

# Breakthrough

MONTESSORI



## Employee Handbook

2019

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# About this Handbook

We prepared this handbook to assist you in finding the answers to many questions that you may have regarding your employment with Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School (BMPCS). Please take the necessary time to read it. We do not expect this handbook to answer all your questions but the handbook does serve as a guide to define organizational norms and policies that explains Breakthrough Montessori's culture and practice.

## Mission

The mission of Breakthrough Montessori is to enable students to develop within themselves the power to shape their lives and the world around them. We seek to build a racially, ethnically, and economically diverse school community deeply committed to realizing the inherent potential of all children.

## Our Statement of Values

“The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind.”

– Maria Montessori

At Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School, we believe in the unbounded potential of all children. Students of all races, classes, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, and backgrounds deserve a personalized education that enables them to shape their world and the world around them.

- **We support all children.** We believe every child is capable of self-construction and deserving of profound respect.
- **We support all families.** We serve not just the whole child, but the whole family. We welcome all families and partner with them to create a robust network of support. We listen to -- and honor -- each person's narrative. We respect difference of beliefs and require behavior that protects all children, families, and staff members.
- **We strive for equity.** We seek to provide public Montessori education to a greater number of families, and we actively work to close the opportunity gap. In our pursuit of equity, we strive to meet the needs of children, families, and staff members by challenging systemic oppression and marginalization.
- **We believe in education for peace.** Our vision of education is deeply linked to a vision of social reform driven by the power inherent in children. We teach all children to embrace their identity while celebrating and respecting the identities of others. By following children, attending to their needs, respecting their interests, and guiding their growth, we come to see the possibilities of a better world.

## 1.0 Professionalism

“Social grace, inner discipline, and joy. These are the birthright of the human

being who has been allowed to develop essential human qualities.”

- Maria Montessori

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School is a learning environment that educates students in primary, lower, and upper elementary grades, as well as adults who serve as classroom and school leaders, assistants, and front desk receptionists. Breakthrough even educates parents through deliberate community outreach. Given the range of ages and people who enter the building, it is important that all employees embody the highest examples of professionalism, self-awareness, mindfulness, and mutual respect - all values that define Maria Montessori's definition of "grace and courtesy."

## 1.1 Dress code

It is necessary for adults who work directly with children to wear clothing that is neat, simple and comfortable.

The following guidelines should be observed:

1. Do not expose inappropriate areas. Clothes should cover your rear when sitting on the floor and bending over. Clothes should not expose areas below the waist. Clothes should cover cleavage.
2. You may wear leggings with a shirt or dress that covers your rear. The shirt should be tunic length or longer. Leggings should be used as tights, not pants. Leggings should not be transparent.
3. Shorts, skirts and dresses should reach your fingertips when arms are extended at your sides.
4. No undergarments should show, so straps should be thick on tanks or covered by a sweater, shirt, etc.
5. Midriffs should not be visible.
6. Dress for the weather (especially if you are expected to go outside with children).
7. If you have acrylic nails, they should not get in the way of doing your job (you may be expected to work with paint or clay, as well as be able to clean materials and shelves.)
8. Nails should be short and blunt enough that they do not run the risk of scratching students.
9. Clothing should not contain offensive language or visuals
10. Jeans are allowed to work, but ripped jeans are not allowed.
11. Tattoos and piercings are allowed, and hairstyle is left to your discretion.

## 1.2 Working Hours and Schedule

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School normally is open for business Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm except for federal holidays, and winter and spring break. The following is a general outline of the working programs at Breakthrough:

- 7:30: beforecare arrival
- 8:00 a.m.: school arrival for 8 to 4 employees
- 10:30 a.m.: School arrival for afternoon assistants
- 8:30 - 3:30 a.m.: school day starts for students
- 3:30 PM: school dismissal for students

- 3:45 p.m.: first possible dismissal time for 8 to 4 employees
- 3:15 p.m - 6:30 p.m.: extended day working hours

You will be assigned a work schedule by your supervisor. Employees will be provided a break during the day as allowed by schedules and school needs. Consult your Supervisor for further details.

### ***Timeliness***

You are expected to come to work on time daily. Your start time reflects the time when you should be ready and able to attend to duties, not when you should be walking through the door. Coming to work later than you are required can be counted toward days off and thus reduce time in your bank of personal days. Failure to come to work on time daily may affect your ability to continue working at Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School. While it is understandable if you are 5-10 minutes late, you need to inform your supervisor if you are running late beyond 10 minutes.

### ***Incident Weather Delays***

The administration of Breakthrough Montessori values the safety of the entire Breakthrough community. In the event of a weather-related emergency or snow accumulation where safe travel to and from school for families, students, and staff is affected, the administrative team may decide to delay or close school. Although the majority of delay and closing decisions follow the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), Breakthrough will independently judge travel conditions and publish a closing or delay decision by 5:00 AM.

All delays are based off an 8:30 AM school start time.

- 1 hour delay: School starts at 9:30 AM
- 90 minute delay: School starts at 10:00 AM
- 2 hour delay: School starts at 10:30 AM

Breakthrough staff members are alerted to closing and delay decisions via Slack. Closing and delay decisions will be published in various other locations including: the Breakthrough text message system, the Breakthrough listserv, the Breakthrough Facebook page, the SHA listserv, and local television stations. Parents and staff can also access information from the Public Charter School Board website at <http://www.dcpsb.org> and by following the DC Public Charter School Board on Twitter at @DCPCSB.

## **1.3 Workplace Conduct**

Because everyone may not have the same idea about proper workplace conduct, it is helpful to adopt rules that all can follow. Unacceptable conduct may subject an employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The following are examples of some, but not all, conduct that can be considered unacceptable:

- Obtaining employment on the basis of false or misleading information
- Stealing, removing or defacing BMPCS property, a co-worker's property or student property
- Disclosure of confidential information
- Dishonesty

- Violation of safety rules and policies
- Fighting, threatening or disrupting the work of others or other violations of BMPCS policy
- Insubordination or disobedience of a lawful directive
- Use of foul or inappropriate language
- Actions that negatively impact school culture, including but not limited to: gossip, actions that countermand Breakthrough's Conflict Resolution Policy, and spreading false information.
- Violation of BMPCS's Punctuality and Attendance Policy, including but not limited to irregular attendance, habitual lateness or unexcused absences.
- Gambling on BMPCS property.
- Willful or careless destruction or damage to BMPCS assets or to the equipment or possessions of another employee.
- Violation of BMPCS's Harassment or Equal Employment Opportunity Policies.
- Violation of the Communication and Computer Systems Policy.
- Violation of BMPCS's Child Protection Policy
- Unsatisfactory job performance.
- Any other violation of BMPCS policy.

The Abuse Prevention Policy also includes a Code of Conduct with additional expectations (see section 7.2 or the full Abuse Prevention Policy for more information):

- Children will be treated with respect at all times.
- Children will be treated fairly regardless of race, sex, age, or religion.
- Staff will not swear or tell off-color jokes.
- Staff will not discuss with children their sexual encounters or in anyway involve children in their personal problems or issues.
- Staff will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children.
- Staff will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or Internet pornography, in the presence of children.
- Staff will not have secrets with children.
- Staff will avoid wearing provocative and revealing attire including midriffs, tank tops, halter tops, short shorts, or short skirts.
- Staff will not stare or comment on any child's body.
- Staff will adhere to uniform standards of affection.
- Staff will avoid affection that cannot be observed.
- Staff shall not abuse children in any way including the following:
  - *Physical abuse*: hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints
  - *Verbal abuse*: degrade, threaten, cursing
  - *Sexual abuse*: inappropriate touch, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations
  - *Mental abuse*: shaming, humiliation, cruelty Neglect: withholding food, water, shelter
- Staff will report concerns or complaints about Breakthrough Montessori staff or children to the Executive Director. Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and will result in immediate dismissal from Breakthrough Montessori. Breakthrough Montessori will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made and investigated.

In response to minor violations of workplace conduct, the following steps may be taken:



1. The employee receives a verbal reminder
2. The employee receives a written notice, and the Director of Operations places it in their employee file.
3. During regularly scheduled appraisals, the supervisor reviews the record of written notices in the employee's file, along with the employee's score on the Professionalism Checklist (please see section on Appraisals for more information about the Professionalism Checklist).
4. The supervisor reminds the employee that a pattern of negative behavior may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

In response to major violations of workplace conduct, the following steps may be taken:

1. Members of the school's leadership conduct interviews with all individuals (staff, children and parents) who witnessed or were impacted by the violation.
2. The Metropolitan Police Department and/or Child and Family Services Agency are contacted.
3. The employee is placed on an Individual Action Plan (IAP). An IAP identifies the inappropriate or unsatisfactory behavior, sets specific goals for improvement, as well as a timeline for the employee to demonstrate improvement.

