




Bella Mente Montessori Academy

Family Handbook

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Table of Contents

	Page
<i>Mission and Values</i>	6
<i>Core Beliefs</i>	6
<i>Academic Program and Overview</i>	8
	
<i>Who was Maria Montessori?</i>	8
<i>Montessori: "A Cosmic Approach to Education"</i>	8
<i>Planes of Development</i>	10
<i>Basic Academic Areas of BMMA's Montessori Educational Program</i>	11
<i>Core Subjects</i>	11
<i>Cultural Subject</i>	12
<i>Research and Projects</i>	12
<i>Homework Policy</i>	12
<i>Character Education and Peace Education</i>	12
<i>Teaching Students to Become Contributing Members of Their Society</i>	12
<i>The Montessori Classroom Environment</i>	13
<i>TK/Kindergarten Program: (culmination of ages 4 years 8 months to 6)</i>	14
<i>Lower Elementary Program: First through Third Grade Levels (ages 6 to 9)</i>	14
<i>Upper Elementary Program: Fourth through Sixth Grade Levels (ages 9 to 12)</i>	15
<i>"Normalization"</i>	15
<i>Materials in the Montessori Classroom</i>	16
<i>Movies shown in class</i>	16
<i>Instructional Use of the Internet: School Use of Internet Services is a Privilege</i>	16
<i>School Use of Internet Guidelines include</i>	17
<i>Special Education and Services</i>	17
<i>Section 504 Accommodations</i>	17

<i>The Faculty of Bella Mente Montessori Academy</i>	18
<i>Montessori Assessments, Testing, Progress Reports and Report Cards</i>	19
<i>Annual State Testing</i>	19
<i>School Records and Student Privacy</i>	20
<i>Special Occasions and Events</i>	20
<i>Birthdays</i>	20
<i>School Holidays and Vacation Periods</i>	20
<i>BMMA Religious Holiday Policy</i>	20
<i>Family/School Community Partnership, Parent Participation & Parent Education</i>	22
<i>Parent Education and Orientation</i>	22
<i>Parent Participation is a BMMA Priority</i>	23
<i>Parents can offer Special Units of Study: an Important Part of our Montessori Curriculum</i>	23
<i>Student Safety: Livescan Fingerprinting and TB tests</i>	23
<i>Parent Participation on Field Trips</i>	24
<i>Bella Mente Montessori Academy Welcomes Parents to Observe our Classrooms and Daily Activities</i>	24
<i>Child Custody</i>	25
<i>Tobacco Use and Vaping</i>	25
<i>Parent Communications at BMMA</i>	26
<i>Parent-Teacher Conferences</i>	26
<i>Weekly Newsletters and Updates</i>	26
<i>Class/Team Newsletters and Updates</i>	26
<i>Parents are Vital to Every Child's Success</i>	27
<i>School Evaluations</i>	27
<i>Guidelines for Arrivals & Departures</i>	27
<i>Separation: TK/ Kindergarten/First Grade students and parents</i>	28
<i>School Hours and Extended Day Programs</i>	27
<i>Calendar</i>	27
<i>Montessori Uniform Attire / Dress Code</i>	29
<i>Discipline and Behavioral Guidelines</i>	33
<i>Student Discipline Procedures, Suspension and Expulsion Policy</i>	32

<i>Weapons and Dangerous Substance</i>	35
<i>Sexual Harassment</i>	35
<i>Theft or Destruction of School, Student or Staff Property</i>	35
<i>Threat of Harm</i>	35
<i>Suspension and Expulsion Procedures</i>	36
<i>Communications and Dispute Resolution</i>	42
<i>Uniform Complaint Procedures</i>	45
<i>Bella Mente Montessori Academy Attendance Policy</i>	53
<i>Absence, Tardiness/Late Arrivals, and Early Departures</i>	56
<i>Reporting Absences</i>	54
<i>Excused Absences</i>	55
<i>Verification of Illness</i>	55
<i>Chronic Illness</i>	55
<i>Missed Assignments and Test</i>	56
<i>Excessive Absence/Truancy Notification</i>	56
<i>Unexcused Absences</i>	56
<i>Total Absences (excused for illness or unexcused)</i>	57
<i>Excessive Late Arrivals or Early Departures</i>	57
<i>Students Classified as Truant</i>	60
<i>Formal Written Notice</i>	60
<i>Options for Students Unable to Attend School</i>	60
<i>Attendance Questions or Assistance</i>	60
<i>Student Health and Safety Policies</i>	59
<i>Immunization Records and Health Exams</i>	59
<i>Medications Administered at School</i>	63
<i>California Safety Laws</i>	63
<i>Nutritional Health</i>	63
<i>Student Food and Beverage Snack List</i>	62
<i>Approved Potluck List</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Registration and Enrollment for Bella Mente Montessori Academy</i>	66
<i>New Enrollment will be carried out using the following guidelines</i>	66

<i>Classroom Placement Policies and Procedures</i>	67
<i>Student Policy for Promotion/Retention</i>	67
<i>English Learners</i>	68
<i>Special Education</i>	68
<i>Appeals Process</i>	68
<i>Field Trip Policies and Procedures</i>	69
<i>Field Trip Participation, Costs and Payment Options</i>	69
<i>Permission Forms</i>	69
<i>Parent Participation on Field Trips</i>	69
<i>Chaperone Responsibilities & Expectations</i>	67
<i>Siblings</i>	68
<i>Information Technology / Electronic Resource</i>	68
<i>Technology Use - Rules and Responsibilities</i>	69
<i>Personal Items at School</i>	73
<i>Toys and Sharing</i>	73
<i>Extra Changes of Clothes</i>	73
<i>Other personal items at school</i>	73
<i>Student Freedom of Speech/Expression</i>	731
<i>Family Education Rights and Privacy Act</i>	731
<i>Technology Use Agreement</i>	735
<i>Elementary Infraction Matrix</i>	737



Mission and Values

The mission of Bella Mente Charter School is to provide students with the opportunity to acquire an education based on a “quality” curriculum founded on the educational philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. We promote an educational atmosphere that encourages socioeconomic diversity by providing all students with the opportunity to obtain a quality public education. Our aim is to prepare each of our students with the skills, knowledge, and values to participate meaningfully in the pluralistic world of the 21st century.

Bella Mente Montessori Academy (“BMMA”) Charter School provides a Montessori curriculum, integrated with the common core standards, for students ranging from transitional kindergarten through eighth grade. ***Bella Mente is committed to serving the best interest of the student.*** Parental participation is strongly encouraged and highly valued in terms of the contribution it makes to the child's education and the school community. However, parental involvement is not a requirement for acceptance to, or continued enrollment at BMMA.

High academic standards and expectations of achievement, with emphasis on core subjects, are maintained through adherence to these values:

- Creative, passionate, progressive teachers who are committed to Montessori philosophy
- Responsibility, accountability, and freedom for individual student progress within the academic framework
- Challenges to develop critical reasoning, openness to encourage creativity, and opportunities to facilitate service
- High, unwavering standards of conduct, emphasizing respect for self and others, honesty, responsibility, and courtesy
- Emphasis on collaboration, peer governance, problem-solving, and goal-setting according to developmental readiness
- High parental involvement and collaboration in education and service

Core Beliefs

Dr. Montessori’s fundamental goal was to prepare the child for the “real world” and recognized that each student is a unique individual with unique personal, social, and educational needs. As a result, interactions with individual students may be unique in nature. In response to this, BMMA has chosen to adopt a “principles-based” approach to professional conduct and school-wide behavior management. Under such an approach, BMMA staff members have met and agreed upon

a common set of principles, which shall serve as the basis for all interactions and decisions that may arise within the school community.

Empirical research has shown us that people learn in two ways: Through experience and by modeling. Recognizing that each person comes to our community with a different personality and a different set of life experiences, it is almost impossible to achieve total consistency of beliefs and actions within a staff. As we strive to acknowledge the unique nature of each student and staff member, consistency is achieved when social, academic and professional decisions are handled in a manner consistent with an agreed set of principles. Thus, staff members are encouraged to approach situations and decisions with the understanding that the coaching, counseling, and/or consequence implemented shall be consistent with the set of values and principles agreed upon by the staff as a whole.

The following list of core beliefs outlines the professional attitudes and actions of all staff members of this school:

1. Our professional attitude is a mindset with a core belief that our actions and our words should always maintain the dignity and respect of both child and adult.
2. Adults will model appropriate and respectful behavior for students and will guide students to solve their own problems in any way that does not create a problem for others.
3. Students will be given opportunities to make decisions and live with the consequences, both positive and negative. These experiences shall serve as valuable learning opportunities for our students.
4. Students will be given the opportunity to make decisions about issues that affect themselves. Outcome of choices, including misbehavior, will be handled with natural and/or logical consequences instead of punishment, whenever possible.
5. Outcomes of choices and misbehavior will be viewed as opportunities for individual problem solving and preparation for the real world. Staff acknowledge that misbehaviors are not necessarily a personal attack on school or staff and acknowledge that other underlying personal or emotional issues may need to be considered.
6. In the event a consequence appears to be unfair, students are encouraged to request an opportunity to fully communicate their viewpoints and any additional facts regarding a situation with which they were involved.
7. School problems will be handled by school personnel. Criminal activity will be referred to the proper authorities.

Academic Program and Overview



Who was Maria Montessori?

Maria Montessori was a doctor, research scientist, and educator from the late 1800's – early 1900's who made observations about how children learn. The Montessori Philosophy of Education is based on Dr. Maria Montessori's observation that children have a natural desire to learn and that stages of development exist for which there should be corresponding educational environments and trained adults who prepare these environments. Children can learn independently in a prepared environment with teachers who guide and serve as the links between the student and the environment. By providing freedom of choice, this enriched learning environment cultivates individuals who learn to make independent decisions and to solve problems creatively. They learn to develop healthy social relationships, to develop skills in concentration, and to master basic academic and life skills. At BMMA students are challenged to create, explore and imagine.

Montessori Education provides children with a lifetime gift – the opportunity to fully develop their innate intellectual, physical, social and emotional potential. BMMA encourages parents to be an integral part of their child's education by learning about the Montessori philosophy, observing in the classrooms, and volunteering in the school.

Montessori: "A Cosmic Approach to Education"

The Montessori philosophy was originally developed in the early nineteenth hundreds by Dr. Maria Montessori to enhance a child's opportunities for learning, relevant to the student's relationship to the world around him/her. Over the years, the philosophy has evolved to challenge the whole child's personality and intellect in a variety of multicultural settings. Her teaching system is based on a strong integration of adult to child observation and practical hands- on activities. From her observations, she designed functional learning environments created to support and enhance a child's innate desire to learn about the world around him/her. Classroom materials offer learning experiences in a clear, concrete manner. Students are encouraged to use motor and intellectual discovery when working with these materials. There is an emphasis on the sequential and orderly acquisition of both motor and cognitive skills. This ordered work method also allows for individualization and usually offers a two to three-year age span within the classroom; enabling students to work and learn at their own pace, as well as in group settings. The integration of varied age spans allows older students to gain confidence by working and role modeling materials with younger students. Collaborative learning and projects completed in groups encourage students to teach and learn with each other. This combination of order and freedom is facilitated by what is called "*the prepared environment*".

A well-prepared Montessori learning environment is given careful attention, allowing and encouraging the child accessibility to all materials she/he needs in performing and experiencing the step-by-step process of individual work. The classroom is thus arranged in a series of easily accessible shelves designed to accommodate specific work areas. This framework of organization gives accessibility to the necessary learning materials and frees the student to concentrate on the work, allowing an increase in independence and responsibility. This, in turn, decreases the need of direction from the teacher. As a result, children develop internal rather than external referencing. The teacher is also better able to observe the total classroom environment. Within Bella Mente, each classroom follows Montessori's concepts and is carefully designed to provide for the developmental needs of its students.

The areas of the classroom consist of materials to support learning in the core subjects of language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, and geometry while also providing concentrations in the areas of history, geography, and natural sciences (biology: botany, zoology; astronomy, etc). Cultural subjects such as art, music, second languages and physical education are interwoven. Each class contains materials that teach specific concepts for the particular age range. The materials are designed in a logical sequence of skill acquisition and concept building while reinforcing the development of abstract thinking. In this way, the students observe and experience a movement toward self-set goals. The learning materials initially isolate knowledge to one concept at a time in a concrete manipulative style. Eventually, the child progresses toward an abstract, more divergent level of evaluation.

The Montessori teacher acts as a facilitator of information and is always responsible for what is called "making the match". Through observation and standardized assessments, the teacher assesses the needs and level of each student to guide him/her towards a path to meet his/her individual interests, maturity levels, capabilities and educational needs. As a result of these assessments, teachers can make adjustments in individual learning plans, both academically and behaviorally. The student who is in a period of self-directed activity can be given much freedom regarding choice. All students can work at their own speed and must demonstrate mastery of material before moving on.

Bella Mente offers these prepared classrooms in a variety of age/grade combinations. In the early grades, students receive the foundation of the Montessori curriculum by learning and practicing the cornerstone concepts of:

- Care of Self,
- Care of Environment,
- Control of Movement, and *very importantly,*
- Grace and Courtesy

The elementary or cosmic approach to learning introduces educational opportunities in a new and exciting light. It is designed to begin with the aspects of impressions. For the first six years of life (first plane of development), the child has absorbed the world around him/her: visually, auditorily, and tactually. Mastery of concrete experiences has taken place. Moving into the second plane of development, we can now begin an adventure of building abstractly on these early concrete experiences.

The following information is an overview of BMMA’s philosophy for elementary (second plane of development) and middle school (third plane of development) Montessori programs. For this experience to be a successful adventure, it calls for a fully participating and committed team. We look forward to working with your child(ren) and your family and we welcome you as a member of this team dedicated to providing the most optimum learning environment for your child(ren).

Planes of Development

Developmental levels consist of distinct planes with certain characteristics that should be considered in formulating a plan for the child’s education. These varying characteristics may be considered from four distinct aspects:

Intellectual Social Emotional Moral

Intellectual: Dr. Montessori identified two sensitive intellectual periods during the second and third planes: Imagination and the understanding of the abstract. Imagination is the great power of this age. This special mental ability enables us to imagine what exists or has existed but cannot be seen because of time or distance. Not only can imagination travel through infinite space but also through infinite time. So, the child aged 6 to 12, and then 12 to 16, uses a creative imagination based on reality in order to psychologically conquer the world.

At these ages, the student’s need to assimilate concepts using the concrete Montessori materials is still prevalent, and many appropriate materials are provided. The elementary and middle school-aged child develops the ability to move from the concrete into abstraction of a concept, based on this repeated opportunity for concrete experience.

Between the ages of 6 to 16 is the period of life during which the elements of all science should be given. This time frame could be called the “sensitive period of culture.” In the early years of life, the child takes in her/his immediate environment. After the age of six, the child becomes involved in the greater community, growing into global awareness. In Montessori education the child is able to do this through “Cosmic Education”.

The starting point of Cosmic Education is to introduce a vision of the world as a whole. To offer culture in terms of a cosmic vision means to show the intimate and interrelated relationship between things, living nature, and humankind. It also means the ability to understand the cosmic task of each element and of each force in the cosmos, including our human society and each of us as individual members of society.

Social: In the second and third planes, the group beyond the family, the peer group, now attracts the child. Children begin to form a society of their own peers and resist adult control as far as possible. The basic moral principle in operation during these periods requires a commitment from the individual: The commitment of the individual to the peer group.

Emotional: The child aged 6 to 16 is generally less accommodating to adults. Dr. Montessori explained this developmental change in terms of Nature’s logic, whose aim is to arouse in the child not only a hunger for knowledge and understanding but also a claim to mental independence, a desire to distinguish good and evil by one’s own power, and to resist limitation by arbitrary authority.

Moral: During the second and third planes, a sensitive period of morality comes to the forefront. A concept of justice is born at this age, together with a growing understanding of the relationship between our acts and the needs of others. Children at these ages will react strongly against anything they regard as unjust or unfair.

According to Dr. Montessori, nature has equipped the children of this age (6-16) with the qualities of loyalty, generosity, a sense of responsibility, a strong sense of justice, admiration for what is outstanding and progressive, and a distaste for trivialities. The children of this age want to become self-sufficient, prove their new independence, and help their neighbor.

One of Montessori's basic principles is that the adult should understand the natural tendencies driving the child at each plane of development and cooperate with those tendencies rather than go against nature.

Basic Academic Areas of BMMA's Montessori Educational Program

Montessori education offers a wide variety of academic study for all students, in a way that interrelates each subject to the others, which in turn supports the development of a better-rounded individual. One of the classic components of the Montessori approach is to provide uninterrupted units of work time for the students, to allow them ample opportunity to work through various academic tasks each day. At BMMA, breaking the academic day into two distinct parts provides these units of work time: Core academics (Language Arts, Math, and Geometry) are most often presented in the morning, and cultural subjects, such as History, Geography, and Science are usually presented in the afternoon. Practical Life lessons are practiced daily (care of self, care of environment, control of movement, grace and courtesy), and subjects traditionally referred to as cultural in nature (fine art, performing art, second languages, etc.) are interwoven throughout the week.

Core Subjects:

Reading and Language are essential for all areas of learning. Children learn phonetically through the use of tactile materials such as sandpaper letters, through auditory repetition and visual identification. Then they progress into reading and working independently through study cards (e.g. Albanesi) that give direction to their individualized program and to their researches. Reading and language are integral parts of all cultural lessons.

Writing is used in almost every academic experience. Printing and cursive are developed in the early years, as the child is ready. Later, students develop formal writing and composition skills.

Basic Math facts (counting, addition and subtraction) are stressed as the prerequisite for accomplishing the more-advanced math that follows: fractions, long multiplication and division, powers of numbers, systems of numeration, squaring, and cubing.

Geometry is studied as it assists in the development of a creative capacity in the child. It is the foundation toward the construction of reality. This progression flows naturally from the 3-6 year old experience with sensorial materials.

Cultural Subjects:

Subjects such as History, Geography, and Science are referred to as Cultural Lessons and are studied as interrelated aspects of the same world.

