtainable but not legally obtained or used. Therefore, the term includes prescription drugs obtained illegally and prescription drugs not being used for prescribed purposes. It also includes marijuana, cocaine and heroin and derivatives of those drugs, among other illegal drugs.
- 3.3 Legal drug - Legal drug includes prescribed and over-the-counter drugs legally obtained and being used for the purpose for which they were prescribed and/or manufactured.
- 3.4 Premises - Premises includes all buildings and other facilities used by the School to conduct its operations plus all work sites to which employees are assigned in the course of the performance of their duties for the Company.
- 3.5 Reasonable Suspicion - For all purposes under this policy, reasonable suspicion shall be defined as a belief based on observed, specific, objective facts where the rational inference to be drawn under the circumstances is that the person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. An unexplained workplace accident may be considered to provide reasonable suspicion.
- 3.6 Criminal Drug Statute - For the purpose of the Policy, criminal drug statute means a federal or non-federal criminal statute involving the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possessing or use of any controlled substance.
- 3.7 Controlled Substance - For the purpose of the Policy, controlled substance means a controlled substance in Schedules I through V of Section 202 of the Controlled Substance Act (21 U.S.C. 812) and as further defined in regulation 21 CFR 1308.11-1308.15.
- 3.8 Conviction - For the purpose of the Policy, conviction means a finding of guilt (including a plea of nolo contendere) or imposition of sentence, or both, by any judicial body charged with the responsibility to determine violations of the federal or respective state criminal drug statutes.

## **4.0 PROCEDURES**

- 4.1 The School will take steps to prevent and discourage such use, possession, sale, or distribution of stated narcotics, alcohol, drugs, controlled substances, and weapons at any time by any School

employees or contract employees. In accordance with this policy, periodic searches, random or annual urinalysis, drug screening or blood testing may be conducted. Such searches and testing will be performed by the School using qualified contracted agents.

4.2 Over-the-counter drugs and drugs prescribed by a physician for an employee's personal use within the last twelve months from the date of drug testing and quantities not exceeding reasonable or specified dosage requirements are not subject to the Policy. Any employee who is taking medication prescribed by a physician must be able to provide a record of the prescription, including the name of the medication, the prescribing physician's name, the reason it was prescribed, and any limitations the prescription may place on the employee's ability to perform assigned duties. Further, employees taking prescription or non-prescription medication are responsible for being aware of any potential effect such drugs may have on their reactions, judgment, or ability to perform their duties, and if impairment is possible, to report such use to their supervisor prior to reporting to work.

4.3 Compliance with the policy is strictly voluntary. Refusal by an employee to submit to a search or testing procedure may, however, constitute grounds for termination or appropriate disciplinary action.

4.4 The primary purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and well being of all employees. It would be inconsistent to promote a strong safety effort while allowing the use of drugs and alcohol or the possession of weapons to undermine the safe and effective performance of employees on the job.

#### 4.5 Drug Abuse Program

4.5.1 Consistent with our overall policy on drugs, alcohol, and weapons, the Company has established a detailed program to provide and maintain a drug free work environment.

4.5.2 The School may test for the following substances and for any other substance as may be required by state law, federal law, regulations or contractual agreement:

- Alcohol
- Hallucinogens Propoxyhene (Darvon)
- Amphetamines
- Marijuana (cannabinoid metabolites)
- Barbiturates
- Methadone
- Benzodiazepines
- Opiate derivatives (heroin, morphine, codeine)
- Cocaine Metabolites
- Phencyclidine (PCP)

4.5.3 The Company reserves the right to conduct a periodic review of the foregoing list and to add additional drugs to the list, with or without notice.

#### 4.6 Pre-Employment Drug Testing

4.6.1 Each applicant for employment will be required as a condition of employment to undergo a urine drug screen. Applicants will be asked to read the policy and sign the Pre-Employment Offer and

Employee Consent to Alcohol and Drug Screening Form. If an applicant tests positive and is determined to be in violation of this Policy, applicant will be ineligible for employment until the applicant submits to a second urine drug screen which does not disclose that the applicant is in violation of this Policy. Thereafter, the employee will be subject to testing, the same as current employees.

4.6.2 It is preferred that a new employee be tested prior to reporting for work. However, it is realized that under certain circumstances a new employee may start before test results are known. In such circumstances the employee's hiring is conditional upon passing the drug test.

4.6.3 All employment offer letters are to contain a statement that employment is conditional upon passing a drug test. Employees will be required to read and sign the Pre-Employment Offer and Employee Consent to Alcohol and Drug Screening Form immediately prior to the first day of employment.

