



DISCIPLINE POLICY

Montessori Approach To Discipline ¹

At Shining Stars, we strive to foster an environment where children, guides, assistants, administrators and parents are respectful, caring and purposeful. Our approach to discipline at Shining Stars involves using discussions centered around restorative practices, Montessori Grace and Courtesy lessons and other vetted conflict resolution principles and strategies to help our young children learn self-discipline, and redirection techniques to use when they encounter challenging situations. However, there are times when we may have to take disciplinary action to address minor or serious misbehaviors/offenses to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff, to educate the student, and to ensure the student is successful academically, emotionally, and socially.

Upon visiting a Montessori classroom for the first time, you might wonder what magic spell has been cast upon these young children making them so calm and self-directed. Another person might look at that same class and be confused by the children's independence, wondering "where's the discipline, these children just do as they please." Visitors commonly issue such comments as, "I've heard Montessori is too free and chaotic." Or "I've heard Montessori is too structured." It does not seem possible that these two extreme opposites can both be true. Montessori is, however, all in the eyes of the beholder. This method or philosophy of education varies in interpretation from school to school, teacher to teacher, and parent to parent. There are certainly some Montessori classrooms that are very rigid and adult controlled, and there are also classroom that are disorderly and anything goes. Montessori when done well, however, is a beautiful blend and perfect balance of freedom and structure. The best Montessori Guides/teachers or facilitators understand that maintaining the delicate balance is one of the most challenging and rewarding aspects of their job. It is on that foundation of freedom and structure that the child learns discipline.

Freedom is not a word that is traditionally associated with discipline. Parents are often concerned that the Montessori child's freedom to choose activities presupposes that discipline is something alien to our classrooms. Does freedom mean license to act as he or she chooses or does freedom of choice carry with it certain responsibilities in the classroom community? Are we, as some would claim, a place where children can do what they like or, as a young Montessori student once told a visitor, a place where children like what they do? To have any meaningful discussion of these questions, it would seem that our first priority should be to define this thing called discipline. Montessori herself held that discipline is not "...a fact but a way." True discipline comes more from within than without and is the result of steadily developing inner growth. Just as the very young child

¹ This 'approach' to discipline and classroom management was first published by Mary Conroy and Wm. Bravo in Tomorrow's Child Magazine (2000 reprint).

must first learn to stand before s/he can walk, she must develop an inward order through work before she is able to choose and carry out her own acts. Surprisingly enough, Montessori found that it was through the very liberty inherent in her classrooms that the children were given the means to reveal their inner or self-discipline. Independence did not diminish respect for authority but rather deepened it. One of the things that aroused her greatest interest was that order and discipline seemed to be so closely united that they resulted in freedom.

Many people assume that discipline is something that is imposed by an authority figure who should be obeyed without question. Discipline in the Montessori environment is not something that is done to the child; nor is it a technique for controlling behavior. Our concern is with the development of an internal locus of control, which enables an individual to choose the right behavior because it is right for him or herself and right for the community.

If discipline comes from within, then what is the job of the teacher? Inner discipline is something which evolves. It is not something that is automatically present within the child and it cannot be taught. The role of the teacher, then, is to be a model and a guide while supporting the child as he develops to the point where he is able to choose to accept and to follow the rules of the classroom community. This level of obedience is the point where true inner discipline has been reached. One knows this level of discipline has been reached when children are able to make appropriate behavioral choices even when adults are not present.

Discipline presupposes a certain degree of obedience. Before the age of three a child is truly unable to obey unless what is asked of her/him happens to correspond with one of her/his vital urges. At this stage, her/his personality has not formed to the level where she/he is capable of making a choice to obey. It is this level which Montessori termed the first level of obedience. A toddler can obey, but not always. The second level of obedience is reached when the child is capable of understanding another person's wishes and can express them in her/his own behavior. When this second level of obedience is reached, most parents and teachers would think they had reached their goal. Most adults ask only that children obey. The goals of Montessori reach beyond this; however, to the third level of obedience which Montessori called "joyful obedience". At this stage the child has internalized obedience, or we might say, has developed self-discipline where s/he sees clearly the value of what is being offered to her/him by authority and rushes to obey. This is not blind obedience at all, but is a fully informed choice by a personality which has grown in freedom and developed to its fullest potential. This is what we want for our children. With this level of obedience or self-discipline comes a degree of self-respect in which a child cannot help but respect the rights and needs of others alongside her/his own. S/he is then able to learn and grow freely in the security of a community of respectful individuals.

This of course, is a wonderful philosophy, but can Montessori truly deliver these results? Montessori can only benefit children when it moves beyond philosophy and takes a practical application. This involves the careful preparation of the teacher and the

classroom environment. The teacher or guide is a specialist, trained in child development, as well as Montessori Philosophy and methodology for the age group with whom he or she is working. Equally important, these adults possess robust enthusiasm for learning, a deep respect for all life, kindness, and the patience of a saint.

The classroom should be beautiful, orderly, and so inviting that the child cannot resist exploring. It should be steeped with a sense of wonder. Within this environment the child is free to explore, but with this freedom comes responsibility. **One of the secrets to success in the Shining Stars Montessori classroom is freedom within the limits of very clear ground rules.** Each classroom's ground rules may vary but the essence is generally the same. 1) Take care of all people and living things in our environment, and 2) Take care of all of the material things in our environment. If you think about it, every do or don't one could wish to implore fits in these two rules, or could be narrowed even further to this one simple rule, be respectful of everyone and everything.

The rules are kept simple, yet they are explored in great detail. It should never be assumed that the child understands what it means to be kind or respectful. A great amount of time and energy is focused on teaching lessons that demonstrate socially acceptable behavior. Children don't just automatically know how to be a friend, express anger, or how to solve problems. As a matter of fact, many adults are still learning how to cope with these issues. Yet, we often forget to teach children the everyday skills necessary for getting along with others. These special skills are taught with the Grace and Courtesy lessons (see the Attachments section for a more detailed discussion of Grace & Courtesy). These lessons are presented through demonstration and then practiced through role-playing, and modeled by Guides and older students. They are the foundation of the classroom, as they set a tone of respect and kindness. The child learns such important skills as, how to shake hands and greet a friend, how to properly interrupt someone who is busy, and how to tell someone to please move out of my way. The children love these lessons. They are always eager to take a turn playing the roles, and they are thrilled to know a better way to handle personal situations.

