



Code of Conduct

23-26 School Year

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The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to promote a safe and respectful environment for all children, guides, and staff members of Sankofa Montessori. The Code of Conduct outlines the expectations for student behavior, consequences for breaches, and procedures for resolving conflicts. All Sankofa Montessori students are expected to adhere to this Code of Conduct and are responsible for their behavior at school, on school grounds, and during school-sponsored activities.

The emotional development of each child is extremely important to us at Sankofa Montessori. We believe that each child has an innate goodness that thrives with consistency and clarity. Our basic goal is to help the development of self-discipline, responsibility, and courtesy within the child as s/he matures. To discipline is to teach. Discipline is based on love and logical, natural consequences.

Discipline Philosophy and Equity Statement

- Right to a High-Quality Education: All students have a right to a high-quality education. As such, school disciplinary measures should not be used to exclude students from school or otherwise deprive them of such an education, unless it is necessary to preserve the safety of students and staff.
- General Principles: The goal of student discipline is to teach students to behave in ways that contribute to our school's community and success. Successful school discipline is guided by the following principles:



- Effective and engaging instruction and well-established routines within a classroom community are the foundation for effective discipline.
- School discipline is best accomplished before a community infraction occurs, and using effective interventions after they occur.
- Our school community's success and safety are formed and strengthened when all school personnel build positive relationships with students and families.
- School personnel should promote high standards of behavior that supports our community by teaching, modeling, and monitoring behavior that is consistent.
- School discipline that is paired with meaningful instruction and guidance, offers students opportunities to learn from their mistakes and to contribute to the school community, and is more likely to result in the student re-engaging with the learning community.
- Effective discipline maximizes the amount of time students spend learning and minimizes the amount of time students are removed from their classroom.
- **Reasonable Consequences:** The School will make every reasonable effort to teach student community-affirming behavior and repair community infractions through school-based responses at the lowest possible level, and to support students in learning the skills necessary to enhance a positive school environment and avoid negative behavior. In all instances, school discipline should be reasonable, timely, fair, age-appropriate, and should match the severity of the student's misbehavior.
- **Use of Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions Should be Minimized:** Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions should be reserved for infractions that cannot be appropriately addressed through other interventions and disciplinary responses. Absent rare exceptions, expulsions will only occur in cases of state or federal mandates involving weapons and illegal substances, action that causes irreparable harm, or if a student's behavior displays a pattern of endangering the physical and or emotional safety of other students or school personnel.
- **Limited Role of Law Enforcement:** involvement should be limited to situations when it is necessary to protect the physical safety of students and staff or appropriate to address criminal behavior of persons other than students. Police involvement should not be requested in a situation that can be safely and appropriately handled by the School's internal disciplinary procedures.
- **Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities have too often had their education needlessly interrupted by inappropriate out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, referrals to alternative schools, and referrals to law enforcement. This is especially concerning when the behavior resulting in the punitive response was a manifestation of the student's disability. School staff is responsible for implementing this Policy and eliminating the over-punishment of students with disabilities, along with ensuring that any disciplinary consequences are in accordance with students' individualized



education plans (IEPs), behavior intervention plans (BIPs), and 504 plans (as applicable).

- **Non-Discrimination:** School staff is responsible for implementing this Policy without discrimination based on ethnicity, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability.
- **Due Process:** Sankofa Montessori will ensure due process for any students facing long-term suspension or expulsion (see [due process section](#)). For students with IEP or 504 plans, Sankofa Montessori will hold Manifestation Hearings (see [Manifestation Hearing section](#)).
- **Staff Training:** All Sankofa Montessori staff will receive specific training on our positive discipline approach, the Nautilus Approach, and our approach to the Code of Conduct.
- **Community Involvement:** Meaningful parent, student, and community involvement in the creation and application of school policy is essential for building effective schools with positive and inclusive learning environments.

Students are expected to follow the Code of Conduct when:

- On school property;
- In a motor vehicle being used for a school related purpose;
- At a school-related activity, function or event;
- At any time or place when the student's behavior has a direct and immediate effect on maintaining order, safety, health, and discipline in the school;

School Administrators are authorized to take disciplinary action for misconduct that occurs at a school activity or event, on a school computer or platform, at a non-school activity, function or event where the misconduct leads to a potential danger or disruption of the school. The school has authority to take disciplinary action for such misconduct at any time of the year provided that such conduct has a direct, or immediate impact on school discipline, the educational operation or function of the school, or the welfare of students or staff of the school. Such misconduct could include, but is not limited to, a felony, a delinquent act which would be considered to be a felony if committed by an adult, an assault upon another student, a violation of the laws prohibiting controlled substances, or sexual misconduct and which makes the student's continued presence at school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or which disrupts the educational process (OCGA 20-2-751.5).