Please note that any behavior that is illegal; threatens the safety of children or adults; or is physically or emotionally harmful to children or adults may result in immediate termination, without any of the aforementioned steps taken.

Not every type of misconduct can be listed. BMPCS will deal with each situation individually and nothing in this Handbook should be construed as a requirement of specific treatment in a given situation.

The observance of these rules will help to ensure that our workplace remains a safe and desirable place to work.

### ***Cell Phone Policy***

As a community, our greatest priority is what's best for children and cell phone usage negatively impacts quality of care. However we recognize that cell phones can be an important communication tool, especially during an emergency, so we trust you to have your cell phones on your person for that purpose exclusively and to monitor your own usage. Cell phones, however should be reserved for the following situations:

- outside of the classroom
- never when engaged with children
- at the park for the purpose of alerting an admin member to a crisis

We strive to be a technology free environment. For this reason, children should never see you using your cell phone while you are engaged with them.

We suggest that you do not share your personal cell phone number with families, however we suggest that you use an app such as Google Voice if you choose to communicate with families via text.

### ***Consequences:***

If you are observed using your cell phone while engaged with children, you will receive a written notice that will go into your file. Please be mindful that written notices are taken into account during the appraisal process and multiple written notices can

negatively impact your appraisal. You may also be asked to store your cell phone in a safe location outside of the classroom during the school day.

### ***Office Cleanliness Policy***

At Breakthrough Montessori, we strive to always do what is best for children through keeping the highest standards in Montessori practice. In Montessori practice, an important piece of the philosophy is the prepared environment. For children, the prepared environment largely refers to their workspace, where they can find everything they need to be able to work without interruption due to unnecessary clutter or disorganization. At Breakthrough Montessori, our community space and offices are our adult workspace. It is a community expectation that all workspaces, private and shared, are kept organized and generally free of clutter, so as to promote a healthy prepared environment that emulates that which we provide for the child.

### ***Required Training***

At times, your work at Breakthrough will require training beyond what you currently possess. As the school decides to take on new endeavors or is subject to new regulations by our governing bodies, you may periodically be asked to complete required training to fulfill an obligation. Any additional training that may be required by the school will be paid for by the school. Hourly employees will be paid for time spent training outside of their normal work hours. Salaried employees are not paid for training hours outside of the typical workday. When possible, Breakthrough will work to schedule required trainings during scheduled professional development hours, however this may not always be the case. At times, a certificate may be required to prove you have completed said training. Any training required must be completed in the time frame allotted, unless your supervisor has given you express permission to complete it at a later time. Failure to complete required training may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

### ***Students of Employees***

At Breakthrough Montessori school, we invite staff to enter the lottery for enrollment of children who are within the age range of children we serve. In the case that your child is enrolled at Breakthrough, you must consider the following policies:

1. Your child may not be enrolled in your own classroom if your work requires you to be stationed primarily in one class.
2. During working hours, you are expected to perform your duties, unless you are tending to an illness, crisis or other emergency concerning your child.
3. Your child may not join you for any required work duties. If class is in session, they must be with their class. Before and after school participation are left to the employee's discretion, as long you are not in charge of overseeing before or aftercare and work duties before or after school are not impacted.
4. For professional development, your child should not join you. If professional development takes place at a campus other than your/your child's assigned campus, you may not excuse your child from class to join you.
5. Discipline at school should be handled within the scope of Breakthrough policies and go through typical protocol.
6. Children of Breakthrough employees may not receive "special treatment" from any Breakthrough employee. Any employee found to be giving preferential treatment to their/a colleague's child may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
7. Children of employees must be enrolled in Extended Day in order to benefit from Extended Day services.

There may be times when you may feel that you need to have your child, who is not enrolled at Breakthrough, with you at work. Breakthrough is a child-centered environment. If the safest care option for your child is to be at Breakthrough, we will work to accommodate that. Our policy is that children who are not enrolled at Breakthrough should only join staff members during working hours if you have cleared it with your supervisor. If your supervisor clears it:

1. Together with your supervisor, you will come up with a care plan that takes into consideration the age and needs of your child and has minimal impact on your professional responsibilities.
2. Each situation or occurrence is decided separately and should be used as a last resort.

## 1.4 Workplace Violence

### *Workplace Violence*

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School is strongly committed to providing a safe workplace. The purpose of this policy is to minimize the risk of personal injury to employees and damage to BMPCS and personal property.

Prohibited Conduct includes: threats, threatening language or any other acts of aggression or violence made toward or by any BMPCS employee. For purposes of this policy, a threat includes any verbal or physical harassment or abuse, any attempt at intimidating or instilling fear in others, menacing gestures, flashing of weapons, stalking or any other hostile, aggressive, or injurious or destructive action undertaken for the purpose of domination or intimidation. All persons except for authorized law enforcement or security are prohibited from carrying weapons onto BMPCS premises.

### *Workplace Violence: Procedures for Reporting a Threat:*

All potentially dangerous situations, including threats by co-workers, should be reported immediately to your supervisor, who will then decide whether it needs to be reported to the Director of Operations who will then conduct an internal review. Reports of threats may be maintained confidential to the extent that maintaining confidentiality does not impede our ability to investigate and respond to the complaints. All threats will be promptly investigated. No employee will be subjected to retaliation, intimidation or disciplinary action as a result of reporting a threat in good faith under this policy.

We do not expect you to physically subdue a threatening or violent individual. Indeed, we specifically discourage you from engaging in any physical confrontation with a violent or potentially violent individual. However, we do expect and encourage you to exercise reasonable judgment in identifying potentially dangerous situations.

If BMPCS determines, after an appropriate good faith investigation, that someone has violated this policy, BMPCS will take swift and appropriate corrective action. If you are the recipient of a threat made by an outside party, please follow the steps detailed in this section. It is important for us to be aware of any potential danger in our offices. Indeed, we want to take effective measures to protect everyone from the threat of a violent act by an employee or by anyone else.

## 1.5 Non-Discrimination Policy

It is Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School's policy to prohibit harassment of any individual by another person on

the basis of any protected classification including, but not limited to, race, color, national origin, disability, religion, marital status, sexual orientation or age.

If you feel that you have been subjected to conduct which violates this policy, you should immediately report the matter to your first-line supervisor. If you are unable for any reason to contact your supervisor, contact the Director of Operations. If you have not received a satisfactory response within five (5) business days after reporting any incident of what you perceive to be harassment, contact the Executive Director. Every report of perceived harassment will be fully investigated and corrective action will be taken where appropriate. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. All complaints will be kept confidential. In addition, BMPCS will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who report unwelcome conduct to school leadership or who cooperate in the investigations of such reports in accordance with this policy. Employees who make complaints in bad faith may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

## 1.6 Sexual Harassment

It is Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School's policy to prohibit harassment of any employee by any supervisor, employee, client or vendor on the basis of sex or gender. While it is not easy to define precisely what types of conduct could constitute sexual harassment, examples of prohibited behavior include unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; obscene gestures; displaying sexually graphic magazines, calendars or posters; sending sexually explicit e-mails; and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, such as uninvited touching of a sexual nature or sexually related comments. Improper conduct also can include sexual joking, vulgar or offensive conversation or jokes, commenting about an employee's physical appearance, conversation about your own or someone else's sex life, or teasing or other conduct directed toward a person because of his or her gender.

If you feel that you have been subjected to conduct which violates this policy, you are encouraged to report any instance of sexual harassment to your supervisor and/or the Director of Operations. If you feel uncomfortable going to a supervisor, you should report the matter to the Director of Operations. If you have not received a satisfactory response within five (5) business days after reporting any incident of what you perceive to be harassment, contact the Executive Director. Every report of perceived harassment will be fully investigated and corrective action will be taken where appropriate. While an affected person is encouraged to report the matter so that appropriate action can be taken, you are not required to report the matter. You may file a complaint of discrimination as an alternative to, or in addition to, reporting the matter.

Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. All complaints will be kept confidential. In addition, BMPCS will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who report unwelcome conduct to school leaders or who cooperate in the investigations of such reports in accordance with this policy. Employees who make complaints in bad faith may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

## 1.7 Confidentiality

During the course of work, an employee may become aware of confidential information about Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School's business, including but not limited to information regarding BMPCS finances; students; pricing; software and computer programs; marketing strategies; suppliers; clients and potential clients; and knowledge, skills and abilities of

personnel. An employee also may become aware of similar confidential information belonging to BMPCS's clients. It is extremely important that all such information remain confidential and not be disclosed. Any employee who improperly copies, removes (whether physically or electronically), uses or discloses confidential information to anyone outside of BMPCS may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

## 1.8 Conflict Resolution Policies and Procedure

In order to create and preserve a school culture of mutual respect and peace and in alignment with our commitment to coaching, Breakthrough expects its staff members to participate in a community of mutual learning, and to take on courageous conversations in which others are “called in” instead of “called out.” Some necessary definitions are the following:

### *Courageous Conversations*

Engaging in courageous conversations is about challenging current practices and fostering improvement and growth through conversation, listening to and acting on feedback, and providing feedback that will lead to improvements in student achievement and well-being. In courageous conversations, whether in the context of performance appraisal, mentoring, or coaching, individuals are encouraged to express their views openly and truthfully, rather than defensively or with the purpose of laying blame. *Integral to courageous conversations is an openness to learn.*<sup>1</sup>

### *“Calling In” vs. “Calling Out”*

In social justice circles, *calling in* refers to “the act of checking your peers and getting them to change problematic behavior by explaining their misstep with compassion and patience.” Picture a huddle where you bring someone in and talk about the game plan to get on the same page. *Calling out* is a more familiar—and, perhaps, more popular and easier—way of addressing socially problematic language and behavior, especially online. When you call someone out, you “issue a direct challenge to something they’ve said or done, usually in public and with the intent of exposing the person’s wrongdoing to others.” Of course, the act of calling in demands a lot of emotional labor. It’s important to remember that those who are being oppressed have a right to their anger and are under no obligation to do the work of educating the people participating in their oppression. *Calling in* is a tool for teaching others in safe situations, and it can be particularly useful if you are someone from a privileged group who can do the work of calling in others who share your privilege and challenging their problematic beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of conflict, the following steps should be taken first:

- Professional or personal conflict with another staff member (coworker, supervisor, supervisee):
  - Have a courageous conversation with the colleague
  - If the colleague’s behavior does not change, it can then be reported to a supervisor.
- A coworker comes to you with a complaint about a third party
  - Listen empathetically to the colleague
  - Encourage your colleague to have a courageous conversation with the person who can solve their problem or with the offending party

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/pdfs/TipSheetConversation.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/e/calling-in-vs-calling-out/>

- If needed, and if you are willing, support your colleague in figuring out what s/he needs to have the courageous conversation
- Do not take your colleague's complaint on as your own or attempt to resolve the complaint in their stead, even if multiple colleagues share the same complaint with you. Problems can only be resolved when they are brought to the person who has the authority to resolve them.
- You observe a staff member saying or doing something that you disagree with, or is not aligned with Breakthrough's policies
  - Have a courageous conversation with the colleague
  - Focus on "calling in" instead of "calling out," to make the person a partner in changing their behavior
  - If the colleague's behavior does not change, it can then be reported to a supervisor

Any conflicts that cannot be resolved using the above steps can be reported to the Director of Operations, which then initiates an HR (Human Resources) investigation process.

Certain behaviors and actions should be reported immediately to a member of the administration, as they are unlawful and are a detriment to Breakthrough Montessori and the community as a whole. These include:

- Abuse or harm of a child
- Behavior, actions, or words related to discrimination or harassment
- Drug or alcohol use while at work, or showing signs of intoxication from previous consumption of drugs or alcohol
- Stealing or defacement of property
- Any other illegal action or activity

## 1.9 HR Investigation Process

For any conflict or actions that cannot be effectively addressed through the Conflict Resolution - often a scenario where two people disagree to a point of aggressive frustration - the Director of Operations will conduct an internal investigation to gather evidence and testimonials across a targeted group. It may also be necessary to investigate work emails to validate a complaint. Here are the steps that outline an internal investigation:

1. Explain the complaint to the supervisor. If the supervisor will decide whether the complaint warrants further investigation across the organization. (If an employee is uncomfortable approaching the supervisor, go directly to the Director of Operations. If the employee is uncomfortable approach the Director of Operations, approach the Executive Director.)
2. The Director of Operations will email a short list of identified employees to explain the timeline, process, and confirm confidentiality.
3. All short listed employees will be asked the same set of questions.
4. The Director of Operations will write a report and then send directly to the Executive Director with a list of recommendations. (If the Executive Director is being investigated, the Director of Operations will send the report to the Board Chair.)

# 2.0 Nature of Employment

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School (BMPCS) adheres to the policy of employment at-will, which permits the BMPCS or the employee to terminate the employment relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without cause or notice. Professional best practices include giving notice at least two weeks notice before the final work date.

## 2.1 Compensation

### *Employee Classifications*

All employees fall within one of the classifications below:

**Full-Time Employees** - Employees who regularly work at least 25 hours per week who are not hired on a short-term basis. Examples of full-time employees include administrators, guides, classroom assistants, and dedicated aides. Full-time Employees generally are eligible for BMPCS benefits.

**Part-Time Employees** - Employees who regularly work fewer than 25 hours per week who are paid hourly. Part-time Employees are not eligible for BMPCS benefits.

**Short-Term Employees** - Employees who were hired for a specific short-term project, or on a short-term freelance, stipend, per diem or temporary basis. Short-Term Employees are not eligible for BMPCS benefits, but are eligible to receive statutory benefits.

In addition to the above classifications, employees are categorized as either "exempt" or "non-exempt" for purposes of federal and D.C. wage and hour laws.

**Exempt employees** do not receive overtime pay; they generally receive the same pay regardless of hours worked.

**Non-Exempt Part-Time** - employees will be given an hourly rate of pay and will be paid for all hours worked, even if beyond 25 hours per week.

**Non-Exempt Full-Time** – Employees will be given an hourly rate of pay and will be paid for all hours worked, including overtime for work beyond 40 hours in a workweek. Full time employees have the option of being paid over 12 months rather than 10 months, and the hourly rate of pay will be adjusted accordingly.

You will be informed of your classifications upon hire and informed of any subsequent changes to your classifications.

### *Your Paycheck*

You will be paid bi-weekly, every other Friday. Each check covers the time you worked during the previous pay period. Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School strongly encourages employees to use direct deposit. If you do not wish to have your paycheck direct deposited, then the check will be sent directly to the school.

If you believe there is an error in your pay, bring the matter to the attention of the Director of Operations immediately, so BMPCS can resolve the matter quickly.

## 2.2 Safe Harbor Policy

It is our policy and practice to compensate employees accurately and to do so in compliance with all applicable D.C. and federal laws. To ensure that you are paid properly and that no improper deductions are made, you must review your pay stubs promptly to identify and report all errors.

Under federal and D.C. law, your salary is subject to certain types of deductions, including:

- health premiums
- federal taxes
- D.C. taxes
- social security
- medical coverage (if you choose to sign up for Breakthrough's medical plans)
- voluntary contributions to your retirement plan
- any court ordered garnishments, e.g. child support
- any absences in excess of allotted PTO

Under federal and D.C. law, your salary is subject to certain deductions. These include:

- Full-day or half-day Absences for personal reasons.
- Full-day or half-day Absences for sickness or disability.

NOTE: unless D.C. law provides otherwise, you may use your accrued PTO leave to pay for full- or half-day absences for personal reasons, sickness or disability.

- Full-day or half-day disciplinary suspensions for infractions of our written policies and procedures.
- Family and medical leave absences (either full- or partial-day absences).
- The first or last week of employment in the event you work less than a full week.
- Any full work week in which you do not perform any work.

Your salary may also be reduced for certain types of deductions such as your portion of health or dental premiums; federal or D.C. taxes; social security; or voluntary contributions to a 401(k) or pension plan.

In any work week in which you performed any work, your salary will not be reduced for any of the following reasons:

- Less than half-day absences for personal reasons, sickness or disability.
- Your absence on a day because your employer has decided to close a facility on a scheduled workday.
- Absences for jury duty, attendance as a witness, or military leave in any week in which you have performed any work.
- Any other deductions prohibited by D.C. or federal law.