Another important consideration is that children have the same range and depth of emotions as adults, but they don't have the maturity or experience to put these feelings into perspective. The goal of Grace and Courtesy lessons and conflict resolution techniques is to validate these feelings and give children the tools to successfully tackle them. Children learn what to do when someone is unkind or unfair and how to discuss conflicts when they occur. Guides and children act as mediators, coaching children in conflict through a process of expressing their feelings and finding a way to fix their mistakes.

In addition to lessons, which teach social graces, there is significant emphasis placed on developing practical life skills. What we commonly refer to as misbehavior is often a symptom of an insecure and disempowered child. In fact, some experts believe that misbehavior serves the purpose of communicating unmet needs. Children who are happily engaged in self-satisfying activities with a clear purpose experience a great sense of accomplishment and power. When

the child can do things for her/himself, s/he will feel confident and in control. These everyday living skills such as pouring, scrubbing tables, dish washing, and polishing, also help the child learn to focus his attention and complete a task. These lessons require the child to follow an orderly step by step process, which will further develop both self-discipline and logical thinking, thus laying a foundation for the more abstract academic activities offered within the other areas of the classroom.

The magical spell that enables the Montessori Child to become disciplined is her/his love for meaningful activity. When the environment provides consistency, nurturing adults and stimulating work, the child can go about his most important work, creating the adult he will become. Montessori offers her/him valuable tools for this great task: independence, order, coordination, cooperation and confidence.

Montessori, however, is only one component in the child's life. A child's home environment and parents love are the most critical factors in her/his development. Unfortunately, our children are not born with an owner's manual. Parents generally rely on the wisdom of grandparents, doctors, and educators, as well as their own instincts to determine the right parenting style for their family. Parents will be able to find within our Montessori school, a family friendly environment that is ready to offer support. When schools and families develop a partnership, there is greater opportunity for consistency and continuity.

Whether in the home or the classroom it is important to keep in mind the ultimate goal of discipline. Too often we discipline for the moment, hastily responding to the present problem, but possibly creating future ones. Disciplining with long-range goals means keeping in mind the independent adult you want your child to become.

The goal of the Shining Stars classroom whether it is the prepared environment for preschoolers, or elementary, is first and foremost the development of skills necessary for a productive and fulfilling life. The best of the academic curricula are useless if the child does not develop inner discipline, integrity, and respect for others and oneself. In today's world, these goals may seem out of reach, but they are more important now than ever before. The young person who faces the world of tomorrow armed with self-confidence and self-discipline is far more likely to achieve success and happiness. They will be prepared to meet any challenges that the real world may present, and will hopefully bring to that world a bit of the peace and joy they experienced in the Shining Stars Montessori environment.

Furthermore, misbehavior on the part of a student is approached in a manner that is appropriate for the student's age, which will enable the student to comprehend what s/he did and the consequences that such behavior may bring about. However, while Shining Stars believes and strives to address misbehavior at the lowest level possible, for those times where a student is exhibiting severe misbehavior, Shining Stars has an obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff in accordance with D.C. Official Code §38-236 et seq., and other district and

federal laws. Below is an outline of Shining Stars expectations of student behavior, identification of prohibited behaviors, and approach to corrective actions for misbehaviors.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT AT SHINING STARS

Behavioral Expectations

As is expected in the Montessori approach to education, the adults are the models of appropriate behavior for the children. We must keep this in mind at all times as we interact with each other and with the children. Whatever behavior we want the children to exhibit, we need to make sure that we are also demonstrating that behavior, because children learn what they see, not what they hear. So, the first step in helping children develop self-discipline and self-control is for us to model self-discipline and self-control. We also need to model and teach the children appropriate strategies and techniques for them to use in handling conflicts. The general behavioral expectations for all at Shining Stars, whether staff, student or parent/guardian, are as follows:

Be Respectful:

- We use kind words
- We use gentle hands on our friends and the materials
- We use walking feet inside the building
- We keep self-to-self
- We use quiet voices
- We clean up after ourselves
- We walk around rugs on the floor

Be Caring:

- We ask a friend if they need help
- We help keep the classroom clean
- We cooperate with our friends
- We wait our turn

Be Purposeful:

- We work with concentration
- We choose work that we have had a lesson on
- We complete our work
- We control our bodies

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT AND CONSEQUENCES

One of the most powerful discipline tools is the guide/adult's ability to pair kindness with firmness, and to be a model of grace and courtesy. If a child displays difficulty following the rules of the community, the adult response will be positive and age-appropriate. Verbal acknowledgment of a child's difficulties with the use of compassionate statements, reminders of the behavioral expectations, encouragement to engage in desirable behavior, reinforcement of desirable

behavior, planned ignoring, distraction, substitution and/or removal from the situation are among the various approaches utilized. When the adults charged with their care and well-being interact with children in supportive and respectful ways, the children are much more likely to demonstrate self-discipline and self-control. Moreover, many instances of misbehavior resolve themselves as the child, within the bounds of safety, experiences the logical consequences of his/her actions, for example, being directed to clean up after throwing something on the floor. If the child disregards the limits of the classroom community, the guide/adult seeks the underlying causes in order to help the child understand the inappropriateness of his/her actions. The guide/adult also assists the child in finding a constructive alternative.

Children at Shining Stars are also expected to always put forth their best efforts in making work choices, concentrating and completing chosen work tasks. When students exhibit both appropriate social skills and good work habits, they are said to have reached a level of “normalization”. This is a Montessori term not meant to mean that everyone is the same but to express a state of mind and classroom existence reflective of both social and academic independence for the child and the classroom.

All members of our community are expected to respect one another, use manners with adults and peers, care for their space, and care for the environment. Children at Shining Stars learn to resolve their conflicts with one another and to seek the help of an adult if necessary, to aid them in peacefully solving problems. It is imperative that misbehaviors be addressed for the social, emotional and academic well-being of Shining Stars community. The table below provides identification, classification, and an explanation of infractions, minor to serious misbehaviors, which disrupt the peace and safety of our community:

Tier I Offenses	Tier II Offenses (Offenses that may rise to the level of in-school suspension)	Tier III Offenses (Serious Disciplinary Behaviors/Offenses that may result in out-of-school suspension and/or expulsion)
Disrespectful behavior	Property/material damage/destruction (greater than \$100 but less than \$500)	Severe harassment/bullying ² /threatening Social or group bullying Hurtful teasing or name-calling (creating an emotional distress for the student(s) and/or staff).

² Shining Stars defines bullying as repeated exposure, over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more persons. Please review SSMA’s Bully Prevention Policy.