History begins with the concept of time and evolves each year through a study of the Fundamental Needs of Humans, the Timeline of Life, and Stages in the Progress of Civilization. Geography continues from the preschool period with completed work in maps. Successive work includes a study of landforms and their classified nomenclature in conjunction with the study of the earth as our home. Geology continues this study of the earth and its historical relationships.

Science encompasses units of study in areas such as Biology, Astronomy, and Chemistry in the later grades, and is presented in a way that allows the student to explore and observe the world around him/her. Biology is initially presented to younger students through dual studies divided between Botany and Zoology; beginning with Botanical and Zoological Classified Nomenclature. These units of study continue with experiments on vital functions of the plant kingdom and a comparative study of the vital functions of the different phyla and classes of the animal kingdom, progressing into a study of human functions and structure.

Research and Projects:

Within the Montessori method, opportunities for study and projects on various levels of thinking are essential. Critical and creative-thinking skills are an integral link to the Montessori Cosmic philosophy and curriculum. Furthering a child's study and understanding of concepts is accomplished by applying their learning in research projects and presentations.

Homework Policy

Homework is not necessarily a traditional component of the Montessori philosophy but is crucial to the success of students at BMMA. While students will not be given a burdensome amount of homework, teachers recognize the importance of their students completing follow-up activities in the home to supplement work completed in class. In addition, work which is not completed by the student during traditional in-class work periods will be sent home for the student to complete and return.

BMMA teachers have developed their own homework practices that will be shared with parents during orientation at the beginning of each school year. When there is no assigned homework, we recommend that you encourage your child to read.

Character Education and Peace Education:

Teaching Students to Become Contributing Members of Their Society

BMMA recognizes that the role of the parent/guardian is paramount in developing civic values and ethical behavior in their children. Montessori curriculum is developed to encourage and support students in the further development of the civic values and ethical behaviors that support them to become responsible and caring citizens, family members, and workers within society. Character education is interwoven throughout the educational program and fosters qualities such as: honesty, respect for self, others and property, morality (understanding what is right, legal and

ethical), responsibility, human dignity, empathy, justice, civility, courage, and concern for the common good. BMMA encourages all students to participate in community service projects to learn the importance of giving back to their community.

BMMA believes in the dignity of all and that everyone, including students, families and staff, should be treated with dignity and respect. There is a great deal of diversity in the families we serve, and we strive to ensure that everyone feels welcome within our schools. Differences are celebrated! As a part of Cosmic Education (a study of each cosmic unit in relation to the whole), Maria Montessori was an advocate of Peace Education: the idea that the study and understanding of different cultures and societies would lead to acceptance and peace between nations. The breadth of the Montessori curriculum is designed to provide students with this exposure to a variety of cultures, societies, and beliefs, and to support students to be good citizens, as well as, progressive and compassionate thinkers and high-level communicators.

In accordance with this aim, BMMA will not tolerate behavior by students, families, staff or visitors which is insulting, degrading or stereotyping of any disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in California Penal Code section 422.55.

The Montessori Classroom Environment

In Montessori education, the whole child must always be considered. Thus, it is in the best interest of the student that home and school environments are consistent. For positive development of the body, mind, and spirit; the physical, mental, emotional, social, and academic needs of the child must constantly be taken into consideration. At BMMA, this is our first priority. To be successful, staff AND parents need to be committed to the following precepts:

- BMMA has chosen to implement the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori versus a traditional educational approach. Therefore, BMMA classrooms and school environment will operate using the concepts and methodology of Montessori.
- BMMA believes that children need pro-active and positive affirmation regarding self- image and esteem.
- BMMA provides guidance in the area of behavior and attitudes; and recognizes that each child has a unique personality, likes and dislikes, values, strengths and challenges. Uniqueness of the child will be honored while providing guidance.
- Each class establishes rules within the first week of the school year. It is the expectation that these rules are set with the understanding that everyone will respect and follow them. This provides the child with ability to reason and think for her/himself and to experience natural consequences for her/his choices.
- At BMMA, children are encouraged to communicate in a respectful, assertive and socially acceptable manner. An atmosphere in which students feel safe to express their differing viewpoints will be provided, as well as guidance with conflict resolution.
- All levels and styles of learning are encouraged. BMMA references both Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theories and Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Thought Process structures to enhance the critical thinking skills of all students.

- Placement, pretests and posttests are conducted in language arts and mathematics. Reading assessments will be conducted for reading readiness.
- At BMMA, personal responsibility and accountability is taught and practiced. Guidelines, limits, freedom of choice, and consequences will be made understandable to the students.
- BMMA will provide clear and timely communication to families in all areas of the educational program.

TK/Kindergarten Program: (culmination of ages 4 years 8 months to 6)

TK/Kindergarten is the culmination of the early childhood program which addresses the needs of the child during the first plane of development. Within this class, students transition from parallel play to an attitude of cooperative play. During this stage of development, the child gravitates toward a desire to work along with her/his peers. The TK/Kindergarten classroom allows these concepts to develop naturally through the role modeling of the teachers as well as the integration of age levels and interests.

In the TK/Kindergarten environment, the students *explore Montessori materials*. In mathematics, the Golden Bead Material is used to introduce the decimal system and progresses into the four mathematical operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) in a concrete fashion. The Sensorial area concentrates more on geometry that eventually ties in with concepts in math. Language and reading materials guide the child toward recognition of the alphabet both by letter name and phonetically. “Sight words,” those words in the English language not phonetically pronounced, are introduced gradually.

Upon mastery of the above foundational tasks, pre-reading and reading skills are integrated with the use of small primer books designed to allow the child to read successfully at their own level. Writing extensions are now integrated to strengthen the interest in reading. D’Nealian style manuscript handwriting is incorporated in all areas of the classroom, both in pre-writing or tracing activities, along with actual experience stories. The students move through writing of lower case letters first, and follow with the upper case, capital letters.

The Practical Life area of the classroom enables the child to extend her/his concentration, coordination, and independence into a stronger sense of order for the future. In Kindergarten, the cultural lessons explore the areas of zoology, botany, geography, history, art and music. Within each area, specific units of study are presented. Physical Education is also explored within a group process, both indoors and out.

Lower Elementary Program: First through Third Grade Levels (ages 6 to 9)

Bella Mente focuses on the aspects of the Cosmic Curriculum of the Montessori philosophy. We work toward continuously increasing self-direction and independence of the junior child, age 6- 9 years. In achieving these goals, the students gain strong self-concepts and effective roles of direction in self-responsibility. Our staff believes that to provide an appropriate learning environment for the child, we must encourage opportunities for reflective thinking, problem solving, and critical evaluation. Our environment provides opportunities for creative expression and encourages divergent thinking skills. We can allow and encourage your child's personal rate

of learning, and can vary our teaching strategies to accommodate the needs of each individual student.

The curriculum is specifically designed with the elementary child in mind. We integrate the structure of Dr. Montessori's methodology, by using the core subjects of Language Arts, Mathematics, and Geometry, within the Cultural Subjects (including but not limited to: History, Geography, Zoology, and Botany) as our foundation of knowledge. Chromebooks are used to familiarize students with the workings of technology, keyboarding skills, and simple research are available in each classroom. Physical Education is based on California standards and occurs within the school week.

BMMA integrates the expectations of the common core standards for this age and developmental stage and has paid careful attention to aligning the Montessori curriculum with state standards across the board. If you would like to view the curriculum for a particular level, please feel free to ask the teacher.

Upper Elementary Program: Fourth through Sixth Grade Levels (ages 9 to 12)

The philosophy of Montessori education is to encourage the student to classify, analyze, and evaluate information based on the introduction of any given academic subject matter from an impressionistic viewpoint. The goal for the student is to take information and apply it to real life experiences. These experiences then create opportunities for critical thinking and logical analysis.

The upper elementary curriculum continues to be specifically designed with the elementary child in mind. Core subjects of Language Arts, Mathematics, and Geometry are integrated throughout the Cultural Subjects (including but not limited to: History, Geography, and Science) as they remain the base for further knowledge and deeper exploration. Computer technology and research skills are taught to enhance the students' academic experience and prepare them for future academic and professional applications. Physical Education is a regular component of the curriculum, as well.

The upper elementary expectations of the common core standards for this age and developmental group serve as a minimum standard, with the Montessori curriculum often surpassing these minimum standards and offering students personal challenge toward academic excellence.

“Normalization”

Dr. Montessori used the terms “normal” and “normalization” to describe a unique process she observed in child development. When children are allowed freedom in an environment suited to their needs, they blossom. After a period of intense concentration, working with materials that fully engage their interest, children appear to be refreshed and contented. Through continued concentrated work at their own academic level, children grow in inner discipline and peace. This progression of self-development and harmony is what Dr. Montessori referred to as the “normalization process”. Dr. Montessori cited “normalization” as “the single most important result of our work” (“The Absorbent Mind”, by Dr. Maria Montessori, 1949).

At the beginning of each school year, you will hear teachers and other staff members refer to the period of normalization. This is a time when students are acclimating to their new environment,

their new teachers, and their new classmates. This is also the time when students will be learning how to use the bulk of new classroom materials and working to establish expectations and order within their classroom peer group. Once students have had a chance to “normalize”, parents will begin to observe a very wonderful routine and structure to the daily and weekly classroom activity.

Materials in the Montessori Classroom:

BMMA has developed a process for carefully reviewing and selecting all of the instructional materials, textbooks, and library books used in our school. Our review process is very important to ensure that your children have the best possible instructional tools and to assure consistency throughout our program.

For the younger students in the Montessori classroom, learning materials are arranged invitingly on low, open shelves. The materials are beautiful and inviting, increasing the child’s interest in using them. During specified periods of uninterrupted work time, children may choose from all the lessons that have been demonstrated to them, particularly those that attract their interest, and work with them as long as they hold the child’s interest (independence and freedom of choice). When students have finished with each lesson (job), they return it to the shelf from which it came (care of environment and self-responsibility).

Each lesson in a Montessori classroom isolates one specific quality. In this way, the concept that the child is to discover is presented more clearly. Moreover, the materials are self-correcting. When a piece does not fit, or is left over, the child easily perceives the error, thus eliminating the need for adult correction. The child is able to solve problems independently; building self-confidence and analytical thinking skills, and earning the satisfaction that comes from accomplishment.

For the older students, instructional materials are appropriate to their level of learning and a higher level of independent work takes place. New concepts are introduced using the Montessori materials, and as understanding takes place, the students move to abstract work with the concept. Many of the same Montessori materials introduced in the lower grades are utilized once again in the upper elementary classroom, but are used for more complex curriculum.

Movies shown in class

Occasionally educational movies will be shown at school. These movies have been reviewed by staff and are shown specifically for their educational content in conjunction with the relative curriculum. “G” rated non-educational movies may be shown on occasion. Appropriate PG movies will require prior parental permission. No movies rated PG-13, R, X, or NC-17 by the motion picture industry are shown at any grade level.

Instructional Use of the Internet: School Use of Internet Services is a Privilege

BMMA recognizes the necessity for students of today to be computer literate, and computers are provided in each classroom for student use. Before students may use the Internet at school, they must have parental permission on file and meet with their teachers to review school policies regarding Internet use, along with the consequences for not following these policies. Students wishing to use the Internet will sign an agreement to abide by these policies. The policy details what is expected of anyone using the Internet, email services, designing a webpage, researching,

or using education programs online. Content filters are installed by BMMA to eliminate exposure to undesirable Internet sites.

School Use of Internet Guidelines include:

- Use of the Internet is a privilege.
- Those under 18 may not reveal their last names, addresses, or phone numbers.
- The user acknowledges that email has no guarantee of privacy and all content on school computers is subject to periodic review.
- Messages related to or supporting illegal activities will be reported to authorities, and messages are subject to the same restrictions as any material prepared for distribution.
- Transmission or reception of copyrighted material; material protected by trade secret; product advertisement or political lobbying; material that is obscene, libelous, slanderous, gang-related, incites students and/or staff to create a clear and present danger by promoting unlawful acts on school grounds, violation of school regulations, or disrupts orderly operation of school are prohibited and will result in termination of the user's Internet privileges. Additionally, the user will be subject to all applicable consequences.
- Acts of vandalism, such as knowingly downloading or uploading computer viruses, will result in termination of the user's Internet privileges and will subject the user to all applicable consequences, including but not limited to financial restitution from the family to repair/replace damaged equipment and resources.

The Technology Use Agreement signed by students, parents, and teachers may be viewed on the BMMA website and the end of this document.

Special Education and Services

BMMA desires to meet the needs of all our students. California law requires public schools, including charter schools, to provide a free appropriate public education to all students, including those with exceptional needs. Although most students' needs are met through the traditional Montessori curriculum, occasionally supplemental services are needed. BMMA may arrange for outside agencies or a neighboring school district to provide these services if they are not available at the BMMA campus. If your child has special needs, please talk with her/his teacher and with the Principal/Executive Director so we can address these needs.

Section 504 Accommodations

California law requires schools to provide a free appropriate public education to qualified disabled persons. When a student qualifies under Section 504, an accommodation plan is designed to meet the student's special needs.

BMMA is committed to providing students with a highly professional environment where they are safe to grow and learn, and which nurtures a love of learning. BMMA honors each student's learning style and developmental level.

The Faculty of Bella Mente Montessori Academy

The Montessori teacher observes and participates in all classroom activities. The goal of each staff member is to assure that each student's needs are being met from the perspectives of safety, physical and emotional well-being, and academic excellence.

The style of teaching in a Montessori "prepared environment" is quite different from that of the teacher in a traditional classroom, who imparts the same lesson to all the children at the same time. In a Montessori "prepared environment," the teacher's role is more of a guide or facilitator of the many different concurrent learning projects. To do this effectively requires special training to observe each child for signs of readiness, and to select the appropriate material to introduce at the appropriate time.

BMMA is committed to the preservation and implementation of Montessori methodology, principles and curriculum within its educational program. All teachers shall hold a Commission on Teacher Credentialing certificate, permit, or other document equivalent to that which a teacher in other public schools would be required to hold, except that flexibility shall be given with regard to noncore, noncollege preparatory courses. One of the goals of Bella Mente Montessori Academy is for all teachers to have both their Montessori and California credentials. When a teacher has only one of these credentials, she/he will enroll in an approved program to obtain the other. In each Primary and Lower Elementary classroom, a full or part-time instructional assistant will be available to assist the teacher. BMMA instructional assistants have knowledge and/or background in early childhood education as well as previous successful experience working with children and have met the criteria set forth in the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act. These staff positions are supervised by the lead teacher.

BMMA promotes and teaches the concepts and skills of positive discipline through verbal reasoning and conflict resolution. BMMA believes that by role modeling these aspects of growth within a consistent program, students will develop a sense of responsibility and a desire to work and learn in a cooperative manner with others.

As a learning environment, BMMA is committed to providing faculty with a highly professional environment within which they are safe to grow, to continue their own professional development, and to nurture their own personal love of learning. In keeping with this goal, BMMA has designed a comprehensive teacher support program and regularly offers a variety of staff development opportunities throughout the school year.

As a Montessori teacher, preparation of self is equally important to preparation of the environment. All BMMA teachers are provided with morning and afternoon preparation time to allow them an opportunity to feel well organized prior to greeting their first student of the day. Staff are encouraged to take a few minutes each morning for self-reflection to allow for proper mental preparation before class begins. Please be respectful of these preparation times by keeping interruptions before school to a minimum. Teachers are always willing to schedule in advance a convenient time to meet with parents and answer questions or address concerns. Parents are also encouraged to send in written notes or communicate through the classroom email to which the teacher should respond within one or two days.

Montessori Assessments, Testing, Progress Reports and Report Cards

Assessment in the Montessori classroom is the hourly, daily, and weekly appraisal of student progress at BMMA. Early in their educational career at BMMA, students learn self-assessment from the prepared environment of self-correcting materials and the examples/modeling provided by the adult teaching staff. Self-assessment, self-reflection and self-correction are important lifelong skills that students acquire from the earliest years in a Montessori environment. Additionally, students also learn from their earliest years that their learning is a partnership with their teachers and parents.

Adults and students establish and agree upon daily, weekly, and monthly goals. Teachers maintain written records of the work presented and mastered, and each child has an individualized “work plan” which is used to guide them through the lessons and academic work required for that week.

At any given time, a Montessori teacher knows precisely where a child is: academically, developmentally, socially and emotionally. With frequent one-on-one interaction and individual, personalized assessment of student work by the classroom teacher, issues and concerns are quickly addressed as they emerge.

BMMA teachers conduct GO Math! assessments for placement in Math. Posttests are conducted to assess student mastery of concepts. Reading assessments are conducted for appropriate reading levels, and additional assessment tools are utilized to determine areas where a student may need reinforcement, as well as, to demonstrate a student’s academic advancement in any subject area.

In such a highly structured program, parents are alerted quickly to any concerns throughout the year. Additionally, BMMA provides formal documentation of the student’s progress two times each year: Progress reports are presented to the parents/guardians at Parent/Teacher Conferences twice each year (in the Fall and the Spring), and end-of-semester reports are sent home in January and June). While parents are most familiar with the traditional “A-B-C-D” report card, BMMA’s grade report has been carefully designed to give parents and students a progressive account of the student’s academic mastery with the common core standards.

As a result, the traditional “A-B-C-D” grades have been replaced with assessments that give a view of the child as a whole. Mastery of concepts at a student’s ability level is balanced with information pertaining to the state grade level standards. A student’s goal is to attain proficiency/mastery in all subject areas, yet we recognize that some students may require more time to reach this goal. Effort put forth in their lessons at their ability level is also a necessary element in determining a child’s progress. Conversely, a student whose abilities are above grade level will be challenged academically, and the assessments will reflect that advanced work.

Through this multi-level approach, performance and progress, not grades, become the focus of assessment and the heart of any discussion about the child.

Annual State Testing

As a public school, BMMA administers annual state testing assessments for all students in grades 3 through 8. The process and results of such state measurements can be used as one of many

indicators of an individual child's progress from year to year. Seen in this light, state assessments can be useful - to help parents, teachers and the student develop individual academic work plans.

