

Family Handbook

2026-2027

Our Commitment

To create a school atmosphere where every child is physically and emotionally safe and where every classroom is engaging and joyful so that each child can do his/her/their best learning and growing.

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**FSMA abides by all federal, state and local regulations which supersede any individual school policy.*

Welcome to First State Montessori Academy!

The mission of FSMA is to create successful, contributing, life-long learners in a Montessori public educational program for students in Kindergarten through 8th grade.

FSMA strives to create joyful classrooms that are filled with learning. We respond to individual needs, set individual goals, and give each child an individualized education. We are committed to making this a place where your child loves school, embraces learning, develops strong friendships and learns new ways to think about the world around them.

FSMA provides parents and students with an authentic, time-tested, Montessori education in a public school. We believe that the presence of a Montessori public school in New Castle County, DE improves student learning, allows for greater choice for parents, and serves as a model for alternative approaches to education by providing a proven and innovative teaching and learning environment.

As a charter school, we are given the flexibility to create our own educational model while also being held to a high level of accountability from the State of Delaware Department of Education. We work closely with other charter and Montessori schools and are committed to being a member of the larger education community. We are also committed to building a community within our classrooms, within our school, and with our families.

Statement of Inclusivity

FSMA is a community of learners who value, and are themselves strengthened by, the diversity of its members. In order to prepare students for living and leading in a diverse and complex world, all people – students, families, staff and board members – will conduct themselves in a way that is not only inclusive but honors and respects the differences we may have based on, but not limited to race, ethnicity, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, mental or physical disability, family structure, and economic background.

Parent Engagement

At FSMA, it is more than being INVOLVED, it is being ENGAGED!

A note on the term "parent": We recognize the diversity in family structures and the challenge of coming up with one word that fits all of our unique situations. In using the word "parent," we are referring to any adult who is the child's primary caregiver. Our intention is to honor/include all those who devote their time, attention, care and love to raise the children who attend FSMA.

Our **hopes and dreams for parent engagement:** We ask that you are engaged with our school in a way that is meaningful to you and positively impacts our students. Each family is asked to do what they can. There is no required number of hours, but instead, we ask that you **participate as often as you can** and **contribute when you are able**. Not only does it help our community, you are an extremely powerful model for our students. Remember, "the life you lead is the lesson you teach!"

Why? Over 30 years of research shows that one of the most effective ways to increase student social and academic achievement is for parents to be actively involved in the education of their children. In addition, the regular presence of parents in the school can bring a diversity of style and a richness of experience that no teacher alone can provide.

Who to contact for more information about a certain program or to get involved:

FSMA Board of Directors	Becky Phillips	fsma.board@fsma.k12.de.us
PTO	Justine Deputy	fsmapto@gmail.com
English Language Learners	Liz Madden	Liz.madden@fsma.k12.de.us
Title One	Courtney Fox	Courtney.fox@fsma.k12.de.us
Homelessness/Foster Care	Meghan Feby	Meghan.feby@fsma.k12.de.us
Enrollment	Sherry DiGiovanni	Sherry.digiovanni@fsma.k12.de.us
Transportation	Julia DiMattia	Julia.dimattia@fsma.k12.de.us
Food Services and Student Health	Meg Sternberg Becky Adeleke	Megan.sternberg@fsma.k12.de.us Rebecca.adeleke@fsma.k12.de.u
Special Education	Jessica Bass	Jessica.Bass@fsma.k12.de.us
Main Office		Mainoffice.fsma@fsma.k12.de.us

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Policies and Procedures
that Students and Families Need to Be Aware of and Follow

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

The FSMA Family is part of a larger community. We ask that everyone follow our procedures to ensure student safety. Please help us be a good community member to our neighbors by respecting local traffic and obeying the laws.

Arrival: 8:25 – 8:45 a.m. (Students arriving after 8:45 a.m. will need to be walked in and signed in by an adult. Students arriving after 8:50 a.m. will be marked tardy)
Dismissal – 3:25 – 3:45 p.m.

Arrival Procedures: Car Riders

Lower School students should be dropped off in front of the Lower School and Upper School students may be dropped off in front of the Upper School. If you have children in both buildings, they should both be dropped off in front of the Lower School and we will cross them safely.

- **Cars will pull up in the designated area** and a staff member will meet your car, open the door, and welcome each child. Please ensure your child is ready to get out (have backpacks ready, can unbuckle and is off of any distracting devices).
- **Cars should turn onto French St. from 9th St.** No cars will be allowed to turn from 10th St.
- Our staff will not unbuckle your child or pick up their belongings but will joyfully greet them.
- **Carline is a busy place**… please be flexible and patient as we all have the same goals of getting children into school safely and quickly. A positive start to the day helps everyone!

Arrival Procedures: Bus Riders (see Transportation Section for additional bus information)
Please remember that appropriate behavior is expected at the bus stop while waiting for the bus.
Please note that parents are NOT permitted to board the bus for any reason.
Students who ride the bus, must:

- Stay in their assigned seat
- Follow all safety and school rules

Upon arrival at FSMA, our staff will meet the bus and help students get to their classroom.

Dismissal Procedures: Bus Riders (see Transportation Section for additional bus information)
Bus Riders will be escorted from classrooms by a staff member and we will ensure all students get on the correct bus.

K/1st grade students MUST be met by an adult at the bus stop. If an adult is not present, the child will be brought back to school and must be picked up by the parent. Repeated occurrences of this could result in loss of bus riding privileges. During the first few weeks, K/1 students will have a red tag pinned to their backpack to help the bus drivers learn who requires a parent to meet them.
Please note that parents are NOT permitted to board the bus for any reason.

Dismissal Procedures: Car Riders
All families will be given a 3-digit number. Parents will park and walk to the building their child is in (side doors). You will line up on a designated spot. A staff member will come out to get your number. This number will be sent to classrooms and signal to your child's teacher that you are here. Children will come down to the designated area as their number is called. No children will be dismissed from the main office/main lobby.
***If you do not have a Pick-Up Tag,** you will need to park and go to the office. You will need to have your license and be on the approved pick-up list in order for us to give you a pick-up tag.

Parking Information:

- Lots of street parking exists within a few blocks of FSMA.
- Spaces are constantly opening up as children are picked up.
- Many families are walking to their cars, so please be very careful as you are parking.

A few general traffic safety reminders:

- Do NOT make a U-turn anywhere on French St.
- Do NOT block our neighbor's driveways… we are a part of a community and do not want to negatively impact our neighbors.
- We encourage device-free car rides and expect all drivers to use only hands-free devices. There is a lot of movement/traffic in this area, and your undivided attention is appreciated!

Walker Policy:

Students in 7th or 8th grade may walk home with parent permission. The school must be notified prior to the dismissal that the child will be walking home. Students may not change their dismissal to a walker, this must be done by a parent/guardian.

Walker Line – All pick-up people must be over 16. FSMA students may not pick up other younger FSMA students.

ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

Forming responsible habits regarding attendance and promptness is important. Parents are expected to support the goal of punctuality by having their children arrive on time, remain in school for a full day, and schedule appointments after school hours.

14 Del.C. §2702. Compulsory attendance requirements

Every student who is enrolled in a public school of this State shall attend the school each day of the minimum school term and any academic improvement activities required by § 153 of this title. **A student who has been absent from school without a valid excuse for more than 3 school days in a school year is a truant**. A truant and the parent of a truant are subject to the administrative procedures and court proceedings (Delaware Code).

14 Del.C. §2725. Absences without excuse; truancy conferences

If a student is truant, the principal shall schedule a truancy conference with the student, the student's parent and the Head of School pursuant to § 2726 of this title.