<p>Property/material misuse/damage (less than \$100)</p>	<p>Inappropriate/disrespectful language (direct)</p>	<p>Threatening or physically assaulting another person (any member of the SSMA community including students, staff, and/or parents).</p> <p>Physically dangerous behavior (where a student has assaulted or threatened to assault another students or students), illegal behavior, alcohol, drugs, and/or weapons.</p> <p>Mistreating another student by recklessly or intentionally endangering the health or safety of, or inflicting bodily injury on the student in connection with or for the purpose of threatening them.</p> <p>Conduct including fighting, making threats, stalking or intimidation that endangers the wellbeing of other students or staff.</p>
<p>Refusal to participate or work</p>	<p>Physical contact/horseplay</p>	<p>Smoking or taking illicit/illegal substances</p> <p>Selling/distribution of drugs</p> <p>Bringing a weapon to school</p> <p>Selling/distribution and/or consumption of alcohol</p>
<p>Leaving the classroom w/o permission</p>	<p>Mild physical aggression</p>	<p>Severe disruption</p> <p>Repetitive defiance</p> <p>Repetitive Non-compliant that causes a disruption to the class and creates an inability for the other students to learn.</p> <p>Property/material damage/destruction (greater than \$500)</p>

Defiance/non-compliant	Writing/markings on desk	Sexually suggestive/explicit behavior and/or inappropriate touching.
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Incident Reports

Parents/guardians are notified of issues/incidents, which occur during the school day via an incident report (IR) form. If the incident requires further review or investigation, the parent/guardian will be notified of additional findings. The parent/guardian may be requested to attend a meeting to discuss the following:

1. The offense;
2. The student’s conduct;
3. Illicit the assistance of the parent/guardian, to conduct an at-home discussion with the student and to develop a plan for the student to avoid any further incidents from happening in the future;
4. Provide an opportunity for the parent/guardian to discuss any concerns, thoughts, and/or provide the parent/guardian an opportunity to request the school’s assistance with student; and/or
5. Provide the student an opportunity to discuss his/her feelings and what may have led the student to misbehave.

Two types of behaviors are documented on incident reports:

1. When a student is involved in an accident and/or has a medical concern; and
2. When a student does not respond to adult redirection attempts.

Any staff member who encounters a student who has experienced an accident completes an IR form or who is demonstrating repeated difficulty complying with our school-wide behavioral expectations. When staff other than the classroom Guide completes a report, the Guide should be notified immediately, so that s/he can report the incident to the child’s parent as soon as possible, but before the end of the day. Once an IR has been initially processed by administration, the form is emailed to parents, the Guide, the Executive Director, the Principal, and the Director of Student Support. If further investigation is deemed necessary, a timely resolution to the concern is pursued.

Shining Stars’ Response to Bullying Behavior

Bullying behavior is not uncommon among elementary school-aged children. The term bullying can be defined as

“intentional, repeated hurtful acts, words, or behavior such as name calling, threatening and/or shunning committed by one or more persons against another. The victims do not intentionally provoke these negative acts and for

such acts to be defined as bullying, an imbalance of real or perceived power must exist between the perpetrator and the victim.”

Bullying behaviors can be verbal, physical, electronic, and/or exclusionary. Some amount of teasing or physical interaction is developmentally appropriate and expected among elementary aged children. However, bullying experts believe that social gain is at the root of 95 percent of bullying behavior, and therefore children who continually engage in bullying others are most often motivated by a desire for social power. When a school employee believes that a child is bullying another child, the Guide will intervene immediately with both children. The staff member will also contact the school’s Bullying Prevention Team so that follow up intervention procedures are conducted with all students involved and their parents. Please visit the SSMA website (Parent Portal) for more information about our Bullying Policy Manual.

To obtain further information regarding how we respond to bullying behavior, you may contact our bullying prevention team coordinator, Willa Jones, PhD, at wjones@shiningstarspcs.org. Shining Stars’ Bullying Prevention Team is comprised of teachers and administrators who meet monthly and on an as-needed basis to investigate all bullying claims.

When students demonstrate difficulty executing their responsibilities, a series of actions may be taken depending on the significance and magnitude of an inappropriate behavior. Each student incident is treated individually but the following staff responses may occur:

Progressive Responses for Less Serious/Minor Behaviors

Misbehaviors can include minor student conflict, not following directions, disruptive behaviors, and/or those offenses identified under Tier 1 and Tier 2. These less serious/minor behaviors are addressed in the following ways listed below:

Level I and II Offenses

1. Student redirected by Guide and/or staff
2. Problem discussed with students
3. Conflict resolution/Peace Table
4. Calming area/talk with staff
5. Short and Extended In-School Reflection Time (i.e., both within and/or outside of the classroom)
6. Assigned seating near the teacher for a period of time
7. Reflection assignment
8. Logical consequences (see below)
9. Parent note or phone call (staff member will complete an incident report)
10. In-School Reflection Time (in-school suspension)

In-School Reflection (In-School Suspension)

Based on the seriousness of the infraction and the child's behavioral history, the school may implement in-school reflection (ISR), a disciplinary response to a persistent, disruptive, and harmful behavior for students 5 years old and above. ISR will be considered if a repeated attempt to redirect a child's behavior is implemented; positive behavior interventions have been implemented; a parent call/conference has been completed; and/or support has been requested and have all proven ineffective in modifying the child's behavior to meet school expectations. If Administration determines that ISR is recommended with input by the Guide, an incident report will be generated and sent home to the parent. ISR will start immediately, if possible. ISR will be completed in another supervised working area where the student will continue to work and complete a Reflection exercise to assess his/her behavior, to identify the triggering event and to problem-solve for future success. Prior to the completion of ISR, administration will talk with the student to assess learning and reflection prior to returning to class. Depending on the infraction, ISR can last through a working cycle up to several days.

Depending on the duration, on the following day, upon arriving at school, the student will report to his/her classroom Guide to receive his/her work assignment. The student will then report directly to the Principal (or designee) with his/her work and be reminded of the behavior that warranted the ISR. Periodically, the student's Guide may visit the ISR site to supply additional work and check on the student's progress. The student's freedom of movement and the privilege to be in the classroom environment are restricted during an ISR. Depending on the duration, the student will receive lunch and a movement breaks without his/her peers. The student will be closely monitored for the duration of the ISR. The ISR will not be held for a period greater than three hours (or the equivalent of one work cycle) for a Primary Student. If ISR extends to more than one day and the student becomes absent, ISR continues upon their return to school to full completion.

Immediate Responses for Serious Disciplinary Behaviors/Offenses

Shining Stars endeavors to ensure all students receive the education they are entitled to; thereby addressing incidents/offenses at the lowest level possible. The following incidents/offenses, including those identified under Tier III, may lead to out-of school reflection time (out-of-school suspension) or expulsion: punching; hitting; kicking; spitting; profanity; physical aggression; carrying a weapon, possession, use, or distribution of drugs, repeated bullying; sexually suggestive/explicit behavior, inappropriate touching; verbal aggression, etc.