#### 4.7 For Cause Testing, Random and Annual Testing

4.7.1 Subsequently, each employee, as a condition of continued employment, is subject to medical or physical examination or tests, including urine drug screen, at the determination of Site Director, or to whom the employee reports, providing the following conditions are met:

4.7.2 If the employee's supervisor has reasonable cause to suspect that the employee is in violation of this policy; or

4.7.3 If the employee's job performance is deficient in a manner which suggests a possible violation of this policy; or

4.7.4 If the position is designated as a safety sensitive and/or high risk occupation; or

4.7.5 If the employee is selected at random for testing in order to monitor and ensure compliance by all employees with this policy. The random selection will be done centrally by the Payroll and Personnel Department and will not be done by individual offices or sites, unless specifically authorized.

4.7.6 The Company recognizes that in certain states, the legality of random drug testing is still being reviewed; therefore, in those states where random drug testing has not been approved, this part of the policy will be suspended.

4.8 Refusal to Test - An employee who refuses to submit to drug testing, as provided for in this Policy, will be asked to leave the office or project site immediately and the employee will be discharged.

4.9 Rehire - An employee who is discharged for distributing or possession of drugs in violation of this policy will not be eligible for rehire.

4.10 Searches - The Company reserves the right to conduct unannounced searches of its property, vehicles, and facilities, including work areas, desks and lockers assigned to employees, at any time. No employee has the right to interfere with or object to such searches of Company property based on expectations of privacy or otherwise.

4.11 Acknowledgment - All personnel will be required to sign the Pre-Employment Offer and Employee Consent to Alcohol and Drug Screening Form acknowledging their understanding of and compliance with Company policy.

4.12 Right to Amend CP-9587 - The Company reserves the right to amend any or all of this Drug, Alcohol, and Weapons Policy or to terminate it in its entirety should either action be deemed necessary.

## **20. SECURITY/CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

### **Purpose**

Little Explorers Montessori School has an interest in protecting employees, employee property, and the property of Little Explorers Montessori School. Any security concern should be reported promptly to any supervisor.

### **Proprietary and Confidential Information**

Company property includes not only tangible property, such as desks, typewriters, and computers, but also intangible property such as business data, formulas, and information. Of particular importance is proprietary information and confidential information. Proprietary information includes all information obtained by employees in the course of their work. This Employee Handbook and the Systems Reference Manual, for example, contain proprietary information. Confidential information is any Company information that is not known generally to the public or the industry. Customer lists, customer files, personnel files, computer records, financial and marketing data, process and procedure descriptions, research plans, computer systems, and trade secrets are examples of confidential information. Given the nature of Little Explorers Montessori School business, protecting proprietary and confidential information is of vital concern to Little Explorers Montessori School. Such information is one of the most important assets of Little Explorers Montessori School as it enhances Little Explorers Montessori School opportunities for continued growth. Employees must not use or disclose any proprietary or confidential information obtained during their employment with Little Explorers Montessori School. This obligation continues even after an employee's relationship with Little Explorers Montessori School comes to an end. In addition, all employees are expected to observe good security practices, and keep proprietary and confidential information secure from outside visitors and all other persons who do not have a legitimate reason to see or use such information. Procedures regarding document control, restricted access to files, and other such procedures are to be strictly observed. Failure to adhere to Little Explorers Montessori School policies regarding proprietary and confidential information are considered grounds for discipline, up to and including immediate termination. To acknowledge this policy, each employee must sign a Confidentiality Acknowledgment form to indicate his or her understanding of these obligations.

### **Obligations Upon Termination**

All items that have been issued to an employee during the course of their employment, including this Employee Handbook, remain the property of Little Explorers Montessori School. At the time of an employee's termination, whether voluntary or involuntary, all School documents in the employee's possession or control must be returned to Little Explorers Montessori School

## **21. DISCIPLINARY ACTION AND PROCEDURE**

Each job at Little Explorers Montessori School is important. Each job contributes to the success and efficient operation of the School. Without this continuous success and efficiency, no job can be assured.

We believe that the policies and rules set forth are reasonable in order to coordinate and schedule the varied activities taking place. Rules on absence, appearance, treatment of property, etc., are essential to

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assure fair treatment of yourself and the School. Most employees have no trouble following the rules. When these rules are broken, appropriate disciplinary action must be taken. See Systems Reference Manual for the Disciplinary Action Process and forms.