Following a truancy conference, the school shall decide whether or not to file a charge against the parent for a violation of § 2702 of this title. The Head of School shall refer the case for prosecution following the twentieth day of unexcused absence by a student during the school year, in compliance with § 2702(d) of this title, and may refer the case before the twentieth day of unexcused absence if the Head of School determines it is appropriate to do so.

MINIMUM ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS: As per Title 14, Chapter 4, a violation of the attendance requirements set forth by FSMA may result in dismissal at the end of the school year. FSMA's attendance requirements are:

- Attendance for 85% of the school year (Excused absences are included in the maximum number of absences permitted to meet the Delaware Department of Education's requirement of attendance for 85% of instructional time to qualify for promotion to the next grade level)
- No more than 15 unexcused absences

If more than 15 unexcused absences OR attendance for less than 85% of the school year, a student's enrollment may be terminated for the following school year.

EXCUSED ABSENCE: An excused absence is for one of the following reasons listed below and for which the required documentation (see below) has been submitted:

1. Illness of child
2. Scheduled appointments to a physical or mental healthcare provider, including, but not limited to, a physician, dentist, orthodontist, and psychologist

3. Contagious diseases within the home of a student subject to regulations of the Division of Public Health and Department of Health and Social Services
4. Death in the family or of a close friend
5. Legal business requiring the student's presence
6. Observance of religious holidays
7. Medical diagnosis and/or treatment
8. Absence, pre-approved by the administration, to participate in other educational experiences or authorized school activities
9. Emergency situations as determined by the Head of School
10. Suspension or expulsion from school

DOCUMENTATION OF ABSENCE: When a student is absent, upon his/her/their/their return to school and **no later than the five school days after the absence,** a parental written note of explanation must be given to the office in order for the absence to be excused. If a student has been to see a doctor, the student should return with a note from the doctor's office. A student's absence will be marked as unexcused until the parental or doctor's note is submitted. Attendance notes can be emailed to the main office (mainoffice.fsma@fsma.k12.de.us).

SCHOOL ACTIVIES WHEN ABSENT: When absent, a student may not participate in any school activities that day. These include games, plays, or anything that is school sponsored. In addition, a student who is absent is not permitted to be on school property, except to acquire missed academic assignments. An exception may be made for pre-arranged absences such as high school shadow days, take your child to work day, etc.

PREARRANGED ABSENCE: A request for a prearranged absence should be submitted in writing to the Head of School, giving the full particulars of the absence on our "Anticipated Absence –Request for Excusal" form available on our website. Approval for such absences should be sought, where practicable, at least two (2) weeks prior to the date on which the absence is to occur. In some cases, there will be the development of a plan by student and teacher for making up the assignments to be missed. The Head of School will determine if the absence is excused. Prearranged absences will not be approved during the state assessment periods.

What pre-arranged absences will be considered excused? Educational trips that cannot be planned during a school holiday or that are necessary to be during a certain time.
*We understand that some families plan vacations during the school year. FSMA does not count family vacations as excused and recommends planning vacations during set breaks throughout the year. Competitive sports competitions are also not excused.

NATIONAL TAKE YOUR CHILD TO WORK DAY: On this day, parents are encouraged to "take their child to work with them." The intent of this day is to inspire young dreamers to dream big...and to inspire them to dream of themselves in a variety of roles and in a variety of places. As a school, we see great value in exposing our children to different work environments and helping them to visualize their future. Because of this, student absences for "Take Your Child to Work Day" will be excused (a note must be submitted noting the child's participation in this day).

LEAVING SCHOOL: First State Montessori Academy is a closed campus. Students are not permitted to leave campus during school without parent permission and administrative approval. The "campus" refers to the school building, and outside areas utilized regularly during recess and physical education. Students arriving by bus, or other means of transportation are to proceed directly to the school. Students may travel between the two buildings but must be accompanied by a staff member.

TARDINESS AND EARLY DISMISSAL: Classrooms open at 8:25 a.m. and students are expected to be in the classroom by 8:45 a.m. and remain until the end of the school day at 3:25 p.m. If a student arrives after 8:45 a.m., for safety reasons and accountability, a parent/guardian must accompany a tardy child into school and sign the child in at the main office. Reasons such as personal illness, medical appointments, and appearances in court will be considered as excused tardiness when verified by a note. Late arrivals are closely monitored by the student's teacher and the Head of School. Parents or Guardians will be contacted to discuss the student's tardiness. Families should recognize that a written explanation from home does not automatically cause the tardiness to be excused. Such reasons as car trouble, personal business, heavy traffic, home obligations, etc., while understandable, are not acceptable excuses and will be listed as unexcused.

Instructional time is lost when a student misses any portion of the academic day. A conference with the administration may be requested after 15 or more unexcused later arrivals or early dismissals. When a student accumulates any combination of 20 unexcused late arrivals and/or unexcused early dismissals, a meeting with the Head of School will be required.

COMMUNICATION DEVICES

"AWAY ALL DAY" Policy:
Communication devices such as, but not limited to, cellular phones and smart watches may not be used at school, on field trips, and/or on the school bus without permission of an FSMA staff member. Devices brought to school must be silenced and **kept in backpacks/lockers (Lower School), and classroom phone storage containers (Upper School)**. On the first offense, the device will be confiscated, and it will be returned to the student at the conclusion of the school day. Subsequent violations will result in confiscation of the device, which will only be returned to the student's parent or guardian.

Students are prohibited from bringing to school any electronic devices, including portable stereos, iPods, iPads, laser pens, laser pointers, toys, or any other items that are inappropriate or distracting to the educational atmosphere. If a device is being used for an educational activity such as a presentation, pre-approval should be sought from the school administration prior to the device being brought to school. Violating this policy will result in confiscation of the item, and it will be turned over to the Head of School. The Head of School may return the item/s to the student or parent at a later date. Subsequent violations may result in parental contact and/or additional serious consequences.

First State Montessori Academy is not responsible for lost, stolen and/or damaged property while in the possession of the student or school personnel. Students that bring cell phones, smart watches or other devices do so at their own risk. Parents/Guardians should be aware that it is not the school's responsibility to go to extraordinary effort to locate lost or stolen communication devices.

DRESS CODE

The FSMA dress code is established to help ensure a professional atmosphere. Each student, with the advice and counsel of his or her parents or guardian, should dress in a manner which is appropriate for the school and its related activities. All clothing is to be worn appropriately and in the manner for which it was designed. Likewise, clothing should be seasonally appropriate for the safety and welfare of students. General Dress Code rules that apply include the following:

- Outer clothing which resembles loungewear, pajamas, or underwear is prohibited.
- See-through/ mesh clothing is prohibited
- Apparel must fully cover any undergarments (or where undergarments would be). This includes:
    - Clothing with holes, which may expose the seat or parts of the body unique to the male or female, is prohibited/ armholes cannot be so large that undergarments can be seen
    - Torso must be covered – no bare midriff
    - Tank tops must have at least 1 inch straps
    - Shorts and skirts must cover to 3 inches above the knee or have at least a 4 inch inseam
- Hats/hoods/head coverings are not permitted to be worn inside, exceptions may be made for religious purposes.
- The student's apparel is free from words or pictures which contain vulgar or offensive themes, racial slurs, sexually suggestive material or references to drugs/ alcohol.
- Shoes must stay securely on a student's feet (for safety reasons). Flip-flops, and other backless shoes are not permitted unless a clear exception is made for a special seasonally appropriate event. Shoes with wheels are not permitted. Sneakers must be worn on gym day. Parents may be contacted to bring different shoes if there is a concern for student safety.
- Bags/fanny packs/purses/etc. must be kept in classroom cubbies or lockers. Students may not bring bags to classrooms or lessons.
- Headphones are not to be worn as an accessory (only for academic or medical needs)

Students who are found to be in violation of the dress code are subject to disciplinary action. The Head of School's actions may include:

- Counseling/warning the student
- Calling parents to bring a change of clothes
- Having the child change into school provided clothes (if available)
- Recommending suspension (for flagrant or repeated violations)

FOOD SERVICES

School-Provided Meals: FSMA offers breakfast and lunch in accordance with CACFP. Students in grades K – 6th Grade eat meals in their classroom while students in 7th and 8th Grade eat in a central location/cafeteria. Families may apply for free/reduced price meals by filling out a Meal Benefit Form application available on the school website. Students with a free/reduced status must still order meals using the online ordering system.