Consistent with D.C. Official Code § 38-236 et seq., and school policy, Shining Stars will not suspend or expel any student unless the incident/offense shows that the student willfully caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause bodily injury or emotional distress to staff, another student or students on and off school grounds. In response to those offenses classified as serious, to include serious safety incidents, Shining Stars may suspend (out-of-school) or expel a student to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff. Upon notification of the incident, Shining Stars may do the following

1. Removal of the student from the classroom or incident site (staff member must complete an incident report)
2. Outside assistance from school administration or other personnel
3. Immediate phone call to parent/in-person to notify and schedule a conference
4. Referral for Star Support Team (SST)
5. Development of Action Plan for student, parent and Guide
6. Financial penalty in the case of proven theft or purposeful property damage
7. Out-of-School suspension (an opportunity for the student to have a time to reflect his/her actions away from school) (see below)
8. Expulsion

Out-Of-School Reflection (Out-of-School Suspension)

Out-of-School Reflection Time (OSR), is a disciplinary response to a persistent, disruptive, disrespectful, injurious, violent and/or harmful behavior that has resulted in severe destruction or unsafe condition/situation for the offending student and others. Students whose behavior is persistently disruptive, harmful to themselves and/or others, and/or to school property, and does not change in response to the adult's redirection attempts, will be subject to disciplinary action. This action may include OSR and/or Expulsion.

Shining Stars' maintains that it is within the school and classroom environments where we can most effectively support and create change for a child. However, if and when prior interventions have failed and depending on the severity of the infraction, administrators may recommend OSR and its duration to the Executive Director/head of school who makes the final decision.

Before Shining Stars issues an OSR to a student, the following procedures will be followed to determine whether or not a suspension is warranted or if a less serious discipline will be a more appropriate response:

Investigation

While investigating, the student, depending on the severity of the incident/offense, may remain at school or be sent home while an investigation is being conducted. The Executive Director will appoint an administrative staff to conduct an investigation into the

- Incident
- Circumstances surrounding the incident/offense
- Interview the student
- Interview witnesses
- Interview Guide and/or aide
- Review any files or incident report(s) generated as a result of or in response to the incident and/or offense

Findings

Upon the completion of the investigation, if the investigation shows the student violated school policy and his/her conduct is serious and warrants a suspension, the Executive Director/head of school, will determine how long the student will be suspended. The length of the suspension will be based on and determined in conjunction with the severity of the incident, student's age, discipline history, and any other relevant information.

Notification

The OSR shall become effective immediately. The decision to remove (suspend) a student from school (for reflection) shall be documented in writing (i.e., Incident Report) and given to the parent/guardian on the same day that the decision is made. Both the student and his/her parent/guardian will also be notified in writing the length of the suspension, along with the reason(s) why the school was taking such action against the student, how the parent/guardian may obtain the student's classwork and homework, and the parent/guardian will be provided with the teacher's and Principal's contact information. A call will be placed to Child and Family Services (CSF) for students who are not picked up if OSR has been determined during the school day. The student may return to school without being accompanied by his/her parent/guardian. However, the parent/guardian will be required to meet with the Principal at a scheduled time, to discuss expectations of the student and parent/guardian, to ensure the student's academic and emotional success. As required, all OSR incidents will be reported to the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) and OSSE. There is no appeal for an Out-of-School suspension for five (5) days or less. If a child is placed on OSR for three (3) or more instances within the same school year, an expulsion will be considered.

Length of suspension

Depending on the severity of the offense, an OSR shall not exceed five (5) consecutive school days for any individual incident in grades kindergarten through 5 and ten (10) consecutive school days for grade 6, during an academic year.³ A student, regardless of grade, may not be subject to an OSR, for longer than twenty (20) consecutive days, without a written justification to the student and parent/guardian from the Executive Director describing the following: why exceeding the twenty (20) day limit is a more appropriate disciplinary action than alternative responses; or the student's conduct necessitated an emergency removal.⁴

Continuity of student's education while on suspension

During a student's OSR, s/he will be given work and all appropriate assignments for the duration of the suspension. This will ensure the student does not get behind on his/her schoolwork. Additionally, it will ensure that upon the student's return to school, s/he will be able to transition with little to no difficulty. Should the student's parent/guardian have any follow up questions, concerns, or

³ D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04(b)(1) and (b)(3).

⁴ D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04(b)(3)(A) and (b)(3)(B).

requires additional assistance pertaining to the student or assignments provided to the student, the parent/guardian is encouraged to contact the Principal at academics@shiningstars.org.

If there are assignments the student is not able to complete from home, during the suspension, the student's parent/guardian may schedule a meeting with the student's teacher, Principal, and/or both, to create a plan that will allow the student to make up any assignment s/he missed. This may require the student and his/her parent/guardian, along with the teacher, Principal, and/or both, to create a plan that will require the assignment(s) to be completed before school starts (come to school before 8:35am) or after school (3:30pm), to ensure the student does not get behind in his/her schoolwork.

Expulsion

For serious, repeated major offenses and/or repeated OSRs, expulsion from Shining Stars may be considered. This is an action of absolutely last resort. Shining Stars requires that a parent/guardian attend a meeting with the Executive Director, the Principal, and the student's Guide/teacher to review the expulsion decision. The Director of Student Support may also be involved in this meeting (please see due process and grievance procedures below).

Due Process For Long-Term Suspension/Expulsion

If the student is recommended for a long-term out-of-school suspension (suspension that is for 6 consecutive days or more for grades kindergarten through 5 and 11 consecutive days or more for grade 6) or recommended for expulsion, following the meeting with the Principal, the parent has the right to attend a hearing on the matter. Except as provided otherwise in the District of Columbia laws and Federal Regulations, the Executive Director will not impose a long term suspension or expel a student as a consequence of a serious offense without: (1) first providing the student and the parent/guardian written notice, (2) providing the student and the parent/guardian an opportunity for a hearing on the charge, and (3) the parent/guardian an opportunity to participate in such hearing. The Executive Director shall provide written notice to the student and the parent/guardian either in English and/or in the primary language of the home, if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

HEARING PROCEDURE FOR LONG TERM SUSPENSION/EXPULSION

Written Notice to student and parent/guardian

The Executive Director shall convene the school's disciplinary committee, with the exclusion of the designee who conducted the initial investigation, to make a final decision regarding the decision to institute a long-term suspension and/or expulsion and notify the parent/guardian in writing of the final decision. During the hearing, the student and his/her parent/guardian will have the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident. The final decision and next steps (procedures for returning to school after the long-term suspension and/or procedures for expulsion) will be communicated with the parents/guardians in writing. Should the student be required to return to school, the student may return without being accompanied by his/her

parent/guardian.⁵ The Principal will contact the parent/guardian to schedule a meeting to discuss expectations of the student and parent/guardian, to ensure the student's academic and emotional success.