Please note: if a parent/guardian or other affiliated adult is consistently unsafe or does not follow school expectations during school events, procedures or processes, the affiliated student is at risk of automatic withdrawal.



Progressive Discipline

When a student's choices fall under our 3 D's (dangerous, destructive, demeaning) and they are unable to return to their work, we utilize our progressive discipline policy detailed below.

The 3 D's: Dangerous: Intentional physical aggression; throwing objects that can hurt others (furniture, large/sharp objects) Threat of physical aggression or:

- Destructive: Damage school property (breaking/destroying materials or larger items)
- Demeaning: Harassment/bullying (when repeated and targeted toward one/particular group of students); verbally abusive/threatening language (more serious threats of aggression)
- Extreme intentional physical aggression*
- Weapons possession*
- Suicidal threat or ideation*
- Homicidal threat or ideation*
- Running out of school building*

The breaches to our Code of Conduct have been organized into three levels of prohibited behaviors: Level 1 discipline (minor) offenses, Level 2 discipline (moderate) offenses, and Level 3 discipline (destructive, demeaning, dangerous) offenses. Behaviors that implicate Title IX regulations (as implemented) will be managed as discussed in our Title IX policy.

- Level 1 offenses are generally **minor** offenses and may represent a failure to demonstrate universally defined expectations or social skills. Following appropriate teacher intervention, students may be referred to an administrator.
- Level 2 discipline is used for **moderate** acts of misconduct. These include acts directed against people or property that do not seriously endanger the health or safety of others and serious disruptions of school order. Consequences may include in or out-of-school suspension and a disciplinary hearing referral. Unique, serious, or multiple offenses may result in the offense being considered a Level 3 offense.
- Level 3 Discipline offenses are **serious** (destructive, demeaning, dangerous) acts of misconduct that place students or staff at risk of emotional or physical harm which may include threats to the health, safety, and/or property of others, and other acts of serious and repeated misconduct. Consequences may include in or out-of-school suspension and a disciplinary hearing referral. Behaviors that implicate Title IX regulations will be managed by our Title IX policy.

Behavior Level Consequences



Level	Breaches of Code of Conduct
<p>Minor Incidents 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Verbal assault ● Use of profanity or obscene language or the possession of obscene materials ● Possession of devices or objects which cause distractions including, but not limited to, toys, radios, and phones during learning experiences or school events that are not authorized by staff members ● Trespassing or loitering ● False allegations against staff, children, volunteers ● Falsification of Records ● Academic dishonesty (plagiarism or cheating) ● Possession of nuisance devices or objects which cause distractions including, but not limited to, toys, radios, and phones during learning ● Repetitive acts of defiance or insubordination towards staff members
<p>Moderate Incidents 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Physical or verbal threats, including but not limited to, the staging or reporting of dangerous or hazardous situations that do not exist ● Committing an act which inflicts great bodily harm upon another person, even though accidental or a result of poor judgment ● Inappropriate or disrespectful language toward teachers or staff members ● Inappropriate, abusive, threatening, or demeaning actions based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, disability, national origin, or sexual orientation. ● Bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment ● Defacement/Damage of property or theft/possession of stolen property ● Possession of look-a-like weapons ● The dissemination of profane, obscene, lewd, or pornographic images, url links, or websites ● Elopement from the classroom or other assigned areas



<p>Serious Incidents 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extreme acts of defiance and/or threats towards teachers/staff members/fellow students ● Elopement from the school building ● Fighting, physical assault and/or battery on another person ● Hitting, kicking, biting, spitting, or any other behavior that causes harm to another student or staff member ● Terroristic threats ● Verbal threats that are mortal or contain a weapon or extreme violence ● Inappropriate touch including but not limited to private areas (genitals) or the gesturing of inappropriate touch to another student. ● Possession of fireworks, explosives, and or chemical substances ● Criminal sexual conduct ● Sexual assault, battery, abuse and/or harrasment (includes invasion of privacy in the bathroom) ● Indecent exposure (for example, ,exposing of genital areas) ● Possession of dangerous weapons ● Arson ● Chronic disciplinary problems that interfere with the learning process of other students and shows a disregard for school rules
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Due Process Procedures

Our school will implement logical consequences and limit suspensions and expulsions as much as possible.