Families are required to order meals using the online ordering form (sent out via email) before the start of the month by the required due date. Student accounts will be charged and students will be served the meals on days ordered. If absent, a student will not be charged for any pre-ordered meals.

For paid meals, families must use the online payment system. Students may be prohibited from ordering meals if their account carries an unpaid balance of more than $50.

Meals Brought from Home should be nutritious and well balanced. Students may not bring candy or caffeinated beverages to school. Lunches should be brought in an insulated bag/box with an ice pack as students may not have access to a refrigerator. A microwave is available for use but limited time is available so please only send items that require less than 30 seconds of warming up.

Classroom Snacks: Research and experience indicate that students, including adolescents, benefit by having periodic snacks to meet the needs of their growing bodies. In line with brain research regarding nutrition, FSMA students may bring raw fruit, vegetables or a healthy protein from home.

Drinks: Students should bring a water bottle to class for general use throughout the school day. For meals, students may bring drinks other than water but soda is not allowed and caffeinated and sugary drinks are discouraged.

Gum is not allowed during any school activities (including the bus). An exception may be made if chewing gum serves as an accommodation documented through a 504 plan/IEP or during state testing upon discretion of the teacher/test administrator.

Meal Delivery: Our office CANNOT receive deliveries for students. This includes meal orders from delivery services (ex. door dash, etc.)

Birthday Celebrations/Snacks – Check out our website for specifics about Birthday Snacks.

MTSS/ SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

FSMA's MTSS Student Support Team utilizes a collaborative process to help students achieve their educational goals. Referrals are made for students who demonstrate a significant academic, behavioral, social/emotional, health, or attendance need. Within the MTSS model all students receive appropriate core academic instruction delivered with fidelity. Teachers and instructional staff administer universal screeners, as well as classroom and curriculum based assessments. Results inform staff about students' skill levels, including any specific deficits. Results also help staff plan instruction, and select and implement class wide, small group, and individual interventions.

Referring a Student: In addition to the universal screener, when there is a significant academic, behavior, health, or attendance concern, a teacher or parent can refer a student to the Team. Often, the decision to refer occurs when there is a significant or persistent deficit and there is lack of meaningful progress after Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports and interventions have been implemented. Families are informed when a student is referred and an intervention plan is created.

Action Plans: Teachers will meet with members of the MTSS team at designated times throughout the year (cycles) to review classwide data and to collaboratively create an action plan for students who are found to be below the 25th percentile or below benchmark in academic areas or through behavioral data. Action Plans should designate specific interventions and progress monitoring tools that will be administered. Teachers will add progress monitoring data to the action plan throughout the cycle. The team will meet with the teachers again after 6 weeks to review the data, determine next steps, and communicate with families.

PROGRESS REPORTING

FSMA believes that a partnership with families includes clear communication about a child's progress in all areas – academically and socially. The plan for formally communicating with families includes:

Scheduled Conference Days (2 minimum) – Throughout the year, families will meet with teachers twice in order to learn about their child's academic performance, social and academic goals, classroom procedures, etc. Conferences will be scheduled for all students both in the fall and spring.

Report Cards – K – 6th Grade Students will receive a standards-based midyear report and an end-of-year report. These report cards will include student growth toward grade level Common Core State Standards as well as characteristics of Lifelong Learners. Teachers will be responsible for data collection and providing supporting evidence for the information communicated on the report card. Middle School Students will receive a report card at the end of each cycle and will receive letter grades.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

In order for a student to be promoted from one grade to the next the student must:
a) Receive a passing grade in grade level Reading/ English Language Arts & Mathematics and/or any course required by the Board or the Department of Education for the particular grade level. Grade level is defined by state performance indicators in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

b) Receive instruction for at least 85% of the time established by the School Calendar in a given school year. For any student who receives instruction for less than 85% of the time established by the School Calendar in any given school year, the Education Director must review indicators of academic success to determine whether the student should be retained one school year. Instruction can be in a regular or alternative school or by homebound instruction provided by FSMA.

c) Except for students receiving special education under Title 14 of the Delaware Code, Chapter 31, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (the "IDEIA"), the Education Director will make the decision to retain or promote the student based upon the requirements set forth above. For students receiving special education under Chapter 31 and the IDEIA, promotion and retention decisions shall be made by an IEP team.

Specific Requirements for Promotion

Elementary School: Grades K-6 Promotion decision shall be based upon performance recorded on the standards-based report card and with input from the student's teacher(s) and parent(s) in consultation with the building principal, if necessary.

Middle School - 7th and 8th Graders must take the following each year:
1 /English Language Arts 1 Math 1 Science 1 Social Studies
3-6 additional courses depending on whether they are full-year or semester courses

Failure to Meet Promotion Requirements:

If a student fails to meet promotion requirements at any grade level, Administrative Assignments may be made, as determined by state or federal law or regulations, for:

a) LEP students whose progress is impeded by a language barrier
b) Students receiving special education services under Chapter 31 of the Delaware Code
c) Students who have already been retained for 2 years for academic reasons.

Appeals

Parents have the right to appeal the Education Director's decision on the promotion of their children. Appeals should be made in writing to the Head of School. A copy of the placement/Retention Appeal Form is available.

TECHNOLOGY

FSMA's internet is filtered through the State of Delaware's firewall, which blocks inappropriate sites from being viewed. FSMA also utilizes GoGuardian's suite of software. This will apply a strong content filter and monitor any school device or personal device using a school chrome login, whether onsite or remote. It also filters for content that would indicate a student who is at risk of self-harm or possible harm to others through threats, violence, and bullying. Additionally, FSMA now has the ability to use location tracking to geolocate a school owned device. While FSMA employs these safeguards, it is not guaranteed that students cannot find their way around a filter. In order for a student to utilize technology and internet access, students and parents/guardians must agree to the following guidelines:

1. Students must receive permission from the teacher before each use of technology including internet access.
2. The use of hardware, software and internet access is a student privilege that may be revoked by the FSMA staff at any time for misuse. Such conduct would include, but not be limited to:
    a. Using technology to harass, bully, or hurt someone
    b. Using the account for commercial purposes
    c. Seeking unauthorized access, damage, misuse of files, data or information of any user
    d. Sharing or compromising personal or other user's account information
    e. Damaging FSMA hardware or software through the use of food, drink, or other methods
    f. Placing unlawful or damaging information on the system
    g. Using or accessing obscene, abusive or otherwise objectionable public or private messages or websites
    h. Downloading or installing unauthorized software
    i. Accessing social network pages (i.e. Facebook)
    j. Copying others' work or breaking copyright laws
3. FSMA staff has the authority to monitor any students' use of computers, telephones, or tablets including any use of home e-mail accounts on school computers. FSMA reserves the right to examine any items stored in files to which students have access.
4. All activity on a school account or using school technology associates the transmission with First State Montessori Academy. Therefore, the account should not be used in any way that would reflect poorly on the school, its educators, or its students.
5. First State Montessori Academy and its employees are not responsible for the content or language of any information obtained through the internet. Additionally, you release First State Montessori Academy and its employees from any and all claims of any nature that might result from your child's use, or inability to use, First State Montessori Academy technology.
6. Students are expected to immediately report any abuses they might notice to FSMA staff.

*Please refer to Acceptable Use Policy on the FSMA website for additional details.