The written notice to the student and parent/guardian may be made by hand delivery, first-class mail, certified mail, and electronic mail (e-mail), to the address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the Family Handbook. The notice shall outline the student and parent's/guardian's right to attend the suspension and/or expulsion hearing. The notice shall set forth in plain language

1. The disciplinary offense
2. The basis for the charge
3. The potential consequences
4. The purpose of the hearing (to discuss proposed long-term suspension and/or expulsion recommendation)
5. Invitation to the student and parent/guardian to attend the hearing;
6. Date and time of the hearing
7. Location of the hearing
8. Right to request an interpreter
9. An explanation of the student and parent's right to have an interpreter be present, should one be needed for the student and/or parent to participate

Parents/guardians may request to attend a long-term suspension and/or expulsion action in the following way:

The parent may submit a written request to the Executive Director within five (5) business days of receiving the written notice to suspend student long term and/or expel the student. The written request shall be addressed to the following

Shining Stars Montessori Academy PCS
Dr. Regina Rodriguez-Garcia
Executive Director
1240 Randolph St NE
Washington, DC 20017
www.shiningstarspcs.org
202/723-1467
rrodriguez@shiningstarspcs.org

⁵ D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04(e).

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR LONG TERM SUSPENSION/EXPULSION

If the parent disagrees with the decision or wishes to contest the final decision of the Executive Director and the hearing committee; the parent/guardian may submit his/her request for an appeal within five (5) business days of receiving the decision via email to the SSMA Board Chair, Mr. Anthony King, Esq. at aking@shiningstarspcs.org. Parents/guardians should only contact the Chair after taking all of the steps outlined above. The Chair will then schedule a hearing to address the parent's/guardian's grievance.

DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in the school's Family Handbook and the SSMA 2019-2020 Special Education Procedural Safeguards Handbook. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") provides certain procedural protections for special education students as set forth below. Special education students can be suspended from school for up to ten consecutive days in one school year or up to ten cumulative days in one school year.

For removal of more than ten consecutive or ten cumulative days, special education students are entitled to a manifestation determination hearing that shall occur prior to the tenth day of removal. The Director of Special Education will convene a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meeting to conduct a manifestation determination and answer the following two questions, after reviewing relevant documents and the misconduct of the student:

1. Is the misconduct the result of failure to implement the student's IEP; or
2. Is the misconduct caused by, or does it have a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability?

If the answer to either of these questions is "yes," the student's conduct is a manifestation of his disability. If the answer to both of these questions is "no," the conduct is not a manifestation of the student's disability.

If the manifestation determination is positive, the multidisciplinary team will

1. Conduct a functional behavioral assessment and create a behavioral intervention plan; and
2. Review the behavioral intervention plan, if one already exists, and modify it as necessary to address the behavior in question.

If the manifestation determination is negative, the student can be subject to disciplinary procedures in the same manner and extent as a regular education student except that the student must continue to receive services such that he is able to make progress toward his *IEP* goals and objectives. Students on *504 plans* are entitled to a manifestation determination for removals for more than ten consecutive or cumulative school days in a given year. If the manifestation is

negative, the student may be disciplined as a regular education student with no further entitlement to educational services. If the manifestation is positive, the student shall be returned to the placement from which the student was removed.

RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Guidelines for Emergency Behavior Intervention Strategies

One of Shining Stars primary responsibilities is to ensure the safety of its students, staff, and visitors. Shining Stars firmly believes that every student has a right to learn and grow in a safe learning environment. To create a safe learning environment, Shining Stars administrators, teachers, and therapists carefully plan for social, emotional, and behavioral development of individual students and the social climate of the school community. As coping with strong emotions and conflict are natural parts of childhood, Shining Stars develops specific plans to support students through moments of emotional crisis using positive behavior support strategies. In a moment of high emotional crisis, a student may exhibit behaviors that seriously challenge the physical safety of him or herself and/or the safety of others. When such dangerous incidents occur, positive behavioral support strategies may not regain the safety of the student and others. At this point, further intervention is needed and Shining Stars school personnel must consider using emergency strategies in order to prevent the student from harming him or herself and others. The following document includes specific guidelines for employing emergency behavior intervention strategies: physical restraint and seclusion. These guidelines were written while reviewing special education laws, current research, and Shining Stars best practices. Most importantly, these guidelines have been written from a child-focused perspective and are intended to ensure the safety and dignity of all Shining Stars' students.

Background Information

Shining Stars believes that in almost every situation and for all students; positive behavior support strategies can prevent the use of restraint and seclusion. Shining Stars also acknowledges that at times, a student's behavior in an emotional crisis can become so heightened that it will directly challenge the physical safety of him or herself and/or the safety of others. In such moments of high emotional crisis, school personnel are forced to take drastic steps to manage the student's behavior to protect the student and school community. When school personnel are not trained in child-focused crisis intervention techniques, Shining Stars believes that the students and staff are at risk of further harm. Shining Stars has staff that are specifically trained in how to physically restrain and seclude students as an appropriate emergency behavior intervention strategy to address only high emotional crisis incidents that place a student or others in imminent danger of physical injury. Shining Stars has also adopted best practices to ensure that the physical restraint and seclusion techniques used are preventable and respectful of all students' right to safely attend and enjoy school.

GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINT RESOLUTION POLICY

INFORMAL COMPLAINT

Shining Stars Montessori Academy Public Charter School maintains an “open door” policy. Parent complaints will be addressed in a timely and consistent fashion. Disagreements should be resolved whenever possible among the people most closely involved while preserving positive relationships. We would ask that all parties come to the discussions assuming the good intentions of the other party. When parents have complaints or disagreements with any parties at Shining Stars we ask that you observe the following guidelines:

1. If the complaint involves a situation in the classroom, parents should seek to resolve the issue by discussing it with the classroom Guide when students are not present.
2. If a resolution is not possible, the parent should seek to resolve the issue by making an appointment with the Principal or supervisor/Director responsible for the area of concern.
3. If a resolution is not possible, or if the complaint is with a school-wide policy or procedure, the parent should seek to resolve the issue by making an appointment to discuss it with the Executive Director.
4. If resolution is not possible with any of the parties above, parents should address their concerns to the Board Vice Chair (vicechair@shiningstarspce.org) who will document the concern and forward matters of concern to the Board Chair (chair@shiningstarspcs.org).