If you believe you have been subject to any improper deductions, you should immediately report the matter to your supervisor. If the supervisor is unavailable or if you believe it would be inappropriate to contact that person (or if you have not received a prompt and fully acceptable reply), you should immediately contact the Executive Director or any other supervisor in BMPCS with whom you feel comfortable.

If you believe there is an error in your pay, bring the matter to the attention of the Director of Operations immediately, so BMPCS can resolve the matter quickly.

### ***Salary Advances***

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School does not permit advances on paychecks or against accrued paid time off. Advance pay for vacation must be requested in writing at least two weeks prior to the vacation period.

## **2.3 Time Sheets**

Breakthrough uses “iSolved GO” - a smart phone application to clock in employee time. The application also allows employees to view paystubs, W2s, submit time off requests, and allows employees to change their tax withholdings. Employees can submit their arrival time (e.g. “clock in/out” or “punch in/out”) at the start of their work day at the front desk or even through their smartphone. It is your responsibility to sign your time record to certify the accuracy of all time recorded. Any errors in your time record should be reported immediately to the Director of Operations.

## **2.4 Work Expense Reimbursement**

Employees may be reimbursed for reasonable approved expenses incurred in the course of work. These expenses must be approved by your supervisor, and may include air travel, hotels, motels, meals, cab fare, rental vehicles, or gas and car mileage for personal vehicles. All expenses incurred should be submitted to the Director of Operations along with the receipts in a timely manner.

Employees are expected to exercise restraint and good judgment when incurring expenses. You should contact your supervisor in advance if you have any questions about whether an expense will be reimbursed.

## **2.5 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act, known as the ADAAA, are federal laws that prohibit employers with 15 or more employees from discriminating against applicants and individuals with disabilities and that when needed provide reasonable accommodations to applicants and employees who are qualified for a job, with or without reasonable accommodations, so that they may perform the essential job duties of the position. It is the policy of Breakthrough Montessori PCS to comply with all federal and state laws concerning the employment of persons with disabilities and to act in accordance with regulations and guidance issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

(EEOC). Furthermore, it is our company policy not to discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in regard to application procedures, hiring, advancement, discharge, compensation, training or other terms, conditions and privileges of employment. The company will reasonably accommodate qualified individuals with a disability so that they can perform the essential functions of a job unless doing so causes a direct threat to these individuals or others in the workplace and the threat cannot be eliminated by reasonable accommodation and/or if the accommodation creates an undue hardship to Breakthrough Montessori PCS. **Contact the Director of Operations (responsible for Human Relations) with any questions or requests for accommodation.**

## 3.0 Employee Benefits

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School's employee benefits include a leave policy for personal time off ("PTO"), health, vision, and dental coverage, short term disability, and a retirement plan. We are continually studying and evaluating our benefits programs and policies to better meet your present and future requirements and to keep up with changing times and needs. If you have any questions regarding your benefits, please contact the Director of Operations.

### 3.1 Leave Policy

#### *Paid Time Off ("PTO")*

Employees are entitled to use their PTO hours at their own discretion - for personal, vacation, or sick needs. However, if an employee intends to be away from work for more than 2 hours, they must submit an official request to their supervisor. The request can be submitted using the "iSOLVED GO" application, which sends an alert to their supervisor - or the supervisor can deduct hours from the PTO balance of the employee.

Leave requests must align to the following:

- Requests must be submitted at least 2 weeks before the dates of absence.
- Requests cannot conflict with the same day as 3 employees in the same building.
- Requests cannot create a long weekend, such as combining a Friday and Monday.

For all leave requests, please speak to your supervisor who can plan for substitutions or back up support.

All veteran employees have a PTO balance of at least 80 hours of PTO (equivalent to 10 work days). PTO hours will be deducted from employee balances as soon as the time requests have been approved and fulfilled. While Breakthrough will not pay out unused PTO, employees have the option to roll over up to 24 hours (3 work days) of hours remaining in their balance into the next school year, assuming a renewed contract.

New employees will start with 24 hours of PTO (3 days) and will receive 8 additional hours of PTO after every successful month that is completed at Breakthrough.

## 3.2 Parental Leave

### *Parental Leave Policy*

Breakthrough Montessori will provide sixteen weeks of parental to employees following the birth of an employee's child, placement of a child with an employee in connection with adoption or foster care, or placement of a child where an employee legally assumes and discharges parent responsibilities. The purpose of parental leave is to enable the employee to care for, and bond with, a newborn or a newly adopted or newly placed child. Breakthrough offers the first ten weeks of the sixteen week period as paid parental leave.

### *Eligibility*

Eligible employees must meet the following criteria:

- Have been employed with Breakthrough Montessori for at least 12 months (the 12 months do not need to be consecutive).
- Have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the date the leave would begin.
- Be a full-time, regular employee.

In addition, employees must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have given birth to a child.
- Have a spouse or committed partner who has given birth to a child.
- Have adopted a child or been placed with a foster child (in either case, the child must be age 17 or younger). The adoption of a child by a new spouse is excluded from this policy.
- Have a child placed in their care and legally assume and discharge parental responsibility.

### Amount, Time Frame and Duration of Paid Parental Leave

- Eligible employees will receive a maximum of sixteen weeks of parental leave, ten of which are paid parental leave, per birth, adoption or placement of a child/children. Multiple births/adoptions/placements (e.g., the birth of twins or the adoption/placement of siblings) does not increase the total amount of parental leave granted for that event. In addition, in no case will an employee receive more than sixteen weeks of parental leave in a rolling 12-month period, regardless of whether more than one birth, adoption or foster care placement event occurs within that 12-month time frame.
- The first ten weeks of parental leave are compensated at 100 percent of the employee's regular, straight-time weekly pay. Paid parental leave will be paid according to the regular pay period and pro-rated if necessary.
- The remaining six weeks of parental leave are not compensated by Breakthrough Montessori. Employees may apply paid time off (PTO) to the parental leave period following the first ten weeks.

- Approved parental leave may be taken at any time during the six-month period immediately following the birth, adoption or placement of a child with the employee. Parental leave may not be used or extended beyond this six-month time frame.
- Employees must take parental leave in one continuous period of leave and must use all parental leave during the six-month time frame indicated above. Any unused paid parental leave will be forfeited at the end of the six-month time frame.
- Upon termination of the individual's employment at Breakthrough Montessori, he or she will not be paid for any unused parental leave for which he or she was eligible.

#### Coordination with other Policies

- Parental leave taken under this policy will run concurrently with leave under the FMLA; thus, any leave taken under this policy that falls under the definition of circumstances qualifying for leave due to the birth or placement of a child due to adoption or foster care, the leave will be counted toward the 12 weeks of available FMLA leave per a 12-month period. All other requirements and provisions under the FMLA will apply. Please refer to the Family and Medical Leave Policy for further guidance on the FMLA.
- After the ten weeks of paid parental leave is exhausted, the balance of FMLA leave (if applicable) will be compensated through employees' accrued sick, vacation and personal time. Upon exhaustion of accrued sick, vacation and personal time, any remaining leave will be unpaid leave. Please refer to the Family and Medical Leave Policy for further guidance on the FMLA.
- The school will maintain all benefits for employees during the parental leave period just as if they were taking any other paid leave such as paid vacation leave or paid sick leave.
- If a school holiday occurs while the employee is on paid parental leave, such day will be charged to holiday pay; however, such holiday pay will not extend the total paid parental leave entitlement.
- If the employee is on parental leave when the school offers administrative leave (known as an "admin day"), that time will be recorded as paid parental leave. Administrative leave will not extend the paid parental leave entitlement.
- An employee who takes parental leave that does not qualify for FMLA leave will be afforded the same level of job protection for the period of time that the employee is on parental leave as if the employee was on FMLA-qualifying leave.

### 3.3 Family and Medical Leave Act

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides certain employees with up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year. It also requires that their group health benefits be maintained during the leave.

FMLA is designed to help employees balance their work and family responsibilities by allowing them to take reasonable unpaid leave for certain family and medical reasons. It also seeks to accommodate the legitimate interests of employers and promote equal employment opportunity for men and women.

FMLA applies to all public agencies, all public and private elementary and secondary schools, and companies with 50 or more employees. These employers must provide an eligible employee with up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave each year for any of the

following reasons:

- For the birth and care of the newborn child of an employee;
- For placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care;
- To care for an immediate family member (i.e., spouse, child, or parent) with a serious health condition; or
- To take medical leave when the employee is unable to work because of a serious health condition.