TRANSPORTATION (BUS)

First State Montessori Academy contracts bus service for its students. The bus is an extension of the school day. The Family Handbook remains in effect anytime a student is on a school bus (including the bus to and from school, aftercare bus, field trip buses, etc.). Riding the school bus is a privilege for each student. If the following rules and regulations are not followed, the student may no longer be given the opportunity to ride the bus. If the privilege to ride the bus is suspended or revoked, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be responsible for transporting their child to and from school. While riding the bus, students are to adhere to the following rules:

- The bus driver is in charge of the bus and students are expected to follow all instructions given by the driver.

- Students must remain properly seated at all times (back-to-back; bottom-to-bottom), keep voice volume low, and keep hands and arms inside the windows.

- Students are to keep their hands and feet to themselves (no fighting, horseplay, etc.).

- Students are to conduct themselves on the bus in such a way that will not distract the driver. (Distracting the driver puts everyone on the bus at risk. Students who do not follow the reasonable requests of the bus driver jeopardize their riding privileges.)

- Students are not to eat or drink while on the bus.

- Students are not to throw objects of any kind inside, outside, or around the bus.

- Students should keep the bus clean and orderly. They must not damage bus seats or equipment.

- Students are not to use abusive language, obscene or rude gestures while on the bus.

- Students are not to leave the bus without the driver's permission, except on arrival at their assigned bus stop or at school.

Minor bus misbehaviors will result in a warning and parent contact. Subsequent minor bus misbehaviors will result in suspension of bus riding privileges for a period of time determined by the administration and the bus company. **Third offenses for bus infractions may result in revocation of bus riding privileges**. Any major disruptive behavior such as fighting, vandalism, etc. will result in immediate suspension of riding privileges for a period of time determined by the School Leadership Team and could result in permanent revocation of riding privileges and other consequences.

K/1 students must be supervised by an adult at pick up and met by an adult at dismissal. Multiple incidents of not being present could result in loss of bus riding privileges for the student.

An Overview of our Approach to Discipline

The successful operation of a school requires the cooperation of many people. By enrolling at First State Montessori Academy, we expect that our students, their families, and staff will abide by our philosophy and policies. The guidelines provided apply to all students in the school and are applied in a developmentally appropriate manner. First State Montessori Academy will abide by all state and federal regulations related to behavior issues and regulations will pertain to all special education students. Due process will be provided and a student/family will always be given the opportunity to provide his/her/their information about the situation. It is expected that the guidelines articulated in this document will be followed at all times on school property, while on field trips, at other school sponsored events, and when riding the bus to and from school.

FSMA's goals in discipline are to:

- Establish a calm, orderly, 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 our school community
- Promote respectful, kind, and healthy teacher-student and student-student interactions

Based on the **Responsive Classroom Approach**, discipline at First State Montessori Academy is viewed as an aid to learning responsible, social behaviors and is not considered a punishment. Our approach does not rely on punishment or rewards to "get students to behave" but instead offers clear expectations for behavior, actively models and teaches behaviors to children, and provides opportunities for children to practice and internalize the rules and expectations. Children are always treated with respect in a pleasant, non-competitive, and purposeful environment. Corporal punishment and humiliation (intimidation, mental mistreatment or embarrassment) are not allowed under any circumstance. 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 class meetings, problem-solving meetings, and positive time out.

Maria Montessori initially discovered that children involved in deep, uninterrupted concentration did not disrupt or misbehave. In Montessori terms this is called "normalization" and is a natural and predictable result of training students in self-regulation and attention. Research shows that children who have the capacity for self-regulation decrease their negative attention getting behaviors. First State Montessori Academy uses activities with the aim of helping children develop self-control, understand what socially responsible behavior is and learn the value of such behavior.

Responding to Misbehavior

First State Montessori Academy recognizes that even with our best attempts at being proactive in our teaching of discipline, children will still make mistakes, test the limits, and misbehave.

When responding to misbehavior, our goal is to:

- Maintain safety and order
- Help students recognize and fix their mistakes
- Help students develop internal control of their behavior

Protocol for responding to misbehavior:

(This is not a step-by-step process but rather, choosing which protocol will best address the issue)

- Address the misbehavior when it starts (reminding or redirecting language, nonverbal signal, move closer to the child)
- Use a non-punitive consequence (reparation, increase structure and supervision, move the child, take away object, narrow the choices, take a privilege or responsibility away, positive time-out, buddy teacher time-out)
- Provide more intensive supports if needed (re-teaching, role-playing, feedback, simplify procedures, increase teacher role, collaborative problem solving through meeting or conference)
- Have the child leave the room or school for an extended period of time (extended time out in another classroom or space – in school suspension or sending the child home – at home suspension)
- Consultation with administration/school resource team for situation analysis and recommendation

Students who are making it unsafe for others, physically or emotionally, will immediately be removed from the classroom.

Level 1, 2 and 3 Offenses and the Required Action Associated with Each Offense

FSMA recognizes that clear and consistent consequences are important. We balance this with the need to look at each case individually and determine the best course of action to help the situation improve.

We recognize that consequences and required action are just one piece. Suspension does not help a child learn the necessary skills to make a better choice in the future, however, sometimes students need time away from a situation in order to move forward. Suspensions give children a break from the environment or situation and allow them to regroup and re-enter with a plan for changing the behavior or making reparation.

In addition, please note that off-campus, non-school activity conduct which shows disregard for health, safety, and welfare of others including, but not limited to, violence, weapons, and drug offenses may subject a student to disciplinary action as indicated below.

<u>In addition to the required action, other consequences could include:</u>

- Rebuke or verbal reprimand clearly specifying what is not acceptable and consequences if repeated
- Serious talk with school staff member
- Serious talk with school staff member with parents present
- Supervised break times
- Behavioral report cards sent home
- Creation of a behavior contract
- Reassignment of seats in class, lunch or on bus
- Forbidden to enter certain areas of school
- Reassignment of classes
- A referral to an external agency

Level 1 Offenses	**Inappropriate Language** – any profane or derogatory, disrespectful comments **Disruptive Behavior** – language, gestures, or actions that produce distractions and disturb the effective functioning of the teacher, another student, a class or a school activity **Defiance** – refusal to comply with a reasonable request from school personnel **Arguments** – when two are more children engage in negative problem-solving even when redirected by a staff member. (Physical altercations are Level 2 +) **Tardiness to Class** (6th Grade and Middle School only) – all students are to be on time to all classes. If entering a class late for a reason, the student needs a pass signed by a staff member. (Students should not be visiting the nurse between classes but instead should go to class and get a pass to the nurse.)	**Required action:** *First Offense:* Teacher/student conference *Second Offense:* Teacher/student conference Parent/guardian notification *Subsequent Offenses:* Admin/student conference and/or Removal from the classroom for a period of time / Suspension **Multiple/repeated offenses may be considered a level 2 offense*

