



**Community Handbook**  
For 2023-24 School Year  
Last reviewed/approved 10/26/2022.

*Sankofa Montessori shall distribute a copy of this handbook and enclosed policies to all students and their parent(s)/guardian(s), in a language they can understand. It shall also be posted on the [school website](#) and available for review in the Main Office.*

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## SECTION 1: ABOUT SANKOFA MONTESSORI

### Welcome to Sankofa Montessori!

#### Vision

To design more purposeful futures.

#### Mission

At Sankofa Montessori, we utilize the Montessori model of learning to provide our children with a culturally responsive, child and family-centered Montessori education to empower every child with the knowledge, skills, and agency to lead a life of purpose. The meaning of Sankofa is to honor the past to make way for the future. It symbolizes our philosophy of perpetual reflection and growth at the center of our work with our students, families, and communities.

#### Our Values

<b>Love</b>	We act in service of love by building deep and meaningful relationships and always going above and beyond for each other.
<b>Ownership</b>	With shared ownership of our vision and mission, we deliver on our commitments, take the initiative, and find ways to elevate our excellence every day.
<b>Purpose</b>	We operate with intention and urgency in all that we do to ensure that every child has the opportunity to lead a life of purpose.
<b>Reflection</b>	We cultivate a growth mindset by making time to reflect on what we do and why we do it to ensure that we are continuously improving.
<b>Joy</b>	We have fun, we celebrate each other, and we show up as our full selves.

#### Governing Board

The Sankofa Montessori Governing Board of Directors is charged with the management of the affairs of the not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation, Sankofa Montessori, Inc., and must pursue such policies and principles in accordance with law, the provisions of the Articles of Incorporation, Sankofa Montessori Bylaws, and any written charter entered into by the Board. As trustees of public funds, The Governing Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring the school's long-term financial stability and integrity of the charter. The board sets the strategic



plan and is responsible for overseeing the effective, faithful execution of the mission through the school's program and operations. Directors recognize that in order to fulfill these obligations, they pledge to personally contribute needed resources and/or talents to maintain the school's success. Please visit [www.sankofamontessori.org](http://www.sankofamontessori.org) for more specific information regarding the duties and obligations of the Governing Board of Directors as well as a list of current members.

### **Leadership Staff**

Sarah Harvey's educational career started over a decade ago as a 6th through 8th-grade Special education teacher. She has served as an instructional coach, a founding Director of Operations for a Graduate school of education and later as a Senior Director of National Strategy and Operations. Through her educational career, Ms. Harvey realized the role of the teacher in harnessing each child's inner drive to learn was the most powerful tool in determining academic outcomes for children. For Ms. Harvey, the educational pedagogy that most embodied this educational belief was the Montessori pedagogy and upon realizing there were no tuition-free charter Montessori options for families in the Atlanta area, she sought to found, along side community, Sankofa Montessori. Ms. Harvey earned a BA in Political Science and Psychology from Washington College, a Masters in Special Education from Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University and her Masters in Industrial-Organizational Psychology from the Extension School at Harvard University.



### **Director of Student Support and Services Rhushanda Barnes**

Rhushanda Barnes has worked in the field of education for the last 12 years in both the public and charter school space holding roles as a special education teacher, response to intervention specialist, content facilitator, instructional coach, Student Support Coordinator, and Assistant Principal of Scholar Support. Ms. Barnes is passionate about helping schools improve their inclusive practices and is relentless in her pursuit to ensure students in need of additional support receive what they need to be successful in and out of the classroom. Ms. Barnes is excited to join the Sankofa community to build our Student Support program where all





students are seen and achieve at their highest level. Rhushanda earned her BA in Political Science from Howard University and a M.ED in Special Education from Kennesaw State University. In her spare time, Ms. Barnes is often out exploring Atlanta with her husband and 2-year old son or enjoying a good brunch with family and friends.

Associate Director of Operations  
**Assata Hatch**

Associate Director of Academics  
**Chantille Chelich**

Chantille Chelich has been a Montessori educator for 12 years, 7 of which have been in public Montessori schools. She has served as a Primary teacher for 5 years in Florida, a Lower Elementary teacher for 3 years in Dallas, a Montessori Instructional Specialist, and

Manager of Student Culture and Family Engagement  
**Jasmine See**

### **Complete List of Public Policies**

Our current list of public policies can be found at [this link](#), and is continuously updated as new policies are passed.

### **Charter Information**

Georgia law grants groups the right (or “charter”) to start new public schools that report to the local school district and to their own independent governing boards. By freeing charter schools from many of the constraints of traditional public schools, charter school law in Georgia intends for charter schools to “increase student achievement through academic and organizational innovation.” Charter schools are public schools funded through national and state funds, as well as local school fundraising. The current Sankofa Montessori charter agreement is through the State Charter School Commission and runs from July 1, 2023-June 30, 2028. Please visit the [Sankofa Montessori website](#) to view the complete charter agreement.



## SECTION 2: THE FAMILY EXPERIENCE

### Hours of Operation

7:30 AM-3:00 PM

### Who to Contact with Questions

Question area	Who to contact
I have questions about my child's academic and/or social-emotional progress	Your child's teacher
I have questions about homework	Your child's teacher
I have questions about school activities (field trips, etc.)	Your child's teacher
I have questions about after-school or enrichment programming	Main Office
I am worried that my child is being bullied. If your child experiences bullying, contact their teacher or administrator, especially if the harassment or bullying involves another Sankofa Montessori	Your child's teacher or Manager of Student Culture and Family



student, occurs during school, and/or occurs during a school-related activity. Please also see our <a href="#">bullying policy</a> for more information.	Engagement
I have a question about my child's IEP/504 plan	Special Education Director
I think my child may have special needs	Special Education Director
My child has an allergy	Main Office
My child needs medication during the day	Main Office
I don't know whether to send my child to school because they may be sick	Main Office
My child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness	Main Office
My child will be absent or late	Main Office
I will be picking up my child early on a given day	Main Office
I need to get an emergency message to my student during the day	Main Office
I need help ordering uniforms	Main Office
I need help with free/reduced lunch	Main Office
I need a copy of the calendar or other materials	Main Office
I would like to enter my student's siblings into the lottery for next year	Manager of Student Culture and Family Engagement
I would like to volunteer	Manager of Student Culture and Family Engagement
My family would like support with housing, food, clothing, or	Manager of Student



community resources	Culture and Family Engagement
I would like to make a donation of goods, services, or money to the school	Executive Director
I would like to escalate my question or concern. <i>Please see our <a href="#">Grievance Policy</a>. We ask that you start with your child's teacher and then go on to the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture, because it is most likely that they can solve the problem directly.</i>	

All members of the Sankofa Montessori staff will make every effort to respond to phone calls and e-mails during the school week within 72 hours or two business day, though circumstances may arise that delay a response. Please never hesitate to be in touch with questions, concerns, or suggestions.

#### Contact Information

- Main Office, \_\_\_\_\_, [info@sankofamontessori.org](mailto:info@sankofamontessori.org)
- Sarah Harvey, Founder/Executive Director, (470)-502-4921, [sharvey@sankofamontessori.org](mailto:sharvey@sankofamontessori.org)
- Director of Student Support and Services
- Associate Director of Operations
- Associate Director of Academics
- Manage of Student Culture and Family Engagement

#### Enrollment and Attendance Zones

Sankofa Montessori will accept applications for Kindergarten, First, and Second Grades for the 2023-2024 school year.

The attendance zone for eligible applicants is any residence within the State of Georgia. Class size is at the discretion of the Executive Director, with Board approval, as long as within legal limits.

#### Lottery

If the number of timely applicants received by Sankofa Montessori exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building, Sankofa Montessori shall ensure that such applicants have an equal chance of being admitted through a random-selection lottery. The lottery will be



open to the public and advertised in advance. An unbiased third party will witness and certify the validity of the lottery.

A detailed description of Sankofa Montessori's lottery policy and procedures can be found on the [Sankofa Montessori website](#).

### **Withdrawal From School**

In the event that a student needs to withdraw from school, an email should be sent to [info@sankofamontessori.org](mailto:info@sankofamontessori.org) one week before withdrawal, stating the date of the child's last day in school, new address, and new school. This will allow the office to prepare the necessary forms, so the child's records can be sent to the new school. Additionally, Sankofa Montessori is authorized to withdraw a student who has missed more than 10 consecutive days of school due to unexcused absences or is no longer a resident of Georgia.

### **Annual Calendar**

Our current annual calendar can be found at [this link](#).

### **Attendance**

Sankofa Montessori's priority is for every child to be with our community every day. Attending school and being on time are critical to our children's and our school's success. Students of school age have a right to a free public school education; they have a responsibility to attend school. Unless excused by the office assistant, students are expected to be in school on time every day.