Employees are eligible for leave if they have worked for their employer at least 12 months, at least 1,250 hours over the past 12 months, and work at a location where the company employs 50 or more employees within 75 miles. Whether an employee has worked the minimum 1,250 hours of service is determined according to FLSA principles for determining compensable hours or work.

Time taken off work due to pregnancy complications can be counted against the 12 weeks of family and medical leave.

(<https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/benefits-leave/fmla>)

## 3.4 D.C. Family and Medical Leave

The District of Columbia has its own family and medical leave law that applies to more employers, and provides more leave, than the federal FMLA. In D.C., employers with 20 or more employees must allow eligible employees to take up to 16 weeks of unpaid family leave plus 16 weeks of unpaid medical leave in any 24-month period. Medical leave is for the employee's own serious health condition. Family leave may be taken for any of the following reasons:

- for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child
- for the placement of a child for whom the employee permanently assumes and discharges parental responsibility, or
- to care for a family member with a serious health condition.

D.C.'s law also applies to a broader category of family members than the FMLA. While the FMLA defines "family member" as a spouse, child, or parent for most types of leave, D.C.'s law includes: anyone who is related to the employee by blood, custody or marriage; a foster child; a child who lives with the employee and for whom the employee has permanently assumed parental responsibility; and someone who has lived with the employee in the last year and who shares a committed relationship with the employee.

The eligibility requirements under D.C.'s family leave law are also more relaxed than the FMLA. Employees are eligible under D.C.'s law if they have worked for the employer for one year and worked 1,000 hours in the 12 months prior to taking leave.

### ***D.C. Paid Sick & Safe Leave***

All employers in D.C. must provide eligible employees with paid leave that can be used:

- for the employee's or a family member's physical or mental illness, injury, or medical condition
- for the employee's or a family member's medical care, diagnosis, or preventive medical care, or

- to seek social, medical, or legal services for the employee or a family member who is a victim of stalking, domestic violence, or sexual abuse.

"Family member" is defined broadly and includes parents, spouses, children, domestic partners, grandchildren, siblings, people related to the employee through an in-law relationship, and more.

The amount of paid leave provided to employees is between three and seven days each year, depending on the size of the employer. For more in-depth information, see our article on [D.C. paid sick leave](#).

### ***D.C. Paid Family Leave***

D.C. will begin implementing a paid family leave program in 2019, funded by employer payroll taxes. Beginning on July 1, 2020, employees can receive benefits from the district when taking time off to bond with a new child, to care for a family member with a serious health condition, or to recover from their own serious health conditions. Benefits are paid for between two and eight weeks, depending on the reason for the leave. Employees will receive a percentage of their normal wages, but no more than \$1,000 per week. (See our article on D.C. paid family leave for more information.)

## **3.5 Worker's Compensation**

On-the-job injuries are covered by our Workers' Compensation Insurance Policy, which is provided at no cost to you. If you are injured on the job, no matter how slightly, report the incident immediately to your Supervisor. Failure to follow BMPCS procedures may affect your ability to receive Workers Compensation benefits.

This is solely a monetary benefit and not a leave of absence entitlement. Employees who need to miss work due to a workplace injury must also request a formal leave of absence.

## **3.6 Short Term Disability Duty**

Breakthrough covers short term illnesses - such as back and joint injuries, and even longer term leave to support employees who may be of need to be out of work beyond PTO hours. Unlike PTO requests, short term coverage and pay will be determined by the insurance company and a doctor's report is required. See the Director of Operations for further details.

## **3.7 Jury Duty**

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School realizes that it is the obligation of all U.S. citizens to serve on a jury when summoned to do so. All employees will be allowed time off to perform such civic service as required by law. You are expected, however, to provide BMPCS with notice of your request to perform jury duty within three days of receipt, and with your verification of service. You also are expected to the school informed of the expected length of your jury duty service and to report to work for the major portion of the day if you are excused by the court. Employees on jury duty leave will be paid for their jury duty service in accordance with state law.

## 3.8 Military Leave

If you are called into active military service or you enlist in the uniformed services, you will be eligible to receive an unpaid military leave of absence. To be eligible for military leave, you must provide advance notice of your service obligations, unless you are prevented from providing such notice by military necessity, or it is otherwise impossible or unreasonable for you to provide such notice. Provided your absence does not exceed applicable statutory limitations, you will retain reemployment rights and accrue seniority and benefits in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

If you are required to attend yearly Reserves or National Guard duty, you can apply for an unpaid temporary military leave of absence not to exceed the number of days allowed by law (including travel). You should provide as much advance notice of your need for military leave as possible so that we can maintain proper coverage while you are away.

## 3.9 Retirement

All Breakthrough employees are eligible to open a TIAA Simple IRA Plan; however, Breakthrough Montessori will only match contribution to those full-time employees who have successfully completed one year of employment (from their start date). For example: if you started August 12, 2019, you may open a TIAA account August 12, 2019; however, an employer match will not occur until August 12, 2020. Breakthrough will match up to 3% of the full salary. For enrollment and paperwork, please see the Director of Operations.

# 4. Professional Development

All Breakthrough staff are expected to participate in ongoing professional development activities. Such activities include our annual Summer Institute, Monday afternoon staff meetings, workshops, seminars, conferences, training courses, or visits to other Montessori schools.

Guides and Montessori Support Specialists are welcome to seek out professional development opportunities (in addition to regularly scheduled work and professional days). If you would like to take advantage of a PD opportunity, please contact your supervisor and provide a written proposal that includes the topic of the PD, your goals for participation, and what you plan to bring back to the team. If approved, the school can cover the cost of the opportunities up to \$100 per year. Please note that you will be required to use your PTO for any professional development opportunity that falls on an instructional day.

## 4.1 Performance Review

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School values personal growth, and your performance will be reviewed regularly. Please understand that a positive performance evaluation does not guarantee an increase in salary, a promotion, or continued employment.

## Coaching

What does coaching mean?

Coaching is a way to support a child-centered community of reflective practice. In our world, it is how we support Montessori best practices at all levels, with all people as a way to ensure that we are always reaching toward what is best for children. It is composed of conversations between an individual or a group and their coach, where successes and challenges are discussed and plans for growth are made in a non-judgmental, supportive environment.

Who receives coaching?

Coaching happens with all people. That means everyone from the Executive Director to the janitor gets coached. *Everyone agrees to coach and get coached.*

Is coaching related to appraisal?

Appraisal and coaching are separate. Appraisal is an evaluative tool, whereas coaching is a tool designed to support practitioners' growth and development. Classroom observations are used to inform both coaching and appraisal, and the same topics may be addressed in both the coaching and appraisal conversations. However, the conversations that happen during coaching are separate from the appraisal process. Appraisal tracks growth towards goals, whereas coaching is the support that the practitioner receives throughout their development.

What do you need to participate in coaching?

- Be present and flexible
- Use your knowledge and intuition
- Be open to not knowing and taking risks
- Recognize that there are many ways to do things, but always do your best
- Be observant, reflective, curious, collaborative, humble and patient

From whom does everyone receive coaching?

| Role                     | Coach  | Coaching experience   |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Facilities Support Staff | Director of Operations   | Individual conversations  |
| Operations Associate     | Director of Operations   | Individual conversations  |
| Extended Day Assistant   | Extended Day Site Manager, Director of Curriculum and Instruction                                    | Individual conversations  |
| Classroom Assistant      | Level Coach (currently Director of Curriculum and Instruction or Director of Student Support), Guide | Weekly group meetings with level coach, weekly level meeting with guide |
| Dedicated Aide           | Montessori Support Specialist,   | Weekly individual meetings with M.S.S., weekly level                    |



|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | Director of Student Support, Guide   | meeting with guide   |
| Guide                                  | Level Coach (currently Director of Curriculum and Instruction or Director of Student Support), Montessori Support Specialist | Weekly individual meetings with level coach, Weekly individual meetings with M.S.S.                      |
| Montessori Support Specialist          | Director of Student Support  | Weekly individual meetings with D.S.S.   |
| Director of Operations                 | Executive Director   | Monthly meetings with the Executive Director   |
| Director of Student Support            | Director of Curriculum and Instruction, NCMPS Lead Coach   | Bi-weekly meetings with NCMPS Lead Coach, conversations as needed, participation in NCMPS Coaches' group |
| Director of Curriculum and Instruction | NCMPS Lead Coach   | Bi-weekly meetings with NCMPS Lead Coach, participation in NCMPS Coaches' group                          |
| Executive Director                     | NCMPS Leaders Group  | Monthly meetings with the Chairman of the Board, monthly meetings of the NCMPS leaders group             |

***What other experiences are embedded coaching?***

- Child Study
- Lesson Study
- Equity meetings
- Professional Development
- Level meetings

***Appraisals***

What does appraisal mean?