Parents should also keep the following in mind when addressing a complaint to the board of trustees:

1. Complaints should be made in writing and should include details of your efforts to resolve the issue in steps 1 and 2, and where the discussion broke down. This allows all parties involved to work from a consistent body of information.
2. The Board of Trustees, in general, will not address a complaint based on hearsay or made on behalf of another parent or family.
3. The Board of Trustees, in general, will not address a complaint if resolution with the appropriate individuals if steps #1 and #2 has not yet been attempted in good faith.
4. The Board of Trustees reserves the right not to address a complaint that is made anonymously.
5. The Board of Trustees, in general, will not address specific complaints about the performance of individual school employees in a public meeting. If such a complaint is brought at a public meeting, the Board will take the complaint under advisement and will provide an appropriate response at a later time.

6. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to notify individual school employees about complaints brought against them. Parents may request that they are not personally identified as the party bringing the complaint.

If a parent complaint is not addressed to the satisfaction of the people involved, parents should notify the board chair and the executive director that they are seeking resolution via other regulatory government entities.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Shining Stars works diligently to ensure students, parents, and members of its community are treated fairly and given the utmost respect. This mission is effectuated by implementing proper procedures for complaint filing and conflict resolution. While Shining Stars strives to be a premier educational institution, there will be times when disagreements will arise and proper implementation of a fair and just resolution is required, moments like this we look towards a written guidance. This guidance/or procedure allows Shining Stars to resolve disagreements and misunderstandings, while preserving the schools integrity and relationship with members of our community.

An individual may file a formal grievance, if s/he is unable to resolve his or her concerns informally, or if s/he would rather make his/her concerns formal and reduce the concern to writing. In order to bring a formal grievance, you must complete a Formal Grievance Form. This form is available upon request. You must submit a Grievance Form and include any supporting documents you wish to present as evidence or in support of, this must be delivered either in person or by postal mail to the address below.

Dr. Regina Rodriguez-Garcia
Executive Director & Head of School
1240 Randolph St NE
Washington, DC 20017
www.shiningstarspcs.org
202/723-1467

Students who desire to file a formal complaint are required to complete the Student Complaint Form, or speak to anyone on the administrative staff about his or her desire to file a formal complaint. You may obtain a copy of the form at the front desk or you may request for one from an administrative staff member. Once you have completed the form, you may drop the form in a drop box, located at the front desk or to an administrator.

Resolution of Formal Grievance

Upon receiving a formal grievance, within fifteen (15) business days of receiving the complaint, the Executive Director, in her authority, will determine which member of the administrative staff or teacher, non-involved party, will investigate and resolve the grievance. The

designee will follow the following steps:

1. Review

Determine if s/he has all the information or documents required to begin an investigation. If all documents/or information has been provided to conduct an investigation, the designee will begin his/her investigation into the complaint. However, if additional information is needed, the designee will contact the grievant in writing or via telephone and schedule a meeting to obtain the additional information needed.

2. Mediation

The designee will evaluate the complaint and will determine whether mediation is possible or appropriate. Prior to scheduling mediation, the Executive Director will determine one (1) or two (2) school officials, who are not involved, that will mediate the matter before the parties (the grievant and the involved party) and discuss possible solution or resolution to the issue at hand. Shining Stars goal for mediation is to facilitate open communication, to aid in the resolution of conflicts in a non-adversarial, confidential manner.

3. Investigation

If the designee determines that mediation is not a viable option, the designee will conduct an impartial investigation into the grievance. The designee will interview all parties involved and/or named, obtain statements, and documents responsive or pertinent to the grievance.

4. Final Determination

Designee shall conclude his or her investigation within thirty (30) business days from the time the investigation began. Shining Stars shall provide a final determination letter to the grievant of his or her findings, including a determination of whether the grievance was substantiated, and possible solution that designee is proposing. Dissemination of information or documents to grievant must correspond with District of Columbia and federal laws that govern the release of records.

Appeal Process

A grievant may appeal the final determination of his or her formal grievance. The grievant must appeal the response to his or her formal grievance within fifteen (15) business days of receiving the final determination letter; the appeal must be addressed to the Executive Director of Shining Stars. The appeal must be in writing and delivered either in person or by postal mail to the address below.

Dr. Regina Rodriguez-Garcia
Executive Director
1240 Randolph St NE
Washington, DC 20017
www.shiningstarspcs.org
202/723-1467

rrodriguez@shiningstarspcs.org

A final response shall be provided to the grievant no later than twenty (20) business days from receipt of the appeal. The response shall include an explanation of the outcome of the appeal and any corrective or remedial action to be taken by Shining Stars.

In following the above, the parent disagrees with the appeal decision of the Executive Director, parents, students, or guardians may submit their request for an appeal to the SSMA Board Chair,

Mr. Anthony King, Esq at chair@shiningstarspcs.org. The Chair will then schedule a hearing to address the parent grievance.

Please note: this grievance policy is not designed to supersede or supplant federal law and parent rights under The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as amended, 1996.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Shining Stars is a school with high academic standards that promotes a ‘culture of attendance’. In order for your child to have a complete Montessori experience we need to maximize the use of instructional time. Being late and absent puts the child’s development and subsequent academic performance in jeopardy. The ability to ensure that the child arrives on time and attends school consistently will help us to create a truly rich and meaningful school culture. It draws unnecessary attention to your child when s/he is tardy and may make him/her feel uncomfortable entering an already established, working environment.

We understand that there will be occasions when you need to pick up your child early for a doctor’s appointment or other obligation. To ensure that your child is ready, please send an electronic email or send a note in the Blue Bag to the classroom teacher letting them know the time that you will be picking up your child. Similarly, please contact the Receptionist to inform the school of your child’s early dismissal. When you arrive at school, please sign your child out at the reception desk. A Shining Stars staff member will escort your child to the main lobby. Shining Stars expects that a child will miss school only when an illness requires them to remain at home or in the event of a family emergency.

Arrival and Dismissal

Morning arrival begins promptly at 8:15 am so that children can be in class, ready to work by 8:30 am. Please use 13th Street NE to turn right onto Randolph. 13th Street can be accessed via Michigan Avenue or any street above Quincy. **When driving to school, please do not turn onto Randolph from 12th Street.** Please make sure your child is on the passenger side of the car so that the staff can safely take the child out of the car. Parents should stay in the car during drop-off to assist with the flow of carpool. After you drop off, please continue West on Randolph and exit via 12th Street. There is no place to make a U-turn.