The State Legislature has recognized the importance of regular attendance by enacting a compulsory attendance law for students under the age of 16. In addition to the importance for our students' success, student attendance rates impact the school's College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) State accountability score and goals in our charter contract with the State.

### **Absences**

If a student must be absent, families must notify the Main Office prior to 8:00 a.m. on the day of the absence. Upon returning to school the student should bring a note explaining the absence. As well, if a student is going to be absent for medical appointments or family-related reasons, the Main Office should be notified prior to the absence and any prolonged absences (defined as three days or more) should be communicated to the Main Office.

### ***Defining excused/unexcused absences***



In accordance with the provisions of state board rule 160-5-1-.10, Student Attendance, Sankofa Montessori defines **acceptable excuses for being absent from school as:**

- Personal illness of the student and/or a situation in which attendance in school would endanger the health of the student or the health of others.
- Serious illness or death in the immediate family of the student that would reasonably necessitate absence from school.
- Special and recognized religious holidays observed by the faith of the student that necessitate absence from school.
- Mandates by the school or other governmental agencies, such as pre-induction physical examination for service in the armed forces, a court order or out-of-school suspension.
- Weather or other environmental conditions preventing a student from getting to school or rendering school attendance hazardous to the health or safety of the student.
- Voter registration or voting in a public election, not to exceed one (1) day per school year.

**Upon return to school from any absence, the student shall bring to the school a note, signed by the parent/legal guardian, stating the reason for the absence.** A student who has an emergency necessitating absence from school for a portion of the school day must be present at school at least for one-half of the instructional day

#### ***Notice of Compulsory School Attendance Law***

Pursuant to state law O.C.G.A § 20-2-690.1 each parent and student shall receive notice of the Compulsory School Attendance Law, which our school shares as part of student registration, as well as in this handbook. Each parent, guardian, or person having control or charge of any child between the ages of 6 and 16 are required to enroll and send said child to a public school, private school, or any home study program that meets the requirements for public school, private school, or any home study program. Consequences & Penalties for Failure to Comply with the Compulsory School Attendance Law:

- Any parent, guardian, or person who has control or charge of children and violates the Compulsory Attendance Law shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. Upon conviction the parent, guardian, or person having control or charge of a child or children shall be subject to a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00, imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, community service, or any combination of the penalties at the discretion of the Court.
- Each day absence from school in excess of five (5) unexcused days of absence after notice has been given to the parent, guardian, or person having control or charge of a child or children shall constitute a separate offense of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law.



- After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent, guardian, or person having control or charge of a child or children of five (5) unexcused absences without response, the school system shall send a notice to the parent, guardian, or person having control or charge of a child or children by certified mail return receipt requested.
- Violation of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law shall be referred to the Juvenile Court of competent jurisdiction.

Our Office Assistant calls all students with unexcused absences to determine the reason for their absence, troubleshoot any barriers to attendance (e.g. transportation), encourage/affirm the importance of having the student at school each day. Select [this link](#) for more detailed information regarding attendance procedure.

### **Late Arrival**

A student is tardy when he/she arrives at school after 8:01 AM. Students arriving must be signed in by their parents or guardian. The Office Assistant will issue a late pass to students who arrive late.

### **Early Checkout**

We ask that you do not pick up students early, as this is very disruptive to the other students at the school. So as to minimize disruption to our dismissal process, families who come to pick up a child after 2:30 PM will have to wait until our dismissal time of 3:00PM. If daytime appointments are needed, please utilize Wednesday afternoons after 1:30 PM when our school does weekly early release.

### **Late pickup**

Dismissal is from 3:00pm-3:30pm. At 3:35 pm all remaining students will be automatically placed in aftercare with a drop in fee of \$25.

### **Student Abandonment Procedure**

Sankofa Montessori is committed to ensuring the safety of all students. If a student is not picked up by the designated end time, the school will make every effort to contact the parent or guardian. In the event that a student has not been picked up after all attempts have been made to reach a parent guardian or emergency contacts the following measures will be taken. In the event that a student is abandoned at a school or at a Sankofa Montessori-sanctioned activity and a parent or guardian cannot be reached at the close of the day or event the following steps should be implemented after a one-hour grace period:

- Step 1: All students who are not picked up after the end of the school day will be dropped off at after care.



- Step 2: For children who are not picked up after care, every effort will be made to contact the parent or guardian and all emergency contacts. ***If family or emergency contact cannot be reached after an hour of the aftercare program, the school will leave a message advising the guardian that the police department will be contacted as a next step per the Student Abandonment Procedure.***
- Step 3: If the parent/guardian cannot be located after 60 minutes, the Lead of the after care program will notify the Associate Director of Operations (Associate Director of Operations will notify the Manager of Student Culture and Family Engagement and Executive Director).
- Step 4: If after 1 hour the parent/guardian/emergency contacts cannot be reached, the Associate Director of Operations will contact the police department and Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS).
  - Staff member is required to remain with the student until the police arrives or until student has been released to a guardian or local authority
  - Staff member will provide details of the event and parent contact information to the officer and/or case manager
  - Staff member will record all contact information of the police officer and case manager which should include name badge/ID number and phone number
  - Staff member will release student into the custody of the police officer or DFCS case manager if necessary
  - Staff members will document the event using the Student Incident Report Form. A copy should be provided to the school Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture and placed in the student's permanent record folder
- The police department and DFCS will follow their internal protocols which may include a visit to the child's home for further investigation. The Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture will follow-up with the family, police department, and/or DFCS.

### **After School and Enrichment**

Participation in school-sponsored enrichment activities is an excellent way for a student to develop talents, receive individual recognition, and build strong friendships with other students; participation, however, is a paid program that operates outside the school day.

### **Activities, Field Studies, and Field Trips**

Student-directed field studies are a key aspect of our rigorous academic program at the elementary level (grades 1-6). With adult guidance, small groups of children work together to plan outings related to the topics they are studying. For instance, a small group studying plants and soil might plan a trip to a farm, or children studying the human body might plan a trip to a hospital. The children take responsibility for making the phone calls needed to set up the trip,



scheduling an interview with an adult expert, budgeting for the outing, and planning how to get to the site.

In addition to Field Studies, classes may participate in field trips throughout the year.

During school-sponsored events and/or activities off-campus, all school rules and policies, including those outlined in this handbook, are applicable. Students are required to adhere to the same rules, policies, and behavioral expectations at an off-campus school-sponsored event or activity as if they were in the school building. In other words, student misconduct during an off-campus school-sponsored event and/or activity may result in disciplinary consequences, and may result in the same disciplinary consequences as such misconduct on school grounds.

There will be one comprehensive permission slip for the year that is included during registration. Families are asked to sign, date and acknowledge permission. A parent or guardian must provide written consent in order for a student to attend. Please note that verbal consent is not sufficient. A student may be considered ineligible for a trip/event for reasons including, but not limited to involvement in a recent disciplinary incident (level three infraction in our code of conduct). Students who are considered ineligible for attending a trip will be notified at least 48 hours in advance, and be required to attend school that day, and provided alternative academic assignments.

### **Student Counts**

Before transporting students to or from any field trip, the adult teacher and at least one other adult will do a complete roll call to ensure all students are accounted for. At any given time each staff member and chaperone should know the number of students they are currently responsible for.

### **Financial Limitations**

There are no required field trip fees, and the costs for most field trips and field studies will be covered by the school. In the case that there is a cost associated with a trip, students cannot be excluded from a field trip based on the inability to pay the accompanying fee. If a family would like support paying any accompanying field trip fees, the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) can contact their teacher or Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture prior to the date the field trip permission slip is due back to school so the school has sufficient time to make alternative arrangements.

### **Inclement Weather/Emergency Dismissal**

When severe weather creates hazardous conditions, the regular school schedule may be suspended to ensure the safety of students and staff. Sankofa Montessori is not a part of



Clayton County School District and will not always have the same decisions on weather emergencies. If a potentially hazardous event occurs prior to the beginning of the school day, we will communicate with families via Transparent classroom as well as publicize via internet platforms (school webpage ([www.sankofamontessori.org](http://www.sankofamontessori.org)), social media (Instagram, Facebook, etc.), and local radio or television broadcasts. If emergency early dismissal is necessary, we will communicate dismissal instructions with families via Transparent classroom as well as publicize via internet platforms (school webpage, social media, etc.).

### Emergency Drills

In each classroom are posted charts that indicate the exits and safe areas to be used for safety drills. A fire drill is held twice in the first month of school and then once every month thereafter. Students are expected to file out of the building in an orderly manner without talking or running. Classes will remain on the grounds until the “all clear” signal is given from the Associate Director of Operations or a member of the leadership team. All schools participate in the state-wide tornado drill, and each school has a safety plan for other emergencies with corresponding drills planned throughout the year. For more information, please review the staff emergency preparedness procedure [here](#).