**22. POLICY CHANGE AND INTERPRETATION**

Please keep in mind that Company-paid fringe benefits are benefits given by Little Explorers Montessori School to the employee. The School reserves the right to alter or change fringe benefits, or any other term and condition of employment, as it deems appropriate, with or without prior notice. Policies, as described in this handbook, may be changed, altered, modified, amended or terminated in any manner, and at any time, as Little Explorers Montessori School believes is in its best interest.

**23. SEPARATION**

Upon separation from employment with Little Explorers Montessori School where appropriate notice has been given, the employee receives all earned and unused vacation pay calculated as of the separation date. Additionally, employees may elect to continue their individual and/or dependents' medical coverage subject to the requirements and specifications set forth in Little Explorers Montessori School Group Insurance Benefits booklet. Employees forfeit all other company benefits upon separation. However, employees may elect to continue health insurance benefits via Cobra regulations and in accordance with Little Explorers Montessori School insurance program.

Upon separation, on-site employees must return Little Explorers Montessori School materials, including, but not limited to, equipment and keys, and those employees living on the premises must vacate the premises in accordance with the rules outlined in the Employee Apartment Agreement.

**24. BULLYING AND BULLYING INTERVENTION EDUCATION**

Little Explorers Montessori School has adopted the below policy regarding bullying prevention and intervention. Our staff discusses this policy at length throughout the school year. It is reviewed, and edited if needed, annually by staff and our Board of Directors in order to remain current and up to date with methods for effective prevention and intervention of bullying.

**BULLYING IDENTIFICATION, PREVENTION AND PLANNING  
BY CHIP DELORENZO, M.ED.**

Defining Bullying – Classic bullying behavior occurs when one person is exposed, repeatedly, and over time, to the negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, with a noted power differential. The target of the behavior is chosen, specifically due to the real or perceived power imbalance in the relationship rather than due to ordinary social conflict.

Bullying behavior is misbehavior, and can be manifested in many forms, both passively and overtly. Examples of passive bullying behavior are: telling lies, spreading false rumors, covert threatening, etc. Examples of overt bullying behavior are: hitting, saying hurtful things, deliberately excluding, teasing, etc. It is important to note that while these passive and overt behaviors are also very common, and developmentally appropriate, misbehaviors that elementary children exhibit as they

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learn to navigate social dynamics. The identifying component in the bully/victim relationship is rooted in the power imbalance.

It is important to narrow the definition of bullying because of the power differential component involved in the behavior. Specific steps, requiring direct intervention, are used to effectively address the power differential when true bullying behavior occurs. These steps are different than steps used to address normal misbehavior or social conflicts. If too broad a definition for bullying is used, then there is a danger of over or under reacting to true bullying behavior and over reacting to normal misbehavior. Under reacting can create an environment of permissiveness, and overreacting can create an environment of repression; both of which lead to increased misbehavior and social conflict.

Note: Most bullying literature suggests strongly not labeling a child as a bully or a victim. Instead, refer to the behaviors as bullying or victim behavior.

Roles in Bullying Behavior – There are often more than two students involved where bullying behavior is being exhibited. The roles of other children may be passive, but often enable the cycle of behavior to continue.

1. Bully – The student or students directly involved in the negative, repetitive behavior toward the victim.
2. Victim – The student or students who are the target of the repetitive, negative behavior by the bully(ies).
3. Bystanders – Students who witness the behavior. Those students may be followers, supporters (passive or active), onlookers or defenders. In traditional approaches to bullying behavior, the importance of these students in enabling the behavior or in solving the problem has been significantly overlooked. These students play a key role in creating a safe environment.

#### Successful Bullying Prevention

“There is a type of fish, known as the Puffer fish that frightens off enemies by puffing itself up to a greater size. A bully is like a threatened puffer fish that is all puffed up and full of air. The best tool at the bully's disposal is the willingness of other people to be victims. When a bully meets weakness he thrives. When a bully encounters dignity and assertiveness he deflates into nothingness.” ~ Jane Nelsen, Ph.D.