The following due process procedures only govern the suspension or the expulsion of a student from the school’s regular educational program. For students receiving services documented through an IEP or 504, please see the Manifestation Hearing section.

If a student charged with violation of this code of conduct has been returned to the regular school program pending a decision, then such action of reinstatement shall not limit or prejudice the school’s right to suspend or expel the student following that decision.

- A. Suspension of Ten (10) School Days Or Less: As a general rule, prior to any suspension of the student, the school administration shall provide the student with the following due process:



- a. The student will be informed of the charges against him/her, and, if the student denies the charges, the school administration shall provide the student with an explanation of the evidence.
- b. The student shall be provided an opportunity to explain his/her version of the facts.

If a student's presence in school poses an immediate danger to students or staff, the school administration may immediately suspend the student, and as soon thereafter as reasonable, provide the student with his/her due process rights as set forth in this section.

If, after providing the student with his/her due process rights, the school administration determines that the student has engaged in a prohibited act under this Student Code of Conduct then he/she may impose a disciplinary penalty of a suspension not to exceed ten (10) school days. The school administration shall inform (in person or by phone) the student's parent of the suspension and of the reasons and conditions of the suspension. A decision to suspend a student for ten (10) or fewer school days is final and not subject to further review or appeal.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-742, students in Pre-K through 3rd grade will not be suspended for more than 5 consecutive or cumulative school days in a school year without first receiving a multi-tiered system of support, such as RTI, unless the student possessed a weapon or dangerous instrument, possessed illegal drugs, or the student's behavior endangers the physical safety of other students or school personnel.

- B. Suspension for Eleven (11) or more school days and Expulsion: The Executive Director has the discretion to recommend a long-term suspension or expulsion upon referring a matter to hearing. Hearings shall be heard before a hearing officer designated by the Board of Directors. Such hearing officer shall meet the training requirements of the State Board of Education and Georgia law.

If a student's presence in school poses an immediate danger to students or staff, the school administration may immediately suspend the student, and as soon thereafter as reasonable, provide the student with his/her due process rights as set forth in this section.

Acts of misconduct warranting expulsion require that the student be immediately placed on suspension for up to ten (10) school days pending the hearing.



1. Hearing for Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion: If a student is charged with a violation of the Student Code of Conduct carrying a consequence of long term suspension or expulsion, the student and his parent shall be notified of such in writing by registered mail, as well as the student's rights of due process as set forth herein.

The written notice of violation shall state the nature of the violation, the proposed consequence, and the student's and parent's right to a due process hearing at a specified time and place to determine (i) whether a violation occurred and (ii) whether the consequence of such violation merits the imposition of a long-term suspension.

The notice shall also set forth the right of the student and his parent and an advocate of their choice and at their expense to participate in the hearing, the right of the student to review and observe the evidence offered against him or her during the hearing and the right of the student to present written evidence or testimony on the student's behalf. The hearing shall be held in closed session and a written record of the hearing shall be recorded. The student shall have the right to appeal to the Board of Directors if the hearing was not originally held before the Board of Directors.

The hearing officer shall preside at the hearing for long term suspension, at which time the student and parent shall be advised of the alleged violation and the facts leading toward the allegation. Following the hearing within twenty-four (24) hours the hearing officer shall issue his or her decision in writing along with a written statement of the student's right to appeal the result.

The parent of the minor child shall be responsible for making arrangements for the child's educational needs during a long term suspension and/or expulsion.

Qualifications of Disciplinary Hearing Officers: Disciplinary hearing training and officers will meet the qualifications outlined below.

1. Tribunal Training Provider – one who has expertise and/or knowledge of:
 - a. All student disciplinary provisions in Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
 - b. due process requirements under federal and state law,
 - c. applicable rules of evidence,



- d. leading federal and state judicial and administrative decisions, and
 - e. applicable ethical standards and the role of the hearing officer and panel member as an independent, neutral arbiter.
2. Qualified Student Discipline Hearing Officer or Disciplinary Tribunal or Panel Member – an individual selected by the local school system who is:
- a. in good standing with the State Bar of Georgia, or
 - b. has experience as a teacher, counselor, or administrator in a public school system, or
 - c. is actively serving as a hearing officer under an existing contract/agreement with a Georgia school system provided that such individual completes the tribunal training course within 6 months of July 1, 2016.