In summary, our emergency procedures cover:

- **Lockdown Protocols:** In the event of a lockdown, Administration or Operations staff will inform school staff in-person and/or via the intercom feature on class telephones.
  - **Lockdown (Interior):** Threat is inside the building; close and lock all exterior/classroom doors; open exterior window blinds or curtains to allow exterior visibility into the classroom.
  - **Lockdown (Exterior):** Threat is outside the building; all students and staff must remain in their location from the time the lockdown is announced until it is lifted.
  - **Lockdown (Full):** Threat is inside the building; all students and staff must remain in their location from the time the lockdown is announced until it is lifted.
  - **Shelter in Place:** Used to protect school occupants from external threats such as tornadoes, some chemical plumes, other natural disasters, and man-made threats.
  - **All Clear:** No longer at risk. Resume normal school day.
- **Bomb and Fire Evacuation Protocols:**
  - The teacher(s) brings their student roster/backpack that includes updated emergency contact information for students and parents.
  - The teacher(s) will be the last person to exit a classroom, and will ensure that all occupants have safely evacuated after an alarm.



- The teacher(s) will assist any physically or otherwise handicapped students in exiting safely.
- The teacher(s) will bring students in an orderly fashion to the designated exit and meet the rest of the school in the designated meeting place.
- The teacher(s) will take student attendance using roster and record on green/red cards.
- **Shelter in Place/Tornado/Earthquake Drill:**
  - All teachers and students will go into the hallway by the wall closest to their door, and get in the “DUCK, COVER, and HOLD ON” position as close as possible to a wall, no one will be allowed to move or leave until the all clear is called. Head should be towards the wall with hands covering the back of the head.
- **Medical Emergency:** see [Medical Emergency Response section.](#)

## **Illness, Injury, Health, and Wellness**

### **General Health Guidance**

Health and safety are a top priority at Sankofa Montessori. Before a student can enroll in the school, the school must have on file the following forms:

- **Medical Requirements Checklist.** This form contains records showing that the student has: 1) up-to-date immunizations; and 2) permission to receive screening for vision, hearing, and scoliosis.
- **Health Information Form.** This form provides important information about a student’s emergency contacts, health care providers, and insurance. Most importantly, it gives the school permission to initiate emergency medical treatment in the event that a parent or guardian cannot be reached.
- **[Physician’s Request for Administration of Medication Form.](#)** If a student requires medication while in school, the school must have on file an Authorization to Dispense Medication form, completed by the student's physician and parent. No student is allowed to bring medication to the school without the school's full knowledge and the appropriately completed form.

### **Nursing Policy**

Sankofa Montessori will hire a full time clinic aide to be on duty for the 7 hours of the daily instructional schedule. Students, staff, and families will be able to share medical concerns with the clinic aide, and the clinic aide will contact parents/guardians if there is a medical issue with a student in the course of the school day.



### **Sick Policy**

When a child becomes ill at school with any of the symptoms listed below, the school clinic aide at Sankofa Montessori contacts the parent/guardian immediately so that the child can be picked up within one hour. This ensures prompt medical attention, when necessary, and minimizes the spread of infection and communicable diseases. Please keep contact information updated on school records to include current phone numbers for home, work, cell, or a nearby friend or relative.

If the illness is contagious, a doctor's note is required before the student is allowed to return to school. The child may return to school 24 hours after his/her symptoms have subsided without the use of fever-reducing medication.

To prevent the spread of illness, please keep children at home if any of the following symptoms are present:

- Fever – 100.4°F or greater.
- Vomiting – two or more occasions within the past 24 hours.
- Diarrhea – two or more watery stools, or any bloody stool, within the past 24 hours.
- Rashes – especially with fever or itching.
- Eye discharge or conjunctivitis (pink eye) – eye is not clear or 24 hours has not passed since antibiotic treatment began.
- Change in behavior – child expresses not feeling well and/or is not able to keep up with program activities.
- Head lice – live bugs are present and/or head has not yet been treated

### **Infectious Disease Policy**

#### **Definitions**

“Communicable Disease” means a disease that can be directly or indirectly transmitted from one person to another.

#### **Protections**

1. No student shall be denied access to nor shall an otherwise qualified individual be denied employment in educational programs of the School solely because he or she is infected with a Communicable Disease.
2. A student or employee who is infected with a Communicable Disease will remain in his or her educational or employment setting unless he or she presents a significant risk of contagion as determined by the School after consultation with the student's or employee's physician or other public health official knowledgeable about the disease if



in the judgment of the Executive Director if it is necessary to consult a private physician.

### **Prevention of Transmission**

1. Each year the Executive Director shall provide educational opportunities and review this policy for all employees to become informed concerning transmissions of Communicable Disease infection.
2. Education and policy review shall include procedures to reduce the risk of transmitting infection of Communicable Diseases, including precautions to be taken in handling bodily fluids and blood whenever necessary. Handling blood and body fluids shall be in a manner consistent with the Center for Disease Control's Universal Precautions for Handling Blood and Body Fluids.
3. Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) shall be made available and shall be appropriate to tasks with exposure potential.

### **Identification of Potential Risks**

1. When there is reasonable suspicion to believe that an employee or student has a Communicable Disease, the school clinic aide and/or the Executive Director shall counsel that person immediately, or if the person is a minor, shall notify the student's parent/guardian of the need to obtain an appropriate medical evaluation.
2. Whether or not an infected individual presents a significant risk of contagion shall be determined based upon reasonable medical judgment given the state of medical knowledge about:
  - a. The nature of the risk; i.e., how long the disease is transmitted;
  - b. The duration of the risk; i.e., how long the carrier is infectious;
  - c. The severity of the risk; i.e., the degree of potential harm to third parties; and
  - d. The probability that the disease will be transmitted and will cause varying degrees of harm.
3. Once the student's or employee's medical condition has been determined, the Executive Director shall consult with the student's or employee's physician or other public health official knowledgeable about the disease.
4. If an accommodation that does not impose undue financial hardship or administrative burdens can be made, then neither student nor employee shall be denied the right to participate in School programs or to be employed by the School.
5. In order that the Executive Director may have time to obtain a reasonable medical judgment concerning the student or employee who is infected by a contagious disease, the Executive Director is authorized to remove the infected student or employee from School programs or employment for a period not to exceed ten days during which time



the School shall make a decision as to whether the student or employee can be accommodated and does not pose a significant risk to others.

6. The student or employee shall be excluded only if the School Leader determines after consultation as provided above that the Communicable Disease is of such nature or at a stage that the individual should not be in an educational setting.

### **Privacy Rights**

Neither the School nor its employees shall disclose medical information about a student or employee with Communicable Disease without the consent of the employee or the student or his or her parent or guardian, whichever is applicable, or only as required by law or court order.

### **Immunization Policy**

Sankofa Montessori follows the State of Georgia requirements for childhood vaccinations. Georgia law requires children attending daycare or school to be protected from certain vaccine preventable diseases. The Clayton County Board of Health offers vaccines to protect children and prepare them for school at clinics throughout the county. Georgia law states that families who move to Georgia from another state and enroll their child in a Georgia school for the first time must provide the child's daycare center or school with a Certificate of Immunization (Form #3231) within 30 days of enrollment. This certificate verifies that the child has received the immunizations recommended for his/her age. For more requirements on immunization schedule, please click the link [HERE](#).

Families can obtain this certificate from the child's private physician or from the County Board of Health Department where their child was immunized. Families should bring a complete record of the child's immunizations in order to complete the certificate.

Georgia law allows for two types of exemptions from the immunization requirements: medical and religious. Each child must have one of two items on file—either a valid Georgia Immunization Certificate ([Form 3231](#)) or a signed, notarized statement, which is called an [affidavit of religious exemption](#). A medical exemption must be marked on the Georgia Immunization Certificate (Form 3231). A letter from a physician, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) or physician assistant (PA) attached to the certificate will not be accepted as a medical exemption. It must be marked on the certificate.

### **Vision, Hearing, Dental, and Nutrition Screening**

The parent or guardian of a child being admitted for the first time to a public school shall furnish to the school a properly executed Department of Public Health Form 3300: Certificate of Vision, Hearing, Dental and Nutrition Screening. The screenings reported on the certificate shall have



been conducted within one year prior to the time that the child is admitted for the first time to a public school. Any child admitted to a public school without a Certificate shall present a Certificate within three months following admission. When a child transfers to another school within Georgia, the Certificate and any related follow-up documentation must be forwarded to the new school.