Below are three components of developing a school environment that reduces the opportunity and instances of bullying behavior, and helps students develop life-long assertiveness skills:

- Establish a whole school culture of respect for oneself and others.
  - Modeling of respectful, kind and firm behavior by adults
  - Involve students in creation of classroom culture and ground rules so that students have ownership over the social/emotional environment
  - Involve students in resolution of problems

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- Taking time for training – communications skills, resilience/assertiveness skills, expected behavior, problem solving skills, identifying and responding to bullying behavior
  - Provide support for adults
    - Training in respectful classroom discipline
    - Outlined plan for bullying behavior
  - Specific support for students
    - Bystander training with all students
    - Assertiveness and communication training with all students
    - Individualized support for victim behavior
    - Individualized support for bully behavior

#### Sample Plan for Bullying Behavior

1. Increased supervision by adults
2. Meeting with parents of both children, outlining classroom plan and support needed from home.
3. Separation of students (direct or indirect)
4. Individualized support plan for child exhibiting victim behavior that includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. accessing immediate adult support
  - b. development of communication and assertiveness skills
  - c. establishment of buddy system
  - d. adult support in conflict resolution
  - e. class meetings
5. Individualized support plan for child exhibiting bullying behavior
  - a. establishment of clear expectations for behavior and logical consequences
  - b. development of communication skills in resolving conflict and receiving peer messages
  - c. development of needed social skills for making connections
  - d. support and redirection to positive power and social responsibility
  - e. class meetings

#### Sources:

1. <http://www.education.com/reference/article/definitions-characteristics-bullying/>
2. [http://www.pbis.org/pbis\\_resource\\_detail\\_page.aspx?PBIS\\_ResourceID=785](http://www.pbis.org/pbis_resource_detail_page.aspx?PBIS_ResourceID=785)
3. <http://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/support-kids-involved/index.html>
4. <http://www.positivediscipline.org/resources/Documents/PDSbrchr-8-06.pdf>

## **25. PREVENTING BULLYING, INTIMIDATION, AND HARASSMENT -POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Bullying, intimidation, and harassment diminish a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate. Preventing students from engaging in these disruptive behaviors and providing all students equal access to a safe, non-hostile learning environment are important Little Explorers Montessori School's goals.

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender or sex (includes gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and pregnancy-related



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medical conditions), race or ethnicity, ethnic group identification, ancestry, nationality, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability, age, immigration status, marital status, genetic information, order of protection status, political belief or affiliation (not union-related), military status, unfavorable discharge from military service, or association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic **is prohibited** in each of the following situations:

1. During any school sponsored education program or activity.
2. While in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the school bus, or at school sponsored or school sanctioned events or activities.
3. Through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment.
4. Through the transmission of information from an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the School but causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This paragraph (item #4) applies only when a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred; it does not require School staff to monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

#### Definitions 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7

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

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

Bullying, may take various forms, including by not limited to one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

*Cyber-bullying* means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photo-electronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. *Cyber-bullying* includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of *bullying*.

*Cyber-bullying* also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in

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the definition of *bullying*.

*Restorative measures* means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community,

(ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.

*School personnel* for purposes of this policy means persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer in a school district, including without limitation school and school district administrators, teachers, school guidance counselors, school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers, and security guards.

#### Bullying Prevention and Response Plan.

1. School principal and staff shall work to develop safe, supportive school environments that prevent bullying and harassment through developing supportive school climate strategies, teaching students social emotional skills, and establishing predictable responses and effective disciplinary practices.
2. All School employees who witness incidents of bullying or harassment or who possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying, must: (a) intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate to the context and ensures the safety of all people involved; (b) report the incident of bullying or harassment to the Principal/Head of School as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours; and (c) cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the Principal/Head of School. Alleged bullying targeted at sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression should be reported immediately to the District's Title IX/Nondiscrimination Coordinator at 801 W. Normantown Road, Romeoville, IL 60446, 815-886-2700 or [VVSD.Complaint-Manager@vvsd.org](mailto:VVSD.Complaint-Manager@vvsd.org) in accordance with Policy 7.20.
3. Students are encouraged to immediately report bullying. A report may be made orally or in writing to the Principal/Head of School, or any staff member with whom the student is comfortable speaking. Anyone, including parents/guardians, who has information about actual or threatened bullying, is encouraged to report it to the Principal/Head of School, or any staff member. Alleged bullying targeted at sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression should be reported immediately to the District's Title IX/Nondiscrimination Coordinator at 801 W. Normantown Road, Romeoville, IL 60446, 815-886-2700 or [VVSD.Complaint-Manager@vvsd.org](mailto:VVSD.Complaint-Manager@vvsd.org) in accordance with Policy 7.20.
4. The Principal/Head of School shall promptly investigate and address reports of bullying, by, among other things:
  - a. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, promptly informing the parent(s)/guardian(s) of every student involved in an alleged incident of bullying or harassment and discuss, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures.