Level 2 Offenses	**Major Disruption** - language, gestures or actions that disturb the class or a school activity and negatively impact the educational atmosphere or causes an evacuation of a classroom **Bullying or Cyberbullying** – defined in subsequent sections **Skipping class/Not being in assigned classroom** – not attending a class or educational program assigned to attend. **Elopement** – leaving the building or unauthorized presence in any school area **Abusive Language** – written or spoken words or gestures that are considered offensive, obscene or vulgar **Fighting** (depending on the circumstances) **Repeated misconduct and/or continual disregard of school regulations** – intentional or unintentional behavior that may cause injury or damage **Cheating/Plagiarism** – copying, unauthorized use of materials during a test, presenting someone else's work as your own **Dangerous Instrument** – possession of a item that could be considered dangerous (is not a weapon/lookalike weapon) **Substantial Defiance** – refusal to comply with a reasonable request from school personnel including a verbal or non-verbal display of disrespect that causes a substantial disruption **Harassment** (physical, sexual or verbal harassment)/ see definition **Tobacco related offenses** - Smoking in the building or on school grounds/ Possession or use of tobacco and tobacco related products **Misuse of Technology –** any violation of computer use policy **Threats** – when a person makes a statement of intent to do harm to a person or object whether able to follow through or not **Offensive Touching** – when a student uses their body or an object to harm another person (student or staff) intentionally or with force **Defamatory or demeaning actions** – actions or statements made with the intent to harass, annoy or alarm another person **Stealing** – taking something that belongs to another student/person **Vandalism** – destruction of property (no permanent damage)	**Required action:** *First Offense:* Administration/student conference Parent/guardian notification *Multiple or Subsequent Offenses:* Removal from the classroom for a period of time/ remainder of the school day Suspension (1 – 3 days) Multiple suspensions may result in loss privilege of field trip or other off-site activities *See Below

Level 3 Offenses	**Assault –** intentionally or recklessly causes physical injury to another person **Drugs** - Any involvement with drugs or alcohol at school or at a school-sponsored activity **Weapons** - Any possession of a weapon at school or at a school-sponsored activity **Lighters -** Bringing any kind of lighter to school, or starting a fire **Offensive Touching** – multiple assaults **Harassment** (physical, sexual, or verbal harassment) / see definition **Stealing** (depending on circumstances; severe cases included items over $100 and property of a staff member **Fighting** (depending on the circumstances) **Terroristic threatening -** when a person makes a threat knowing that the statements may cause serious inconvenience or evacuation **False Alarm** - Turning in a false alarm **Vandalism/Destruction of School Property –** permanent or substantial damage	**Required action:** Suspension (short-term or long-term) These violations are dismissible offenses. They will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the Discipline Review Board but may result in dismissal from FSMA as per Title 14, Chapter 4 § 407 **Additional action will be determined by the Discipline Review Board*

In addition, the Gun Free Schools Act (GFSA) prohibits firearms on school property. Violation of the GFSA will result in mandatory expulsion.

SUSPENSION and EXPULSION

FSMA feels it is very important for families to understand what types of activities could result in suspension or expulsion. A family always has the right to appeal a decision. An appeal should be submitted in writing within 48 hours of the suspension and will be reviewed. A determination will be made and if the suspension has already occurred and the appeal determines that the offense should not have resulted in a suspension, the absence will be counted as an excused absence and the student's records will be updated to remove the suspension.

Suspension: FSMA believes that some behaviors require a break from school in order for a child to regroup and be ready to re-enter the classroom appropriately. Suspension is not meant to be a punishment but rather an opportunity for reflection and plan-making to re-engage appropriately at school. If a student is suspended multiple times, a team meeting (school/parents) may be held to create an alternate plan.

Suspension can be designated as in-school or out-of-school.

> *In-School Suspension:* Students will remain in the building but will be in a designated, supervised area. Students assigned to in-school suspension are not permitted to participate in any extracurricular activities during the length of their suspension.
>
> *Out-of-School Suspension*: Students must remain out of school, off of school property during the length of their suspension. It is the parent/guardians responsibility to arrange for their care. Students assigned to out-of-school suspension are not permitted to participate in any extracurricular activities during the length of their suspension.

For information about short-term and long-term suspensions, please request Level 3 procedures from the Head of School.

*Middle School students who are suspended more on more than one occasion or for a level 3 offense, will not be able to attend any overnight field trips and may be limited on attending other field trips or school activities.

Expulsion: Any expulsion action taken by the Head of School may be appealed to the school's Board of Directors. While an appeal is pending, the Head of School's expulsion action is not considered to be final. However, the student will remain suspended until the final determination of an appeal. The appeal must be made in writing to the Head of School within five business days of the hearing. It must include the grounds for the appeal. Within one week, a committee of no less than three members of the Board, selected by the Chairman of the Board, will meet with the parents, student, and school officials. After the hearing, the committee, by majority vote, will determine whether or not to affirm the dismissal.

In addition to any action taken by school officials, the school will comply with the notification requirements of House Bill 322 that includes notification of police.

LEVEL 3 OFFENSES – DISCIPLINE REVIEW BOARD

Investigation and Determination Timeline:
When a report is made that a student has committed a Level 3 offense, the Head of School shall conduct a preliminary investigation to determine if there is reasonable basis to pursue disciplinary actions. The preliminary investigation shall include an opportunity for the student to present his/her/their description of the incident (if possible).

If it is determined, after the preliminary investigation, that a Level 3 offense did occur, the student will be removed from the general student population and if the student's presence poses any threat to health, safety or welfare, he/she/they will be removed from the school environment.

Any contraband or evidence related to the offense shall be confiscated by the Head of School or designee. The items shall be labeled, dated and secured in a locked area. Any confiscated items, which may be used for criminal/juvenile proceedings, shall be turned over to the appropriate police agency.

A Discipline Review Board meeting will be scheduled within 3 school days of the offense, pending that all witnesses, offenders and victims can be interviewed within that time.

Discipline Review Board Overview:
The Discipline Review Board may convene with parents/guardians and the student, whenever a Level 3 offense has been or may have been committed by the student or when referred by the administration for repeated classroom misbehavior and/or violations of school regulations. A student is suspended from school from the date of administrative action until the date of the Discipline Review Board determination meeting. The Discipline Review Board evaluates the facts, reviews the student's cumulative performance, and recommends specific action to the Head of School.

Full Procedures for Discipline Review Board: Anytime a Level 3 Offense is being investigated, families will be sent the full procedures for the DRB. In addition, these procedures can be sent upon request by contacting the Head of School. The DRB's intent is to provide a fair process that allows for the ability of the student/family to review and respond to the evidence. The DRB provides an opportunity for the student/family to be heard in the decision-making process.

Discipline Review Board for Students with Disabilities:
In accordance with IDEA, Delaware Procedural Safeguards: Parent and Child Rights in Special Education will be provided for students with an IEP.

DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If a student with a disability, as defined by Federal and State law and regulations, is recommended for a disciplinary removal from school for more than ten (10) school days, either consecutively or cumulatively, in any one school year, or if an alternative placement or expulsion is being recommended, a meeting of the student's IEP or Section 504 team shall be conducted. The student's IEP or Section 504 team will consider whether the offense was a manifestation of the student's disability.

Manifestation Determination Outcomes:

- If the team determines the offense was a manifestation of the student's disability, the student shall not be removed from school unless the parent/guardian and district agree otherwise.
- If the team determines that the offense is not a manifestation of the student's disability, FSMA may discipline the student using the relevant disciplinary procedures applicable to students without disabilities in the same manner and duration.

In instances where the student with a disability presents a danger to him/ herself or others, or is so disruptive to the educational environment as to interfere with the rights of other students, emergency placement and/or removal may be sought by FSMA, including homebound instruction.

Nothing stated herein shall preclude an IEP team from placing a student with a disability, determined to have brought a firearm or weapon to school, in an interim alternative educational setting in accordance with State and Federal law.

Further Clarifications/Definitions related to FSMA's Offenses/Violations:

BULLYING - Bullying refers to any intentional violent or hostile acts or actions through written, electronic, verbal, or physical means against another student, school employee, or school volunteer. Violent or hostile acts or actions include: placing a student, employee, or volunteer in reasonable fear of substantial harm to his/her/their emotional or physical well-being or substantial damage to his/her/their property; creating a hostile, threatening, humiliating, or abusive environment due to the pervasiveness or persistence of actions or due to a power differential between the bully and the target or; interfering with a student having a safe school environment that is necessary to facilitate educational performance, opportunities or benefits; or perpetuating bullying or inciting, soliciting, or coercing an individual or group to demean, dehumanize, embarrass, or cause emotional psychological or physical harm to another student, school employee, or school volunteer. According to Delaware state law and Department of Education regulations, when a situation rises to **actual bullying** it must reported to the appropriate authorities.