### **Hearing, Vision, and Scoliosis Screening**

Periodically during the school year, students' hearing and vision will be tested by qualified professionals. If any screening indicates that further diagnosis is needed, families will be advised immediately. Consent for these screenings is requested from families as part of their registration paperwork when enrolling at Sankofa Montessori.

### **Medications at School**

In order to ensure the health and safety of children requiring any medication during the school day, the following procedures must be followed:

- [Physician's Request for Administration of Medication Form](#) and a [Student Health and Safety Information Form](#).
- The [Physician's Request for Administration of Medication Form](#) must be signed by the child's physician and parent/guardian. The medication form should be taken to the child's licensed prescriber (doctor, nurse practitioner) for completion and returned to the school Office Assistant. This order must be renewed as needed and at the beginning of each academic year.
- The medication dispensation authorization form requirement applies to all medication, including Children's Tylenol and ibuprofen. If a student needs to take Tylenol, ibuprofen or another over the counter (OTC) medication during the school day, he/she must have on file the authorization signed by a parent or guardian, giving the school permission to administer the medication during the school year.
- No student is allowed to bring medication to school without the school's full knowledge and the appropriately completed form.
- Students are not permitted to transport medications on their own. For students who ride the Special Education bus, families must personally hand all medications to the driver when the student boards the bus. The bus driver will give medicines to a school administrator each morning when the bus arrives at school.
- All medication must be brought to school by an adult in a pharmacy or manufacturer labeled container that is properly labeled with the child's name. Students who have provided the school with medication dispensation authorization forms should bring the medication (other than Tylenol and ibuprofen, which the school will stock in the main office) to the school on the first day, or contact the school to make other arrangements. All medication must be presented in its original container from the



pharmacy and must be brought in by a parent or accompanied by a note from the parent. No student may carry either prescription or over-the-counter medication, including inhalers and EpiPens, at school without the written permission of the Sankofa Montessori Office Assistant.

- The medication dispensation authorization form requirement also applies to asthma inhalers, which will be stored in a locked space in the school building. If a student needs to use his/her asthma inhaler during the school day, he/she should go to the main office to self-administer the inhaler. Accommodations will be made for children who need their inhalers at recess, on field trips and on field studies trips.
- Self-administration of inhalers and EpiPens are allowed when approved in writing by the student's physician, parent(s)/guardian(s), and the Sankofa Montessori Office Assistant.

### **Medical Emergency Response**

At Sankofa Montessori it is our number one priority to keep all staff, and students safe. In an emergency situation, borderline situation, or a situation where it may be unclear whether an emergency exists, we will err on the side of caution and contact 911. Sankofa Montessori has developed this Medical Emergency Response Plan (Plan). Please see below for a high-level summary of that plan:

- **For Minor Emergencies:**
  - Staff will notify the clinic aide and Associate Director of Operations and escort an injured person to the school clinic aide's office.
  - Clinic Aide, Associate Director of Operations or other designated school staff will administer first aid procedures as indicated by the nature of the accident.
  - Clinic Aide, Associate Director of Operations or other designated school staff will notify parents, always.
  - Staff witnessing the accident and/or providing first aid care complete an [incident report](#) as soon as possible.
- **For Major or Life Threatening Emergencies** (*any injury deemed by school staff to need immediate physician care, EMS or transport to a healthcare facility*)
  - ***Either the first school staff person attending to the student or another school staff person calls 911 immediately.***
  - Staff will notify the clinic aide and Associate Director of Operations
  - Staff will escort an injured person who is ambulatory to the school clinic aide's office or notify the school clinic aide if the person cannot be moved.
  - Main office personnel will ensure that designated individuals are directed to remain with the injured or ill person until medical assistance arrives.



- Provide first aid or other Basic Life Support (CPR, rescue breathing, etc.). If CPR or rescue breathing is required, school staff must also retrieve or send other staff to the Automated External Defibrillator (AED). All staff are required to have Basic Life Support training.
- Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture or designee calls the parent or guardian immediately.
- The Associate Director of Operations will notify the Executive Director and Board Chair with a summary email of the incident.

### **Guidelines for Students with Life-Threatening Allergies**

Allergic reactions can span a wide range of severity of symptoms. The most severe and potentially life threatening reaction is anaphylaxis. Sankofa Montessori cannot guarantee to provide an allergen-free environment for all students with life-threatening allergies or prevent any harm to students in emergencies. The goal is to minimize the risk of exposure to food allergens that pose a threat to those students, educate the community, and maintain and regularly update a system-wide protocol for responding to their needs. A system-wide effort requires the cooperation of all groups of people within the system.

The goal of Sankofa Montessori regarding life-threatening allergies is to engage in a system-wide effort to:

- Prevent any occurrence of life-threatening allergic reactions.
- Prepare for any allergic reactions.
- Respond appropriately to any allergy emergencies that arise.

The Office Assistant, in conjunction with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and the primary care provider/allergist, will prepare an Allergy Action Plan/Individual Health Care Plan for any student with a life-threatening allergy.

The plans will be reviewed by the Office Assistant, the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), and primary care provider and/or the student's allergist, and signed off by the child's physician indicating that he/she deems it to be adequate. Multiple copies of the Allergy Action Plan/Individual Health Care Plan will be kept at the school for quick access in the clinic, main office, the student's homeroom, and in the homeroom teacher's emergency binder/backpack.

EpiPens will be available in the Main Office and those prescribed for individual students will be kept in that child's homeroom emergency backpack or, with permission, carried by the child at all times. Staff will be trained to identify and respond to reactions from life-threatening allergies, including the use of EpiPens. Any staff involved with students who have life



threatening allergies will be provided information from the Allergy Action Plan of each of these students.

School staff will take steps to ensure that these classrooms and instructional areas are as allergen-free as possible. During lunch, Sankofa Montessori will encourage “NO FOOD TRADING” and “NO UTENSIL SHARING” to minimize accidental exposure to allergens.

It is requested that each family of a student with a life-threatening allergy inform the Main Office of the child’s allergies prior to the opening of school (or as soon as possible after a diagnosis). Families must arrange to meet with the Office Assistant to develop an Allergy Action Plan/Individual Health Care Plan for the student and provide medical information from the child’s treating physician as needed to write the plans.

In addition, parents should do the following:

- Provide the Main Office with enough up-to-date emergency medications (including EpiPens), so they can be placed in all required locations for the current school year.
- Complete and submit all required medication forms.
- Provide a Medic ALERT ID for their child.
- Provide EpiPen to be taken on field trips, prior to the date of the trip.
- Encourage their child to wash hands before and after handling food.
- Teach their child to recognize the first symptoms of an allergic/anaphylactic reaction and to communicate clearly as soon as she/he feels a reaction is starting.
- Encourage their child NOT to share snacks, lunches, or drinks.
- Encourage their child to take as much responsibility as possible for his/her own safety.
- Help their child understand the seriousness of allergies and the potential consequences of children with allergies by being exposed to allergens.

***Any insect sting, food allergy reaction, or other allergic reaction in students known to have such reactions is an EMERGENCY and staff will CALL 911. All rapid onset (within a few minutes) breathing problems or swelling of the tongue and face are considered EMERGENCIES and staff will CALL 911.***

### **Nut-Free School Policy**

Sankofa Montessori is committed to offering safe educational environments for all students including students with food allergies. Food allergies can be life-threatening. Cooperative efforts between students, families, physicians, and school staff members can help minimize risks. To protect the safety of students who have life-threatening anaphylactic allergies to peanuts and tree nuts, all food products must not contain nuts. Students who have documented anaphylactic reactions to peanut butter and other nut-related products can react



not only by ingestion but also by contact with nuts. This means that just by touching a small amount of peanut or tree nuts, these children could suffer a severe or life-threatening anaphylactic reaction, possibly leading to death. This means that NO peanut butter or products including peanuts or tree nuts will be permitted at Sankofa Montessori during school hours and at any before/after school functions or trips.