Appraisal is designed to provide targeted, constructive, summative assessment of developmental practice. Appraisal documents evaluate different items, behaviors or outcomes that are linked to various indicators, which are clustered around several domains. This tool is used as part of a constellation of observational, self-report, and reflective data in order to set goals toward improving practice.

Who receives appraisals?

Everyone is appraised by their supervisor, and everyone also has an opportunity to appraise their supervisor. Everyone has the opportunity to appraise the overall institution as well.

What happens to my appraisal documents?

Your appraisal documents are shared with you and also kept in a central file by your supervisor. Appraisals are used to set growth goals throughout the school year.

What happens to my appraisal of my supervisor?

Supervisor appraisal data is anonymously aggregated and shared with the practitioner's supervisor. The person that supervises the supervisor then reviews the aggregated data as part of the appraisal process.

Is appraisal related to coaching?

Appraisal and coaching are separate. Appraisal tracks growth towards goals, whereas coaching is the support that the practitioner receives throughout their development. Classroom observations are used to inform both coaching and appraisal, and the same topics may be addressed in both the coaching and appraisal conversations. However, the conversations that happen during coaching are separate from the appraisal process.

What do I need to do before my appraisal meeting?

- You should examine the appraisal tool and become familiar with all the domains and indicators. Appraisal tools are available from your supervisor.
- Rate yourself (in pencil) with evidence for the score you have given yourself
- Know that your final appraisal rating will come from your supervisor and that you should be ready to discuss why you chose the ratings you did for yourself

## 4.2 Performance Management and Timeline

| Role                     | Appraiser  | When?   |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Facilities Support Staff | Director of Operations   | November (initial), April (second), June (year-end reflection and review of personal goals)             |
| Operations Associate     | Director of Operations   | November (initial), April (second), June (year-end reflection and review of personal goals)             |
| Extended Day Assistant   | Director of Curriculum and Instruction   | 60 days from your start date  |
| Classroom Assistant      | Guide  | November (initial), April (second), June (year-end reflection and review of personal goals)             |
| Dedicated Aide           | Director of Student Support  | November (initial), April (second), June (year-end reflection and review of personal goals)             |
| Guide                    | Director of Curriculum and Instruction (Primary) or Director of Student Support (Elementary) | Initial appraisal: October for new guides and December for returning guides.<br>Second appraisal: April |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | Year-end reflection and review of personal goals: June                                      |
| Montessori Support Specialist          | Director of Student Support            | December (initial), April (second), June (year-end reflection and review of personal goals) |
| Director of Operations                 | Executive Director                     | August (initial), February (second), July (year-end)<br><br>Upward feedback in May          |
| Director of Student Support            | Director of Curriculum and Instruction | August (initial), February (second), July (year-end)<br><br>Upward feedback in May          |
| Director of Curriculum and Instruction | Executive Director                     | August (initial), February (second), July (year-end)<br><br>Upward feedback in May          |
| Executive Director                     | Board of Trustees                      | August (initial), February (second), July (year-end)<br><br>Upward feedback in May          |

## 5. Business Ethics

We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe and are connected with each other to form one whole unity.

- Maria Montessori

### 5.1 Technology Practices

#### *Use of Communication and Computer Systems*

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School's communication and computer systems are intended for business purposes and may be used only during working time; however, limited personal usage is permitted if it does not hinder performance of

job duties or violate any other BMPCS policy. This includes the voice mail, email and Internet systems. Users have no legitimate expectation of privacy in regard to their use of the systems.

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School may access the voicemail and email systems and obtain the communications within the systems, including past voicemail and email messages, without notice to users of the system, in the ordinary course of business when the BMPCS deems it appropriate to do so. Further, Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School may review Internet usage to ensure that such use with BMPCS property, or communications sent via the Internet with BMPCS property, are appropriate.

The reasons for which the BMPCS may access the voicemail and email systems and obtain the communications within the systems, and review employees' use of the Internet with BMPCS property include, but are not limited to: maintaining the system; preventing or investigating allegations of system abuse or misuse; assuring compliance with software copyright laws; complying with legal and regulatory requests for information; and ensuring that BMPCS operations continue appropriately during an employee's absence.

BMPCS may store electronic communications for a period of time after the communication is created. From time to time, copies of communications may be deleted.

The BMPCS's policies prohibiting harassment, in their entirety, apply to the use of the BMPCS's communication and computer systems. No one may use any communication or computer system in a manner that may be construed by others as harassing or offensive based on race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious beliefs or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law.

Since the BMPCS's communication and computer systems are intended for business use, these systems may not be used to solicit for religious or political causes or outside organizations. Further, since the BMPCS's communication and computer systems are intended for business use, all employees, upon request, must inform school leadership of any private access codes or passwords.

Unauthorized duplication of copyrighted computer software violates the law and is strictly prohibited. No employee may access, or attempt to obtain access to another employee's computer without appropriate authorization.

Violators of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### ***Telephone Calls***

Disruptions during working time can lead to errors and delays. Therefore, we ask that personal telephone calls be kept to a minimum, and only be made or received after working time, or during lunch or break time.

The school is constantly busy with parents and general business. If you get a personal call or non-emergency call during class time, the message will be put in your mailbox. Please save your phone calling until after school as it is important to keep the phones clear for parents and school business. Please use the phone for short, local calls only.

### ***Blogging and Social Media***

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School respects the right of any employee to maintain a blog or social media profile. However, to protect BMPCS's interests and ensure employees focus on their job duties, employees must adhere to the following rules:

1. All rules regarding confidential information apply in full to blogs and social media. Any information that cannot be disclosed through a conversation, a note or an e-mail also cannot be disclosed in a blog or social media post.
2. If employees mention BMPCS in a blog or social media post, and also express a political opinion or an opinion regarding BMPCS's actions, the poster must specifically note that the opinion expressed is his/her personal opinion and not BMPCS's position. This is necessary to preserve BMPCS's good will in the community.
3. Any conduct which under the law is impermissible if expressed in any other form or forum is impermissible if expressed through a blog or social media post.
4. Posting a photo of a Breakthrough Montessori student on a blog or social media is prohibited for all current and past employees.

Further, the BMPCS encourages all employees to contemplate the speed and manner in which information posted on a blog or social media account can be relayed and often misunderstood by readers. Thus, subject to the limited restrictions above, while an employee's free time is generally not subject to any restrictions by BMPCS, BMPCS urges all employees to not post information regarding BMPCS or their jobs which could lead to morale issues in the workplace or which could detrimentally affect BMPCS's business, employees or students.

## 5.2 Personal/School Property

### *Use of Facilities, Equipment and Property, Including Intellectual Property*

Equipment essential in accomplishing job duties is often expensive and may be difficult to replace. When using property, employees are expected to exercise care, perform required maintenance, and follow all operating instructions, safety standards and guidelines.

Please notify your supervisor if any equipment, machines, or tools appear to be damaged, defective, or in need of repair. Prompt reporting of loss, damages, defects, and the need for repairs could prevent deterioration of equipment and possible injury to employees or others. The supervisor can answer any questions about an employee's responsibility for maintenance and care of equipment used on the job.

Employees also are prohibited from any unauthorized use of BMPCS's intellectual property, such as audio and video tapes, print materials and software.

Improper, careless, negligent, destructive, or unsafe use or operation of equipment can result in discipline, up to and including discharge.

Further, BMPCS is not responsible for any damage to employees' personal belongings unless the employee's supervisor provided advance approval for the employee to bring the personal property to work.

## 5.3 Conflict of Interest and Business Ethics

It is Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School's policy that all employees avoid any conflict between their personal interests and those of BMPCS. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the BMPCS's honesty and integrity, and therefore its reputation, are not compromised. The fundamental principle guiding this policy is that no employee should have, or appear to have, personal interests or relationships that actually or potentially conflict with the best interests of BMPCS.