CYBER BULLYING: Neither the school's network nor the broader internet (whether accessed on campus or off campus, either during or after school hours) may be used for the purpose of harassment or demeaning and inappropriate interactions of any kind. All forms of harassment in cyberspace, often called cyber bullying, are unacceptable. Cyber bullying includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another person by sending or posting inappropriate and hurtful e-mail messages, instant messages (including text messages), or web site postings (including blogs). Often the author (sender or poster) of the inappropriate material is disguised (logged on) as someone else. Students who feel that they have been the victims of such misuses of technology should not erase the offending material from the system. They should print a copy of the material and immediately report the incident to the Head of School. All reports of harassment in Cyberspace will be investigated fully.

DRUGS - A drug shall mean any controlled substance or counterfeit substance including narcotic drugs such as heroin or cocaine, amphetamines, anabolic steroids, and marijuana, and shall include any prescription substances that has been given to or prescribed for a person other than the student in whose possession it is found. ***Drug-like substances are*** any non-controlled or non-prescription substances capable of producing a change in behavior or altering a state of mind or feeling - some over the counter cough medicines, certain types of glue, caffeine pills, and diet pills all count as drug-like substances. This definition does not include tobacco or tobacco products; tobacco products have their own definition. ***Drug Paraphernalia*** means includes all equipment, products and materials such as roach clips, miniature cocaine spoons and containers for packaging drugs. Use, possession, or distribution of drugs, look-alike substances, and/or drug paraphernalia at First State Montessori Academy is absolutely forbidden.

FALSE ALARMS/STARTING FIRES – If a student turns in a false alarm or maliciously pulls a fire alarm, the student will be immediately suspended and reported to the police and to the proper fire authorities. If a student starts a fire or is in possession of a lighting device (matches, lighter, etc.) in any part of the school building, grounds, or school bus, the student will be immediately suspended and reported to the police and to the proper fire authorities.

FIGHTING - Fighting shall mean any violent and aggressive physical altercation between two or more individuals. Fighting in school will result in both parties being sent to the Head of School's office. During this time, the administration will attempt to ascertain who was at fault and will contact the parents of the involved parties. If the fault can be determined, further action could result. In addition, depending on the severity of the fight, a longer suspension period, parental contact, and police contact may result. Referral to a police agency may be required for students who intentionally, aggressively touch a staff member who is attempting to break up a fight or who is attempting to keep a student from injuring him/herself or others. Recommendation for expulsion may be considered.

HARASSMENT – speech or actions so severe, pervasive, or targeted at particular people that it hinders a student's ability to get an education, significantly harms their well-being, substantially interferes with their rights, or intimidates the student because of their identity.
To be a level 3 offense, harassment must be severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive to the extent that the victim is deprived of educational opportunities or services.

MISUSE OF TECHNOLOGY - Misuse of technology means soliciting, using, or sending pornographic or obscene material, accessing unauthorized email, downloading and/or installing files with or without malicious intent, and/or damaging equipment within the school environment. Misuse of technology (severe clause) shall mean situations in which a student (or students) deliberately tampers with, damages, alters, accesses, crashes, or corrupts the computer/communications system within the school environment resulting in the loss or corruption of information, the ability of the system to operate, or the disruption or degradation of the school's technological infrastructure. Computer-related activities and equipment are to be used exclusively in support of educational activities and objectives. First State Montessori Academy does not support or tolerate any damage, misuse, vandalism, or modification of its hardware and/or software configurations by students. All students and parents will be required to sign an Acceptable Use Policy.

OFFENSIVE TOUCHING - a person is guilty of offensive touching when he/she intentionally touches another person, either with a member of his/her body or with an instrument knowing that he/she is thereby likely to cause offense or alarm to such person. NOTE: Offensive Touching which causes injury is to be reported as assault. Offensive Touching which involves touching of the breast, buttocks, or genitalia which is considered sexual in nature is to be reported as Unlawful Sexual Contact.

POSSESSION OF A FIREARM* OR WEAPON/DANGEROUS INSTRUMENT OR LOOK ALIKE WEAPON/DANGEROUS INSTRUMENT - Possession of a firearm, weapon/dangerous instrument or object designed to look like a firearm or weapon/dangerous instrument, and/or conspiring to conceal or hide a firearm or weapon/dangerous instrument is forbidden and punishable by law. A firearm or lookalike firearm is defined as any instrument from which a shot may be or is meant to be discharged. A weapon/dangerous instrument includes a knife of any sort (switchblade knife; box cutter, razor), a slingshot, or any other item used or designated to inflict bodily harm others or used in an aggressive and threatening manner. A student violating this policy will immediately be suspended from school, and the police will be contacted. In addition, the student will be required to appear before the DRB.

*Possession of a firearm (as defined by Federal and/or State law), or deadly weapon (as defined by State law) on school property, in a school bus, or at any school-sponsored event or activity, shall result in expulsion for a period of not less than one year. The possession of a BB gun or knife will require a recommendation for expulsion. The Head of School may modify such expulsion requirement to the extent a modification is required by Federal and State law. This provision is in compliance with Federal Gun Free School Act of 1994. Section 921 of Title 18, United States Code, and Possession of a weapon in a Safe School and Recreation Zone, Section 1457 of Title 11, Delaware Code.

SCHOOL AND PERSONAL PROPERTY -Students are responsible for the proper care of books, calculators, computers, supplies, and all other school property. Students are responsible for the replacement cost of any school property that may be damaged, lost, or stolen. First State Montessori Academy is not responsible for damaged, lost, or stolen personal property.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A SCHOOL SETTING

Sexual Harassment – A form of discrimination based on sex that may encompass sexual abuse and misconduct. Included are objectionable comments, or conduct of a sexual nature, that may affect someone's personal integrity, discomfiture, security, or the school environment. Objectionable behaviors my include mocking or threatening comments or conduct that are not overtly sexual but

nonetheless cause personal embarrassment to a student, based upon that student's gender/gender they identify as.
Sexual Abuse – Sexual or sexualized verbal or physical conduct to include:

- Touching (for a sexual purpose, directly or indirectly, with a part of the body or with an object) any part of the body of a student
- Invitation or engagement in sexualized contact
- Sexual exploitation
- An indecent act
- An exposure of private body parts
- A sexual assault or other crime that may affect the personal integrity, security of any student, or the school environment

Sexual harassment and sexual abuse offenses may result in suspension and /or dismissal (expulsion). In addition to any action taken by school officials, the school will comply with applicable notification requirements to the Department of Education and/or police.

TERRORISTIC THREATENING - Terroristic threatening is when a person threatens to commit any crime likely to result in death or serious injury to a person or property, or when a person commits an act with intent of causing an individual to believe that he/she has been exposed to a substance that will cause personal death or serious injury. ***Terroristic threatening or security threats*** also apply when a person makes a false statement or statements knowing that the statement or statements are likely to cause the evacuation of a building, place of assembly or facility of public transportation; knowing that the statement or statements are likely to cause serious inconvenience; or in reckless disregard of the risk of causing terror or serious inconvenience. Terroristic threatening will result in suspension and a report will be made to police and/or fire authorities. **Referral to a Police Agency is required for students upon showing of intentionality or malice for terroristic threatening against a staff member. Recommendation for expulsion may be considered.**

VANDALISM - The school will not tolerate vandalism of any kind. If guilty of vandalism, the student/s will be required to pay for the damages and be referred to the administration for further disciplinary action. If the vandalism is significant, the student will be suspended and potentially dismissed. If necessary, the matter will be referred to the police.

