

**Student Discipline** [14 *Del. C.* §512(6)-(7) and (11), 14 *Del. C.* § 4112F]

**1. What will be the key elements of the school discipline policy,...**

Our policy is to assist children in arriving at inner discipline through concentrated work. In all areas, the child is assisted in developing the skills necessary to control their own actions to develop self-discipline. Natural or logical consequences are used as a means of helping the child to develop inner limits. However, there will be times when a child struggles to maintain control in a classroom. In this case, the following general classroom guidelines will be followed:

- If a child is disruptive or endangers others, staff immediately intervene in as positive manner as possible.
- If a child has trouble settling into the class, they are redirected to an activity by the teacher.
- If the child is still unable to settle in, the teacher will intervene and may have the child remain beside her/him until the child is able to calm down and make respectful choices.
- When an incident occurs, the teacher or staff involved will submit a summary of the incident on an Incident Report form.
- If the behavior becomes extreme, the teacher will schedule a meeting with the parents and, depending on the circumstances, with the Head of School or appropriate staff, while the incident is still fresh in the child's mind. Staff, parents, and child will respectfully work together to modify the behavior. It is important to note that modifying the behavior will take time as the child develops inner limits.

If a pattern of willful, disruptive behavior develops:

- Teachers will record behavioral observations.
- The teacher will inform the student's parents.
- Appropriate staff will be notified.
- The student, teacher, parents, and Head of School will work together on a plan to modify behavior and when/if appropriate additional professional help will be solicited.

Unacceptable conduct is defined as any willful, deliberate behavior that creates unsafe conditions including, but not limited to, acts of bullying, willful and deliberate physical violence, harassment, and illegal acts. It does not include normal, developmentally appropriate peer conflict.

The following procedures will be followed when an occurrence or pattern of unacceptable conduct is identified:

- Verbal notification to each parent involved.
- Consultation between parent and teacher, and when appropriate Head of School or appropriate staff.
- Written plan for subsequent action and follow-up review.

- Normal, developmentally appropriate peer conflict is not included in the definition of Unacceptable Conduct, and therefore the procedures outlined above do not apply to such circumstances.

If a child persists in the unprovoked, willful, and deliberate hurting of others it may be necessary to remove the child from school to allow time for the parents, teachers, and other professionals to work on a plan to support the child. Extreme negative behavior may result in the school requiring a behavioral evaluation by a professional and alternatives to support the child.

Restraint will be used only if a child poses a significant and imminent risk of harm to self or to others in the school community. Only SMS employees who complete restraint training will be authorized to use restraint with a child. This training will be provided to the Head of School and Education Director as well as specific special education staff. Parents will be notified if any restraint has been used with a child. When the situation is mitigated, the child will be asked to debrief from the situation, a written report will be kept including details of the incident, students involved, and a description of the debriefing. All such incidents will be reported to DDOE as required. All IEP requirements for behavioral support will be used before any restraint is used with a child with an identified IEP and behavioral plan.

## **2. How will the discipline policy be practiced in the classroom in order to ensure that students are working on task and focused on learning?**

The word “discipline” means to “teach”. Many situations in a Montessori School are viewed as opportunities to teach. Many situations found in less engaging learning environments are avoided because children are engaged in learning. Maria Montessori initially discovered that children involved in deep, uninterrupted concentration did not disrupt or misbehave. They learned instead to “self-regulate”. Research shows that children who have the capacity for self-regulation decrease their negative, attention getting behaviors (Rathunde, K. & Csikszentmihalyi, M., 2005 & 2006). The goal in developing a school environment that supports children is to:

- Establish a calm, orderly, and safe environment for learning;
- Foster an appreciation for the role of rules in school;
- Help children develop self-control and self-discipline;
- Teach children to be responsible, contributing members of their school community, and promote respectful, kind, and healthy teacher-student and student-student interactions
- provide an engaging environment for learning

The Montessori approach does not rely on punishment or rewards to "get students to behave". Teachers at SMS will offer clear expectations for behavior, actively model and role-play behaviors that teach children how to live up to those expectations, and provide opportunities for the children to practice the rules. In fact, during the first week of school, students will participate in creating the ground rules for their classroom and classmates to follow throughout the year. These classroom rules are organic and differ year to year, classroom to classroom.

When students break rules, teachers incorporate natural and logical consequences to help students learn from their mistakes.

Teachers also incorporate other strategies for resolving problems such as classroom meetings, problem solving meetings between students involved in a conflict, and positive time out spaces within the classroom for a child to regain composure.

Rathunde, K. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2005A), "Middle school students' motivation and quality of experience: A comparison of Montessori and traditional school environments", *American Journal of Education* 111 (3): 341–371, doi:10.1086/428885.

Rathunde, K. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2005B), "The social context of middle school: Teachers, friends, and activities in Montessori and traditional school environments", *Elementary School Journal* 106 (1): 59–79, doi:10.1086/496907.