Each spring BMMA participates in the state's official assessment system, the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP):

English language arts/literacy and mathematics assessments (grades three through eight)

- Smarter Balanced
- California Alternate Assessment (CAA)

Science assessments (grades five and eight):

- California Science Tests (CAST)
- CAA for Science

Testing materials are processed by state specified agencies and individual results are usually available in late summer/early fall. All assessment reports are sent to the school and will be sent home to parents soon after receipt.

School Records and Student Privacy

You child's school record is available for your access by making a request to the Front Office. You may request an amendment of your student's education records if you believe that there is an inaccuracy. These records are confidential and unavailable to other outside unauthorized parties. For more information about student records, please see the section below regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Special Occasions and Events

Birthdays

Children love to share their birthdays. Each teacher has developed her/his own practice for acknowledging birthdays. This information will be provided during parent orientation for your child's class. BMMA prefers parents choose to bring an item such as a book to donate to the classroom library to honor their child's birthday instead of a snack. If a parent desires to bring a snack, it must follow BMMA's Student Food and Beverage Snack List. Please see the section in this handbook for more information.

School Holidays and Vacation Periods

Please see the BMMA school calendar for a schedule of days off and intersession services throughout the year.

BMMA Religious Holiday Policy

In response to parent request and legalities, BMMA provides the following concerning religious holidays and public education; a subject at times marked by confusion and conflict.

BMMA recommends that teachers, school officials, parents and students, approach this discussion as an opportunity to work cooperatively for the sake of good education rather than at cross-purposes.

BMMA's religious holiday policy was developed based on the shared commitment of respect for individual religious beliefs expressed in the constitutional guarantee of religious liberty. This means that BMMA neither promotes nor inhibits religious belief or non-belief. Because Montessori classrooms are rich in cultural lessons and materials, BMMA takes into account the role of religion in history and cultures.

BMMA is aware of the legal issues surrounding the guidelines about the teaching of religion in public schools. Within the current legal framework, BMMA, their board of directors, administrators, teachers, parents and students must make practical decisions regarding religious holidays. We have done this by showing sensitivity to the needs of every student and a willingness to steer a course between avoidance of all references to religion on one hand and the promotion of religion on the other.

The Supreme Court has ruled that public schools may not sponsor religious practices (*Engel v. Vitale* (1962) 370 U.S. 421; *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963) 374 U.S. 203) but may teach about religion. While having avoided making a definitive ruling on religious holidays in public schools, the Supreme Court let stand a lower federal court decision stating that recognition of holidays may be constitutional if the purpose is to provide secular instruction about religious traditions rather than to promote the particular religion involved (*Florey v. Sioux Falls School District* (1980) 619 F.2d 1311 (8th Cir.)).

BMMA policy allows for the study of religious holidays in our school as opportunities for teaching about religions of various cultures and societies. Such study is to serve the academic goals of educating students about history and cultures, as well as learning about the traditions of particular religions within a pluralistic society.

Teaching about religious holidays will be conducted when natural opportunities arise during the course of the year as students study different cultures and communities. Teachers are alerted to the distinction between teaching about religious holidays, which is permissible, and celebrating religious holidays, which is not. Recognition of and information about holidays may focus on how and when they are celebrated, their origins, histories and generally agreed-upon meanings. Our approach needs to be sensitive, neither promoting nor inhibiting religion. We desire to foster understanding and mutual respect for differences in belief and culture.

Teachers are to avoid asking students to explain their beliefs and customs. An offer to do so should be treated with courtesy and accepted or rejected depending upon the educational relevancy. Teachers will not use the study of religious holidays as an opportunity to proselytize or to inject personal religious beliefs into class discussions. Teachers can avoid this by teaching attribution, i.e., by reporting that "some Buddhists believe, some Christians believe..."

Teachers may use religious symbols as examples of cultural and religious heritage. Religious symbols may be displayed only on a temporary basis as part of the academic program. Students

may choose to create artwork with religious symbols, but teachers should not encourage or discourage such creations.

Sacred music may be sung or played as part of the academic study of music. School concerts that present a variety of selections may include religious music. Concerts should avoid programs dominated by religious music, especially when these coincide with a particular religious holiday.

Seasonal activities such as parent holiday programs are to serve an educational purpose for all of the students. Children should not be made to feel excluded or identified with a religion not their own.

Holiday concerts in December may appropriately include music related to Christmas and Hanukkah, and religious music should not dominate. Dramatic productions should emphasize the cultural aspects of the holidays. Nativity pageants or plays portraying the Hanukkah miracle are not appropriate in the public-school setting.

Students may be excused from classroom discussions or activities related to particular holidays. BMMA acknowledges that some holidays considered by many people to be secular (for example, Halloween and Valentine's Day) are viewed by others to have religious overtones. Excusal requests will be granted for holidays that are marked by classroom parties and similar non-academic activities.

Students may be allowed a reasonable number of excused absences, without penalties, to observe religious events within their traditions. Students may be asked to complete makeup assignments or examinations in conjunction with such absences.

Family/School Community Partnership, Parent Participation & Parent Education

Bella Mente Montessori strives to partner with parents and guardians to best serve the needs of the children. This is accomplished through parent education and orientation, frequent and positive communication between staff and families, and regular parent involvement.

Parent Education and Orientation

BMMA provides a variety of parent education opportunities and events throughout the year. Within the first few weeks of school, an official orientation Sneak Peek and/or Back-to-School Night will take place. This is a very important evening to provide parents with information about the curriculum, classroom schedule, field trips, and other pertinent policies.

On-going throughout the school year are volunteer orientation trainings, during the work day and in the evening, which focus on preparing parents for the volunteer opportunities available at the school both in the classrooms and on field trips. This is especially important for new families, but does vary in content each year to encourage all parents to attend.

Later in the year, teachers may schedule curriculum informational evenings, as well as Watch Me Work evenings when children demonstrate to their parents the special materials they use each day in class.

Information about these events will be provided in the campus calendars and weekly newsletters. At times, BMMA will also arrange for educational professionals to provide workshops or presentations for families and teachers.

Parent Participation is a BMMA Priority

BMMA recognizes that parents are the most important educators in their children's lives. Studies show that children whose parents are involved in their education perform better in school than children whose parents are not involved. This is why we encourage parents to be active with their children's school at all grade levels.

BMMA also encourages parents to be active with their children's learning at home. *Read to them regularly. Ask them about their day and listen. Enjoy dinners as a family.* Parent involvement can easily be woven into even today's busy schedules. Parents and guardians are encouraged to schedule visits to their child(ren)'s school.

A variety of service opportunities exist and include: Working in the classroom with our Montessori staff, chaperoning field trips, and serving on campus committees to enhance the learning community. Volunteer activities can be done at the campus or at home. Parent education nights, fundraising, school events, and parent workdays provide enough additional opportunities to assure a comfortable level of participation. BMMA is grateful for the contribution volunteers make on behalf of the school and in the lives of all of our students.

It is our goal to work with each family to best meet the needs of the families and school.

Parents can offer Special Units of Study: an Important Part of our Montessori Curriculum.

If parents, relatives, or family friends have special talents or training, please let us know so that we may schedule some time for you to participate in the appropriate curriculum unit. Students often enjoy the opportunity to share their special adults with their classmates.

Student Safety: Livescan Fingerprinting and TB tests

Student safety is a priority at BMMA. In an effort to provide the highest level of safety for our students, all BMMA staff, contractors and volunteers who interact with students are required to successfully complete an electronic fingerprinting process known as a "livescan" report through the Department of Justice. Volunteers who are in frequent or prolonged contact with students are required to undergo a tuberculosis risk assessment, and, if tuberculosis risk factors are identified, the person must be examined and found to be free of infectious tuberculosis. These two requirements must be on file with the school office prior to commencing work at any BMMA campus.

The livescan report by the Department of Justice (DOJ) looks for the same things all our employees are checked for – convictions for drug crimes, sexual crimes, violent felonies and DUI crimes. Livescan reports can be initiated at various LiveScan location or directly at the Department of Justice and usually take 3 to 5 days or longer to generate a report to the school.

Because the Department of Justice has not yet developed a process for cross reporting, all parents must obtain a livescan clearance specifically for BMMA regardless of whether the parent has previously received clearance through an employer or another organization.

Tuberculosis is an airborne disease, which means it can be passed from one person to another simply by sharing the same air. TB tests can be obtained through your medical doctor or through the county department of health. For those with a positive TB test, a chest x-ray is required prior to clearance.

A clear livescan report and TB test result must be on file with the school office PRIOR to the first time a parent volunteers in any role where he/she is in direct contact with students. This includes participation in school-sponsored field trips.

Working from home or serving on parent committees does not require these clearance checks.

Parent Participation on Field Trips:

Parent/guardian participation plays a key role in the success of field trips, and parents are asked to drive students and assist with chaperoning. All adults attending field trips must fulfill screenings to ensure the safety of the children. **Please note that any adult without these clearances may not attend the field trip, including other adult family members.** Adult chaperones must have on file in the campus office:

- Cleared livescan finger print report from the Department of Justice for Bella Mente Montessori Academy (to be completed only once)
- Cleared TB test result (required every four years)

In addition, any parent(s) who will be driving students during field trips must have on file in the campus office:

- DMV 10 Year Driver's Official History Report: Form H6 (due at the beginning of each school year)
- Proof of Insurance: \$100,000/\$300,000 liability per person/occurrence (due at the beginning of each school year)
- Copy of valid Driver's License (due only once)
- Copy of Vehicle Registration (due at the beginning of each school year, and upon renewal)

Bella Mente Montessori Academy Welcomes Parents to Observe our Classrooms and Daily Activities.

Any time you would like to observe the daily activity at our school, please feel free to schedule a time with your child's teacher. While it is standard procedure to advocate an "Open Door Policy", we also want to be sure to limit the amount of potential interruptions and distractions each day. Contacting your child's teacher to schedule an observation in advance will help alleviate scheduling conflicts. The only exception is the first month of school: No observations will be permitted to allow for students to adjust to their new setting without interruption.

Parents are also reminded that an appointment for a classroom observation is just that: a time for you to observe your child's class and make any notes regarding questions that may arise.

Observers should be courteous and quiet guests during the entire observation period. Observers must refrain from student interaction and must save discussions with the teacher until she/he is relieved of her/his student supervision duties. Additionally, parents should remain aware of the length of the observation period and keep it to a reasonable length of time, usually 20-25 minutes, or less. Parents who prefer to interact with the class should plan to complete the requirements for parent participation in the classroom (see page 24, Student Safety: Livescan Fingerprinting and TB tests) and should submit a request to the teacher to provide such service. Parents should be aware they must make an appointment to observe in a classroom. Walk-ins are generally not permitted as they are a disruption to the students' working environment. While observing, parents must adhere to policies regarding student confidentiality. Parents shall not talk about any student to another student, parent or other third party. Breach of this policy is a breach of confidentiality and will jeopardize the parent's opportunities for further classroom observation or participation. Policies for observations have been developed to assure a positive experience for all parties. Upon check-in at the front office, observers will be provided with a set of rules to follow while in the classroom setting. Observers who chose to ignore these policies will be asked to end their observation immediately.

Visitors are required to provide a government issued ID at the Front Desk. This will allow each visitor to be vetted through the Department of Justice sexual offender database.

Child Custody

BMMA follows child custody decisions made by the courts. In order to do this, the family must provide copies of all relative legal documents to the school. It is not BMMA's responsibility to obtain these documents. School staff cannot modify or make exceptions. If a child custody arrangement has changed, a parent or guardian must provide copies of the applicable legal documents to the school. If any dispute arises at school regarding visitation or child custody, BMMA staff will call the local authorities to resolve the situation. BMMA requests that separating and divorced parents place their child's wellbeing as their number one consideration. When divorce occurs, families are still co-parenting and the child(ren)'s welfare must come first. BMMA wishes to support families as much as possible in achieving positive implementation of this goal.

Tobacco Use and Vaping

BMMA is a tobacco, e-cigarette, and vape free environment. Smoking/Vaping and use of any tobacco products are prohibited at all times on school campus and surrounding areas, including outdoor areas. Smoking/Vaping is also prohibited during school functions and field trips off site, regardless if smoking/vaping is permitted in that particular environment. Thank you for your cooperation.

Parent Communications at BMMA

Parent-Teacher Conferences

BMMA identifies parents and teachers as two integral parts of the student's academic success team. As such, BMMA encourages parents and teachers to stay in close communication regarding each student's progress toward subject mastery. In addition to informal discussions and communications throughout the year, BMMA offers formal opportunities each school year for parents and teachers to meet individually to discuss the child's progress. These parent-teacher conference periods are scheduled at four specific intermittent periods (at the end of each quarter and semester). In the fall, at the end of the first quarter, to provide an overview of the goals and objectives of the child's academic plan for the year, and toward the end of the school year to provide a final update on the child's progress toward subject mastery before moving on to the next level.

Weekly Newsletters and Updates

Each week, BMMA will publish email newsletter updates to include information regarding special projects and events, holiday activities, field trips, fundraising, and various other informational items of interest to our BMMA families. Campus newsletters are emailed. Look for these updates and read them to keep informed of important school information.

Team Newsletters and Updates

Each teaching team composes their own lessons and newsletter information. This information will be published at regular intervals and is another way for you to stay informed about your child's education. As you read through the information, please let your child's teacher know if there are any areas you are knowledgeable in and wish to share. We also encourage you to share this newsletter with your child.

Parents are Vital to Every Child's Success: Developing a Plan of Support for your Child

BMMA recognizes that parents are vital to every child's academic success. The following points are offered to assist you in developing a plan of support for your child:

- Schedule an appointment to visit your child's school; you are a welcomed visitor!
- Make sure that your child gets enough sleep, eats a healthy breakfast every day, brings a healthy lunch and snacks for school, wears appropriate clothing for the weather, and arrives at school on time and ready to learn.
- Read to your child every day, or encourage your child to read independently.
- Insist that your child treat him/herself, other students, teachers and staff with respect and obey home and school rules.
- Call your child's teacher or the school office, write a note, or email the teacher at her/his email address when you have a question, a compliment, or a concern.
- Volunteer your time. Many volunteer tasks can be done at home.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences to discuss your child's progress and any challenges he/she may be encountering.

- Carefully review your child’s report cards, school newsletters, and other information from school.
- Participate in school activities. Encourage your child to do the same. These activities and events have been planned to provide families with the opportunity to participate in the school community and enhance relationships between students, parents, and school staff.

School Evaluations

Each year BMMA will conduct surveys of parents and staff regarding their perception of the school/teachers and program. We invite you to provide us with feedback to help us continually improve. The results of these surveys will be shared with the Executive Director, Principal, the BMMA Governing Board, and staff, and will be used to effectively implement positive program change. Many of our best ideas have come from parents and staff!!

Guidelines for Arrivals & Departures

Due to traffic and facility configurations, BMMA has a specific drop off and pick up procedure. This will be explained during parent orientation.

In general, parents should plan to drop off their children at the designated location, and provide a warm, affectionate goodbye. Extending the drop-off procedure on a regular basis can create separation problems and can take away the child’s opportunity to establish healthy patterns of self-confidence and responsibility. As noted in the Academic Overview portion of this handbook, students are encouraged to develop self-reliance and positive esteem. These characteristics are best developed and practiced through effective care of self and care of environment. Once students have worked through the initial “First Day of School” experience, students are very capable of getting themselves settled in and ready for the academic day without the help of mom or dad. ***Parents will not be allowed to walk students into class (even the first week).***

Likewise, parents should plan to pick up their students at the end of the day in the same designated location to alleviate traffic and campus congestion.

If you have a need to come on to the campus during the school day, please be sure to park in only the designated parent/guest parking areas. Parents should not park in STAR program or Code Bella parking spots.

As explained in the Academic Overview, students are provided with uninterrupted units of time to support their ability to concentrate on the lessons of the day.

Forgotten homework, lunches, etc., may be delivered to the school office.

For a detailed discussion regarding tardies and early pick-ups, please refer to the section on Attendance Policies. For purposes of this section, students arriving at school late or departing early must be cleared through the school office. When late to school, parents should plan to:

- Accompany their child(ren) into the school office
- Sign them in using the designated office log book

- Assist each child in obtaining a tardy slip from an office staff member
- To keep disruption to a minimum, you do not need to enter the classroom with your child as long as she/he has the tardy slip to give to the teacher.

If your child is frequently tardy to school, a family meeting may be scheduled with the Principal to discuss a plan of action that will correct this problem. Children arriving late are often self-conscious and feel uncomfortable entering the room. It also affects their ability to settle into the business of learning when they are in this emotional state. The class often takes care of a variety of business and/or begins quiet journaling activities at this time. Students arriving late create an unwelcome disruption to the rest of the class. Please support your child to be on time. This is a life skill which will be of great benefit as the child gets older.

In the Montessori classroom, a great amount of learning happens at all times of the day, including the afternoon hours. Afternoon lessons are filled with all the cultural activities of history, science, art, etc., and incorporate practice of core academic subject material as well. BMMA stresses the importance of the afternoon curriculum. Parents need to understand this importance and respect the need for the student to attend school for the entire day.

When an early pickup from school is necessary and unavoidable, parents should plan to:

- Contact the teacher in advance of the early pick up so that staff can assist the child and the class to prepare for the interruption and transition.
- At the time of pickup, parent/guardian must check in at the school office and sign the student out in the designated office log book.
- The office staff will facilitate getting the student from class for you while you wait in the office. Adult visitors are not permitted to be unattended on the campus.
- Leave as quietly as possible.

Safety of our students is a priority at all times. During enrollment/registration, parents may provide names of any adults who will be able to pick up their student during school hours. Other arrangements may be agreed upon on a case by case basis.

If there is an occasion where someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up your child from school, please contact the office by telephone and with a written note or email.

Due to custodial agreements, and for every child's safety, it is vital that we have the appropriate, complete, and most up-to-date information regarding who is authorized to transport your child(ren).

Children attending before and after school programs are required to sign their student in and out with the designated program.