2. Appeal of Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion

A student aggrieved by the decision of the hearing officer may request to appeal such a decision to the Board of Directors. The appeal must be requested in writing within five (5) days of receipt of the imposition of the discipline, must contain the reasons that the decision should be reviewed or reconsidered, must be signed by the student or his parent, and must be delivered to the Board of Directors by way of certified first class mail. The Board of Directors shall review the decision of the hearing officer for the erroneous application of the handbook's provisions based upon the grounds presented by the student in his/her written request for appeal.

The request for appeal shall be presented at the next regular meeting of the Board of Directors following receipt of the notice of appeal, at which time the Board of Directors shall review the written request for appeal. The appeal may be considered in open or closed session, at the student or parent's request and shall be conducted in accordance with the rights of confidentiality adhering to Education Records as that term is defined in 20 USC 1232g. In reviewing the written request for appeal, the Board of Directors may, during the review, ask the administration to respond to the written request for appeal orally and may request information of the student or his/her parent. The Board of Directors shall notify the student and his/her parent of the result in writing within five (5) business days of the board meeting at which the appeal was heard.



All determinations of the Board of Directors on appeal or with respect to expulsions are final with regard to due process at the school.

C. Miscellaneous Provisions

- a. **Voluntary Agreements:** At any time, the Executive Director or his/her designee may enter into a written contract with the student and his/her parent(s) setting forth the parties' agreement in settlement of disciplinary charges or restitution related to damage to or loss of school property. In such cases, the written agreement shall be final and binding and may not be later challenged by the Executive Director or his/her designee or the student or his/her parent(s).
- b. **Suspended/Expelled Students On School Property Or Attending School Activities:** A suspended or expelled student who enters onto school property or appears at a school activity, event or function without the permission of a building administrator shall be deemed to be trespassing.
- c. **Maintaining Class Progress:** When practical in the judgment of the Executive Director, a student may be permitted to maintain progress during the disciplinary period.

D. Definition Of Terms

- a. "Behavior Referral Report" is a specific written record of the student's act of misconduct. It documents the date, nature of the offense, and the disciplinary action taken by the teacher and/or school administration.
- b. "Attendance Corrective Action Plan (A-CAP)" is a written document that identifies the causes for excessive tardies and/or absences and what steps will be taken to minimize the number of occurrences. It is signed by the parents, student, and staff member.
- c. "Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP)" is a written document that identifies the cause of repeated misconduct and what steps will be taken in order to help a student overcome inappropriate behavior. It is signed by the parents, student, and staff member.
- d. **Behavior Contract** is a written document that outlines the expected behavior and disciplinary action for a student. It is signed by the parents, student, and appropriate staff members.
- e. **Behavior Support Plan (BSP)** is a written document that identifies the cause of repeated misconduct and what steps will be taken in order to help a student overcome inappropriate behavior. It is signed by the parents, the student, and appropriate staff members.
- f. "Suspension" refers to a decision to temporarily remove a student's right to attend school or any school-related activity not to exceed ten (10) school days.



A meeting with the parents may be convened to discuss the incident that led to the suspension and to develop a BIP for the future.

- g. In-school Suspension refers to a decision to temporarily remove a student from the classroom and to place the student in an environment within the school building that allows the student to continue to progress in their coursework but denies them access to regular classroom instruction and social interaction with their peers. The student will be supervised during the day of suspension. If the student does not properly engage during in-school suspension, they may be required to have a day of out of school suspension.
- h. Out-of-school Suspension refers to a decision to temporarily remove a student's right to attend school or any school-related activity. . A meeting with the parents may be convened to discuss the incident that led to the suspension and to develop a Behavior Contract for the future.
- i. *The determination of in school vs out of school suspension will be based on the severity of the incident and frequency. The decision to keep a student in school vs out of school is at the discretion of the leadership team.*
- j. "Long Term Suspension" is defined as a decision to remove a student from school due to extreme non-compliance with school rules or state law for more than ten (10) school days but less than a semester. The student and his/her parent shall be notified in writing of the hearing date before the board designee and the student's right to due process. The decision, made by the Board of Directors' designee, can be appealed to the Board of Directors at their next regularly scheduled meeting. All other decisions by the Board's designee are final.
- k. "Expulsion" is defined as a decision to remove a student from school due to extreme non-compliance with school rules/state law for a period of time that exceeds the current semester.
- l. "Permanent Expulsion" is defined as a decision to permanently remove the student from the school. This decision shall be made by the Board of Directors. All decisions made by the Board of Directors are final.
- m. Parent Shadow Days refers to an alternative to suspension/intervention where a parent/guardian must accompany the student to school and follow the student through a full or partial academic day at the direction of school staff.