- Please make every effort to drop your child off at school on time. A delay of just a few minutes is very disruptive and makes it harder for your child to begin his/her day in a peaceful manner.
- Children who arrive after morning arrival concludes at 8:30am have a 5-minute grace period to get to class. After 8:35am children **MUST** be accompanied into the building by an adult and signed in at the Reception Desk.
- Either a guide or a classroom assistant will be in the hallway to help direct children to their classrooms as necessary and the other adult will be receiving your children in the classroom (Depending on preference, or particular scheduled activities guides and CA’s may opt to switch locations during arrival and dismissal times).
- Please encourage/allow your child to walk down to their classroom independently. Your child’s guide is very busy during morning arrival time greeting students and helping them get started on their work. They are not available to discuss specific concerns at this time. Contact

your child's guide in order to schedule an appointment if you have any questions or concerns.

Making Separation Anxiety-Free

If your child is new to the school experience she or he may display some separation anxiety during the first couple weeks of school. Please make goodbyes consistent and brief, and know that parting will get easier as time goes on. The staff is prepared to help children with the transition and all adults involved (parents/guardians, person handling drop-off, and school staff) will assure children that they will be fine. It is atypical for a child to cry all day and once involved in the classroom work and social life, your child will settle down and become engaged in the routine of the day.

If your child is experiencing separation anxiety, work closely with your child's teacher and maintain a positive attitude toward drop off time and keep your goodbye routine short and sweet. It is recommended that goodbyes happen outside or in the lobby so that your child can walk to their classroom independently as soon as possible. This will also lessen the duration and severity of the separation anxiety. There may be some reluctance from your child in returning to school the next day but consistency is a MUST and your child will become more comfortable with the separation as time goes on.

Parents are encouraged to ensure that your child receives a full night's sleep, and is provided a healthy breakfast prior to their school arrival in order to encourage a successful day of learning. If you require assistance, please contact the school.

Tardy Policy

Parents must sign-in late students at the reception desk. **Students are considered late after 8:35 am.**

Tardiness records will be kept for all students. All parents will be notified of their child's attendance status at each scheduled Parent-Guide Conference unless the number of tardies requires immediate attention or conference with the Principal prior to that time. Parents are encouraged to notify their child's guide beforehand of any changes in their schedules that would impact their child's attendance. Parents will be notified in writing when they are approaching the 'concerned zone' (3 or more tardies) and a parent conference will be called for persistent late arrivals (5 or more in one month), by the guide. An SST (i.e., SMART/Star Support Team) meeting may be requested by the Principal if it is deemed necessary.

If your child has five (5) unexcused absences, the school will schedule a family conference to discuss concerns, possible consequences, and a plan of action. In the best interest of the child,

students with ten (10) unexcused absences⁶ and a failure to comply with the attendance plan of action may result in school communication with the Child and Family Services Agency. Attendance is a major indicator for academic success.

Excused Absence/Tardy

If you know your child will be late or absent, please call the reception desk at (202) 723-1467. An excused absence or tardiness must be accompanied with a note. Shining Stars has an online form for absences (Absence Form). You can also submit a handwritten note with your child's name, date of birth, classroom name and reason for being absent/tardy when your child comes to school. If your child is late/absent due to a medical appointment or illness, the excuse should have the signature of the health care provider or other authorized person in order to be accepted. Your child will not be admitted to school after an absence due to illness unless accompanied by a doctor's note.

Excused absences are:

1. Death in the student's immediate family
2. Illness of the student (a doctor's note is required for a student absent more than three days)
3. Observance of a religious holiday
4. Medical reasons, such as a doctor's appointment

Unexcused Tardy/Absences

If you bring your child to school after 8:35 am, you must sign him/her in at the Reception Desk. Unexcused absences are recorded and will be reported in accordance with the Compulsory Attendance Law of the District of Columbia to the appropriate child-family protection agency.

Early Pick-Up

Early dismissals follow the same rules as tardiness. If a student has to leave school early during school hours (this does not include those 3-year old students who are to be dismissed by 1:30 pm), parents/guardians must notify the school in writing or by phone. Parents/guardians must check in at the reception desk to sign the student out. A child will not be released to anyone who has not previously been identified in the student's file as a guardian or authorized to pick the child up. This person will be required to provide identification whenever requesting release. Parents must notify the school in advance of any change in pick-up arrangements. Staff will bring the child to the front desk.

Early Dismissal (PK3 Students only)

Parents are encouraged to pick up 3-year old students by 1:30 pm, if they are not scheduled to remain for the full day. You must select the early dismissal option on the enrollment form or submit a request via email to your child's guide and the front desk receptionist. Parents seeking to change from

⁶ Parents of students with 5 or more unexcused absences may be scheduled for attendance at a SST/SMART meeting to discuss how we can partner to better encourage and support student attendance and compliance with DC compulsory attendance laws. SST meetings may also be scheduled for PreK3 and PreK4 students with excessive tardies (>5) and/or unexcused absences.

early dismissal to full day may do so in the month of January. The school does not allow month-to-month changes in the child's daily schedule.

Afternoon Dismissal

Please make sure to arrive no later than the dismissal time. Staff members will wait with your children in the classroom or accompany your child to the dismissal point to await your arrival. In the event that an individual not on your Emergency Contact or Pick-Up Authorization Form needs to pick up your child, please inform the receptionist by phone, email or fax. This individual will need to present photo identification at the reception desk before your child can be released to him/her.

Primary level student dismissal begins at 3:15pm.

Lower and Upper Elementary dismissal is at 3:30pm.

Exceptions are noted below.

Late Pick-Up Policy

Students who are not picked up by 3:30 pm will remain with a staff member until s/he is picked up by a parent or guardian. Families arriving for pick-up after 3:35 pm will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute. This fee must be paid in cash, check or credit card at the time of pick up.

Parents who pick up their children late two (2) or more times will be urged to enroll in the school's Montessori Afterschool Program (MAP) after-care program immediately.

We have been alerted that students who are frequently picked up late without proper accommodations should be reported to CFSA for the family's lack of after school planning. Registering for after care will avoid our need to make such a report. You may want to register ahead of time if you foresee timely pickups being a challenge.

Please remember:

Keep your Emergency Contact and Pick-Up Authorization Forms up-to-date. If your child is being picked up by someone else or is going home with another child, we need to have permission from the parents directly via phone, email or fax.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Shining Stars is committed to equal opportunity for all individuals. . Accordingly, Shining Stars requires all employees to act in conformity with federal and District of Columbia non-discrimination laws, including Titles IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the District of Columbia Human Rights Act of 1977.