Separation: TK/ Kindergarten/First Grade Students and Parents

Sometimes it is difficult for both parent and young child to adjust during the first few days of school. If you anticipate tears or other expressions, we offer a few suggestions based on our experiences.

- ***Please bring your child by the campus for a visit prior to the first day of school.*** Providing a visual reference to the place where the child will be spending his/her day can sometimes make a world of difference!
- Make sure that your child knows when school is over and who is picking her/him up. This reinforces the abstract concept that you WILL be returning to pick him/her up at the end of the day.
- Express your own happiness about school. Give the child something to focus on during your absence (e.g. “I’m really looking forward to hearing the names of your new friends ... can you try to remember some of them for me?”)
- Encourage a hug and kiss, etc. and **promptly** leave. ***Try to avoid struggles by remaining with the student!*** The child will usually engage in an activity within five minutes of your departure.

You are invited to call us to assure yourself that she/he is doing all right.

School Hours and Extended Day Programs

BMMA adheres to and usually exceeds the state’s required number of instructional minutes. The school day is between 8:15 and 3:10 depending on the grade level.

BMMA offers an optional fee-based extended care program and enrichment program (*Star*) to provide care options for our BMMA families. Informational fliers are available from the Front Office.

Calendar

BMMA has a school calendar which adheres to the number of instructional days required by the state. School starts in August and ends in June, with fall, winter and spring breaks. The school calendar is established and approved on an annual basis by the BMMA Governing Board of Directors and is subject to change.

Montessori Uniform Attire / Dress Code

Montessori education is concerned with the inner development of the child’s mental, emotional, physical and spiritual being. As such, we seek to limit undue focus of attention on external appearances. After much discussion about the relative values of a dress code and individual freedom, BMMA has adopted the following middle path Dress Code. We believe that your child will be happiest when dressed in casual, comfortable clothing.

Dress Code Policy

BMMA is in compliance with the provisions of Article IX, section 5 of the California Constitution, and Assembly Bill 1575 (effective January 1, 2013), which prohibit the charging of any student fees for participation in an educational activity at a public school.

Tops

Expectations

Light blue or navy collared polo **with BMA** logo (short or long sleeve).

Outdoor jackets must be **navy**

Navy pull over sweatshirt or zip up jackets **with BMA** logo may be worn inside

BMA t-shirts may be worn during Friday School Spirit Days.

- *Undershirts or turtlenecks worn under the polo must be plain white, khaki, navy, or black (no graphics or other designs)*

NOT Acceptable

- Shirts one size **larger** than the student's body size.
- Modifications to shirts such as, **but not limited to**, pinning, rolling, knotting or any other modifications.
- Undershirts or turtlenecks may not have hoods.

Bottoms

Expectations

Khaki or navy skorts, shorts, jumpers, and pants

Blue Jeans may be worn during Friday School Spirit Days

- *Leggings worn under skorts or shorts must be plain white, khaki, navy, or black (no graphics or other designs)*

NOT Acceptable

- Bottoms must fit properly, be worn at the waist, and not altered or modified in any way.
- Bottoms that are too large (saggy/baggy) or too tight (skinny) are not allowed.
- Shorts and skorts must be 2" above the knee or longer (shorts must also not be more than 2" below the knee) and may not be form-fitting. They must fit properly.
- No cargo pants or pants with side-leg pockets.
- No distressed or altered jeans of any kind

Shoes

Expectations

- Shoes must have closed toes.
- Shoes should be chosen with discretion.

*athletic shoes are **highly** recommended during PE days*

NOT Acceptable

- Boots, house shoes, heels, sandals, or slippers.
- Shoes with offensive logos.
- Heelies or platform shoes.
- Shoes that can be a distraction to others (i.e. shoes with lights).

Accessories & Grooming

Expectations

- Belts without offensive logos or design.
- BMA hats may be worn outdoors.

please write student's name on inside tag

NOT Acceptable

- Hats may not be worn indoors.
- Accessories, such as backpacks or notebooks with writing, pictures or any other insignia which are crude, vulgar, profane, provocative, or sexually suggestive are prohibited. Neither may they advocate racial, ethnic or religious prejudice or the use of drugs or alcohol.

Note:

No student shall be sent home from school or denied attendance to school, penalized academically, otherwise discriminated against for noncompliance with this Dress Code Policy. However, students should be in compliance on the first day of school. New students enrolling during the school year must be in compliance within 10 days of enrolling. Each student is expected to adhere to the Bella Mente Dress Code Policy every day during the school year. Exceptions will include school spirit days, picture days, and others at the discretion of the principal.

Discipline and Behavioral Guidelines

The Montessori philosophy and educational model emphasizes respect for all individuals which is a key component in building a strong school community. Adults serve as models in the way they address the children. Lessons of “Grace and Courtesy” begin at the earliest grades, and students have the opportunity to learn peaceful ways to work through their conflicts. When issues and misbehaviors do occur, a positive discipline approach, based on respectful, relevant, and related consequences, is utilized.

The BMMA staff is trained in Jane Nelsen’s “Positive Discipline.” The classroom curriculum includes Peace Education, with an emphasis on personal peace and tolerance of others’ differences. Conflict resolution tools, such as the Peace Table, as well as Peer Mediation techniques, assist the children in learning these important life skills.

Students are presented with lessons, which include scenarios for all areas of the school, discussing the reasons for safety, respect, and responsibility in those locations. Positive reinforcement is stressed, and students are “caught” following the rules and guidelines.

Physical violence will result in an immediate office referral. Parents will receive a written notification (Incident Report), and a phone call made if it is deemed necessary. Students disrupting their classroom may be removed to do work in another room or in the office.

Generally, once a child has completed a designated amount of work, they are invited to return to their own classroom.

Communicating with parents is an important element in building a team of staff and families. Phone calls and written notes or reports sent home are ways the school can keep parents informed about how their child is doing in the school environment. When necessary, parent/teacher conferences and meetings with the administrator will be scheduled to assist teachers and parents in finding the most beneficial ways to support a student’s success at school.

Student Discipline Procedures, Suspension and Expulsion Policy

BMMA staff will enforce disciplinary rules and procedures fairly and consistently. Discipline may include the counseling of students, conferencing with parents/guardians, detention during or after school hours, suspension, and expulsion.

When a student is observed not following a rule, the child is asked if they know the rule and is then redirected to show the appropriate behavior. Only when a child repeatedly misbehaves are they referred to the school office and parents contacted. Data is collected to determine if further training is necessary for all of the students when issues occur often and by numerous students. The emphasis is on training and positive reinforcement for the desired behavior, as opposed to a punitive approach.

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their classroom may be removed to do work in another room or in the office. Generally, once a child has completed a designated amount of work, they are invited to return to their own classroom.

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When behavior that is unacceptable occurs, the following steps will be taken:

- For minor incidents and with younger students, staff will provide opportunities for re-direction and a chance to "try again."
- Repeated offenses will initiate a progressive system of Student Success Team (SST) meetings starting with a conference between the parents/guardians and teachers.

Should the behavior(s) continue, a SST meeting will be scheduled with a campus administrator, the teacher(s), and the parents/guardians. Other school staff and family members may also be included if deemed appropriate. In the SST process, the team identifies concerns, works together on solutions, and creates an action plan. It is customary for follow-up meetings to take place to discuss progress or the need for additional interventions.

Serious incidents will lead to an immediate referral to a campus administrator. Parents/guardians will be notified by phone or in writing.

Serious or repeated infractions will result in one or more days of suspension from school (refer to the Suspension Policy).

Corporal punishment will never be used as a disciplinary measure. Corporal punishment does not include the use of reasonable force to protect students, staff, or school property.

Parents/guardians will be notified in writing or by phone following any disciplinary action taken in response to a student's misconduct. A follow-up parent conference with the teacher or administrator may be required. Parents may also request a meeting to discuss the incident and disciplinary action.

BMMA maintains a comprehensive suspension and expulsion policy in order to promote learning and protect the safety and wellbeing of all students. A student may be suspended or expelled for misconduct as specified below while on the school grounds, coming and going to school, or at a school-related activity. These policies are developed to conform to applicable federal law regarding students with exceptional needs.

An administrator may suspend students who fail to comply with BMMA discipline policies at any time. Students who habitually fail to comply with these policies or who present an immediate threat to the health and/or safety of others may be suspended pending a recommendation for expulsion to the BMMA Governing Board by the Executive Director.

Prior to expulsion, students will be provided progressive discipline unless the student's conduct presents an immediate threat to the health or safety of others. BMMA will notify the district of any expulsions and will include suspension and expulsion data in its annual performance report to the sponsoring school district.

Weapons and Dangerous Substances:

Due to concerns for safety, weapons of any kind may not be brought to school; this includes the parking lots and surrounding areas of the school. We are required by law to take immediate and strong action should a child bring weapons to school. This consists of, but is not limited to, all knives, including pocket knives, daggers and martial art weapons, air guns, replica guns, ammunition, incendiary devices, and fireworks. Parents are asked to discuss this with their children in an age-appropriate manner to help them understand the seriousness of these items.

Parents/guardians are ultimately responsible for their child bringing such items to school and will be called immediately to pick up their child should he/she be discovered to have a dangerous object. School officials have the right to search student backpacks, lockers, or other containers if the possession of a weapon or dangerous substance is reasonably suspected.

Sexual Harassment:

The BMMA Governing Board prohibits sexual harassment of or by any student, BMMA staff, or volunteer. Teachers should discuss the policy with their students in age appropriate ways and should assure them that they need not endure any form of sexual harassment.

The Board expects students and staff to immediately report incidents of sexual harassment to the Principal or designee. Prohibited sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Theft or Destruction of School, Student or Staff Property:

School staff, in consultation with a school administrator, may search a student's belongings if there is reasonable suspicion to believe the child has taken another's belongings. School administration may refer theft of property to law enforcement.

Students and parents/guardians may be held accountable for replacing or repairing any property damaged or lost due to student negligence.

Threat of Harm:

All threats will be taken seriously. The student will be removed and parents/guardians called immediately in the event a student threatens another student, staff, or volunteer. Depending on the age of the student, and the severity of the threat, law enforcement may be notified.

Suspension and Expulsion Procedures

Governing Law: The procedures by which pupils can be suspended or expelled from the charter school for disciplinary reasons or otherwise involuntarily removed from the charter school for any reason. These procedures, at a minimum, shall include an explanation of how the charter school will comply with federal and state constitutional procedural and substantive due process requirements that is consistent with all of the following:

(i) For suspensions of fewer than 10 days, provide oral or written notice of the charges against the pupil and, if the pupil denies the charges, an explanation of the evidence that supports the charges and an opportunity for the pupil to present his or her side of the story.

(ii) For suspensions of 10 days or more and all other expulsions for disciplinary reasons, both of the following:

(I) Provide timely, written notice of the charges against the pupil and an explanation of the pupil's basic rights.

(II) Provide a hearing adjudicated by a neutral officer within a reasonable number of days at which the pupil has a fair opportunity to present testimony, evidence, and witnesses and confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses, and at which the pupil has the right to bring legal counsel or an advocate.

(iii) Contain a clear statement that no pupil shall be involuntarily removed by the charter school for any reason unless the parent or guardian of the pupil has been provided written notice of intent to remove the pupil no less than five schooldays before the effective date of the action. The written notice shall be in the native language of the pupil or the pupil's parent or guardian or, if the pupil is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the pupil's educational rights holder, and shall inform him or her of the right to initiate the procedures specified in clause (ii) before the effective date of the action. If the pupil's parent, guardian, or educational rights holder initiates the procedures specified in clause (ii), the pupil shall remain enrolled and shall not be removed until the charter school issues a final decision. For purposes of this clause, "involuntarily removed" includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not include suspensions specified in clauses (i) and (ii). Education Code Section 47605 (b)(5)(J).

This Pupil Suspension and Expulsion Procedure is intended to promote learning and protect the safety and well-being of all students at the School. When school discipline policy is violated, it may be necessary to suspend or expel a student from regular classroom instruction. These procedures for student suspension and expulsion may be amended from time to time without the need to amend the charter so long as the amendments comport with legal requirements.

School staff shall enforce disciplinary rules and procedures fairly and consistently among all students. This Policy and its Procedures will be printed and distributed as part of the Family Handbook and will clearly describe discipline expectations.

Discipline includes but is not limited to advising and counseling students, conferring with parents/guardians, detention during and after school hours, use of alternative educational environments, suspension (both in-school and out-of-school) and expulsion.

In-school suspension will be held under the supervision of administrative staff including, but not limited to the Principal or Executive Director. Student will complete work assigned by their classroom teacher.

Corporal punishment shall not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a student. For purposes of the Policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee's use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff or other persons or to prevent damage to school property.

The Charter School administration shall ensure that students and their parents/guardians are notified in writing upon enrollment of all discipline policies and procedures. The notice shall state that these Policy and Procedures are available upon request at the Executive Director's office.

Suspended or expelled students shall be excluded from all school and school related activities unless otherwise agreed during the period of suspension or expulsion.

A student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom the School has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act ("IDEIA") or who is qualified for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") is subject to the same grounds for suspension and expulsion and is accorded the same due process procedures applicable to regular education students except when federal and state law mandates additional or different procedures. The School will follow Section 504, the IDEIA, and all applicable federal and state laws including but not limited to the California Education Code, when imposing any form of discipline on a student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom the School has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability or who is otherwise qualified for such services or protections in according due process to such students. The Charter School shall notify the District of the suspension of any student identified under the IDEIA (or for whom there may be a basis of knowledge of the same) or as a student with a disability under Section 504.

1. Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion of Students

A student may be suspended or expelled for prohibited misconduct if the act is related to school activity or school attendance occurring at the School or at any other school or a School sponsored event at anytime including but not limited to: a) while on school grounds; b) while going to or coming from school; c) during the lunch period, whether on or off the school campus; or d) during, going to, or coming from a school sponsored activity.

2. Enumerated Offenses

Students may be suspended or expelled for any of the following acts when it is determined the pupil:

- a. Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person or willfully used force of violence upon the person of another, except self-defense.
- b. Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, knife, explosive, or other dangerous object unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the students had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Executive Director or designee's concurrence.
- c. Unlawfully possessed, used, sold or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.
- d. Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid substance or material and represented same as controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.
- e. Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
- f. Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property.
- g. Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property.
- h. Possessed or used tobacco or any products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets and betel.
- i. Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- j. Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code 11014.5.
- k. Disrupted school activities or otherwise willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, other school officials, or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties.
- l. Knowingly received stolen school property or private property.
- m. Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.
- n. Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Penal Code 261, 266c, 286, 288, 288a or 289, or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code 243.4.
- o. Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.
- p. Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.
- q. Engaged in or attempted to engage in hazing, as defined in Education Code Section 48900(q), of another.
- r. Aiding or abetting as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person.
- s. Made terrorist threats, as defined in Education Code Section 489700.7(b), against school officials and/or school property.

- t. Committed sexual harassment.
- u. Caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause, or participated in an act of hate violence.
- v. Intentionally harassed, threatened or intimidated a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting class work, creating substantial disorder and invading student rights by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment.
- w. Any other conduct that the Executive Director or Board determines violates school policy or expectations for student conduct as described in the Family Handbook.

Alternatives to suspension or expulsion will first be attempted with students who are truant, tardy, or otherwise absent from assigned school activities.

3. Suspension Procedure

Suspensions shall be initiated according to the following procedures:

a. Conference

Suspension shall be preceded, if possible, by a conference conducted by the Executive Director or the Executive Director's designee with the student and his or her parent and, whenever practical, the teacher, supervisor or school employee who referred the student to the Executive Director. The conference may be omitted if the Executive Director or designee determines that an emergency situation exists, or if the student or parent waives their right to a conference. An "emergency situation" involves a clear and present danger to the lives, safety or health of students or school personnel. If a student is suspended without this conference due to an emergency situation, both the parent/guardian and student shall be notified of the student's right to return to school for the purpose of a conference.

At the conference, the pupil shall be informed of the reason for the disciplinary action and the evidence against him or her, and the pupil shall be given the opportunity to present his or her version and evidence in his or her defense.

This conference shall be held within two school days, unless the pupil waives this right or is physically unable to attend for any reason including, but not limited to, incarceration or hospitalization.

No penalties may be imposed on a pupil for failure of the pupil's parent or guardian to attend a conference with school officials. Reinstatement of the suspended pupil shall not be contingent upon attendance by the pupil's parent or guardian at the conference.

b. Notice to Parents/Guardians

At the time of the suspension, an administrator or designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent/guardian by telephone or in person. Whenever a student

is suspended, the parent/guardian shall be notified in writing of the suspension and the date of return following suspension. This notice shall state the specific offense committed by the student. If school officials wish to ask the parent/guardian to confer regarding matters pertinent to the suspension, the notice may request that the parent/guardian respond to such requests without delay.

c. Suspension Time Limits/Recommendation for Placement/Expulsion

Suspensions, when not including a recommendation for expulsion, shall not exceed five (5) consecutive school days per suspension.

Upon a recommendation of Expulsion by the Executive Director or Executive Director's designee, the pupil and the pupil's guardian or representative will be invited to a conference to determine if the suspension for the pupil should be extended pending an expulsion hearing. This determination will be made by the Executive Director or designee upon either of the following determinations: 1) the pupil's presence will be disruptive to the education process; or 2) the pupil poses a threat or danger to others. Upon either determination, the pupil's suspension will be extended pending the results of an expulsion hearing.

4. Authority to Expel

A student may be expelled by the Executive Director after providing an opportunity for a hearing before a neutral school official appointed by the BMMA Board of Directors (the "Hearing Officer"). Unless a hearing is timely requested by the student's parent(s) or guardian, the Executive Director's determination is final. If a hearing is timely requested, then a hearing shall be held and the Hearing Officer's determination is final.

5. Expulsion Procedures

When the Executive Director determines that a student has committed an expellable offense, the student and the student's parent(s) or guardian shall be provided a timely written notice of the charges against the student and an explanation of the student's basic rights, including the right to a hearing before the Hearing Officer to determine whether the student should be expelled (the "Written Notice"). The parent(s) or guardian shall have 10 calendar days from issuance of the Written Notice to file a written request for a hearing to be presided over by the Hearing Officer. If no hearing is timely requested, the expulsion becomes final as of the 11th calendar day following the Written Notice.