The acts of misconduct listed above are not to be construed as an all-inclusive list or as a limitation on the school leadership to deal appropriately with other types of conduct which interfere with the order of the school, the educational process, and the safety of students.



Recommendation for Expulsion

Expulsion is defined as the permanent exclusion from the school. Expulsion is only an appropriate consequence when a student engages in an alarming disregard to the safety of others, and/or where it is necessary to safeguard the well-being of other students.

O.C.G.A 20-2-751.1 requires that Sankofa Montessori expel students that are in possession of a firearm or dangerous weapon at school for no less than one calendar year.

Consequence Matrix

Disciplinary incidents that result in out-of-school suspensions will be logged into the school's School Information System (SIS) and become a part of your student's permanent record.

Number of Incidents	Level 1 (Minor)	Level 2 (Moderate)	Level 3 (Serious)
1	Teacher Verbal Warning	Parent Contact	Parent Contact -> 2 days of in school suspension
2	Teacher Parent Contact	Parent Contact -> 1 day of in school suspension	1 day of out of school suspension ->Family Meeting
3	Referral to student culture team -> Family Meeting ->MTSS Intervention implemented	Referral to student culture team -> Family Meeting ->MTSS Intervention implemented	2 days of out of school suspension ->Parent Shadow Day
4	1 day of in school suspension	2 days of in school suspension	Family Meeting -> Behavior Contract
5	2 days of in school suspension	1 day of out of school suspension ->Family Meeting	Risk of Expulsion Family Meeting ->3 days of out of school suspension
6	1 day of out of school	2 days of out of	4 days of out of



	suspension ->Family Meeting	school suspension ->Parent Shadow Day	school suspension ->Expulsion Hearing Referral
7	2 days of out of school suspension ->Parent Shadow Day	Family Meeting ->2 days of out of school suspension -> Behavior Contract	Expulsion
8	2 days of out of school suspension -> Risk of Expulsion Family Meeting -> Behavior Contract	Risk of Expulsion Family Meeting ->3 days of out of school suspension	
9	3 days of out of school suspension -> Expulsion Hearing Referral	4 days of out of school suspension -> Expulsion Hearing Referral	
10	Expulsion	Expulsion	

A student violating any of the acts of misconduct listed in the Student Code of Conduct shall be held accountable in a manner that is logical and developmentally appropriate. Administration at Sankofa Montessori has the right to issue consequences not aligned to this consequence matrix. Additionally, a student who engages in an act of misconduct that violates the law may be referred to law enforcement.

Reporting Incidents

Any staff member who becomes aware of a misconduct incident, including theft, damaging property, or other actions that break trust, should immediately report it to the designated leadership team member.

The reporting staff member should provide relevant details, including the date, time, location, and any available evidence or witnesses related to the incident.

Investigation

The designated leadership team member will initiate a thorough investigation into the reported misconduct incident promptly and with confidentiality.



The investigation may involve interviewing involved parties, reviewing any available evidence, such as surveillance footage or witness statements, and consulting with other relevant staff members as necessary. Parents will only be made aware of their individual student's involvement in an incident.

Restoration Process

If the investigation establishes that a student has engaged in misconduct, including theft, damaging property, or actions that break trust or cause harm, the student will be subject to the restoration process.

The purpose of restoration is to hold the student accountable for their actions, facilitate their understanding of the impact of their misconduct, and support their personal growth and responsibility.

Restoration may include one or more of the following actions, depending on the severity of the incident and the student's age:

1. Apology
2. Restitution of damaged property
3. Educational intervention
4. Parental involvement
5. Community service
6. Restorative circles

Documentation

The leadership team at Sankofa Montessori will maintain a confidential record of the incident, investigation process, and restorative measures undertaken. Documentation will include relevant details, actions taken, any agreed-upon plans for monitoring the student's progress, and efforts made to prevent future incidents.

Incident Review Process

After a major incident is reported, the administrative team will complete the following steps to confirm a consequence and communicate with the families of all involved students.