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- b. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of a bullying incident was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported bullying incident. The investigation shall include, but is not limited to, (1) identifying all students engaged in the alleged bullying along with all witnesses; (2) interviewing all involved parties; (3) determining how often the conduct occurred, past conduct, or any continuing pattern of behavior; and (4) assessing individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety.
    - c. Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.
    - d. When the investigation is complete, documenting in writing whether the alleged incident meets any of the four elements of bullying listed above in the definition of bullying and determining whether the report of bullying is substantiated or not substantiated. If the investigation determines a student engaged in bullying behaviors and/or other inappropriate behaviors listed in the District's Policy 7.190, the Principal/Head of School shall impose the appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with District policy.
    - e. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation a copy of the final written report and offer them an opportunity to meet with the Principal/Head of School to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.
  5. The Principal/Head of School shall use interventions to address bullying, that may include, but are not limited to, school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services.
  6. A reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying **is prohibited**. A student's act of reprisal or retaliation will be treated as *bullying* for purposes of determining any consequences or other appropriate remedial actions.
  7. A student will not be punished for reporting bullying or supplying information, even if the School's investigation concludes that no bullying occurred. However, knowingly making a false accusation or providing knowingly false information will be treated as *bullying* for purposes of determining any consequences or other appropriate remedial actions.
  8. The Principal/Head of School or designee shall post this policy on the School's website and include it in the Parent/Student handbook, and post it where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted. The policy must also be distributed annually to parents/guardians, students, and school personnel by posting it on the School's website and in any employee, parent or student handbooks.
  9. The Principal/Head of School shall assist the Board with its evaluation and assessment of this policy's outcomes and effectiveness. This process shall include, but is not limited to:
    - a. The frequency of victimization;
    - b. Student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school;
    - c. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs;
    - d. The types of bullying utilized; and
    - e. Bystander intervention or participation.The evaluation process may use relevant data and information that the School already collects for other purposes. The Principal/Head of School or designee must post the

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information developed as a result of the policy evaluation on the School's website.

10. The Principal/Head of School or designee shall fully implement the Board policies, including without limitation, the following:
  - a. 2:260, *Uniform Grievance Procedure*. A student may use this policy to complain about bullying.
  - b. 6:60, *Curriculum Content*. Bullying prevention and character instruction is provided in all grades in accordance with State law.
  - c. 6:65, *Student Social and Emotional Development*. Student social and emotional development is incorporated into the District's educational program as required by State law.
  - d. 6:235, *Access to Electronic Networks*. This policy states that the use of the School's electronic networks is limited to: (1) support of education and/or research, or (2) a legitimate business use.
  - e. 7:20, *Nondiscrimination, Harassment and Retaliation of Students and Title IX Policy*. This policy prohibits any person from harassing, intimidating, or bullying a student based on an identified actual or perceived characteristic.
  - f. 7:185, *Teen Dating Violence Prohibited*. This policy prohibits teen dating violence on school property, at school sponsored activities, and in vehicles used for school-provided transportation.
  - g. 7:190, *Student Behavior*. This policy prohibits, and provides consequences for, hazing, bullying, or other aggressive behaviors, or urging other students to engage in such conduct.
  - h. 7:310, *Restrictions on Publications and Written or Electronic Material*. This policy prohibits students from and provides consequences for: (1) accessing and/or distributing at school any written, printed, or electronic material, including material from the Internet, that will cause substantial disruption of the proper and orderly operation and discipline of the school or school activities, and (2) creating and/or distributing written, printed, or electronic material, including photographic material and blogs, that causes substantial disruption to school operations or interferes with the rights of other students or staff members.

Nothing in Policy is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

Current Head of School: Sherry Kunze  
815.302.4343 cell #  
sherryk@Little-Explorers.com

For an anonymous report or information, please mail to:  
Sherry Kunze  
Little Explorers  
Montessori School  
175 Highpoint Drive  
Romeoville, IL 60446

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25. **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

All employees are required to sign the Employee Handbook Acknowledgment form. The Acknowledgement indicates that the employee has received and is aware of the contents of the handbook. If questions concerning policies during employment remain, feel free to ask a supervisor, but remember that this is a guide, not a legally binding contract with Little Explorers Montessori School. Little Explorers Montessori School can change the policies, regulations, procedures and benefits contained with or without cause, and with or without notice at any time. Little Explorers Montessori School can terminate an employee's employment and compensation with or without cause at any time.