Additional guidelines are as follows:

- Do not send any nuts or foods containing peanuts or tree nuts to be eaten for lunch or as classroom snacks or treats.
- If a food containing peanut butter or nuts is brought in, the food will be Ziploc bagged, labeled with a reminder, and sent home with the child at the end of the day.
- All food offered through school activities (including before care, aftercare, and enrichment) will not contain nuts. An ingredient label should be included, as many foods are processed in a facility that also produces nut products. This information is vital for nut-allergic individuals.
- Teachers will not be doing any classroom projects that involve nuts or nut shells.
- Food in the Classroom (including celebrations): Food can be an important part of the curriculum for learning about other cultures, the environment, and healthy lifestyles. If teachers include food as part of a lesson (e.g., planting vegetables and herbs in the school garden and then sampling the produce), they will work to avoid the known food allergies in the classroom and notify all families of the lesson at least one week ahead of time. It is important for parents to alert teachers of allergies at the beginning of the school year.
- Schoolwide Celebrations: Sankofa Montessori hosts many school-wide celebrations involving food on evenings and weekends (summer picnic, fall festival, family potluck, etc). The campus continues to be a nut -free campus during these events,

***Sudden Cardiac Arrest Training: In accordance with O.C.G.A. 20-2-324.5, Sankofa Montessori shall hold information meetings twice per year regarding the symptoms and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest. At such informational meeting, an info sheet on sudden cardiac arrest symptoms and warning signs shall be provided to each student's parent or guardian. For purposes of the statute, "student" is defined as being in grades 6-12.***

### **Diabetes Medical Management Plans**

As part of Sankofa Montessori's student health services program and in accordance with O.C.G.A. §20-2-779, and in accordance with GADOE guidelines for care needed for students with diabetes, the Executive Director is responsible for designating at least two employees to serve as trained diabetes personnel when a student with diabetes is enrolled in the school, when appropriate.



The Executive Director shall develop rules and procedures for the implementation of any diabetes medical management plan submitted by any parent/guardian of a student with diabetes who seeks care while at school or school-sponsored activities.

A student who has been diagnosed with diabetes must have a Diabetes Medical Management Plan (DMMP), signed by a parent/guardian and physician, on file with the school to receive or administer the related medication or treatment while at school or school-sponsored activities. The DMMP must contain all items covered in the plan, including how, when, and under what circumstances the student should receive blood glucose monitoring and injections of insulin as well as steps to take in case of an emergency.

Upon written request by a parent/guardian and if authorized by a student's DMMP, a student with diabetes shall be permitted to perform blood glucose checks, administer insulin through the insulin delivery system the student uses, treat hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia, and otherwise attend to the monitoring and treatment of his or her diabetes in the classroom, in any area of the school or school grounds, and at any school related activity, and he or she shall be permitted to possess on his or her person at all times all necessary supplies and equipment to perform such monitoring and treatment functions.

### **Mandated Reporter Policy**

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5, School employees or volunteers having reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred are required to make a report of such abuse. The statute defines “child abuse” to include physical abuse, neglect, exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation. Under this law, failure to report such abuse is a misdemeanor. For more details, see Sankofa Montessori Mandated Reporter Policy in our staff handbook.

### **Bullying Policy**

#### ***Definition of Bullying***

The term “bullying” means an act that occurs on school property, on school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school-related functions or activities, or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology provided by Sankofa Montessori, and includes the following:

- Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so.
- Any intentional display of force that would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm.



- Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, which a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate, that has any one of the following effects:
  - Causes another person substantial physical harm within the meaning of O.C.G.A. § 16-5-23.1 or visible bodily harm as such term is defined in O.C.G.A. § 16-5-23.1.
  - Substantially interferes with a student's education
  - Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment
  - Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school

The term also applies to acts of cyberbullying which occur through the use of electronic communication, whether or not electronic act originated on school property or with school equipment, if the electronic communication (1) is directed specifically at students or school personnel, (2) is maliciously intended for the purpose of threatening the safety of those specified or substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school, and (3) 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.

Retaliation against any complainant or any participant in the complaint process is also prohibited.

### ***Reporting, Investigation, and Notification Procedures***

All students and/or school employees shall immediately report incidents of bullying, harassment, intimidation and retaliation to the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture.

- The Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture shall maintain a method for anonymous reporting of such incidents.
- Each report of bullying shall be documented and promptly investigated, and result in consequences given appropriate to the situation and in accordance with state law.
- Parents/legal guardians shall be notified upon a finding that a student has committed an act of bullying or been a victim of an act of bullying.

Reported incidents of bullying, harassment, intimidation, or retaliation that have occurred outside the jurisdiction of the school and have not disrupted the school environment shall be reported to the students' parents/legal guardians.

### ***Disciplinary Procedures***

Disciplinary actions for incidents of bullying will be decided according to the guidelines set forth in the Student Discipline policy.



### **Suicide Prevention Policy**

Protecting the health and well-being of all students is of utmost importance to Sankofa Montessori. The Governing Board has adopted a suicide prevention policy which will help to protect all students through the following steps:

- Students will learn about recognizing and responding to warning signs of suicide in friends, using coping skills, support systems, and seeking help for themselves and friends. This curricular content will occur in all health classes throughout the school year, not just in response to a suicide, and the encouragement of help-seeking behavior will be promoted at all levels of the school leadership and stakeholders
- The Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture is designated as the suicide prevention coordinator to serve as a point of contact for students in crisis and to refer students to appropriate resources.
- When a student is identified as being at-risk, a risk assessment will be completed by a trained school staff member who will work with the student and help connect the student to appropriate local resources
- Students will have access to national resources that they can contact for additional support, such as:
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255),
  - [Suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
  - The Trevor Lifeline: 1-866-488-7386 [thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now](https://thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now)
  - Trevor Lifeline Text/Chat Services, available 24/7 Text "TREVOR" to 678-678
  - Crisis Text Line: Text TALK to 741-741 [crisistextline.org](https://crisistextline.org)

All school personnel and students will be expected to help create a school culture of respect and support, in which students feel comfortable seeking help for themselves or friends. Sankofa Montessori will provide annual training in the area of suicide awareness and prevention for all personnel. Students are encouraged to tell any staff member if they or a friend are feeling suicidal, or are in need of help. While confidentiality and privacy are important, students should know that when there is risk of suicide, safety comes first.

### **Transportation**

Sankofa Montessori will not provide transportation to families for the 23-24 School year.

### **Rideshare and Taxi Service Policy - Students Only**

Sankofa Montessori does not permit the use of taxis and other for-hire personal transportation or rideshare services including but not limited to Uber or Lyft to get to and from school.



Additionally, many of the rideshare services including but not limited to Uber or Lyft have policies explicitly prohibiting minors from riding unaccompanied. All families are required to sign a rideshare and taxi service policy acknowledgement and waiver as part of registration documentation.

### **Parent Involvement**

Sankofa Montessori is a school working to provide a high-quality experience for all of its members. As the adult members of our community, parents and guardians have the responsibility of protecting and nurturing the children. To model and maintain a focused and present school community, we ask that parents and families avoid cell phone use and other devices with screens while on the school campus. There are several ways by which parents and guardians are asked to participate in their child's education at Sankofa Montessori:

- Participation in the Sankofa Family Association (SFA)
- Family Education Nights and informational meetings (including parent teacher conferences)
- Volunteer service to the school

### **Enriching the Parenting Journey Opportunities**

We are aware that the Montessori curriculum may be new to many families. The teachers and staff will hold Family Education events where teachers, staff, and family members will come together to discuss Montessori theory, the work your children are doing in the classroom, and strategies for continuing this work at home. These events will provide a great opportunity for parents to get to know one another and gain additional insight into Montessori teaching methods.

### **Service to the School**

Research has shown that children who see their families engaged in their school perform better in school. This is why family involvement is a critical element of Sankofa Montessori, and participation at every level is welcome. Many volunteer opportunities can be done from home, in the evenings, or on weekends. Sankofa Montessori gratefully acknowledges all of its members who have offered to volunteer time, energy, and skills to initially organize and create it. Sankofa Montessori will thrive through the years as each family adds its own energy to its growth. By participating in service to the school, families become a part of the school's



community and a practical piece of their child's education. It is expected that most families will help the school in whatever way they can. Families can access our volunteer policy linked [HERE](#).

Georgia Law (O.C.G.A. 19-7-5 (b) (5)) now requires volunteers in schools (including field trips) to be mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. Language in the law specifically spells out the definition of child service organization personnel (those required to report child abuse/neglect) as "persons employed by or volunteering at a business or an organization, whether public, private, for-profit, not-for-profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children." O.C.G.A. 19-7-5 (b) (5). Georgia law requires all volunteers to complete a training session on being mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. To meet the requirements of the law, an online training course is offered at the following link: [Child Abuse and Neglect: Mandated Reporting Requirements for Employees, Volunteers, and Contractors of Georgia Public Schools.](#)

Once the online course is completed, please sign the Sankofa Montessori Volunteer Information Form certifying that the training has been completed and the volunteer's obligations are understood. The form can be located on Sankofa Montessori's website.

### **Fundraising**

To ensure equity for all of our students, providing classrooms with gifts of any kind are prohibited. You can contribute to our school's general fund as a way to support our school to ensure that we are able to meet the changing needs and growth of the school. Please read our fundraising policy and procedures [HERE](#).