If a hearing is timely requested, the Hearing Officer shall hold a confidential hearing within 15 calendar days of receipt of the request for a hearing. During the hearing, the student shall have the right to be represented by legal counsel or an advocate, the right to present evidence, testimony, and witnesses, the right to cross-examine adverse witnesses, and the right to question BMMA representatives.

Written notice of the hearing shall be provided to the student and the student's parent or guardian at least 10 days before the date of the hearing. Upon mailing the notice, it shall be deemed served. The notice shall include:

- (1) The date, time and place of the expulsion hearing;
- (2) A statement of the specific facts, charges and offenses upon which the proposed expulsion is based;
- (3) A copy of the school's rules or policy which relate to the alleged violation;
- (4) Notification of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to provide information about the student's status at the school to any other school district or school to which the student seeks enrollment;
- (5) Notification of the opportunity for the student or the student's parent/guardian to appear in person or to employ and be represented by counsel or a non-attorney advisor;
- (6) Notification of the right to inspect and obtain copies of all documents to be used at the hearing;
- (7) Notification of the opportunity to confront and question witnesses who testify at the hearing;
- (8) Notification of the opportunity to question evidence presented and to present oral and documentary evidence on the student's behalf including witnesses.

The student and/or his or her parent(s) or representative must present all written and oral evidence and argument to be considered at the hearing. The school secretary or Hearing Officer's designee shall attend and prepare minutes of the proceeding, which shall become part of the record of the proceeding along with all written evidence or other material submitted to the Hearing Officer. After considering the evidence, including testimony presented at the hearing, the Hearing Officer shall either (1) support the Executive Director's recommendation for expulsion, (2) reject that recommendation, or (3) modify that recommendation. The Hearing Officer's determination after the hearing is final and cannot be appealed.

6. Special Procedures for Expulsion Hearings Involving Sexual Assault or Battery Offenses

The Hearing Officer may determine that the disclosure of either the identity of the witness or the testimony of that witness at the hearing, or both, would subject the witness to an unreasonable risk of psychological or physical harm. Upon this determination, the testimony of the witness may be presented at the hearing in the form of sworn declarations which shall be examined by the Hearing Officer. Copies of these sworn declarations, edited to delete the name and identity of the witness, shall be made available to the pupil. The Hearing Officer may take any other measures (s)he deems reasonable under the circumstances to protect the privacy of witnesses.

7. Presentation of Evidence

While technical rules of evidence do not apply to expulsion hearings, evidence may be admitted and used as proof only if it is the kind of evidence on which reasonable persons can rely in the conduct of serious affairs. Findings of fact shall be based solely on the

evidence at the hearing. While hearsay evidence is admissible, no decision to expel shall be based solely on hearsay and sworn declarations may be admitted as testimony from witnesses of whom the Hearing Officer determines that disclosure of their identity or testimony at the hearing may subject them to an unreasonable risk of physical or psychological harm.

8. Written Notice to Expel

The Executive Director or designee following a final decision to expel shall send written notice of the decision to expel, including any findings of fact made by the Hearing Officer if a hearing was requested and held, to the student or parent/guardian. This notice shall also include the following:

- a. Notice of the specific offense committed by the student
- b. Notice of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to inform any new district in which the student seeks to enroll of the student's status with the School.

The Executive Director or designee shall send a copy of the written notice of the decision to expel to the district of residence.

This notice shall include the following:

- a. The student's name
- b. The specific expellable offense committed by the student

Additionally, in accordance with Education Code Section 47605(d)(3), upon expulsion of any student, the Charter School shall notify the superintendent of the school district of the pupil's last known address within 30 days, and shall, upon request, provide that school district with a copy of the cumulative record of the pupil, including report cards or a transcript of grades, and health information.

9. Disciplinary Records

The School shall maintain records of all student suspensions and expulsions at the School. Such records shall be made available to VUSD upon request.

10. Expelled Pupils/Alternative Education

Pupils who are expelled shall be responsible for seeking alternative education programs including, but not limited to, programs within the County or their school district of residence.

11. Readmission

The decision to readmit a pupil or to admit a previously expelled pupil from another school district or charter school shall be in the sole discretion of the Board following a meeting with the Executive Director and the pupil and guardian or representative to determine whether the pupil poses a threat to others or will be disruptive to the school environment. The Executive Director shall make a recommendation to the Board following the meeting regarding his or her determination. The pupil's readmission is also contingent upon the School's capacity at the time the student seeks readmission.

No student shall be involuntarily removed by BMMA for any reason unless the parent or guardian of the student has been provided written notice of intent to remove the student no less than five school days before the effective date of the action. The written notice shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student's educational rights holder, and shall inform him or her of the right to initiate the Expulsion Procedures described above before the effective date of the action. If the student's parent, guardian, or educational rights holder initiates the Expulsion Procedures described above, the pupil shall remain enrolled and shall not be removed until the Hearing Officer issues a final decision. For purposes of this clause, "involuntarily removed" includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not include suspensions for disciplinary reasons.

Communications and Dispute Resolution

Do you have a Compliment or a Concern?

BMMA has confidence in the competency and professionalism of its staff. However, if the school your child attends is not measuring up to your expectations, we would like to know about it.

BMMA encourages open and respectful communication from individuals and groups within the community regarding compliments, suggestions, questions, and complaints about any part of the school program or any employee of BMMA utilizes this information to effect improvement and positive change in our program whenever possible.

At BMMA we use the communication style of first talking about what is working, and then discussing what needs improvement. We find that this style of communication is easier heard and received. Additionally, we model this communication style for the children because we believe it helps people achieve positive outcomes. We invite you to join us in this style of communication.

To express a compliment about school personnel:

If you would like to share a compliment, feel free to call the Principal, send a note, and/or speak directly to the person you are complimenting.

To express a concern the following informal dispute resolution process was adopted by the Governing Board of BMMA:

Dispute Resolution Process

Misunderstandings and problems arise from time to time in any situation. Differences of opinion will exist. BMMA intends for the school environment to be a safe and supportive environment for students, teachers, staff, and parents. We are committed to creating an honest and open atmosphere in which any problem, complaint, suggestion, or question will receive a timely and respectful response. It is requested that all parties conduct themselves in a congenial manner and communicate with each other with mutual respect at all times.

Any disputed issue should be brought to the attention of the respective party as soon as possible with the intention to resolve the issue. If it cannot be resolved at this level, then an appointment should be made with the Principal/Executive Director to attempt further resolution.

If a parent disagrees with the established rules on conduct, policies, procedures, or practice, they can express this concern directly to the Principal/Executive Director. No parent will be penalized, formally or informally, for voicing a concern or complaint with BMMA in a reasonable, business-like manner, or for using this dispute resolution process.

The Executive Director is the official representative between parents and the Governing Board. He/she or any Principal/designee is accessible and ready to hear suggestions, concerns, and complaints. BMMA cannot act on any problem unless it is aware of it, so we request that concerns or disputes be brought to the appropriate party as soon as possible.

While not every problem may be resolved to the complete satisfaction of all parties, effort will be made on the behalf of BMMA, and its staff, to bring resolution to any problem. This will only be possible through both parties' willingness to listen, attempt toward understanding, and exploration of all aspects of the issue at hand. Through this process, parents, teachers, and administration will be able to develop confidence in each other. This confidence is important to the smooth, effective operation of BMMA and will directly benefit the students. BMMA will strive to provide such an atmosphere at all times. Parents are encouraged to offer positive and constructive criticism, and to take the following steps if they believe they have dissatisfaction, or believe that an injustice has occurred, or that a decision affecting them or their child is unjust or inequitable:

1. When a problem first arises, the concerned person should discuss the matter with the respective party as soon as possible.
2. If they are unable to resolve the issue at this level, the concerned person should then contact the Principal to make an appointment to discuss the issue as soon as possible.
3. If the problem cannot be resolved informally through discussion or meeting, the concern or complaint shall be reduced to writing by the concerned person and submitted to the Principal. The concerned person should specify the problem to the fullest extent possible and any remedies sought.

4. Following any necessary investigation, the Principal shall prepare a written response to the concerned person no later than ten (10) working days from the date of receipt of the concern, unless for good cause, additional time is required for the response.
5. If the matter is still unresolved at this level, the grievant may request a meeting with the Executive Director. The request for this meeting will be written and will include any and all documentation related to the grievance along with any solutions that have been proposed by the concerned person, the Principal, and any other related parties. The request for the meeting is to be delivered to the Executive Director who, unless sick or out of town, will meet with the concerned person within (10) working days of receiving the written request, or as soon thereafter as is practicable.

After the meeting, the Executive Director may conduct an investigation of the matter if appropriate prior to making any decisions or recommendations. The Executive Director will provide the concerned person with a response and outcome within a reasonable amount of time, not to exceed 30 days from the date of the meeting.

Uniform Complaint Procedures

BMMA has the primary responsibility for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations for students who attend our school. In addition to our informal dispute resolution process described above, we have established Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP) to address allegations of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying, and complaints alleging violation of state or federal laws governing educational programs, the charging of unlawful pupil fees, and the non-compliance of our Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). For more information, a copy of our UCP is included below as part of this Handbook, and is also available at the school site and on our website.

BELLA MENTE MONTESSORI ACADEMY ANNUAL NOTIFICATION OF THE UNIFORM COMPLAINT PROCEDURES (UCP) 2020-2021 school year

This notice is provided by Bella Mente Montessori Academy annually to our students, employees, parents/guardians, school advisory committee members, school district officials, and other interested parties of Bella Mente Montessori Academy's Uniform Complaint Procedures ("UCP") process.

Bella Mente Montessori Academy has the primary responsibility for compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including those related to unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying against a protected group, and all programs and activities that are subject to the UCP, to the extent offered by Bella Mente Montessori Academy.

Programs and Activities Subject to the UCP

- Accommodations for Pregnant and Parenting Pupils
- Adult Education
- After School Education and Safety
- Agricultural Career Technical Education

- Career Technical and Technical Education, Career Technical, Technical Training (state)
- Career Technical Education (federal)
- Child Care and Development
- Compensatory Education
- Course Periods without Educational Content
- Education of Pupils in Foster Care, Pupils who are Homeless, former Juvenile Court Pupils now enrolled in a school district and Children of Military Families
- Every Student Succeeds Act
- Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP)
- Migrant Education
- Physical Education Instructional Minutes
- Pupil Fees
- Reasonable Accommodations to a Lactating Pupil
- Regional Occupational Centers and Programs
- School Plans For Student Achievement
- School Safety Plans
- School Site Councils
- State Preschool
- State Preschool Health And Safety Issues In LEAs Exempt From Licensing

Pupil Fees

A pupil shall not be required to pay a pupil fee for participation in an educational activity, unless the charge for such a fee is specifically authorized by law and does not violate Education Code § 49011. A pupil fee includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:

1. A fee charged to a pupil as a condition for registering for school or classes, or as a condition for participation in a class or an extracurricular activity, regardless of whether the class or activity is elective or compulsory, or is for credit.
2. A security deposit, or other payment, that a pupil is required to make to obtain a lock, locker, book, class apparatus, musical instrument, clothes, or other materials or equipment.
3. A purchase that a pupil is required to make to obtain materials, supplies, equipment, or clothes associated with an educational activity.

Contact Information

The following Bella Mente Montessori Academy official has been designated to receive UCP complaints:

Erin Feeley, Executive Director
 Bella Mente Montessori Academy
 1737 W. Vista Way
 Vista, CA 92083
 760-621-8931

Additional Information

A pupil fees complaint may be filed with the Principal or designee. A pupil fees and/or an LCAP complaint may be filed anonymously, however, the complainant must provide evidence or information leading to evidence to support the complaint. A pupil fee complaint shall be filed no later than one year from the date the alleged violation occurred.

Complaints alleging discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, must be filed within six (6) months from the date the alleged misconduct or the date the complainant first obtained knowledge of the misconduct.

Complaints will be investigated and a written report with a decision will be sent to the complainant within sixty (60) days from the receipt of the complaint. This time period may be extended by written agreement of the complainant. The person responsible for investigating the complaint shall conduct and complete the investigation in accordance with our UCP policies and procedures.

The complainant has a right to appeal Bella Mente Montessori Academy's decision concerning complaints regarding specific programs and activities subject to the UCP to the California Department of Education (CDE) by filing a written appeal within 15 days of receiving our decision. The appeal must include a copy of the originally-filed complaint and our decision.

Civil law remedies, including, but not limited to, injunctions, restraining orders, or other remedies or orders, may be available to the complainant under state or federal discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying laws, if applicable.

Bella Mente Montessori Academy posts a standardized notice of the educational rights of pupils in foster care, pupils who are homeless, former juvenile court pupils now enrolled in a school district, and pupils in military families as specified in Education Code §§ 48853, 48853.5, 49069.5, 51225.1, and 51225.2. This notice shall include complaint process information, as applicable.

All Bella Mente Montessori Academy students have a right to a free public education, regardless of immigration status or religious beliefs. For more information about this issue, we recommend families review the "Know Your Rights" immigration enforcement established by the California Attorney General and available on the California Attorney General website here: <https://oag.ca.gov/immigrant/rights>.

Bella Mente Montessori Academy shall inform students who are victims of hate crimes of their right to report such crimes.

A copy of Bella Mente Montessori Academy's UCP policy and complaint procedures shall be available free of charge. The UCP can be found in the school office located at 1737 W. Vista Way, Vista, CA 92083.

BELLA MENTE MONTESSORI ACADEMY
UNIFORM COMPLAINT PROCEDURE
2020-2021 school year

The Governing Board (“Board”) of Bella Mente Montessori Academy (“Charter”) is committed to compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations governing educational programs and activities. Most issues are best handled informally, and the Board encourages the early resolution of complaints at the site level whenever possible. If you have a concern, you can always come and talk to one of us. If you find that for some reason this informal resolution is not adequate, you can follow our formal complaint policy and procedure set out herein.

Charter developed this UCP pursuant to Title 5, California Code of Regulations, §§ 4600-4687 and consistent with policies and procedures adopted by our Board. This UCP shall apply only to those complaints that fall within the scope of the UCP and are applicable to charter schools. It does not apply to complaints arising from the employment relationship, which are separately addressed by Charter’s employment policies.

COMPLAINTS UNDER THE UCP

A UCP complaint is a written and signed statement by a complainant, including a person’s duly authorized representative or an interested third party, public agency, or organization, alleging a violation of federal or state laws or regulations, which may include an allegation of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying, or charging pupil fees for participation in an educational activity or non-compliance with the requirements of Charter’s Local Control and Accountability Plans (“LCAP”). A UCP complaint must be filed according to the procedures set forth herein.

Complaints Regarding Programs and Activities

Complaints of violations of state or federal law or regulations governing the following programs and activities, to the extent offered by Charter, are subject to the UCP and will be investigated by Charter:

- Accommodations for Pregnant and Parenting Pupils
- Adult Education
- After School Education and Safety
- Agricultural Career Technical Education
- Career Technical and Technical Education, Career Technical, Technical Training (state)
- Career Technical Education (federal)
- Child Care and Development
- Compensatory Education
- Course Periods without Educational Content
- Education of Pupils in Foster Care, Pupils who are Homeless, former Juvenile Court Pupils now enrolled in a school district and Children of Military Families
- Every Student Succeeds Act
- Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP)
- Migrant Education
- Physical Education Instructional Minutes
- Pupil Fees
- Reasonable Accommodations to a Lactating Pupil

- Regional Occupational Centers and Programs
- School Plans For Student Achievement
- School Safety Plans
- School Site Councils
- State Preschool
- State Preschool Health And Safety Issues In LEAs Exempt From Licensing

Complaints Regarding Pupil Fees

Complaints that Charter has violated Education Code §§ 49010 through 49013 concerning pupil fees are subject to this UCP, may be filed with the Responsible Employee or Principal, and will be investigated by Charter. A pupil shall not be required to pay a pupil fee for participation in an educational activity, unless the charge for such a fee is specifically authorized by law and does not violate Education Code § 49011. A “pupil fee” is a fee, deposit, or other charge imposed on pupils, or a pupil's parents or guardians, in violation of state codes and constitutional provisions which require educational activities to be provided free of charge to all pupils without regard to their families’ ability or willingness to pay fees or request special waivers. “Educational activities” are those offered by a school, school district, charter school, or county office of education that constitute a fundamental part of education, including, but not limited to, curricular and extracurricular activities. A pupil fee includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:

1. A fee charged to a pupil as a condition for registering for school or classes, or as a condition for participation in a class or an extracurricular activity, regardless of whether the class or activity is elective or compulsory, or is for credit.
2. A security deposit, or other payment, that a pupil is required to make to obtain a lock, locker, book, class apparatus, musical instrument, clothes, or other materials or equipment.
3. A purchase that a pupil is required to make to obtain materials, supplies, equipment, or clothes associated with an educational activity.

Complaints Regarding LCAP

Complaints concerning Charter’s LCAP are subject to this UCP and will be investigated by Charter. The LCAP is an important component of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Under the LCFF, Charter is required to prepare an LCAP, which describes how we intend to meet annual goals for our pupils, with specific activities to address state and local priorities identified pursuant to Education Code § 52060(d).

Complaints of Discrimination, Harassment, Intimidation and/or Bullying

Charter will investigate all allegations of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying against any protected group as identified in Education Code §§ 200, 220 and Government Code § 11135, including any actual or perceived characteristics as set forth in Penal Code § 422.55 or on the basis or a person’s association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics in any program or activity conducted by Charter, which is funded directly by, or that receives or benefits from any state financial assistance. Any Charter personnel who witness an act of discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying, shall take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so as required by Education Code § 234.1.

Complaints may be based on discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying that occurs employee-to-student, student-to-student, and/or third party conduct to a student.