APPENDIX

Bullying Policy
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Crisis Assessment Information
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Bullying Policy and Procedures

Anyone may report bullying (staff, parents, students) by filling out a "Bullying Reporting Form available on our website or in our office. When bullying is reported, a team will be identified to investigate the situation. Parents will be notified if their child is identified in a bully report, whether the allegation is substantiated or not. After the investigation, communication with both parents will include any next steps that we will take to minimize the potential of future incidents and resolve the situation.

Additional bullying procedures, information and resources are available on our website.

Copyright Policy

All content created for FSMA including emails, documents, videos are a copyrighted work of First State Montessori Academy. © Copyright 2020 First State Montessori Academy. All rights reserved. Any unauthorized copying or modification of this work is strictly prohibited.

Crisis Assessment

Suicide: Staff are trained in the warning signs and when a concern arises, they follow a specific protocol and engage our Crisis Response Team.

Threat Assessment: If a staff member receives or observes a threat, they follow a specific protocol which involves engaging our Crisis Response Team.

With all crisis assessments, our team will carefully analyze the presented information and utilize our resources to determine the next steps which may involve safety precautions, communication, etc.

Distribution of Materials Policy

FSMA receives many requests from organizations independent of the school to distribute materials, both printed and electronically, to students and families. It is the policy of FSMA that the only materials that may be distributed to the parents and students are those which are directly created and sponsored by FSMA. The only exception to this policy is where the distribution of such materials is required by law or at the request of the Delaware Department of Education.

Non-profit organizations or governmental agencies that provide opportunities or conduct activities for school-age youth in Delaware shall be permitted to place materials in a central location (ex. the lobby of each building) for students, parents and teachers to voluntarily pick up, take home and review. Such materials should be provided to the school administration and a designated central location will be determined. All materials should be no larger than 8.5 x 11" and must identify the name of the group responsible for the material.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) sets out the requirements for educational institutions to notify parents and students of their rights for the protection of privacy under section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act. Parents or eligible students have the right to: Inspect and review the student's education records; Seek amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes to be inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights; Consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that the Act and §99.31 authorize disclosure without consent; and File with the Department a complaint under §§99.63 and 99.64 concerning alleged failures by the educational agency or institution to comply with the requirements of the Act and this part. Please contact the office if you require an appointment to review your student's records.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests

A FOIA request is a written request to inspect and copy the public records of the First State Montessori Academy (the School). FSMA complies with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), as required by

Federal and State law. Individuals or agencies shall be granted access to the School's public records under the following terms and conditions:

- Requests shall be in writing, signed, and shall clearly identify the specific public record sought.
- Personally identifiable information shall not be available to the public.
- Review of the requested documents shall be during regular business hours and in the presence of a school employee designated by the Head of School.
- No original documents shall be removed from School property.
- Requested documents may be copied in existing form.
- The requester shall pay a reasonable charge for the copying. Such fees should be commensurate with local businesses that charge for copies.
- Documents may be provided in electronic format with the same per-page charge as copied documents.
- In non-routine circumstances in which a School employee with specialized technology skills must access information, a charge will be based on that employee's hourly overtime wages or an hourly rate based on an annual salary.
- Requests for documents shall not interrupt the normal operations of the School.
- Requests shall be kept on file for three years.
- Requests shall be processed (must either provide access to the records requested, deny request, or state that additional time is needed) within 15 business days from receipt of the request. In case of delay, the Head of School shall approve an extension and shall notify the requesting party in writing of the reason for the delay and the day, date, and time on which the records shall be available.

Public records: Those records as defined by Delaware Code as those the School owns, made, used, retained, received, produced, composed, drafted, or otherwise compiled and collected relating in any way to public business, public purposes, or the public interest. Requests which require an employee to create a record from existing records are not subject to FOIA or this policy.

Responsibility: The Head of School shall serve as the school's FOIA Officer. The FOIA Officer shall be responsible for implementing the procedures and for updating the Board of Directors on any changes in FOIA laws or regulations.

FSMA's "Healthy Homework" Policy

Homework has to be healthy for the whole family if it's to be successful.

Every family comes with different ideas about homework and what they would like to see for their child. We encourage families to supplement as needed and communicate with teachers to make adaptations. The goal is for homework to be a positive experience for all.

Do Montessori children benefit from homework? Yes, Montessori children benefit from homework but it is different from traditional school homework. We accept the research that suggests that traditional homework does not increase student learning, nor does it increase student motivation.

However, our goal in Montessori is to inspire in children a sense of purpose in their lives. This is not traditional homework. We want students to pursue things that interest them -seeking information, skills, and insights on their own to build their knowledge. Montessori homework includes opportunities to read and write. Reading is usually established as a suggested time to set aside for reading whatever children find interesting, and writing might be in a journal or freely chosen creative or expository writing. Also, Montessori's goal is to prepare students for life… so homework may include practical opportunities to develop life-long skills.

What types of things can you expect?

- Daily reading activities
- Writing prompts or journal activities related to areas of interest or areas of classroom studies including playwriting, letter writing, interviewing and biography writing, book reviews, directions for a game, etc.
- Projects such as creating a model, creating a piece of art, doing experiments, developing materials, preparing a timeline, etc.
- Games and activities that involve the whole family
- Practical life activities such as planning and preparing a meal, teaching someone a trick, planting a tree, performing an act of kindness, participating in organizing or clean-up of a household area, help with a garage sale or lemonade stand, etc.

Help for Families Becoming Homeless

When/If an FSMA student family becomes homeless, and the school officials are made aware of the situation, the following steps will be taken:

1) Contact with the parents will be made.

2) Parents will determine if they wish to continue their child's enrollment at First State Montessori Academy, or to move their child's enrollment to the district school in the attendance area where they will reside.

3) If the parents choose to enroll elsewhere, FSMA will make all contacts and records transfer necessary to the new school, to facilitate the student's move.

4) If the parents choose to remain at FSMA, the school may utilize Title I funds to assist with basic family needs and educational needs. FSMA will document the services being provided in the DOE Homeless reporting system in Eschool. These services are readily available for the Homeless Contact Associate at DOE to view. FSMA will follow any required protocols as advised by that office, including connections with related services.

5) FSMA will share with families resources for shelter and transportation as needed.

Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Social Media Policy

Staff Social Media Policy applies to all First State Montessori Academy employees, board members, external contractors providing services on behalf of the school, volunteers, and other individuals who work for or provide a service on behalf of the school. These individuals will collectively be referred to as "staff members" in this policy. While recognizing the benefits of these media for opportunities for communication, this policy sets forth the principals that First State Montessori Academy staff are expected to follow when using social media.

It is crucial that students, parents, and the public have confidence in the school's decisions and services. The principles set out in this policy are designed to ensure that staff members use social media responsibly to protect the confidentiality of students and staff.

This policy applies to personal webspace, such as social networking sites (ex. Facebook), blogs, chatrooms, forums, podcasts, open access online encyclopedias (ex. Wikipedia), social bookmarking sites (ex. del.icio.us), content sharing sites (ex. youtube), microblogs (ex. twitter). The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances or emerging media – the principles set forth in this policy must be followed irrespective of the medium.

Staff members must not have contact through any personal social medium with any FSMA student, unless the student is a family member. Staff members must decline any "friend requests" from students in their personal social media accounts.

Additional information about the Staff Social Media Policy is provided to all staff and is available to others upon request. Please contact the Head of School to acquire the full policy.

Student and Family Social Media Policy - *When the use of social media impacts a student's ability to come to school and learn or a staff member's ability to come to school and teach, FSMA will intervene. This could include discipline, as per the code of conduct, or additional actions as determined by the administration.*

Personal information (that you have acquired through your role at FSMA) about students, staff, or other professionals you interact at FSMA on social media must not be discussed/shared/etc.

Social media and the internet may not be used in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame students, their family members, staff, or other professionals.