Moreover, Shining Stars provides educational opportunities to students absent consideration of, and does not discriminate on the basis of either in part or in whole on race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification or expression, religion, disability, marital status, national origin, age, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, homelessness, or family structure.

Additionally, Shining Stars does not and will not ask for a student or their family's immigration status as a condition of admission or continued enrollment.

Shining Stars also prohibits harassment based on any of the aforementioned protected traits and retaliation against a person because he or she has complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in a discrimination investigation or lawsuit. Shining Stars employees who are found to have engaged in prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action.

Questions pertaining to Shining Stars non-discrimination policies should be directed to:
Dr. Regina Rodriguez-Garcia
Executive Director & Head of School
1240 Randolph St NE
Washington, DC 20017
www.shiningstarspcs.org
202/723-1467

Ms. Tais Taylor, Shining Stars School Performance Manager and Title IX Coordinator, has been designated by Shining Stars to coordinate its efforts to comply with the regulations implementing Section 504, ADA, Title VI, Title IX, the Age Act, and the D.C. Human Rights Act.

To file a complaint of discrimination, students, parents and/or guardians having inquiries concerning Shining Stars compliance with Section 504, ADA, Title VI, Title IX, the Age Act, and/or D.C. Human Rights Act as they apply to students, employees or third parties or who wish to file a complaint regarding such compliance should contact Ms. Taylor.

Tais Taylor

School Performance Manager and Title IX Coordinator

1240 Randolph St NE
Washington, DC 20017
www.shiningstarspcs.org
202/723-1467

En Español: Shining Stars Montessori Academy no pide ni solicitará un estatus de inmigración de estudiantes o familias como condición para admision (es) o (y) inscripción continua.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA) NOTICE

Notification of Parent or Eligible Student's Rights Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Shining Stars complies with all District of Columbia and federal laws as it pertains to the protection and safeguarding of student information, and ensuring personally identifiable information (PII) is protected consistent with established laws. Shining Stars treats all student records with the utmost confidentiality. Student records and special education files are secured in separate locked filing cabinets, aligned with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is a federal law that protects student records and gives parents/guardians access to their records and parents access to their child's record. Consistent with FERPA notification requirement, Shining Stars will annually notify parents/guardians of students in attendance of their rights under FERPA. The annual notification to parents/guardians will include information regarding the right to inspect and review the student's education records, the right to seek to amend the records, the right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information from the records (except in certain circumstances), and the right to file a complaint with the Office regarding an alleged failure by Shining Stars to comply with FERPA.

Shining Stars is not required to notify parents/guardians individually of the types of information it has designated as directory information. Instead, Shining Stars may provide notice to parents/guardians by any means likely to inform parents/guardians of the types of information it has designated as directory information, such as the use of Shining Stars website, family handbook, electronic mail, and/or letters.

The right of parents/guardians to access the child's record is transferred to the student, once the student reaches the age of 18, at which point the child (student) is defined under FERPA as an "eligible student." The law protects educational information, personally identifiable information, and directory information. Moreover, the law affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99, et seq. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access. Parents/guardians should submit a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect; this request should be addressed to the attention of the Executive Director or an authorized designee. The School official shall make arrangements for access and notify the parent/guardian of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent/guardian believes are inaccurate. Parents/guardians may ask the School to amend a record that they

believe is inaccurate. They should write to the Principal (academics@shiningstarspcs.org), clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent/guardian, the School will notify the parent/guardian of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent/guardian when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Shining Stars to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance
Office U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-5901

Parents/guardians may request to review their child's record at any time, or to be informed of information contained therein. A written request must be submitted to the Principal (academics@shiningstarspcs.org) to view the student's record or to make a photocopy, which will be responded to within 45 days from the time of receipt. However, files may not be removed from the school location where they are maintained. Shining Stars will not send or show student records to anyone outside the school without first obtaining written permission from parents/guardians.

There are exceptions to FERPA's prohibition against non-consensual disclosure of personally identifiable information, such as disclosure of information that has been appropriately designated as directory information.

Information, known as "directory information," may be disclosed by

Shining Stars in accordance with the law without permission, for instance, when required to do so by subpoena issued by a court or by a government authority with power to issue such subpoenas. “Directory information” means information contained in an education record of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed, and may include the following information relating to a student:

- The student’s name
- Address and telephone number
- Dates of attendance

Definition

School Officials

For purposes of this policy, school officials are defined as: professors; instructors; administrators; health staff; counselors; attorneys; clerical staff; trustees; members of committees and disciplinary boards; and a contractor, volunteer or other party to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions.

Legitimate Educational Interest

A school official generally has a legitimate educational interest, if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Notice under FERPA

Unless the parent/guardian notifies the school in writing that they do not wish for certain information to be designated as directory information⁷, under FERPA, Shining Stars may disclose directory information without consent, if the school has given public notice of the following

1. Types of information it has designated as directory information; and
 - a. Directory information includes, but is not limited to, the following student information: student name, address and telephone number, electronic mail (e-mail), photo, date of birth, place of birth, grade level, and dates of attendance.
2. The parent’s/guardian’s right to restrict the disclosure of such information and the period of time within which a parent/guardian has to notify the school that s/he does not want any or all of those types of information designated as directory information.
 - a. Parents/guardians may instruct Shining Stars to withhold any or all of the information identified under section 1(a) above by writing to the Principal (academics@shiningstarspcs.org), within thirty (30) days after the first day of the school year.

⁷ Under 34 CFR §99.37 (a)(2), a parent/guardian has a “. . . right to refuse to let the school designate any or all of those types of information about the student as directory information.” However, notice must be given to the school in writing.

OPEN MEETINGS POLICY

Shining Stars is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors that includes parent members. The Board is responsible for developing policies, and ensuring the school is financially viable. The Board's responsibility also includes ensuring academic achievement. As part of the school's Open Meeting Policy, the school holds a total of 6 meetings (or bi-monthly) meeting per school year. The meetings take place on the third Saturday of the month at Shining Stars Montessori Academy PCS. The Board's meeting calendar is posted online on the school's website at <http://www.shiningstarspcs.org/8-content/6-board-of-directors.html>), and also on the school's website master calendar at <http://www.shiningstarspcs.org/school-calendar.html> The meeting times are also announced in the Shining Stars News and Notes, distributed weekly to Shining Stars parents via electronic mail. The school will hold one public meeting to address any proposed campus changes to include but not limited to grade level change(s), location change, or expansion.