UCP ANNUAL NOTIFICATION

Charter shall ensure annual dissemination of this UCP to all students, employees, parents or guardians of its students, school advisory committee members, appropriate private school officials or representatives (if applicable), and other interested parties that includes information regarding allegations about discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying. The annual UCP notice shall be in English. If 15% or more of students enrolled at Charter speak a single primary language other than English, the annual notice shall be provided in that language as well pursuant to Education Code § 48985.

This UCP shall be available free of charge, and can be found in the Charter's office located at 1737 W. Vista Way, Vista, CA 92083.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-RETALIATION

Complaints shall be handled in a confidential manner to respect the privacy of all parties to the fullest extent possible. Every effort shall be made to limit the distribution of information to only those persons with a need to know within the confines of Charter's reporting procedures and investigative process. Charter will make every effort to keep as confidential the identity of a complainant alleging discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

Charter prohibits retaliation in any form for filing of a complaint or an appeal, reporting instances of noncompliance, discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying, or for participation in the complaint-filing or investigation process. Complainants are protected from retaliation.

These confidentiality and non-retaliation requirements extend to all parties involved.

DESIGNATION OF RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYEE

Charter hereby designates the individual identified below as the employee responsible for receiving, investigating and responding to complaints and acting as the compliance officer responsible for handling complaints under this UCP, referred to herein as the "Responsible Employee."

Erin Feeley, Executive Director
Bella Mente Montessori Academy
1737 W. Vista Way
Vista, CA 92083
760-621-8931

The Responsible Employee may designate another representative of Charter to serve in this role, who for the purposes of this UCP, shall be included within the definition of "Responsible Employee." The Responsible Employee shall promptly notify the complainant and respondent, if applicable, if another employee has been designated to handle the complaint.

In no instance shall the Responsible Employee be assigned to a complaint in which he or she has a bias or conflict of interest that would prohibit him or her from fairly investigating or responding to the complaint. Any complaint against Responsible Employee or that raises a concern about Responsible Employee's ability to investigate the complaint fairly and without bias shall be filed with the Board President or designee who shall determine how the complaint will be investigated.

Charter will ensure that employees assigned to investigate complaints are knowledgeable about the laws and programs at issue in the complaints for which they are responsible. The Responsible Employee may consult with legal counsel, as necessary.

The Responsible Employee shall determine whether interim measures are necessary pending the result of an investigation. If interim measures are determined to be necessary, Responsible Employee shall consult with the Board President or designee, prior to implementing any such measures. The interim measures shall remain in place until the Responsible Employee determines that they are no longer necessary or until Charter issues its final written decision, whichever occurs first.

FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Charter shall investigate and seek to resolve, in accordance with this UCP, complaints alleging failure to comply with applicable state and federal laws and regulations including, but not limited to, allegations of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying or noncompliance with laws relating to all programs and activities implemented by Charter that are subject to this UCP.

All parties involved in allegations shall be notified by the Responsible Employee when a complaint is filed, when a complaint meeting or hearing is scheduled, and when a decision or ruling is made.

Step 1: Filing a Complaint

Any individual, public agency, or organization may file a written complaint of alleged noncompliance by Charter. A complaint alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying may be filed by a person who alleges that he or she personally suffered unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, or by a person who believes that an individual or any specific class of individuals has been subjected to unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying, or by a parent or guardian.

If a complainant is unable to prepare a written complaint due to conditions such as disability or illiteracy, the complainant can receive assistance from Charter staff.

Complaints shall be filed with the Responsible Employee at the address provided herein. The Responsible Employee will maintain a log of complaints and subsequent related actions, in compliance with Title 5, California Code of Regulations, §§ 4631 and 4633. The Responsible Employee will evaluate the complaint to determine whether it is subject to this UCP and will notify the complainant within five (5) workdays if the complaint is outside the jurisdiction of this UCP.

Timing of Complaints

A complaint alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be initiated no later than six (6) months from the date when the alleged unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying occurred, or six (6) months from the date the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying. If the complaint is not timely filed, the complainant will be notified of his or her right to appeal to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for an extension of time in which to file the complaint.

Pupil fee complaints shall be filed no later than one (1) year from the date the alleged violation occurred with the Responsible Employee or Principal.

Anonymous Complaints

A pupil fees complaint and/or an LCAP complaint may be filed anonymously if the complaint provides evidence or information leading to evidence to support an allegation of noncompliance.

Step 2: Mediation (Optional)

Within ten (10) workdays of receiving the complaint, the Responsible Employee and complainant may mutually agree to mediation. The Responsible Employee shall make arrangements for any mutually agreed upon mediation that will allow both the complainant and Charter to present relevant evidence. The Responsible Employee shall inform the complainant that the mediation process may be terminated at any time and proceed directly to an investigation. In the mediation of an unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaint, the mediator must agree to keep confidential any information obtained through mediation. If mediation resolves the complaint to the satisfaction of both parties, Charter will implement any remedial measures and the complainant may choose to withdraw the complaint. If mediation does not resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of both parties or within the parameters of law, the Responsible Employee shall proceed with his/her investigation of the complaint.

The use of mediation shall not extend Charter's timelines for investigating and resolving the complaint unless the complainant agrees in writing to such an extension of time.

Step 3: Investigation of Complaint

In order to investigate the complaint, the Responsible Employee shall have access to applicable Charter records and/or information related to the complaint allegations. As part of his or her investigation, the Responsible Employee shall do all of the following, in no specific order:

- Provide an opportunity for the complainant and/or complainant's representative and Charter's representative to present information relevant to the complaint or investigative process.
- Obtain statements from individuals/witnesses who can provide relevant information concerning the alleged violation.
- Review documents that may provide information relevant to the allegation.
- When necessary, seek clarification on specific complaint issues.

Refusal to provide the Responsible Employee with documents or other evidence related to the allegations in the complaint, or failure or refusal to cooperate or obstruction of the investigation by the complainant or his or her representatives may result in dismissal of complaint because of a lack of evidence to support the allegation. Refusal to provide the Responsible Employee with documents or other evidence related to the allegations in the complaint, or failure or refusal to cooperate or obstruction of the investigation by Charter or its staff may result in a finding, based on evidence collected, that a violation has occurred and may result in the imposition of a remedy in favor of the complainant.

Step 4: Board Review

Charter's Board may consider the complaint at its next regular meeting or at a special meeting convened in order to meet the sixty (60) calendar day total time limit within which the complaint

must be answered. Based on all the evidence obtained during the investigation, the Board may approve, modify or reject the Responsible Employee's proposed decision and issue a final decision that meets the requirements set forth herein. The Board may also decide not to hear the complaint, in which case the Responsible Employee's decision shall be final.

Step 5: Final Written Decision

The Responsible Employee shall prepare and send to the complainant a written report of the investigation and final decision within sixty (60) days of Charter's receipt of the complaint, unless extended by written agreement with the complainant. Charter's decision shall be written in English and, when required by law, in the complainant's primary language. The decision shall include:

1. The finding(s) of fact based on the evidence gathered;
2. The conclusion(s) of law;
3. Disposition of the complaint;
4. Rationale for such disposition;
5. Corrective action, if any are warranted, including, with respect to a pupil fee complaint, a remedy that comports with Education Code § 49013(d) and Title 5, California Code of Regulations, § 4600(u);
6. Notice of the complainant's right to appeal Charter's decision to the California Department of Education ("CDE"); and
7. Procedures to be followed for initiating an appeal to the CDE.

In addition, any decision on a complaint of discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying based on state law shall include a notice that the complainant must wait until sixty (60) calendar days have elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the CDE before pursuing civil law remedies.

In no event shall a decision under this section include identifying information of a student or any private employee personnel information, including but not limited to the nature of the disciplinary action taken against the student or employee. If a student or employee is disciplined as a result of the complaint, the decision shall simply state that effective action was taken and that the student or employee was informed of Charter's expectations.

If Charter finds merit in a complaint regarding Course Periods without Educational Content, Reasonable Accommodations to a Lactating Pupil, and Education of Pupils in Foster Care, Pupils who are Homeless, and former Juvenile Court Pupils now enrolled in Charter, the remedy shall go to the affected pupil. If Charter finds merit in a complaint regarding Pupil Fees, Physical Education Instructional Minutes, or LCAP, the remedy shall to go all affected pupils and parents/guardians. Charter, in good faith will engage in reasonable efforts to identify and fully reimburse all pupils, parents and guardians who paid an unlawful pupil fee within one (1) year prior to the filing of the complaint.

APPEAL PROCESS

To appeal Charter's decision, the complainant must file a written appeal within fifteen (15) calendar days of receiving the Charter's decision. This appeal to the CDE must fully explain the basis for the appeal, stating how the facts of Charter's decision are incorrect and/or the law is misapplied. The appeal must be sent to CDE with: (1) a copy of the original locally filed complaint; and (2) a copy of Charter's decision of this original locally filed complaint.

Appeals of decisions regarding discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying, and regarding provision of accommodations to lactating students should be sent to:

California Department of Education
Education Equity UCP Appeals Office
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Appeals of decisions regarding educational program complaints or pupil fees should be sent to:

California Department of Education
Categorical Programs Complaints Management Office
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Appeals of decisions regarding LCAP should be sent to:

California Department of Education
Local Agency Systems Support Office
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Appeals of decisions regarding special education compliance should be sent to:

California Department of Education
Special Education Division - Procedural Safeguards Referral Service
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

The CDE may directly intervene in the complaint without waiting for action by Charter when one of the conditions listed in Title 5, California Code of Regulations, § 4650 exists, including cases in which Charter has not taken action within sixty (60) days of the date the complaint was filed with Charter. A direct complaint to CDE must identify the basis for direct filing of the complaint, which must include clear and convincing evidence that supports such a basis.

CIVIL LAW REMEDIES

A complainant may pursue available civil law remedies under state or federal discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying laws outside of Charter's UCP. Complainants may seek assistance from mediation centers or public/private interest attorneys. Civil law remedies that may be imposed by a court include, but are not limited to, injunctions and restraining orders.

For complaints alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying based on state law, a complainant shall wait until sixty (60) calendar days have elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the CDE before pursuing civil law remedies. The moratorium does not apply to injunctive relief and is applicable only if Charter has appropriately, and in a timely manner, apprised the complainant of his/her right to file a complaint in accordance with Title 5, California Code of Regulations, § 4622.

Uniform Complaint Procedures Form

Belle Mente Montessori Academy has the primary responsibility to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations and shall investigate and seek to resolve complaints in accordance with the Uniform Complaint Procedures Policy (UCP). Please complete this form, providing as much information as possible and attaching any applicable supporting documentation, to assist in the investigation of your complaint.

Information

NAME OF THE COMPLAINANT	ADDRESS
EMAIL ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER
COMPLAINANT WILL NEED THE ASSISTANCE OF AN INTERPRETER <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes <i>(specify the language to be spoken by the interpreter)</i>	
COMPLAINANT IS A: <input type="radio"/> Student <input type="radio"/> Parent/Guardian <input type="radio"/> Employee <input type="radio"/> Public Agency <input type="radio"/> Organization	
THIS COMPLAINT IS BEING FILED ON BEHALF OF: <input type="radio"/> Myself <input type="radio"/> A student (not the complainant named above) <input type="radio"/> Other <i>(specify)</i>	
DATE OF ALLEGED VIOLATION	SCHOOL OF ALLEGED VIOLATION

Basis of Complaint

For allegations related to any of the following programs and activities subject to the UCP:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After School Education and Safety • Child Care and Development • Child Nutrition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP) • Migrant Education • Pupil Fees |
| Consolidated Categorical Aid | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination, Harassment, Intimidation, and/or Bullying • Education for Foster Youth, Homeless Youth, Former Juvenile Court School Students, or Military Dependents • Every Student Succeeds Act (Titles I-VII) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Plans for Student Achievement • School Safety Plan • School Site Councils • Other: _____ |

For complaints alleging discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying, indicate the actual or perceived protected characteristics upon which the alleged conduct is based:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race or ethnicity • Color • Ancestry • Nationality • National origin • Immigration status • Ethnic group identification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion • Age • Marital status • Pregnancy • Parental status • Physical or mental disability • Other _____ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex • Sexual orientation • Gender • Gender identity • Gender expression • Genetic information |
|---|---|--|

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date received _____ Received by _____ Title _____

Investigator _____ Outcome _____

Final written decision sent to complainant on _____ Appeal filed with CDE? Yes No

Details of the Complaint

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If you mention names, please also identify who they are (i.e. student, staff, parent, etc.). Attach additional pages, if necessary.

Provide the **facts** about your complaint: _____

List the **people** involved or impacted: _____

List any **witnesses** or individuals who may have knowledge of the alleged acts: _____

Provide and/or describe the specific **location(s)** where the incident(s) occurred: _____

List all the **date(s) and time(s)** when the incident(s) occurred or when the alleged acts first came to your attention: _____

Describe any **steps** you have taken to resolve this issue before filing the complaint. If applicable, list names and titles of school staff you have contacted: _____

Do you have any **written documents/ evidence** that you can provide that may be relevant/ supportive of your complaint?

- No Yes, copies of the documents/evidence are attached to this complaint

Signature of Complainant _____ Date _____

Bella Mente Montessori Academy shall take steps to protect complainants from retaliation. Please file this complaint form and any additional documents in person, by mail, or via email with the following:

Erin Feeley, Executive Director
Bella Mente Montessori Academy
1737 W. Vista Way
Vista, CA 92083

Bella Mente Montessori Academy Attendance Policy

Absence, Tardiness/Late Arrivals, and Early Departures

At BMMA, attendance is a priority and is crucial to your child's academic success. BMMA is a school of choice. Families who actively choose to enroll their children in Bella Mente Montessori Academy have opted for an educational program, with all of its rich researched- based Montessori materials, lesson presentations and experiential learning. This cannot be duplicated outside the classroom environment, which makes your child's daily attendance even more critical for success.

Absence from school hurts not only the student but also the class. The success of the Montessori environment relies partly upon the strength of the learning community that is developed. When the student is not in school, (s)he is missing out on critical classroom experiences, and the student's classmates are missing out on her/his contributions to the classroom community.

As illustrated in the Academic Overview portion of this handbook, ***all portions of the school day are equally important to the student's growth and mastery of learning***. When students are late to school, they create classroom interruptions which in turn result in an unsettling experience and loss of learning for the student and her/his classmates. Early departures can also adversely impact the student's success and ability to be a contributing member of the learning community.

Finally, California is a compulsory education state. State law requires parents/guardians of children ages 6 to 18 to send their children to school, unless otherwise exempt by law. Parents who fail to meet this obligation may cause their student to be classified as truant. The school reports truancies to the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) established by the County Office of Education in the student's geographical district of residence. In extreme cases of truancy, the county SARB may request intervention and prosecution through the District Attorney's office, as well as possible involvement of Child Protective Services.

BMMA acknowledges the need for family time and for times of rest and rejuvenation. The administrative team has taken this into account in planning the school calendar and has included well-considered break times throughout the year. ***Please refer to the school calendar as a planning guide so that your child is able to be in school each day and receive the maximum benefits of regular participation in his/her Montessori classroom.***

If a family circumstance arises which impacts your child's ability to be at school, please let your child's teacher or principal know so we can work on a plan to support you and your child during this time.

Bella Mente offers temporary Intendent Study. Please make an appointment with your teacher for more information.

Whether the absence is excused or unexcused, the state only provides daily funding to the school if a student is actually at school. With that said, below is a summary of BMMA policies regarding absences, tardies, and early departures from school:

Reporting Absences:

All absences and late arrivals must be called in by a parent/guardian prior to the start of the instructional day.

When arriving late or departing early, the parent/guardian must sign in through the school office and obtain a tardy slip to admit the child to class or an early release slip to indicate to the teacher that you have already signed the child out for the day. Once the child has been signed in, the child may proceed to class. To limit classroom disruption, once a child has been signed out, an office staff member will send for your student to meet you at the office.

Please note that BMMA maintains a closed campus. Students *must* be signed in and out by a parent or guardian or by a responsible adult who has been pre-designated by the student's parent/guardian. BMMA cannot allow children the liberty to leave campus during the instructional day without properly designated adult accompaniment.

Excused Absences:

Excused absences are defined as:

- Student illness: A child is too ill to attend school if he or she has a contagious condition, a temperature of over 100, symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea, or written orders from a doctor to stay at home. If the child is ill 3 days or more, the school will require a note from a physician documenting the child's illness and the necessity of having the child stay home from school. Illness of *other* family members does not result in an excused absence for the student.
- Health/medical quarantine as may be designated by the school, county health department or medical professional.
- Medical appointments or services lasting all day.
- Failure to provide proof of immunization for school enrollment.
- Attending the funeral of an immediate family member to include the student's parent or legal guardian, sibling, grandparent, or any relative living in the household of the student. In such circumstances, one day is allowed; or three days are allowed for travel outside of a 300 mile radius of the child's home residence.
- Observance of a religious holiday or ceremony; or participation in certain kinds of religious exercises for a limited number of days per month when documented by a signed and pre-approved request for absence under this provision. Request shall be submitted in writing to the school principal for pre-approval. Principal shall have discretionary authority to consider the maximum allowable days of excused absences under this provision to include consideration for the student's total absences and student's academic performance. Attendance at religious retreats shall not exceed four hours per semester.
- Excused tardies are only designated for medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours.

All other absences or late arrivals are classified as unexcused, even if the parent notifies the school.

Whenever possible, parents are encouraged to schedule medical/dental appointments and family business during intersession periods, school holidays, and other non-school times. In the event an

absence from school cannot be avoided, the best course of action is to stay in close communication with your child's teachers, and provide an opportunity for the child to make up any missed assignments.

Verification of Illness

The statewide average absence rate for typical childhood illness is 5 days per school year. **Anytime a child has a doctor's appointment and/or documentation that requires the child to stay home from school, documentation must be provided to the school office when the student returns to school. These absences will be recorded as "verified" and will be taken into account when reviewing the child's total attendance record.**

Students who are ill in excess of school guidelines may be required to bring verification of illness from a medical professional on their return to school for successive absences. If the child is under the regular care of a physician for a serious or chronic condition or is directed to stay home by a medical professional, verification is to be provided to the school office at the time of the absence. Absences for excessive illnesses that are not verified with official documentation will be marked unexcused and may subject the student and/or parents to truancy review.