### **Visitors and Observations**

Family and community members are encouraged to visit the school and observe classrooms. The presence of visitors can affect the work students are doing, so we ask that visitors follow some guidelines.

Please schedule observations between September 15 and May 15 only, in order to give the children time to adjust at the beginning of the year and less distraction at the busy year-end. All visits and observations must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance.

Prior to visiting, please inform your child that you will be observing and not coming to help with classroom work. On the day of your visit, stop by the office first to sign in and pick up a visitor's badge and packet. During your visit, please do not engage in conversation with the children. If



children are clinging to you, politely explain that you are here to observe and that they should show you how well they can work. Make notes of questions and discuss them with the teacher at another time. You can call or email teachers with questions, or make a separate appointment to discuss your observation and questions. Remember to sign out in the main office before you leave.

Visitors must always conduct themselves appropriately in classrooms, hallways, or anywhere in the school. This includes monitoring the volume of their voice, using language appropriate for children, respecting school faculty and other visitors, and not taking phone calls or using electronic devices in a distracting manner in public spaces. Visitors who conduct themselves inappropriately may be asked to leave the school or otherwise have access limited.

All visitors (including students' families) must enter through the main doors and are required to sign in at the Main Office and wear a visitor's tag, which must be worn while on school grounds. If a family needs to speak to a teacher or an administrator regarding their child, please call the school, email, or send a note to the teacher or the front office asking for a conference.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

Families that do not wish the school to acknowledge or celebrate their child's birthday should notify their teacher and the school Office Assistant.

In the Kindergarten classroom, we celebrate children's birthdays by inviting families in to join their child and the classroom community during lunch to share pictures and stories about their child with the class.

In elementary classrooms, students create a "birthday book" for students who celebrate their birthday. Elementary students also give "ridiculous wishes" to birthday classmates, like, "I wish all your words come out as rainbows." All students can choose to opt out of the celebration.

We do not allow treats to be brought for birthday celebrations nor do we share treats or have whole class birthday foods since some families do not celebrate birthdays and other children have allergies.

### **Holiday Policy**

The school's Montessori curriculum is aligned to the Georgia state standards and children's needs and interests, and as such, it includes guidelines on the extent to which holidays are celebrated. Three or four holidays will be celebrated school-wide per year. When we are "recognizing a holiday" (i.e., having a discussion or reading a book) or providing activities



related to a holiday, we might include up to five holidays per month. We look at the following to be some of the main goals and functions of holidays and believe this approach appropriately represents our inclusive community: 1) to validate children's and families' holiday experiences and traditions at home, 2) to expose children to different ways of celebrating the same holiday, 3) to introduce children to celebrations, traditions and religions different from their own, and to foster children's respect for them, 4) to build a sense of community, family and togetherness, 5) to provide accurate information about holidays in a developmentally-appropriate manner, and 6) to encourage critical thinking about perspective and bias. The school's families are important partners in the celebration of holidays, and we will communicate about classroom and school-wide events that are planned.

### **Supplies**

Sankofa Montessori will purchase all of the school supplies needed for the classroom. Families are asked to provide a water bottle, and change of clothes. Roller bags and messenger bags are not permitted. Children do not need to bring backpacks to school. Children who bring their own snacks and lunch can bring a lunch bag. To transport reading materials home each night, the school will provide clear folders with handles for children to transport their books.

Students do not need to buy supplies for school. The school will provide each student with supplies needed at school.

### **Lost and Found**

We strongly urge families to label all personal possessions with their child's name. Clothing or items lost at school are taken to the school lost-and-found located in the front office. To claim items, parents will come to the front office and pick the lost items from the lost and found box. Parents will have 30 days to claim items. All unclaimed articles will be donated to a charitable organization at the end of each semester. Sankofa Montessori will not be held liable for loss or damage of any property belonging to the student.

### **Communication**

We know our families are critical partners in our children's success, and consider communication an essential part of that partnership. Our communication structures are:

- As-needed:
  - Please accept your invitation to join your classroom's Transparent classroom account. Transparent classroom should be your primary way of communicating with your teachers.
  - Parents who need to leave urgent messages for their child or their child's teacher may call the Front Office and the message will be delivered.



- Annually: At the beginning of each school year, all families will receive a Family Welcome Visit to get to know the Teachers in the learning community
- Monthly: Families can expect a call at least once a month from their child's lead Guide to discuss each child's progress.
- Weekly: A Weekly reminder email goes to the entire school community with important news and information. The communication will be posted on our website for families to access. If anyone is not receiving these communications, please contact the Main Office to make sure the office has updated contact information.

For staff contact information, please reach out to your child's teachers. Parents should not use email in the case of an emergency; rather, they should call the School front office directly. While Parents may use email to communicate, the demands of the School staff may limit their ability to address such communication or concerns immediately. Should the matter be urgent, please call the Main Office.

### **Photos, Videos and Social Media**

Sankofa Montessori maintains a list of all students whose families complete the Media Release annually, authorizing their children's digital images to be recorded (via photo, video, etc.). No student may have his/her image recorded without this permission.

Furthermore, no student should have his/her image recorded by someone who is not an employee or agent of the school or his/her own family member. Therefore, families are asked to refrain from photographing / videographing their students classmates when attending school events.

Finally, no student's image should be posted on any social media unless it has been specifically and directly authorized by the student's family.

### **Change in Student Information**

It is imperative that the school office be notified immediately if a family has a change in address, telephone numbers, or emergency information during the school year. Please email [info@sankofamontessori.org](mailto:info@sankofamontessori.org) or call the Main Office with updates to this information.



## SECTION 3: THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

### Sample Daily Schedule

No day is ever the same at Sankofa Montessori, but here is a sample of what you'll find when you enter our doors.

Start	Minutes	Finish	Activity
7:30 AM	30	8:00 AM	Doors Open and Breakfast in Classrooms
8:00 AM	180	11:00 AM	<p>Montessori-trained lead teachers guide a group of students through new lessons, based on student readiness. These lessons range from academics, like letters and sounds, to sensorial works that develop concentration and self-control. In between lessons, teachers observe children to see who needs more help, and who is ready to move on.</p> <p>Children choose the work they will practice within the lessons the teacher has given them. Students return to works until they have mastered that skill.</p> <p>Children can work with other students or independently. Children often work at small tables or even mats on the floor. Children quickly learn to respect each others' works.</p>
11:00 AM	30	11:30 AM	<p>Community meeting</p> <p>Read-aloud and community building</p>
11:30 AM	60	12:30 PM	Lunch and Recess
12:30 PM	45	1: 15 PM	<p>Enrichment</p> <p>Every day, children have a 30-45 minute enrichment class. Depending on the grade level, these include:</p> <p>MUSIC: All students learn to be "tune-ful, beat-ful, and art-ful" through our music program, which includes learning to sing folk music from across cultures, along with music theory and</p>



			<p>performance skills.</p> <p>VISUAL ARTS: Children learn to observe and talk about art and influential artists throughout history. They create beautiful works in a variety of media while developing motor skills and deepening creativity.</p>
1:15PM	45	3:00PM	<p><b>Afternoon workcycle</b></p> <p>Students continue independent or group work. In addition, the afternoon work cycle may include the following focus areas:</p> <p>CORE KNOWLEDGE LANGUAGE ARTS: “Listening and Learning” / Seminar: a grade-level group session led by the teacher to help children learn about the world and develop their communication skills. The group reads aloud, discusses, and writes about a great piece of literature or non-fiction historical or scientific writing.</p> <p>MATH MEETING: A small group session where the teacher walks students through solving a challenging math problem together.</p> <p>CLASSROOM JOBS: Children develop responsibility by taking turns doing different tasks. These might include: feeding classroom pets, watering plants, sweeping, preparing snack, cleaning up after meals, and organizing materials. Our students may be stewards of a particular shelf of materials or a student ambassador who might meet guests.</p>
3:00 PM	30	3:30 PM	Dismissal



## **Uniforms and Dress Code<sup>1</sup>**

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

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<sup>1</sup> Our policy is modified from the policy set by Kwende Collegiate and DeKalb Brilliance.



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**.
- All new children receive **one free** uniform shirt. You may purchase additional from our uniform vendor.
- 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.
- 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 Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture and designated Leadership Team staff members will be responsible for completing an informal uniform check as a part of Morning Arrival. If a student is wearing an item that is not in compliance with the uniform policy, the student will be provided with a temporary uniform (that will be returned at the end of the day for laundering).
- If a student repeatedly needs a temporary uniform, the school will conference with the family to understand and resolve any hindrances to consistent uniform use.
- If a teacher notices a student is not in compliance with the uniform during instructional time, s/he will notify the Main Office to provide a temporary uniform for the student.
- 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.