1. Gather information: Talk to all involved parties and try to get a clear understanding of what happened. Do a pulse check on how the involved parties are processing what happened and what support they may need to restore and rebuild a relationship, property or privilege. The goal will be to get all the facts before deciding on a consequence.



2. Reinforce expectations: Remind all involved parties of expectations for behavior and explain the impact of the decisions made. Based on the severity of the decision, there may be a loss of privilege immediately or a warning about consequences for not following expectations.
3. Determine a consequence: The consequence will be developmentally appropriate and consistent with the Code of Conduct. Depending on the severity of the behavior and the school's policies, a consequence could include a warning, a loss of privilege, a phone call or note home to the parent, or a plan. For more severe incidents, suspension or expulsion may be the consequence. Families are notified of all incident referrals.
4. Follow up: Check in with involved parties again later to see how they all are feeling and whether the behavior has improved. Reinforce positive behavior and continue to provide guidance and support as needed.

Pursuant to OCGA Section 20-2-735, discipline will be in proportion to the severity of the behavior leading to the discipline. The prior disciplinary history of the student during the current school year and other relevant factors will be taken into account and due process procedures required by federal and state law will be followed. However, it is important for all students and parents to note that the circumstances of particular violations may warrant more severe consequences even on the first violation. The School reserves the right, in school administration's sole and exclusive discretion, to take any and all actions necessary to protect its students, provide a safe and secure learning environment, and to ensure the orderly operation of the educational process including providing more severe consequences for certain violations.

Determination of the severity of an infraction is at the discretion of the Sankofa Administration. In cases of severe infractions, local, state, or federal legal authorities may be contacted.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The school prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying (including cyber-bullying and sexual harassment) of any student on school property or at a school sponsored event. Bullying is defined as any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so or any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm. It can be non-verbal, verbal, emotional or physical.



Our definition of bullying is any repeated or intentional act or behavior, whether verbal, physical, or written, that targets an individual or group with the intent to harm, threaten, or cause fear. Examples of bullying include but are not limited to name-calling, physical aggression, social exclusion, cyberbullying, and intimidation.

Cyberbullying/Electronic Bullying: Bullying can occur on school property or through school technology resources but can also occur through the use of electronic communications. Whether or not that communication originated on school property with school technology resources, if the electronic communication is directed specifically at students or school personnel, maliciously intended for the purpose threatening the safety of those specified or substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school, creates a reasonable fear of harm to the students' or school personnel's person or property or has a high likelihood of succeeding in that purpose it is considered a form of cyberbullying.

We have put in place the following procedures to prevent and address bullying in our school:

1. **Reporting:** Students, staff, volunteers and parents are encouraged to report bullying behavior to the school administration immediately. The school will take all reports of bullying seriously, and we will investigate each incident thoroughly. No person who reports bullying will be retaliated against by any Sankofa Montessori employee.
2. **Investigation and response:** Once a report of bullying is received, the school administration will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation. This will include speaking with the victim, the alleged bully, and any witnesses. If the investigation reveals that bullying has occurred, the school will take appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with our school's code of conduct.
3. **Consequences:** Consequences for bullying may include, but are not limited to, counseling, suspension, expulsion, or involvement of law enforcement. The severity and frequency of the bullying, the age of the students involved, and any other relevant factors will be considered when determining appropriate consequences.
4. **Support for targeted students:** We are committed to providing support for students who have been targeted by bullying. This may include check ins, referrals for outside counseling, academic support, and other interventions to promote their well-being.
5. **Prevention and education:** We believe that prevention and education are key to promoting a culture of respect and preventing bullying. We will provide ongoing education and training to students, staff, and parents on bullying prevention, positive communication, and conflict resolution.



Students on Section 504 Plans and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) qualify for the protections of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). If a student with a disability is targeted by bullying, Sankofa Montessori will take immediate and appropriate action to investigate or otherwise determine what occurred. If the school's investigation reveals that bullying based on disability created a hostile environment, Sankofa will take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the bullying, eliminate the hostile environment, prevent it from recurring, and, as appropriate, remedy its effects.

If the student is caught in another bullying incident, then he/she will be suspended. In order for the student to return to school the parent must meet with the leadership of Sankofa Montessori to develop a plan for the bullying to stop.

Students, parents/guardians and other stakeholders should report incidents of bullying to an administrator or teacher using Sankofa's procedures or by calling the Georgia Department of Education's 1-877 SAY-STOP (1-877-729-7867) School Safety Hotline. Please note: Any form of electronic bullying (cyberbullying) using school equipment, school networks, e-mail systems or committed at school is strictly prohibited.