It is not possible to give an exhaustive list of situations that might involve violations of this policy. However, the situations that would constitute a conflict in most cases include but are not limited to:

- Holding an interest in or accepting free or discounted goods from any organization that does, or is seeking to do, business with BMPCS, by any employee who is in a position to directly or indirectly influence either BMPCS's decision to do business, or the terms upon which business would be done with such organization.
- Holding any interest in an organization that competes with BMPCS.
- Being employed by (including as a consultant) or serving on the board of any organization which does, or is seeking to do, business with BMPCS or which competes with BMPCS.
- Profiting personally, e.g., through commissions, loans, expense reimbursements or other payments, from any organization seeking to do business with BMPCS.

A conflict of interest would also exist when a member of an employee's immediate family is involved in situations such as those above.

This policy is not intended to prohibit the acceptance of modest courtesies, openly given and accepted as part of the usual business amenities, for example, occasional business-related meals, gifts or promotional items of nominal or minor value.

It is your responsibility to report any actual or potential conflict that may exist between you (and your immediate family) and BMPCS.

## 5.4 Employment Records

Faculty and staff records are the property of BMPCS and will be handled solely by the Executive Director. BMPCS will only request, use and retain personal information about employees that is required for school business or legal reasons. No information will be released to outside sources without the employee's written consent. Exceptions may include employment verification and special litigation requirements. The Executive Director will make a periodic review of each employee's personnel file. Information deemed inappropriate by the Executive Director will be destroyed. The employee has the right to inspect his/her personnel file with the Executive Director, and may take notes or request single copies of any page in the files.

In order to obtain your position, you provided us with personal information, such as your address and telephone number. This information is contained in your personnel file.

Please keep your personnel file up to date by informing the Director of Operations of any changes. Also, please inform the Director of Operations, as well as your supervisor, of any specialized training or skills you may acquire in the future, as well as

any changes to any required visas. Unreported changes of address, marital status, etc. can affect your withholding tax and benefit coverage. Further, an "out of date" emergency contact or an inability to reach you in a crisis could cause a severe health or safety risk or other significant problem.

## 5.5 Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace

To help ensure a safe, healthy and productive work environment for our employees and others, to protect BMPCS property, and to ensure efficient operations, BMPCS has adopted a policy of maintaining a workplace free of drugs and alcohol. This policy applies to all employees and other individuals who perform work for BMPCS.

The unlawful or unauthorized use, abuse, solicitation, theft, possession, transfer, purchase, sale or distribution of controlled substances, drug paraphernalia, or alcohol by an individual anywhere on BMPCS premises, while on BMPCS business (whether or not on BMPCS premises) or while representing BMPCS, is strictly prohibited. Employees and other individuals who work for BMPCS also are prohibited from reporting to work or working, while they are using, or under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substances, except when the use is pursuant to a licensed medical practitioner's instructions and the licensed medical practitioner authorized the employee or individual to report to work. Employees and other individuals who work for BMPCS are also prohibited from reporting to work while recovering from the use of alcohol or other substances.

This restriction does not apply to responsible, authorized drinking of alcohol at business meetings and related social outings.

Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. BMPCS will endeavor to make reasonable accommodations to assist individuals recovering from substance and alcohol dependencies, and those who have a medical history which reflects treatment for substance abuse conditions.

We encourage employees to seek assistance before their substance abuse or alcohol misuse renders them unable to perform the essential functions of their jobs, or jeopardizes the health and safety of any BMPCS employee, including themselves.

## 5.6 Whistleblower Policy

The Code of Ethics and Conduct Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School (hereinafter, *The Organization*) requires directors, officers and employees to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. As employees and representatives of the Organization, we must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling our responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

### ***Reporting Responsibility***

It is the responsibility of all directors, officers and employees to comply with the Code and to report violations or suspected violations in accordance with this Whistleblower Policy.

### ***No Retaliation***

No director, officer or employee who in good faith reports a violation of the Code shall suffer harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequence. An employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is

subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment. This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns within the Organization prior to seeking resolution outside the Organization.

### ***Reporting Violations***

The Code addresses the Organization's open door policy and suggests that employees share their questions, concerns, suggestions or complaints with someone who can address them properly. In most cases, an employee's supervisor is in the best position to address an area of concern. However, if you are not comfortable speaking with your supervisor or you are not satisfied with your supervisor's response, you are encouraged to speak with someone in the Human Resources Department or anyone in management whom you are comfortable in approaching. Supervisors and managers are required to report suspected violations of the Code of Conduct to the Organization's Compliance Officer, who has specific and exclusive responsibility to investigate all reported violations. For suspected fraud, or when you are not satisfied or uncomfortable with following the Organization's open door policy, individuals should contact the Organization's Compliance Officer directly.

### ***Compliance Officer***

The Organization's Compliance Officer is responsible for investigating and resolving all reported complaints and allegations concerning violations of the Code and, at his/her discretion, shall advise the Executive Director and/or the Board of Trustees Executive Committee. The Compliance Officer has direct access to the audit committee of the board of directors and is required to report to the audit committee at least annually on compliance activity. The Organization's Compliance Officer is the Director of Operations.

### ***Accounting and Auditing Matters***

The executive committee of the board of directors shall address all reported concerns or complaints regarding corporate accounting practices, internal controls or auditing. The Compliance Officer shall immediately notify the audit committee of any such complaint and work with the committee until the matter is resolved.

### ***Acting in Good Faith***

Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation of the Code must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation of the Code. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense.

### ***Confidentiality***

Violations or suspected violations may be submitted on a confidential basis by the complainant or may be submitted anonymously. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

### ***Handling of Reported Violations***

The Compliance Officer will notify the sender and acknowledge receipt of the reported violation or suspected violation within five business days. All reports will be promptly investigated and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.



## 5.7 Smoking

Smoking is prohibited on BMPCS premises and in all BMPCS vehicles.

## 5.8 Solicitation and Distribution

To avoid distractions, solicitation by an employee of another employee is prohibited while either employee is on working time. "Working time" is the time an employee is engaged, or should be engaged; in performing his/her work tasks for Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School. Solicitation of any kind by non-employees on BMPCS premises is prohibited at all times. Distribution of advertising material, handbills, printed or written literature of any kind in working areas of the BMPCS is prohibited at all times. Distribution of literature by non-employees on BMPCS premises is prohibited at all times.

## 5.9 Publicity/Statements to the Media

All media inquiries regarding BMPCS and its operation must be referred to Executive Director. Only the Executive Director is authorized to make or approve public statements pertaining to BMPCS or its operations. No employees, unless specifically designated by the Executive Director, are authorized to make those statements. Any employee wishing to write and/or publish an article, paper, or other publication on behalf of BMPCS must first obtain approval from the Executive Director.

## 5.10 If You Must Leave Us

Should you decide to leave BMPCS, we ask that you provide your supervisor with at least two weeks' advance notice of your departure. Your thoughtfulness will be appreciated. All BMPCS property including, but not limited to, keys, laptop computers, iPads, etc. must be returned at separation. Employees also must return all of BMPCS's confidential information upon separation. To the extent permitted by law, employees will be required to repay BMPCS (through payroll deduction, if lawful) for any lost or damaged BMPCS property.

Employees who resign are requested to participate in an exit interview with the Director of Operations, if possible.

# 6. Hiring

## 6.1 Non-Discrimination Policy

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977, as amended, District of Columbia Official Code Section 2- 1401.01 et seq. (Act), Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School does not discriminate (including employment therein and admission thereto)

on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of an interfamily offense, or place of residence or business. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination, which is prohibited by the Act. In addition, harassment based on any of the above-protected categories is prohibited. Discrimination in violation of the aforementioned laws will not be tolerated. Violators will be subject to disciplinary action.

## 6.2 Equal Employment Opportunity

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School is an Equal Opportunity Employer that does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, sex, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family responsibilities, genetic information, matriculation, political affiliation, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal or District of Columbia laws. BMPCS is dedicated to this policy with respect to recruitment, hiring, placement, promotion, transfer, training, compensation, benefits, employee activities and general treatment during employment.

BMPCS will endeavor to make a reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of qualified employees with disabilities unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of our business. If you need a reasonable accommodation to perform your job duties because of a physical or mental condition, please speak to the Director of Operations.

BMPCS will endeavor to accommodate the sincere religious beliefs of its employees to the extent such accommodation does not pose an undue hardship on BMPCS's operations. If you wish to request such an accommodation, please speak to the Executive Director.

Any employees with questions or concerns about equal employment opportunity in the workplace or our EEO policies are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of the Director of Operations. BMPCS will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who raise issues of discrimination, sexual harassment, and/or retaliation. To ensure our workplace is free of artificial barriers, violation of this policy will lead to discipline, up to and including discharge.