### **Nutrition Program**

As a physician, Dr. Montessori believed in the importance of good nutrition to a child's development; research regarding the impact of various foods on the body shows us why she felt this to be so vital.

At our school, we strive to have each child eat in a healthy way and have implemented a nutrition policy to support the growth of our students' bodies and minds.

Sankofa Montessori offers nutritious meals to the students. Breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack are available daily at all schools. Meals served at Sankofa Montessori meet nutrient standards set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for students of all grade levels. Food items meet high quality standards and are served by caring, committed adults.

### **Packing Meals**

Families may also choose to pack a lunch for their child. Please note that students will not have access to a microwave or refrigerator. We ask that families pack healthy lunches for students that help us ensure our students get the variety of foods (protein, grains, vegetables, and fruits) needed to sustain their energy for the remainder of the school day.

Please also note that we ask that some food items simply are never included as part of the food you send to school with your student(s): Juice, Soda/carbonated drinks, flavored milk, chocolate, candy, cookies and cakes.

Please refer to the Nut-Free Policy listed in the Illness, Injury, Health, and Wellness section for more information regarding food items that are not allowed at Sankfoa Montessori if packing a lunch from home.

### **Free or Full or Reduced-Price Meals**

Free and reduced lunches are available. Free and reduced lunch applications will be made available to all students before the first day of school. All families are expected to complete and return the forms regardless of eligibility for the program. Only one application needs to be filled out for all members of a family

### **Accommodating Students with Disabilities and/or Special Dietary Needs**

Sankofa Montessori will make accommodations for children with disabilities whose disability or special dietary need restricts their diet, when that need is certified by a licensed physician. For modifications or substitutions to the school meals, the school's Associate Director of Operations must have a written [Medical Statement to Request Accommodations for Disabilities in the School Meal Programs Form](#) on file that is signed by a licensed physician or licensed health care



professional who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under State law. The Physician's medical statement must identify the specific nutritional needs of the student. This includes listing all dairy, peanut, shellfish, or other types of food allergies.

### **Responsibility of Parents with Students requiring Special Dietary Meals**

- Notify the Associate Director of Operations of any food allergy, disability, or special dietary need regarding their child.
- Provide Medical Statements completed by a licensed physician or licensed healthcare professional who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under State law.
- Participate in any meetings or discussions regarding the student's meal plan.
- Maintain a healthy line of communication with the Associate Director of Operations, and others as needed.
- Notify the Associate Director of Operations of any changes relating to the special dietary need, or needs (a new Medical Statement is required if the diet changes).
- Submit a new medical statement each year or verify the accuracy of the medical statement yearly that a child requires special dietary meals or substitutions.

### **Student Support Services**

Sankofa Montessori is committed to ensuring that all students have the resources that they need to become impactful leaders in the field of their choosing. Thus, Sankofa Montessori will evaluate and support students who are suspected of benefitting from additional supports or accommodations in order to access the curriculum, in accordance with its child find obligations.

### **Annual Information Session**

We recognize that parents are important partners in their children's education. We want to make sure parents have information to help them understand special education at Sankofa Montessori. One way Sankofa Montessori provides this info is via a "Supporting Exceptional Learners Session" in the fall, which is open to any and all families. During this session families will receive information about special education at Sankofa Montessori, including:

- how Sankofa Montessori (and families) may decide to refer a student for evaluation for special education services,
- what happens during the evaluation process,
- how Sankofa Montessori and the GaDOE work together to provide special education supports to students,
- what types of academic and behavioral supports are available at Sankofa Montessori,
- how parents may request behavioral supports, and
- formal and informal ways that parents can communicate any concerns about special education.



Much of the information that will be discussed in the information session is also provided here, in the Family Handbook, as another resource to help families understand special education and partner with Sankofa Montessori in support of their child.

### **Multi-tiered System of Supports**

Our approach to multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) follows GaDOE guidance. Any students that do not have pre-existing IEP or 504 plans but are both a) below grade level and b) in the bottom 30% in each grade in ELA, math, or behavior will be considered for additional supports through MTSS:

- Select and Administer Universal Screener: Our teachers will conduct universal screeners in math and literacy for all students.
- Determine Intervention Groups: Grade-level teams will review visual reports of data in monthly MTSS meetings to determine cut scores for intervention groups. Leadership and grade-level teams will also review behavior data weekly, looking for students with patterns of behavior challenges each week. For students that are confirmed as benefiting from interventions, teams will make appropriately-sized groups, and plan and execute interventions. For each group identified, grade-level teams will design appropriate interventions, such as phonics, math fluency, reflection space protocol for student de-escalation, etc.
- Use Multiple Data Points to Verify: In the monthly MTSS meetings, grade-level teams will use additional data points (e.g. progress monitoring assessments) to determine if multiple data points confirm that the student would benefit from additional support. For behavioral supports, teams will review historic data to confirm trends or areas that require additional data collection to understand triggers and antecedents.
- Use Progress Monitoring Data to Determine Next Steps: In monthly grade-level MTSS meetings, we will review data to determine if students would benefit additional interventions (moving from Tier 2 to Tier 3), are showing that they no longer need as many interventions through improved data (moving from Tier 2 to Tier 1 or moving from Tier 3 to Tier 2), or are showing they should stay in the same intervention.

### **Early Intervention Program**

The Early Intervention Program (EIP) is designed to serve students in grades K – 5 who are at risk of not reaching or maintaining academic grade level, as defined in the state Early Intervention Program Guidelines. The purpose of EIP is to help students reach grade level performance in the shortest possible time.

### **Program Qualification**

*Through a culturally responsive, student and family-centered Montessori Education, Sankofa Montessori Charter School ensures that all students develop the knowledge, skills, and character to lead purposeful lives.*



Students qualify for the program by performing below the 30th percentile on standardized norm-referenced tests and Achievement levels indicate “Not Yet Demonstrated” or “Emerging” on the majority of elements included on the ELA, Mathematics, or GKIDS. Students may qualify for EIP in reading and/or in mathematics.

### ***Program Structure***

The program design is developed in coordination with regular instruction and other educational programs. Development and evaluation of the program involves teachers, administrators, and parents at the school level. The Early Intervention Program includes four components:

- Staff: Early Intervention Program is staffed by certified teachers with experience and expertise in teaching students with diverse needs and abilities. Early intervention funds provide additional staff beyond that provided through regular funds.
- Delivery Models: Each participating school selects the delivery model(s) to be used. Any combination of state approved models may be used within a school depending on the unique needs and characteristics of the students and school.
- Class Size: A class for EIP must follow Class Size Rules in the state guidelines.
- Instructional Segments of Service: A segment is defined as a minimum of 30 minutes daily.

### ***Family Communication***

The school shall provide a ten calendar-day notice for an opportunity to conference with the student's parents or guardians and the student to discuss the student's performance and the role of the early intervention program.

### ***Special Education Services***

#### ***Existing Special Education Services***

Any student with an IEP or 504 plan will receive all appropriate services through Special Education-certified staff and contracted vendors. Sankofa Montessori will serve students on the full continuum of services required by mild, moderate, and severe disabilities. Students will be served through the least restrictive environment (LRE) possible. To ensure the integration of special education into the general education programming, teachers will plan together during common planning sessions. When families enroll, our Office Assistant will ask about IEP/504 plans in their enrollment packets, as well as check the State Longitudinal Data System to confirm any pre-existing plans.

#### ***New Special Education Evaluations***



Any time a parent/guardian requests an evaluation, or the school suspects a disability, the student would be recommended for evaluation, regardless of whether or not the student is receiving MTSS interventions. Families who want to request evaluation should reach out to the Director of Student Supports and Services. Additionally, for students in Tier 3 of MTSS that do not show progress, we will recommend a Special Education evaluation. Under GaDOE SBOE 160-4-7.09-6, we will communicate the recommendation for evaluation to parent(s)/guardian(s) for them to consent to or decline testing through a meeting and parental consent to evaluation (PCE) form. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) declines evaluation, the student will remain in Tier 3 MTSS support. Special Education evaluations will be conducted by a licensed psychologist through a contracted vendor. The initial evaluation must include at least two measures of cognitive intelligence and intelligence-based testing. Students will be tested in all areas of suspected disability.

After an evaluation, the results will be shared with the IEP team (parent(s)/guardian(s), classroom teacher, Special Education teacher, and Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture and Executive Director) at the eligibility meeting. Parent(s)/guardian(s) participation is critical in the determination of eligibility for special education and in the development of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP - see below). Every reasonable effort will be made to schedule meetings such that parent(s)/guardian(s) have the opportunity to participate. Parents may also participate by phone if unable to attend the meeting. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are welcome to invite others to attend the meeting. Parent(s)/guardian(s) should notify the school at least three (3) school days in advance of the meeting the name(s) and role(s) (i.e., family, friend, advocate, attorney) of each individual that will be attending the meeting at their invitation.