Disciplinary Hearings

Student Questioning by Officials

School Administrators have the responsibility and authority to question students for the purpose of maintaining a safe and orderly school environment. Though it is important to inform parents about issues of concern, parental consent or presence is not required prior to the questioning of students.

- **Department of Family and Child Services (DFCS):** DFCS officials investigating suspected child abuse are permitted to conduct reasonable interviews and inspections of children. Notice to parents is neither required nor desirable when the object of that investigation may be the parents. If the investigation involves suspected child abuse by individuals other than those residing in the child's household, parents will be informed that such interviews are being requested, if prior notification is possible.
- **Guardian Ad Litem:** The Guardian Ad Litem is a trained professional appointed by the court to represent the best interests of minor children in court cases. Any request to interview a student or to inspect the student's school record should be submitted, in writing, along with court documentation establishing the Guardian Ad Litem relationship with the child.



Disciplinary Process for Students with Disabilities

Students who are served under IDEA (Special Education) or under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are entitled to certain additional rights in the area of discipline based upon their qualification for services under these federal laws.

Students for whom an IEP includes specific disciplinary guidelines will be disciplined in accordance with those guidelines. If the disciplinary guidelines appear not to be effective or if there is a concern for the health or safety of the student or others, the matter will be immediately referred to the Special Education Team.

Students for whom an IEP does not include specific disciplinary guidelines may be disciplined in accordance with standard school policy relating to each infraction if it is determined by the IEP Team that the behavior is not a manifestation of his or her IEP.

Parents/ guardians may request a hearing to challenge the manifestation determination and the child shall remain in his or her current educational placement while the hearing is pending.

A student suspected of having a disability shall be referred to the IEP Team for evaluation.

Uniforms and Dress Code

Our policy is intentionally written to minimize the risk of students missing instructional time as a result of dress code. It is also written to minimize the time spent by teachers in addressing dress code.

Dress Code Philosophy and Equity Statement

Our values are:

- All students should be able to dress comfortably for school and engage in the educational environment without fear of or actual unnecessary discipline or body shaming.
- Student dress code enforcement should not result in unnecessary barriers to school attendance.
- School staff should be trained and able to use student/body-positive language to explain the code and to address code violations.
- Teachers should focus on teaching without the additional and often uncomfortable burden of dress code enforcement.

Our uniform policy is designed to accomplish several goals:

- Relieve social pressure to wear certain brands or styles that might not be viable or sustainable options financially for all families



- Provide students and families with a predictable option of clothing choices for school each day
- Maintain a safe learning environment in classes where protective or supportive clothing is needed, such as science lab (eye or body protection), dance (bare feet, tights/leotards), or PE (athletic attire/shoes).
- Allow students to choose from a variety of uniform options.
- Allow students to wear clothing that expresses their self-identified gender.
- Allow students to wear religious attire without fear of discipline or discrimination.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing or accessories with offensive images or language, including profanity, hate speech, and pornography.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing or accessories that denote, suggest, display or reference alcohol, drugs or related paraphernalia or other illegal conduct or activities.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing or accessories that will interfere with the operation of the school, disrupt the educational process, invade the rights of others, or create a reasonably foreseeable risk of such interference or invasion of rights.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing or accessories that reasonably can be construed as being or including content that is racist, lewd, vulgar or obscene, or that reasonably can be construed as containing fighting words, speech that incites others to imminent lawless action, defamatory speech, or threats to others
- Ensure that all students are treated equitably regardless of race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income or body type/size

Uniform Policy

All uniforms are required to be purchased from our exclusive vendor due to contractual obligations, therefore families are not permitted to create their own uniform items or any additional items with our logo.

We are not able to license or lend our logo for unofficial school use as per our policy approved by the Governing Board.

Sankofa Montessori students are required to wear a uniform daily. We will provide assistance to any families who are unable to afford the cost of the uniform.

The school is responsible for seeing that student attire does not interfere with the health or safety of any student, that student attire does not contribute to a hostile or intimidating atmosphere for any student, and that dress code enforcement does not reinforce or increase marginalization or oppression of any group based on race, sex, gender identity, gender



expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income, or body type/size.

- **Basic principle: certain body parts must be covered for all students at all times.** Clothes must be worn in a way such that undergarments, buttocks, upper thighs, and chests are fully covered with opaque fabric.