Chronic Illness

Personal illness which reoccurs on a frequent basis will require a doctor's certification. If your child has a diagnosed chronic illness, you must provide a physician's authorization in order for these recurrent absences to be excused. Such authorization requires the treating physician to verify the diagnosis and list symptoms that would require the child to stay home from school but not necessitate an office visit. With this authorization, the parent may send a note when the child returns to school listing one or more of the symptoms identified by the physician's report. These absences will be considered verified. Please contact a campus administrator or attendance clerk for additional assistance.

Missed Assignments and Tests

A student who is absent from class or scheduled instructional activities for allowable reasons may complete missed assignments or tests that can be reasonably provided and will not have his/her grade reduced or lose academic credit if the assignments or tests are satisfactorily completed within a reasonable period of time. In some cases, the teacher shall determine a reasonable equivalency in the tests and assignments provided, but not necessarily identical to, the tests and assignments that the student missed during the absence.

Excessive Absence/Truancy Notification

While BMMA maintains high expectations for student attendance, we also recognize that students may miss a few days/hours during the school year due to illness or family emergencies. For this reason, BMMA has established guidelines for satisfactory student attendance. In the event that students fall short of these guidelines, written attendance letters will be sent to the student's parent/guardian.

These letters are to reinforce the parent/guardian's awareness of potential attendance problems and represent the first steps in the attendance review process. Subsequent portions of this process may include mandatory parent/teacher/principal conferences. If these remedies remain unsuccessful, the parent/guardian may be scheduled to meet with BMMA's Executive Director and/or appear before the school's Attendance Review Committee, consisting of the Executive Director (or designee), the BMMA principal, and a credentialed teacher. A law enforcement representative may be included at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Attendance guidelines have been established as follows.

Unexcused Absences:

- If a student incurs 3 unexcused absences, the parent/guardian will receive a letter documenting the child's attendance. An appointment with the child's teacher will be requested to identify the cause of such absences and to discuss how the school can work with the family to support the child's success in school, including regular attendance.
- Upon incurring the 5th unexcused absence, the parent/guardian will receive a second letter documenting the child's attendance and will request an appointment with the child's administrator to discuss the child's continued absence and develop an attendance improvement plan for the student.
- Upon incurring the 7th unexcused absence, the parent/guardian will receive a third letter documenting the child's attendance. Upon recommendation of the principal, BMMA's Executive Director will become involved in the review of student attendance, which may include a meeting with the student's parents/guardians.

Total Absences (excused for illness or unexcused):

- Once a student incurs 5 total absences, an initial letter will be sent to parents/guardians alerting them to their child's attendance record. The letter will request that parents/guardians contact their child's teacher to discuss the reason for these absences and to develop a plan for attendance improvement.
- After incurring 10 total absences, a second letter will be sent to parents/guardians requiring a meeting with an administrator. A plan will be established to improve the student's attendance, and any subsequent absences for illness will require a doctor's verification.
- The Principal can, at any time, request consultation and intervention by the Executive Director for habitual absence or truancy issues.

Excessive Late Arrivals or Early Departures

As indicated throughout this section, attendance is an issue BMMA takes very seriously. Students who are regularly arriving late to school or leaving early are also at risk of poor academic performance. For students who are habitually missing a portion of the instructional day, notification letters will be sent as outlined above, following the thresholds outlined below:

- Students incurring 5 tardies and early departures will receive a letter requesting a meeting with the child's teacher.

- Students incurring 10 tardies and early departures will receive a letter requesting a meeting with the child's administrator.
- Students incurring the 12th tardy will generate the need for a review of parents' attempts to implement the attendance improvement plan as outlined by parents, teacher and principal. Upon recommendation of the Principal, BMMA's Executive Director will become involved in the review of student attendance, which may include a meeting with the student's parents/guardians.

Families are also reminded that the Montessori curriculum embraces a wide variety of integral subject matter and teachers spend a significant amount of time to ensure that all portions of the school day are equally important to the student's growth and mastery of learning. When a student leaves early, the student is missing out on integral learning experiences which adversely impact the student's success and her/his ability to be a contributing member of the learning community.

Accordingly, if a student develops patterns of early departure, parents will be scheduled to meet with the teacher, Principal, BMMA Executive Director and/or attendance improvement team to develop an attendance improvement plan.

Again, our goal is to have your child in school for each full day of instruction.

Students Classified as Truant

Section 48200 of the Education Code of the State of California, states that it is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to see that their children attend school regularly and on-time. Section 48200 is the law, a part of the contract between home and school, and a component of BMMA's promotion policy. Parents/Guardians violating 48200 may be subject to prosecution by the District Attorney.

Formal Written Notice

When a student's percentage of attendance falls below 90% at any point after the 60 days of school, the parent/guardian will receive a Formal Written Notice alerting them to their student's attendance record and follow-up requirements.

Options for Students Unable to Attend School

Students who are unable to attend school for an extended period of time due to serious injury or illness may be eligible to receive individualized academic assignments during the period of absence when approved in advance by both Principal and Executive Director. Please note that attendance credit is not issued and the sole focus of such assignments is to support the student to stay current on his/her academic studies. The principal may request verification of students' condition by a physician. Students with mental health conditions must present verification from a physician *and* a treatment plan from their therapist. In such cases of medically related extended absence, the Principal and the Executive Director will meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine the appropriateness of long-term individualized assignments (5 days or more of foreseeable absence).

Children who are absent due to shorter term illness should rest and recuperate so that they may return to school as soon as they are able. When reasonable, parents are encouraged to work with teachers to support the student's completion of missed work within a practical period of time.

While families are asked to arrange for vacations and non-medical absences during school intersessions, holidays, and other non-school periods, if you know your child must be absent, please contact the teacher or principal in advance to place your child in a temporary Independent Study.

If your child is regularly unable to attend school or participate in scheduled classroom activities for reasons that are not health related, a conference should be scheduled between parent and principal to determine if BMMA is the most appropriate academic placement for your student.

Attendance Questions or Assistance

We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at any time to discuss any concerns or questions you may have about your child's attendance.

It is the goal of BMMA to team with families to support each child's academic success. Daily attendance is a key component to this success and sends a message to your child that their education is a priority and is valued.

Student Health and Safety Policies

Immunization Records and Health Exams

As a public school, Bella Mente Montessori Academy is required by law to have a copy of immunization card (applicable for all students) and a signed Physician's Form (applicable for 1st grade students only) on file for each enrolled child.

During enrollment and prior to the first day of school, a copy of the child's immunization record is to be presented to the BMMA office staff. This record will be kept in the child's cumulative academic file.

The California Department of Health and Department of Social Services requires all students to receive polio, measles, mumps, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, hepatitis B, varicella, and rubella immunizations.

A pupil who, prior to January 1, 2016, submitted an affidavit on file at a private or public elementary or secondary school, child day care center, stating beliefs opposed to immunization shall be allowed enrollment until the pupil enrolls in the next grade span.

A physician's statement of health (Report of Health Examination for School Entry) is also required prior to the child's **initial enrollment in a public school**. This physician's report form is included in the annual enrollment packet and only needs to be filed once.

Families who need assistance with the cost of these enrollment requirements may inquire with their county health department for dates of immunization and exam clinics in their area. Information on county health programs is included in your enrollment folder.

The following is a summary of health guidelines that the school is required to abide by:

It is the policy of Bella Mente Montessori Academy to allow students to attend school when they have minor allergies.

Any contagious illnesses and/or a fever of *100°F or higher* require the student to be absent from school. The child must remain fever-free for twenty-four hours prior to returning to school. *Contagious illnesses require that the student has been on an approved course of medication for at least twenty-four hours prior to returning to school along with a doctor's note indicating that the student is no longer contagious and is ready to return to school.* Please be conscious of these policies and take the other children and staff into consideration in this regard.

Please call the school if your child will be absent. If it appears your child may have a lengthy illness, please notify the school office as soon as possible, and obtain a doctor's note to be kept with the attendance records.

Please contact the office as soon as possible if your child is diagnosed with any communicable diseases. These include: chicken pox, strep infections, influenza, head lice, fifth's disease, and/or conjunctivitis. Our school will notify the other parents to be aware of symptoms related to these diseases. This is the most effective method of preventing/limiting a potential outbreak of illness.

Your child will be sent home in the event lice or nits (eggs) are found. Instructions will be given to you for treatment of the lice as well as procedures to follow to clear the home of any infestation. Your child may return to school only if there are no lice (alive or dead) or nits/eggs present. Before being admitted back to class, please bring your child into the school office for a re-check.

In the best interest of your child and of all the other BMMA students and staff, if health issues or symptoms of communicable illness or infection are observed in your child at school, you will be notified immediately and will be asked to pick up your child. In this instance, the student may not return to school until a medical practitioner has treated such symptoms or until the student has been symptom free for at least twenty-four hours. If it appears your child may have a lengthy illness, please notify the school administration as soon as possible.

Notify your child's teacher if your child(ren) is/are taking medication only at home. This will enable the teacher to act accordingly in case of allergic reactions or other side effects at school. Should either of these events occur at school, parents will be notified immediately.

This is just a brief summary of student health policies. BMMA has developed a comprehensive policy to address student health issues. If desired, please ask for detailed information at the school office.

Medications Administered at School

Any child taking prescription medications must have an approval form signed by their physician detailing the name of the medication, method, amount, and time schedules by which the medication is to be taken, and a written statement from the parent/guardian indicating the desire that the school assist the student with administering the medication before bringing the medication to school. The prescription medication must be in the original container with the child's name and directions clearly labeled.

All medications must be collected from the office by the end of the school year unless the student is enrolled in Star for the summer intersession. Medication approval forms are available in the office.

California Safety Laws

For safety reasons, if your child is under the age of 8, she/he is required by California State law to be transported in an **approved child safety restraint seat**. Please take the time to ensure the safety of each child in your car, as well as your own, by buckling up.

Various agencies offer car seat safety clinics to check for the proper installation of child safety seats in your vehicle. Often, approved safety seats are available at these events, at a reduced cost or even free of charge. In contrast, the Highway Patrol fines individuals for each unbelted individual in the car. If you have financial difficulty complying with these requirements, contact your local Highway Patrol office. There are funds available to assist families in meeting this requirement.

For those students who may ride their **bicycles** to and from school, **helmets are required**. Please discuss this with your child along with other pertinent safety topics. Be safe, not sorry!!

Nutritional Health

A daily balanced diet is essential to every child's physical, mental, emotional, and physiological needs. If a child comes to school hungry or improperly nourished, the child will have difficulty concentrating on her/his schoolwork. Please make every effort to provide your child with healthy and nutritionally balanced meals for the best possible day!

Breakfast is essential. Be sure that your child begins each morning with a healthy and nutritionally balanced meal to provide the brain energy that he/she will need for the activities of the day. If your child is unable to eat breakfast at home, you are welcome to pack a HEALTHY breakfast for her/him to eat at school prior to the start of class time. A good suggestion might be cereal and fruit in a Tupperware sealed bowl, or fruit juice in a sealed cup and toast, etc. Some of the major food companies are now making "milk and cereal bars" which are relatively low in sugar and surprisingly high in protein. Read labels, be creative, and your child will eat with more interest!

Snacks and ***Lunch*** are the parents' responsibility. Please plan to send a bag or lunch box with your child each day, and make sure to label all containers to be taken home with your child's name. School Lunch is also available for pre-purchase by parents. Information is available in the office.

When preparing your child’s lunch and snacks, please make every effort to send items that the child can eat easily, can open and/or close relatively easily and independently. Lunch must be something that can be eaten without heating.

Please avoid sending junk food and highly processed food items. These food choices are usually loaded with refined sugar or fat and offer little or no nutritional value. During school, students need “brain food”. Stick to items that are as close as possible to their natural state: fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, seeds, nuts, dairy products and proteins. Limit juices and juice drinks. Even 100% juice, consumed in excess provides too much sugar for a young child’s dietary health and results in an afternoon “low” as the child’s blood sugar attempts to balance back out. Instead, opt for a bottle of water or milk that can be kept fresh with a cold pack or in a thermos.

We believe that monitoring the intake of these types of highly processed, non-nutritive foods will provide the child with a better ability to concentrate. If you think that these types of foods are appropriate, please save them for the home environment.

HEALTHY FOOD GUIDELINES

Student Leaders, Student Scholars

Good nutrition is key in helping children grow and learn. BMMA revised the Local School Wellness Policy in 2017 and the Board of Directors passed the revision to ensure the policy is practiced schoolwide.

ALLOWABLE FOODS ON CAMPUS

- **Fruit-** such as apples, pears, plums **Vegetables-** such as carrots, celery, jicama



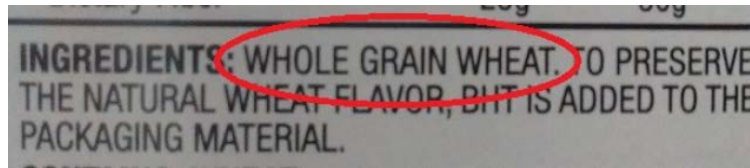
- **Dairy Food-** such as Real cheese, 1% milk, soy milk or non high-fat dairy foods



- **Proteins-** such as nuts, seeds, eggs, legumes, low-fat cheese



- Whole grain food- grains such as wheat, corn, rice, barley, oats, quinoa, and rye. Should be eaten in their “**whole form**”. Products should list whole grain food first, be at least 51% or have a whole grain stamp.



NON-ALLOWABLE FOODS ON CAMPUS

Sodas, Sports Drinks, Caffeinated Beverages



Fried Chips



Sugary Desserts, Popsicles, Candy



Registration and Enrollment for Bella Mente Montessori Academy

As a public charter school, BMMA is a school of choice, and eligibility for enrollment is based on California residency, not on district of residence boundaries.

As a public school, BMMA follows state requirements for Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten and First Grade admission. ***Transitional Kindergarten children must be 5 years old of age between September 2nd and December 2nd they enter school. Kindergarten children must be 5 years old on or before September 1st of the year they enter school. First grade children must be 6 years old on or before September 1st of the year they are to be designated as a first grade student.***

In California, TK/Kindergarten is not compulsory (mandatory), though it does help prepare children for elementary school. BMMA does not administer TK/Kindergarten readiness assessments prior to enrollment. All assessments are conducted by the teacher, at the time the student begins, to establish the creation of the student's individual learning plan. (See Academic Overview) If you have questions about your child(ren)'s readiness for Kindergarten, please contact the school to which you are interested in enrolling.

BMMA seeks a diverse student population from the local area surrounding the school campus. Enrollment is available to those who understand and value BMMA's mission and are committed to BMMA's instructional and operational philosophy. As a California public school, admission to qualified applicants is determined by lottery at the end of the open enrollment period.

New Enrollment will be carried out using the following guidelines:

1. Parents interested in enrollment may be invited to tour the BMMA campus and participate in an orientation that details the purpose, goals, and objectives of our school. The orientation will include an explanation of Montessori philosophy and methodology and how parents can best support their child(ren) in the learning process. This tour and orientation is to provide families with an opportunity to decide if our school appears to be an appropriate match for their child(ren).

2. Families who wish to continue into the final stages of the enrollment process are required to read and complete the enrollment packet prior to enrollment.

BMMA is committed to the academic success of its students and readily acknowledges that Montessori education is not necessarily the perfect match for every student. BMMA encourages parents to recognize that there are other educational approaches that may be more effective for some students. By attending an informational tour and observing in a classroom, parents and guardians will be better informed to make the best choice for their child(ren).

Re-enrollment for current BMMA families is completed in late winter prior to the open-enrollment lottery. Siblings of currently enrolled students will be given priority in the lottery.

Classroom Placement Policies and Procedures

It is the goal of BMMA to place each student in the most appropriate learning environment to fit his/her needs academically, socially, and emotionally. In addition, care is taken to balance classes by grade/age and gender. Information and recommendations from teaching staff is utilized to balance these needs within the classrooms. Although we would like to facilitate parent request for a specific classroom or teacher, the complexity of this process prohibits us from taking these requests.

Student Policy for Promotion/Retention

Montessori instruction accommodates the varying interests and academic development of individual students. Students will progress each year by completing the Montessori and State Standard curriculum necessary to support their success at the next grade level.

When considering promotion (accelerating a student an additional grade level), the child's social and emotional growth is to be taken into consideration. Parents, teachers, and the principal will determine if this is the best course of action for the student by using criteria such as intellectual maturity, academic achievement, including standardized testing, physical, social, psychological, and emotional considerations.

Retention (remaining at the same grade level for a second year) is an action that may be taken to assist a student to be more successful in their learning. Risk for retention should be identified as early in a child's school career as possible. As soon as identified, the teachers and principal should begin interventions to assist the student in areas of concern. Parents should be included in this discussion as early in the school year as possible.

Students are to be identified for retention or promotion on the basis of:

- Academic achievement and standardized testing
- Physical, social, psychological, and emotional considerations
- Special needs
- Information provided by teacher(s), parents, or guardians

The demonstration of individual student learning is to be measured by, but not limited to, the following:

1. Student grades in Reading/Language Arts and Math (more than one grade level above / below)
2. Albanesi (Montessori) assessments in Reading/Language Arts and Math (more than one grade level above / below)
3. State testing scores in Language Arts and Math (assessing below or far below standards in all subject levels / assessing at or above standards in all subject areas)
4. Writing Assessment (same as above)
5. The meeting of the intervention goals determined by the Student Study Team (SST)

English Learners

English Learners, determined through the ELPAC testing process (California’s English language proficiency assessment), could be considered “at risk” based on the challenges they face in acquiring mastery of subject areas in English. English Learners should be provided with supplemental instruction as a key intervention to ensure that they will eventually attain grade-level proficiency. Decisions regarding the promotion or retention of English Learners require special consideration. Following the supplemental instruction for the English Learner, if it is determined through the SST process that the student would benefit from retention, the above determinations and process will be followed.