Rathunde, K.; Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2006). "The developing person: An experiential perspective". In Lerner (ed.), R.M.; Damon (series ed.), W. Theoretical models of human development. *Handbook of Child Psychology* (6 ed.). New York: Wiley.

### **3. How will you ensure that minority students and students with disabilities are not disproportionately represented in disciplinary procedures ...**

As outlined above, Responsive Classroom will be the framework for developing a school culture, rules, and logical consequences. This approach has been shown to be particularly positive for students at risk of school failure and supportive of students with disabilities being part of a positive and accepting school culture. In addition, the concept of acceptance of all children and families is one that is inherent in this approach. SMS will continually support teachers to address issues of diversity in the classroom, equity in response to situations requiring the implementation of the discipline code, and proactive approaches to building a positive school community for all.

It will be the responsibility of the Head of School or their designee to maintain accurate records on suspensions and expulsions if they should occur and report these as a part of the annual school reporting to DDOE.

### **4. Who will be responsible for implementing the school's discipline policy? ...**

All adults employed at SMS will be responsible for implementing the school's discipline policy. The Head of School or their designee will be ultimately responsible for reporting discipline incidents in accordance with state requirements.

### **5. How will the school ensure that staff are adequately trained and properly implementing state and federal law related to the discipline of students with disabilities?...**

In the case of students with disabilities, SMS will follow the process outlined by the Department of Education in the Administrating Manual for Services for Exceptional Students. When a child with disabilities is enrolled, the family will be required to review and sign that they understand the SMS student code of conduct. The teacher, and the IST team will determine if any

specialized help and instruction is required to help the student understand the code. This will be included in the IEP or 504 plan. In the case of behaviors that are related to the child's disability, the Individualized Educational Plan team will create a plan for Positive Behavior Support which will be monitored by the team and teachers. Following the Response to Intervention Model, teachers will closely monitor the child's response to various interventions suggested by the team and make resulting changes and modifications based on their data.

The School will work closely with parents to determine what the best approaches are to helping a child shape their behavior. Each situation will be treated as a unique case and care will be taken to choose the best course of action for a child considering their disciplinary history, their ability to understand consequences and their ability to express remorse. Disciplinary action for a student with disabilities will be no greater than the disciplinary action levied on a student without disabilities. When required, reports will be filed with the appropriate agency relating to the guidelines of DOE and the state law.

Following the IDEA 2004 Discipline Rules guidelines: Students with a disability who have an IEP can be disciplined in the same manner as any other student for 10 consecutive school days or less if the student violates SMS's Code of Conduct. Parents should be familiar with and review the code of conduct with their child at the beginning of the school year. If the student is disciplined for more than 10 consecutive school days within the same school year, school or district staff must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavior intervention plan before the end of the 10th day, or before moving the student to an interim alternative educational placement. In many cases, a student with an IEP will already have a behavior intervention plan in place as part of his IEP in order to support learning and the achievement of his goals. In fact, a student's IEP must include a behavior intervention plan whenever the student's behavior impedes his own learning or the learning of others. Parents will be continuously informed of disciplinary actions to allow for feedback and understanding. Additionally, open communications will allow patterns to be identified and assessed to revise a student's IEP, and to protect a parent's right to appeal decisions made regarding interim alternative educational settings and placement.

However, serious offenses, whether or not related to a student's disability, may require moving the student to an interim alternative educational setting and does not require the parent permission or agreement and does not require involvement by a hearing officer or other impartial third party. These offences are:

- the carrying or possession of weapons (on way to or at school, or on school premises, or at school function)
- the possession of illegal substances for use, sale or the solicitation of sale (at school, or at school function)
- the infliction of serious bodily injury to another person (at school, or on school premises, or at school function)

SMS will maintain a discipline record for children with disabilities in accordance with 14 DE Admin. Code 252. If a child with a disability transfers from one (1) school to another, the

transmission of such child's records will include both the child's current IEP and discipline record in accordance with 14 DE Admin. Code 252.

The teachers and staff at SMS will receive training in the various aspects of the Disabilities Education Act and Delaware statutes and regulations to ensure that the school follows all aspects of the law. New staff will have a routine introductory training and once every three years veteran staff will receive a refresher course updating them on any changes in the law.

**References:**

*IDEA 2004 Close Up: Disciplining Students With Disabilities*

<http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/LD-ADHD/996-idea-2004-close-up-discipliningstudents-with-disabilities.gs?page=all>

*Q and A: Questions and Answers on Discipline Procedures*

<http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cdynamic%2CQaCorner%2C7%2C>

*IDEA—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* <http://nichcy.org/laws/idea>

*Discipline Flowchart -- Children with IEPs in Public Schools*

<http://drnpa.org/File/publications/discipline-flowchart---children-with-ieps-in-public-schools>.

**(Note!** If approved, you will be required to submit a student Code of Conduct prior to opening in accordance with 14 DE Admin. Code § 600.)