- **Students must wear**, while following the basic principle above:

Sankofa Montessori Shirt /Top/Dress:

- Approved school shirt or dress **with Sankofa Montessori logo** (Sankofa Montessori polo shirt, Sankofa Montessori t-shirt, etc.)
- Long or loose-fitting shirts must be **tucked-in**.
- Coats are not to be worn inside the classroom. If needed for comfort, children **may wear a solid-colored jacket**, sweatshirt, sweater, fleece, pullover, or cardigan with no logo or adornment (other than Sankofa Montessori outerwear).

Pants / Skirts / Bottoms:

- **Solid-colored slacks, khakis, shorts, or skirts.** Shorts/skirts should be at least **knee-length**.
- Leggings or tights are permitted in solid colors, provided that they be worn underneath skirts or shorts (except that Kindergarten students do not need the layer over leggings).
- Must be **plain** – **no** markings, logos, patterns, textures (including no “distressed” garments, etc.)
- No sweatpants, athletic gear, jeggings, or jeans.
- Pants must be worn at the waist; **no sagging** of pants will be permitted.

Footwear:

- Shoes should be **easy for children to put on and remove** independently.
- **Shoes must be worn at all times**, both indoors and outdoors.
- For safety, no heels, “heelies,” flip flops, or anything dangling, no open toed shoes
- Socks or tights must be plain and solid colored.

- **Students cannot wear:**

- Violent language or images
- Images or language depicting drugs or alcohol (or any illegal item or activity)
- Hate speech, profanity, pornography
- Images or language that creates a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class or consistently marginalized groups
- Any clothing that reveals visible undergarments
- Swimsuits (except as required in class or athletic practice)
- Accessories that could be considered dangerous or could be used as a weapon



- Hats, scarves, or other accessories that are not core to the students' outfit and could become easily lost

Other:

- **Jewelry:** One pair of stud earrings only. No other jewelry may be visible (e.g. necklaces must be under one's shirt, etc). For safety, no rings or bracelets may be worn to school by students.
- Change of clothes: Kindergarten children are required to have **one emergency change of pants and underwear** kept at school.
- **Physical education shirts:** There is no gym uniform and students may not change clothes for P.E. or recess.
- **Uniforms on field lessons:** Due to safety reasons, students must wear their uniform on field lessons. In the event of an emergency, wearing the uniform will allow staff to quickly identify a student.

Dress Code Enforcement

To ensure effective and equitable enforcement of this dress code, school staff shall enforce the dress code consistently using the requirements below. School leadership and staff shall not have discretion to vary the requirements in ways that lead to discriminatory enforcement.

- To ensure consistent implementation of the dress code policy, the Student Culture and Discipline Coordinator will be responsible for completing an informal uniform check as a part of Morning Arrival.
- The first time a student is wearing an item that is not in compliance with the uniform policy, the student will receive a "Out of Uniform Notice" which will inform the parent/guardian of the specific uniform infraction and serve as a reminder of the expectations surrounding our uniforms.
- The second time the student is wearing a uniform that is not in compliance with the uniform policy, the parent will receive a parent phone call to inform them of the specific uniform infraction
- The third time the student wears a uniform that is not in compliance with the uniform policy, the parent will receive an email.
- The fourth time the student wears a uniform that is not in compliance with the uniform policy, the parent will be required to come in for an in person conference.
- If a student repeatedly receives an out of uniform, the school will conference with the family to understand and resolve any hindrances to consistent uniform use.

- If necessary, students' parent(s)/guardian(s) may be called during the school day to bring alternative clothing for the student to wear for the remainder of the day.



- No student should be affected by dress code enforcement because of racial identity, sex assigned at birth, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, cultural or religious identity, household income, body size/type, or body maturity.
- School staff shall not enforce the school's dress code more strictly against transgender and gender nonconforming students than other students.
- Students should not be shamed or required to display their body in front of others (students, parent(s)/guardian(s), or staff) in school. "shaming" includes, but is not limited to:
 - kneeling or bending over to check attire fit;
 - measuring straps or skirt length;
 - asking students to account for their attire in the classroom or in hallways in front of others;
 - calling out students in spaces, in hallways, or in classrooms about perceived dress code violations in front of others; in particular, directing students to correct sagged pants that do not expose the entire undergarment, or confronting students about visible bra straps, since visible waistbands and straps on undergarments are permitted; and, accusing students of "distracting" other students with their clothing.