## 6.3 Background Check Policy

Employment at Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School is contingent on the review of the job candidate's criminal background at the time a job offer is made. The steps are as follows:

1. Breakthrough Montessori extends a conditional job offer to a candidate.
2. Candidate completes a background check authorization form, which includes full name, address, social security number, birth date, and gender.
3. Background check is run by a third party company, usually within 48 hours.
4. Once cleared, the background check is valid for two years.
5. Every Breakthrough employee will submit to a background check every two years.

Upon reviewing a background check, Breakthrough Montessori will initiate a red flag review if any of the following are included in the background check report:

- Any Felony
- Any Abuse Incident
- Drug/Alcohol Incident
- Harm to children
- Crimes of violence
- Plea bargains
- Patterns of behavior
- Other

The red flag review process includes the following steps:

1. Breakthrough Montessori contacts the job candidate or employee and provides a letter that indicates the item on the background check that has prompted the review. A copy of the background check report is also presented to the candidate or employee.
2. The candidate or employee meets with two members of Breakthrough's leadership (one of whom is either the Director of Operations or the Executive Director). During the conversation, school leadership may ask: 1) if there are details surrounding the incident in question that the candidate/employee would like to share; 2) if any children were witness to the event; 3) if any children were directly or indirectly impacted by the event.
3. Following the conversation, Breakthrough leadership provides the candidate/employee with a follow-up letter stating the school's determination of their employment status.

## 6.4 Hiring Relatives/Employee Relationships

A familial relationship among employees can create an actual or at least a potential conflict of interest in the employment setting, especially where one relative supervises another relative. To avoid this problem, Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School may refuse to hire or place a relative in a position where the potential for favoritism or conflict exists.

In other cases, such as personal relationships where a conflict or the potential for conflict arises, even if there is no supervisory relationship involved, the parties may be separated by reassignment at the discretion of BMPCS. Accordingly, all parties to any type of intimate personal relationship must inform someone on the leadership team.

If two employees marry, become related, or enter into an intimate relationship, they may not remain in a reporting relationship or in positions where one individual may affect the compensation or other terms or conditions of employment of the other individual. BMPCS generally will attempt to identify other available positions, but if no alternate position is available, BMPCS retains the right to decide which employee will remain with BMPCS.

# 7. Student Safety, Support, and Privacy

## 7.1 Confidential Student Information

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them.<sup>3</sup>

## 7.2 Abuse Prevention Policy

Breakthrough is committed to the safety and security of its students, as part of its commitment to providing students with an individualized, holistic learning environment. In order to ensure student safety, a list of non-negotiable policies and procedures are delineated in Breakthrough's complete Abuse Prevention Policy, which is available in the Google Drive and provided to all new employees. All staff also receive abuse-prevention training and participate in Mandated Reporter Training. **It is the responsibility of all Breakthrough employees to be familiar with and follow the policies and procedures included in the full policy.**

The non-negotiable policies and procedures include:

1. Physical interactions: any kisses, full frontal hugs, lap sitting, touching of private parts, tickling, wrestling, and piggyback rides are inappropriate.
2. Verbal interactions: name calling, sexual jokes, shaming, belittling, derogatory language, and compliments related to physique are inappropriate.
3. Discipline practices: biting, pinching, hitting, spanking, shaming, mechanical restraint, punishing for toileting accidents, and angry yelling are inappropriate.
4. Adults must take extra precautions in one on one situations, such as not remaining in a room that is windowless or without doors, and leaving the bathroom door open when helping children to change clothes.
5. Gift giving: any gift given to an individual child or group of children smaller than an entire class must be approved by student's/students' parents and administration.
6. Contact outside of regular school activities: babysitting Breakthrough students or former Breakthrough students, and tutoring Breakthrough students outside of school are prohibited. Other interactions outside of school without parents present are either prohibited or subject to restrictions.

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<sup>3</sup> Language from, and more information available at, <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

7. Electronic communications: blogs and social media accounts of staff members should be inaccessible to students, and staff members should not email students from their personal email accounts. No photos of students should be posted on staff social media.
8. Transporting students: Breakthrough strongly discourages staff members from transporting students in their personal vehicles. Employees must invite an additional staff member if they need to transport students in case of emergency.
9. Student to student interactions: hazing, bullying, differential treatment, truth or dare, ridicule, and humiliation are all high-risk and thus prohibited.
10. Going out: All above procedures apply, and any going out group must include two adults.

Any staff actions that go against these policies or any suspicions or allegations of abuse should be reported to the Executive Director and/or to the Child and Family Services Agency.

The Abuse Prevention Code of Conduct, which is part of the full Abuse Prevention Policy, is found in section 1.3

## 7.3 Restraint and Seclusion Policy

BMPCS will implement school-wide programs and services that teach, reinforce and monitor positive behavior to create a school climate that is highly conducive to learning.

BMPCS provides training for all staff on verbal de-escalation procedures, the dangers of restraint and seclusion, and procedures for contacting fully trained and certified staff when behavioral crises occur. Each school will maintain a core group of appropriate personnel trained and "certified" in crisis intervention techniques, which will include the use of physical restraint and seclusion procedures.

BMPCS authorizes staff members to use physical restraints and seclusion in limited situations. The restraints and the use of seclusion may only be used under the circumstances specified in the full Breakthrough Policy for the Use of Restraint and Seclusion. Physical restraint is appropriate only when a student is displaying physical behavior that presents an imminent risk of injury to the student or others.

The full restraint and seclusion policy is available in the Breakthrough Google Drive, and hard copies are available upon request from the Director of Student Support.

## 7.4 Child Find Policy

Breakthrough Montessori PCS has a foundational commitment to serving all children, and to giving all children access to high-quality Montessori education. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Breakthrough Montessori PCS is responsible for conducting continuous efforts intended to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities enrolled in Breakthrough Montessori PCS. These duties are called Child Find responsibilities.

A referral is documentation provided by the child's parent, or other referral source, which clearly states why it is thought that the child may have a disability. Breakthrough Montessori PCS is required to complete an initial evaluation and determine if a

child is a child with a disability eligible for special education and related services under IDEA within 90 days of receipt of a referral. The 90-day requirement does not apply if:

- The parent fails or refuses to respond to a request for consent for the evaluation;
- The parent of the child repeatedly fails or refuses to produce the child for the evaluation; or The child enrolls in another LEA prior to the determination of eligibility.

Parents and teachers who would like to request an initial evaluation to determine if a child is in need of special education and related services may contact the Director of Student Support. All Breakthrough Montessori PCS staff must accept an oral or written referral for initial evaluation. Upon receiving an oral referral, Breakthrough Montessori PCS staff must assist any outside referral source in documenting the referral in writing, and must document the date of the referral within three (3) business days of receipt. Breakthrough Montessori PCS provides a referral form to assist parents and other parties in documenting a referral. This referral form is available in the Google Drive or at the front desk of both campuses.

After receiving a referral, the Breakthrough Special Education team has up to ten (10) days to analyze existing data to see if the evaluation process should be continued or discontinued. If the team determines that it needs to be continued, at least three attempts to gain parental consent for evaluation should be made before thirty (30) days from the date of referral have passed. If the team determines that the evaluation process should be discontinued, the parents are notified immediately, in writing. All parents also receive a copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice, which outlines their rights as parents in the Special Education process and includes information about the appeals process.

The Child Find process is part of Breakthrough's responsibility to provide a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) to all of its students, as guaranteed by IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

## 7.5 Discipline Policy

Breakthrough's Discipline Policy is based on a constructivist model of education, where the responsibility of educators is to craft an environment in which children's natural desire to learn and develop shines through, as well as removing any obstacles to their development. In cases where students are engaging in actions that are disruptive, dangerous, destructive, or demeaning, the following steps should be followed:

1. Ask nicely
2. Give a clear, specific instruction
3. Ask what the child needs in order to be able to comply
4. State the consequence as a clear choice.
5. Follow through with the consequence that was previously stated.
6. Ask another adult to tap in to help calm / reintegrate the child
7. Call the Montessori Support Specialist
8. Bring the child to administration

At any point during the first five steps that the child stops the behavior, the steps reset to zero. At any point that a child is brought to a Montessori Support Specialist or an administrator, an incident report must be filled out. The complete Discipline Policy is available in the Google Drive, and hard copies are available by request from the Director of Student Support.