The FSMA logo or brand must not be used on any personal webspace or social media.

Students or Families must gain approval prior to creating a site that includes any FSMA content. Details regarding the purpose for using social media and request for approval should be sent to the Head of School.

Student-Led Clubs: Policies and Procedures

First State Montessori Academy encourages students to expand their knowledge and social responsibility by the formation of clubs organized to promote or pursue special interests outside the typical classroom environment and curriculum provided membership is open to all interested and eligible students, approval of the Head of School is obtained and a member of the staff attends the meetings or activities as an official advisor.

Procedures for Creating an Official Student-Led Club are available upon request.

Student Visitors (Prior Students)

Prior FSMA students may visit the classroom for up to 30 minutes. These need to be pre-scheduled and approved by administration.

Title 1 at FSMA

What is Title 1? Title I programs are federally funded instruction that is in addition to core reading and math classes for students who are struggling to meet the state standards. The federal government gives funds to Delaware through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to divide among school districts based on their percentage of low-income families and participating schools. Title 1 is also focused on parent engagement and parent education.

Title 1 Funds: FSMA uses our funds to supplement the salary of our special education teachers. In addition to working with students, this teacher is part of a team that plans specific activities to increase parent involvement and education and is involved in a variety of parent engagement activities because Title I law requires a district to reserve a portion of its federal funds for parent involvement activities.

Parents Right to Know: Parents receive notification letters when their children receive Title I services and are taught by a non-highly certified teacher for four or more weeks consecutively.

FSMA's Title I Parent Involvement Goal is to create programs, activities, and procedures that increase meaningful parental involvement. We will hold an annual meeting to share Title 1 plans and activities and ask for feedback. In addition, FSMA will include parents, board members and administrators in the decision-making process around how funds for parental involvement will be spent.

Tutoring FSMA Students

No FSMA teacher is permitted to tutor one of their current students for profit (pro bono work is acceptable). Accepting money from a parent/family for tutoring a current student is considered by the school to be a conflict of interest. If a staff member is tutoring or coaching outside of the school hours, an administrator should be notified of who is being tutored/coached and a log of activity should be kept by the staff member.

Video Surveillance

FSMA may utilize video surveillance devices in all common areas of the school campus including, but not limited to, outdoor spaces, entrances and exits, parking lots, stairwells, hallways, school buses, and any other commonly used spaces. The school shall not utilize video surveillance devices in private spaces such as restrooms and locker rooms. The intent and purpose in utilizing video surveillance devices is to ensure student and staff health, welfare, and safety in order to maintain safe and orderly conduct throughout the school day.

Video surveillance recordings are not considered student education records unless the recording is maintained and (1) intended for use in a disciplinary action or proceeding, (2) depicts an activity that shows a student violating the law, (3) shows a student getting injured, attacked, victimized, ill, or having a health emergency, (4) contains personally identifiable information from a student's educational record. A video surveillance recording is not considered a student's education record when the student's image is incidental to the activity shown in the recording or when the student is participating in a public activity.

FSMA shall comply with all state and federal law regarding access to, review, and disclosure of student records, including Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"). Video surveillance obtained by FSMA will only be viewed by the FSMA Administration and Law Enforcement Agencies (as appropriate). A parent may request to view a video that is considered part of the child's educational record 1) if their child is the only student or staff member identifiable in the video or 2) when consent is obtained by the school from all other identifiable persons captured in the video. The school will evaluate the legality of any requests in advance of disclosure and will comply with all notice requirements under FERPA.

Visiting FSMA During the School Day

Scheduled visits: If you have scheduled a visit to the school (volunteering in the classroom, conference, meeting, etc.) you will need to **sign in** at the main office. Upon signing in, a member of our office staff will **call the person** you are scheduled to see to let them know you are here. You will then be able to **enter the building**.

If you visit the school on a regular schedule (ex. Art volunteer every Monday, lunch every Tuesday), we will keep a master list of these types of activities/events and entering the building will not require an additional phone call. If you visit the school to work on a special project (ex. PTO meeting, etc.), please ask the person leading the activity/event to leave a list of expected attendees.

Unscheduled visits: If you are stopping by the school unexpectedly, you will need to sign in at the main office. Upon signing in, a member of our office staff will call the person you are here to visit. If it is an unexpected visit, you will need to show ID and be escorted in by the person you are here to see. You may need to wait until this person is available. If you are dropping something off for someone in the building, the office staff will let that person know, and they will come down to pick it up at their earliest convenience.

For the safety of our students, always be prepared to show your ID.

Wellness Policy Overview (full policy on our website)

FSMA is committed to optimal development of every student. We believe that for students to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental, and social success, we need to create positive, safe, and health promoting learning environments at every level, in every setting, throughout the school year. Research shows that two components, good nutrition and physical activity before, during and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. This policy outlines our school's approach to ensuring environments and opportunities for all students to practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors throughout the school day while minimizing commercial distractions. Specifically, this policy establishes goal and procedures to ensure that:

- Students at FSMA have access to healthy foods throughout the school day---both through reimbursable school meals and other foods available throughout the school campus—in accordance with Federal and state nutrition standards
- Students receive quality nutrition education that helps them develop healthy eating behaviors
- Students have the opportunities to be physically active before, during, and after school
- Schools engage in nutrition and other physical activities that promote student wellness
- School staff are encouraged and supported to practice healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors in and out of school
- The community is engaged in supporting the work of FSMA in creating continuity between school and other settings for students and staff to practice lifelong healthy habits
- FSMA will establish and maintain an infrastructure for management, oversight, implementation, communication about, and monitoring of the policy and its established goals and objectives.

A Few Frequently Asked Questions about Montessori Education

(more on our website)

Why Do Montessori Classes Group Different Age Levels Together?

Sometimes parents worry that by having younger children in the same class as older ones, one group or the other will be shortchanged. At FSMA, we teach children at the academic level they are ready for. We know that each child learns at his/her own pace and will be ready for any given lesson in his/her own time, not on the teacher's schedule of lessons. In a mixed-age class, children can always find peers

who are working at their current level. With half of the class returning each year, the classroom culture tends to remain quite stable. Also, working in one class for two years allows students to develop a strong sense of community with their classmates and teachers.

Is Montessori Unstructured?

At first, Montessori may look unstructured, but it is actually quite structured at every level. Just because the Montessori program is highly individualized does not mean that students can do whatever they want. Like all children, Montessori students live within a cultural context that involves the mastery of skills and knowledge that are considered essential. Montessori teaches all of the "basics," along with giving students the opportunity to investigate and learn subjects that are of particular interest. It also allows them the ability to set their own schedule to a large degree during class time. At all grade levels, students are taught how to use some sort of formal system to help them keep track of what they have accomplished and what they still need to complete.

What are the "Cosmic Education" Great Lessons all about?

The Great Lessons are a core curriculum topic in any Montessori classroom. The Great Lessons do not support any specific religion, but it is important to note that Maria Montessori had deep respect for all religions and philosophies. The Great Lessons are designed to introduce children to scientific theories about our universe, our earth and all living things which leads to the study of human needs, cultures, continents, and biomes of the world.

The purpose of the Great Lessons:

- To give the child the big picture of the universe and the world they live in
- To plant seeds of interest for learning about the earth, living things, needs, etc
- To instill in the child a sense of wonder
- To discover the diversity of life on the earth – similarities and needs
- To develop a connection with life and the interconnectedness of living things
- To introduce cycles – water cycle, plant and animal cycles, season, etc.
- To build in the child a respect for all living things
- To give the child an awareness of history and the human journey



Please don’t hesitate to contact us!

Main Office Phone Number (302) 576-1500
Main Office Fax Number (302) 576-1501

MainOffice.FSMA@fsma.k12.de.us