Special Education

Students with physical and/or mental disabilities which interfere with the major life activity of learning are provided protections under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Their educational opportunities will be affected by the development of accommodation plans intended to mitigate the effects of the disability on educational performance.

Students whose physical, mental, or learning disabilities are provided protection under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have their educational needs supported through Special Education (specially designed instruction) and related services (services which enable them to benefit from their Special Education program).

Modifications of curriculum and the grading rubric are to be utilized for students on an IEP (Individualized Education Program). Accommodations put in place for students who have a 504 Plan or are in Special Education are not used when considering retention of the student.

Retention may be considered for students on a 504 Plan or IEP if the academic, social, and emotional needs of the student would benefit from the repetition of a grade. The IEP or 504 team would make the recommendation for retention.

Appeals Process

When the recommendation for retention or promotion is not agreed upon by the parents/guardians, they have the right to appeal to the BMMA Governing Board after first bringing their appeal to the Principal and Executive Director. The principal will provide the Executive Director and/or Governing Board documentation regarding the recommended promotion or retention to include, but not limited to, testing and assessment results, report cards, and SST meeting notes.

Field Trip Policies and Procedures

Field trips are an essential component of the Montessori curriculum. Students are given the opportunity to utilize knowledge gained in the classroom and apply it through experiences in the greater community. Field trips are age appropriate and are linked to the curriculum as much as possible. It is not unusual for an elementary or middle school class to attend a field trip approximately once every six weeks.

Field Trip Participation, Costs and Payment Options:

Student behavior may be a factor in deciding if a child is to participate in a field trip. Parents will be contacted in advance to discuss any issues and to determine other options.

Parents who do not wish for their child to attend a particular trip should discuss their reasons with the teacher, as the purpose of the field trip is to expand on the students' academic experience. Any child not participating in a field trip must attend school that day. The teacher will arrange for your child to do their work in another classroom.

All students are to have equal access to the field trips as a part of the curriculum.

Permission Forms:

Approximately one month prior to a field trip, parents will receive a permission form which states the destination, total suggested donation to the school, and other pertinent information.

Due dates for permission slips are to be strictly enforced, and a child will not be permitted to attend the outing without a signed form. Parent/guardians unable to drive their own child on the field trip are required to leave an appropriate car seat if their child is 8 years of age or younger.

The educational experience of the field trip is always to be emphasized over a commercial one. However, in some instances, bringing spending money may be appropriate and will be stated as such on the permission/ information sheet.

Parent Participation on Field Trips:

Parent/guardian participation plays a key role in the success of field trips. Voluntary fundraising is encouraged to help offset the cost of some trips, and parents are asked to drive students and assist with chaperoning. All adults attending field trips must fulfill screenings to ensure the safety of the children.

Please note that any adult without these clearances may not attend the field trip, and they must be on file in the campus office:

- Cleared Live Scan fingerprint report from the Department of Justice for Bella Monte Montessori Academy (to be completed only once)
- Cleared TB test result (required every four years)
- Attendance at the Parent Education session: “7 Habits of Highly Effective Volunteers”

In addition, the following is also required for parents/guardians driving students:

- Proof of Insurance: due at the beginning of each school year or at time of renewal for all drivers, including parents driving their own child. When driving other children, a \$100,000/\$300,000 liability per person/occurrence is required. (Note: many insurance companies will charge a minimal fee for increasing the liability amount for one day). A parent driving only their child must show proof of insurance meeting the California legal liability limits.
- Copy of valid Driver's License: due at the beginning of each school year for all drivers.
- Copy of Vehicle Registration: due at the beginning of each school year for all drivers.
- DMV 10 Year Driver's History Report: due at the beginning of each school year for all drivers, including those who will only be driving their child. Reports indicating past violations will be sent to BMMA Central Administration for review and for a decision on parent driver eligibility. (Note: On-line DMV and insurance company reports are not certified and cover only 5 years; therefore these do not meet BMMA requirements.) Your DMV record is available to you during normal working hours. You may obtain a report by:
 - Visiting your local DMV office (make an Appointment for faster service)
 - Completing a Request for Driver Record Information form INF 1125
 - Showing identification
 - Paying the fee

Drivers will be given a Field Trip Packet with student information, directions and other pertinent information for the trip, and a list of all field trip policies and procedures. **We ask that drivers read this packet carefully to avoid any misunderstandings.** Note: Student information is confidential and should only be accessed in the event of an emergency.

Teachers are responsible for oversight of the entire group and for facilitating the excursion. Adults participating in the field trip are asked to assist wherever needed and are expected to chaperone the group of students they have driven, as well as be aware of safety concerns for all students. Drivers must drive directly to and from the field trip destination. Stops for food, gasoline (except in the instance of a long distance trip), and other activities outside of the trip itinerary are not permitted. Personal errands are not permitted at any time.

BMMA policy states that only movies rated "G" may be shown without parental permission. Parents with DVD players in their vehicles are therefore asked to follow this policy when driving on a field trip.

Parents are asked to avoid discussing students with others. Discipline issues should be brought to the teachers' attention for appropriate follow-through. Other concerns regarding the field trip should be brought to the teacher or campus principal.

Chaperone Responsibilities & Expectations:

These enriching field trips would not be possible without the support of our parent chaperones. It is a responsibility that should be taken very seriously, as chaperones are responsible for the safety of other children.

Being safe on a field trip means:

- Chaperones are expected to have supervision over their designated group at all times. In the event a parent needs to take a break, to use the restroom for example, another cleared chaperone should be asked to watch their group during that time.
- Chaperones are asked to be aware of all BMMA students on the trip. The safety of the children is everyone's responsibility. On overnight trips, chaperones are expected to have supervision of their group during all waking hours. Chaperones should be available to assist with a student or students in the event of an issue or emergency during the night and be capable of alerting the classroom teacher if necessary.
- No alcohol is to be consumed for the duration of the field trip. If a chaperone is taking prescription or non-prescription medication that would alter a person's state of being, the chaperone is required to inform the teacher prior to the trip. In some instances, this may prohibit a parent from chaperoning on the trip.

Being Respectful on a field trip means:

- Follow the lead of the teacher and model appropriate behavior at all times.
- Treat all students with grace and courtesy.
- Confidentiality must be observed at all times.
- Adults are to dress appropriately for the trip: proper foot wear, properly fitting clothes that are neither too tight nor too loose and that cover the body adequately.

Siblings:

As stated previously, field trips are an important part of the educational experience. Field trips are grade level and curriculum specific, and children anxiously await their opportunity to attend these special events. For this reason, we ask that siblings attending BMMA not be included in their sister or brother's field trip experience. Although it may be enjoyable to attend an extra field trip, attendance in his/her own class is of utmost importance. Prior approval may be granted by the principal and executive director for extenuating circumstances two weeks or more before the occasion. Siblings not attending BMMA may be granted permission to attend based on the appropriateness of the event. Please keep in mind when deciding to participate in a field trip that handling a younger child may be a detriment to proper supervision of the students.

Information Technology / Electronic Resource

Current technology is modifying the way in which information is accessed, communicated, and transferred. These changes may also alter instruction and student learning. BMMA offers students access to technologies that may include electronic mail (through Internet access), Internet connections, and equipment, such as computers and multimedia hardware, in the technology work area of the classrooms.

With the access to computers comes the availability of materials that may not be considered appropriate in the classroom. On a global network it is nearly impossible to control all materials available. Ultimately, the school staff, parents, and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that students should follow when using these technology resources. BMMA supports and respects each family's right to decide whether or not to allow their student access to any part of these technologies.

The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) addresses concerns about access in schools and libraries to the Internet and other information. For any school or library that receives discounts for Internet access or for internal connections, CIPA imposes certain requirements, but does not require the tracking of Internet use by minors or adults. Although BMMA does not receive such funds, we are taking every effort to follow CIPA's guidelines to restrict:

- (a) the access by minors to inappropriate matter on the Internet and World Wide Web; the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications;
- (b) the unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unlawful activities by minors online;
- (c) the unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors; and
- (d) minors' access to materials inappropriate or harmful to them.

Technology Use - Rules and Responsibilities

The school discipline and behavior guidelines, as well as this document, govern access to and use of media technology. Students will be held accountable for any misuse or abuse of any school materials or resources.

The technologies provided are for students to conduct research, enrich educational experiences, and communicate with others in relation to school work. Access to technological services is given to students who agree to act in a considerate and responsible manner. Parent/guardian permission is required. Access is a privilege, not a right. Therefore, based upon the acceptable use guidelines outlined in this document, the system administrator and or staff will deem what is inappropriate use, and their decision is final. The administration or staff may deny, revoke, or suspend specific privileges.

Individual users are responsible for their use of the technologies available to them. The use of these tools must be in support of education and research and must be consistent with academic expectations of BMMA. Transmission of any material in violation of federal or state laws or regulations including copyrighted, threatening, or obscene material is prohibited.

BMMA maintains a public Web site. Intranet Web pages may be established and maintained by staff with secondary responsibilities given to students who have the skills necessary. All content will be approved by BMMA staff before posting.

The user is expected to abide by the following rules of etiquette:

- Be polite. Do not write or send abusive messages. Use appropriate language. Do not swear, use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language.
- Be respectful with regard to others' work; user will not view, alter or otherwise modify someone else's data. This includes documents opened or contained within work folders.
- Altering the operating system, as well as general visual appearances to a technology is prohibited. Such changes may include but are not limited to screensavers, background, sounds, passwords, display setting, network setting, etc.

- Transmission of obscene materials is prohibited. Sending or receiving offensive messages or pictures from any source will result in immediate suspension of privileges with an administrative review.
- Do not reveal personal information about yourself or other students.
- Electronic mail is not guaranteed to be private. Users should only access personal mail when appropriate permission from staff is obtained and no other users need the technology for school use.
- Do not use the network in a way that would disrupt the use of the other network users.
- Malicious attempts of vandalism to harm or destroy data or equipment will not be tolerated.
- Use of personal data or equipment will not be allowed without prior approval. Additionally, proof of current and regular updates on Anti-virus protection, as well as regular disk scans, is required prior to use once approval is obtained.
- Downloading or uploading of any kind requires prior approval. Such loading may include items from the Internet, Flash Drives, external hard drives, etc.
- Games are strictly prohibited.

Violation of any of the above mentioned rules and responsibilities will result in a loss of access and may result in other disciplinary or legal actions.

Personal Items at School

BMMA assumes no responsibility for lost or stolen items.

Toys and Sharing

Participating in sharing at group time enables children to feel important and special. It also facilitates verbal expression. Good suggestions for sharing may be seashells, rocks, library or special books, pictures or treasures from a trip. Please consult with your child's teacher regarding sharing policies for a particular class. Read the weekly updates and monthly newsletters to discover sharing suggestions relating to the units of study for the month. We do ask that toys be kept at home, or leave them in the car, as they often create distractions and possible power struggles between other students when they are brought to school.

Extra Changes of Clothes

Students are encouraged to bring appropriate changes of clothes to store in their cubbies for emergency use; most especially TK/Kindergarteners. Teachers will communicate with parents as the clothes are used and need to be re-stocked. Please remember to label all items with the student's name and send to school in a plastic bag or other disposable/re-usable carrier.

Other personal items at school

Toys, trading cards, electronic games and other personal items unrelated to the student's daily schoolwork should be left at home. These items tend to create disruptions at school and will be held by the teacher.

Trading cards, such as Pokémon and Yugioh are not permitted. They will be confiscated and returned to a parent if brought to school.

Students are discouraged from bringing cell phones and other items of value to school. Cell phones, pagers, iPods, and the like, are to remain off and out-of-sight during school hours and may only be used once the student has left the school grounds. In the event parents require their child to have such items, contact the teacher or Principal to discuss your child's personal circumstances. Once approved, these items are to remain in the student's backpack or locker until the end of the school day. ***If the student uses such items during school hours, it will be confiscated and only returned to the parent. Permission may be granted by the teacher or administrator to use a cell phone during school hours for a specific situation only.***

Student Freedom of Speech/ Expression

BMMA believes that free inquiry and exchange of ideas are essential parts of a democratic education. We respect students' rights to express ideas and opinions, take stands on issues, and support causes, even when such speech is controversial or unpopular.

Students shall have the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press including, but not limited to the: (1) use of bulletin boards; (2) distribution of printed materials or petitions; (3) wearing of buttons, badges, and other insignia; and (4) right of expression in official school publications. "Official school publications" refers to material produced by pupils in the journalism, newspaper, yearbook, or writing classes and distributed to the student body either free or for a fee. The Principal or designee will supervise the material produced by pupils to ensure it meets professional standards of English and journalism.

Students' freedom of expression shall be limited as allowed by Education Code Section 48907, and other applicable state and federal laws. Students are prohibited from making any expressions or distributing or posting any materials that are obscene, libelous, or slanderous. Students also are prohibited from making any expressions that so incites students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts at school-sponsored activities or events, the violation of school rules, or substantial disruption of the school's orderly operation. The use of "fighting words" or epithets is prohibited in those instances where the speech is abusive and insulting, rather than a communication of ideas, and the speech is used in an aggressive or abusive manner in a situation that presents an actual danger that it will cause a breach of the peace. A student shall be subject to discipline for out-of-school expression, including expression on Internet websites, when such expression poses a threat to the safety of other students, staff, or school property, or substantially disrupts the educational program.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents certain rights with respect to their student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day the school receives a request for access.

Parents should submit to the school Principal a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The Principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents who wish to ask the school to amend a record should write the Principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent, the school will notify the parent of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. For this purpose, a school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school's board. A school official also may include a volunteer or contractor outside of the school who performs an institutional service of function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that processes FERPA complaints are:

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

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in §99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent,

§99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the school to record the disclosure. Parents have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents:

- To other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in §99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(2) are met.
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of §99.34.
- To authorized representatives of the U.S. Comptroller General, the U.S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the CDE. Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of §99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf.
- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid.
- To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to §99.38.
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction.
- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions.
- To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes.
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena.
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to §99.36.
- Information the school has designated as "directory information" under §99.37.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the school to include information from your child's education records in certain school publications. Examples include:

- A playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production
- An annual yearbook
- Honor roll or other recognition lists; and

- Graduation programs

Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. If you do not want the school to disclose any or all of the types of information designated below to outside organizations as directory information from your child’s education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the school and “opt out” of the directory.

Any and all of the following items of directory information relating to a student may be released to a designated recipient unless a written request is on file to withhold its release:

- Name
- Address
- Date of birth
- Dates of attendance (*e.g.*, by academic year or semester)
- Current and most previous school(s) attended
- Degrees and awards received

**BELLA MENTE MONTESSORI ACADEMY TECHNOLOGY USE AGREEMENT
ACCEPTABLE COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE POLICY - STUDENT**

NETWORK AND ONLINE RESOURCES

1. The use of BMMA computer network is not intended for private or commercial business use, financial gain, political, or religious purposes. Any such use is prohibited.
2. Use of the network for illegal activity is prohibited.
3. Use of the network that results in the violation of copyright laws is prohibited.
4. Use of the network for purposes other than those set by faculty is prohibited including online games, chat (instant messaging), or browsing the Internet for any purpose other than school related.
5. Use of the network to access obscene, pornographic, hateful, or otherwise inappropriate material is prohibited.
6. Sending material likely to be offensive or objectionable is prohibited.
7. Using programs that harass network users or infiltrate a computing system and/or damage the software components is prohibited. (Including, but not limited to any type of hacking software)
8. BMMA reserves the right to review any material stored on any system provided by the school and to edit or remove any material. Students should not have any expectation of privacy in their activities while using BMMA equipment or systems.
9. Personal devices including laptops, tablets, or mobile devices may not be connected to the network unless a student has received prior written approval from a teacher or school administration. Use of school resources (such as the Internet) through a personal device must be in compliance with all school policies.

AGREEMENT

Student

1. Supervision - I will not use the BMMA Computer Network or any associated system without the permission and supervision of school staff.
2. Language - I will use appropriate language when using email, newsgroups, chat, journals, blogs or instant messaging or any other forms of communication. I will not use profanity or any language that is offensive to anyone. I will always be mindful that I am a representative of our school.
3. Network Etiquette - I will not send, or encourage others to send, discourteous or abusive email messages. I will not send messages, especially widely distributed messages, the receipt of which

I have reason to believe would be unwelcome to recipients. I will use all forms of communication on the network and off the network in a manner that is not offensive to any person or group.

4. Vandalism and Inappropriate Use - I will not use the system to practice vandalism. Vandalism includes any malicious attempt to harm or destroy the property, including data, of any user or system on the network or the Internet. Uploading or downloading very large files from the Internet is not appropriate.
5. Privacy - I will not reveal passwords, home address, or personal phone numbers. I will not use the system to electronically publish or distribute pictures of myself or others or materials created by others without appropriate permission.
6. Trespassing - I will not attempt to access the system or any data on the system without authorization. This includes, but is not limited to, accessing the network using an account other than my own, including email accounts. I will not log in to a computer with anyone else's name and password. I will not leave a computer without logging off. I will not attempt to guess someone else's password.

Parent

I give permission to BMMA to issue an email and network user account and certify that my child and I have read and understand the information contained in this agreement and agree to abide by all rules set forth in this agreement.

I hereby fully indemnify, release and hold harmless BMMA and any of its personnel from any and all claims and damages of any nature arising from my child's use of, or inability to use, the BMMA network. I will instruct my child regarding the rules of use contained in this document and understand and agree that the agreements contained herein are incorporated into BMMA Board policies. I understand that it is impossible for BMMA to completely restrict access to all controversial materials and I will not hold the school responsible for materials accessed on the internet.

I accept full responsibility if and when my child's use of technology is not in a school setting and understand that my child is subject to the same rules and agreements while not at school. I understand that BMMA encourages parents and guardians to supervise and monitor any online activity. I am aware of my child's account information and passwords for Google Docs.

I further understand that I will be responsible for the cost of repair or replacement if my student loses or damages the BMMA-provided devices beyond normal wear and tear.