### ***Eligibility for Special Education***

In order to be eligible for special education services, a student must meet all of the following criteria:

1. The student has a disability, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA")
2. Due to the disability, the student is not making effective progress in the general education program
3. The student requires specifically designed instruction or related services (examples include occupational therapy, speech therapy, or physical therapy)

Students with disabilities requiring specialized support may qualify for a support plan under either Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or an IEP under the IDEA. An IEP must include present levels, goals with input from classroom data and the child's teacher(s), special



educator(s), external evaluation results, the family, Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP – as needed), and any related services. After IEP/504 creation, all modifications and accommodations will be implemented by school personnel, and, as appropriate, contracted service providers.

### ***Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)***

The IEP is a legal document that identifies the services and accommodations that are necessary for students to make effective progress.

An IEP is reviewed every year by a team that includes the student’s teachers, any specialists involved in the student’s education, the parent, anyone the parent invites, and the student if the student is of an appropriate age to participate.

### ***504 Accommodation Plans***

Upon completion of an evaluation, a 504 Accommodation Plan may be developed for a qualified student with a disability which “substantially limits one or more major life activities,” such as learning and who requires accommodations in order to access the general education curriculum. A 504 Plan is a legal document, which is primarily a classroom accommodation plan. It is not an IEP.

### ***Related Services***

Sometimes students with disabilities may need support in areas other than just instruction. For example, if a student has been evaluated and determined to have challenges with speech, then that student should also work with a speech therapist to help them develop important skills for communicating within school. This type of service is called a related service, and is provided by a specialist who is trained in a specific area (for example, a speech therapist rather than a classroom teacher). Sankofa Montessori works with external contracts to provide different related services, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, counseling, and paraprofessional support.

### ***Manifestation Hearing***

In cases where a student with an IEP or 504 plan has a long-term suspension (more than 10 days at once or cumulatively throughout the year), our school will follow the manifestation meeting protocols outlined in the IDEA law. A team of family members, teacher, special educator, Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture, Executive Director and any other involved staff will convene for the manifestation hearing. The team will analyze antecedents, perceived motives, reactions, and outcomes of the behavior resulting in the disciplinary infractions, to determine the answers to two questions: “Was the behavior caused



by or directly and substantially related to the child's disability? Was the behavior a direct result of the school's failure to implement the child's IEP?" If the behavior was a result of the student's disability or the school's failure to implement the student's IEP, then the behavior was a manifestation. No further disciplinary actions may be taken, and the school will evaluate improvements to support plans and implementation. If the behavior was not a manifestation, the need for a functional behavioral assessment and a behavioral intervention plan should be considered to prevent the behavior from recurring.

### ***Disputes***

Sankofa Montessori will make every effort to resolve any concerns from families through IEP team meetings to make the best decision for our students. Please note, parent(s)/guardian(s) always have the right to file complaints regarding special education in accordance with O.C.G.A 20-2-1160. directly with the State Department of Education, the Office of Civil Rights, or filing an administrative complaint. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will receive a copy of their parental rights at the beginning of every special education meeting, which will detail the right parent(s)/guardian(s) to file complaints.

### ***Counseling Services***

The school counselor provides a safe, nurturing environment to foster a trusting relationship with students. Parental permission is not required for students to see the counselor or to participate in classroom guidance activities. In this confidential relationship, students can explore their feelings and experiences in hopes of finding a meaningful, positive solution to their personal issues. In many cases, the school counselor works on problem solving, decision-making, and goal setting with the student. The school counselor, like all school personnel, is a mandated reporter under Georgia law.

### ***English Language Learner Services***

Sankofa Montessori will identify students learning English and deliver programming to ensure student success in accordance with GaDOE SBOE Rule 160-4-6-.02. All students will be placed in general education classrooms and taught in English.

### ***Enrollment***

All information will be provided to families in a language that the parents understand. Upon enrollment at Sankofa Montessori, all families will complete the Home Language Survey. The Home Language Survey is used to determine whether a language other than English is used in the student's home and is not used to determine a student's language classification or immigration status. The information provided on the Home Language Survey is kept in the student's cumulative record. The Home Language Survey consists of three questions 1) Which language does your child best understand and speak? 2) Which language does your child most



frequently speak at home? 3) Which language do adults in your home most frequently use when speaking with your child? If the answers to all questions on the Home Language Survey are “English”, then no further action is taken. If there is evidence of significant non-English exposure, then the pupil must be assessed for ELL status.

### ***English Language Learner Identification***

For all families that indicate a language other than English is spoken in the home on the home language survey, students will be assessed using the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 to determine English language proficiency levels in the domains of speaking, listening, reading and writing within two weeks of enrollment. Sankofa Montessori will utilize qualified staff or external evaluation vendor to conduct assessments.

### ***English Language Learner Programming***

The results of the assessment and the programming plan will be communicated with families in their preferred language, as indicated on the home language survey. If a student is identified as ELL, they will be provided with Sheltered English Immersion instruction – Sheltered Content Instruction and/or Direct ESL instruction depending on the ACCESS data. This instruction will be provided during the morning work block of the day

### ***Progress Monitoring***

Sankofa Montessori will utilize the WIDA suite to monitor progress and adjust appropriate instruction, accommodations, and modifications to ensure student progress. Students will be exited from the ELL program when indicated by ACCESS exam scores or general education assessments indicate language proficiency. Upon exiting the ELL program, students will be monitored with ACCESS for two years, and will be provided services again if regression is measured.

Students whose primary language is not English have equal rights of access to all academic and non-academic components of the Sankofa Montessori experience.

### ***Homeless Student Services***

In accordance with the Education for Homeless Children and Youths: Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) Sankofa Montessori adheres to the principle that all eligible children and youth, including the homeless, are entitled to a free, appropriate public education.

Students identified as homeless or “in transition” will be given full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards and will be included in state and district wide



assessments and accountability systems. Our school will ensure that children and youth in transition are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment. Homeless students will be provided all district services for which they are eligible, including limited English proficiency, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs, and after school programs where applicable.

### **Definitions**

In accordance with the Act and State Board Rule 160-5-1-.28, the term “homeless child and youth” is defined as individual who lack a fixed, adequate, and regular nighttime residence, including children and youth who are:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason.
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
3. Who are living in emergency shelters.
4. Who are abandoned in hospitals or are awaiting foster care placement.
5. Whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation.
6. Who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, or substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
7. Migratory students who qualify as homeless because the children are living in any of the above described circumstances.
8. Unaccompanied and are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
9. A child shall be considered to be experiencing homelessness for as long as he or she is in a living situation as described above.
10. “Unaccompanied youth” means a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who is in transition as defined above.
11. “Immediate” means without delay
12. “School of origin” means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

### **Identification**

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the school’s homeless liaison (Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture) will identify children and youth experiencing homelessness within our school. The liaison will train school personnel on possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth as experiencing homelessness, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the liaison. The liaison will also instruct school registrars and secretaries to



inquire about possible homelessness upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student and to forward information indicating homelessness to the liaison. Community partners in identification may include: family and youth shelters, soup kitchens, motels, campgrounds, drop-in centers welfare departments and other local social services agencies, faith based organizations, truancy and attendance officers, local homeless coalitions, and legal services.

### ***Admission of Homeless Students***

Students are immediately admitted to Sankofa Montessori even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency or other documentation. Sankofa Montessori will make all efforts to update and keep these records current. Unaccompanied youth must also be immediately enrolled in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a parent, non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or Sankofa Montessori's homeless liaison.

### ***Education of Homeless Students***

All students, including those students who are homeless or in transition have a full and equal opportunity at Sankofa Montessori. Parents and guardians of homeless students are informed of the educationally related opportunities available to their children and are provided with the opportunities to participate in the education of their children. Homeless families and students will receive educational services for which all students are eligible. Referrals to health care and immunization services, dental services, health services, and other appropriate services will be made available to all families and students.

### ***Program Procedures***

1. Sankofa Montessori is responsible for identifying a homeless liaison (Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture).
2. Homeless students will be identified based on the definition prescribed by McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and via a numeric code in the school's student information system. All staff in the school will be trained in the identification and recruitment of homeless students.
3. The homeless liaison will provide annual training for all school staff having contact with homeless students.
4. School leadership will receive annual training on the identification and needs of homeless students.
5. The school will display flyers, brochures, and posters that identify the Homeless Liaison contact information.
6. Services for homeless students will be evaluated based on student academic achievement.



### ***Enrollment/Withdrawal***

Enrollment of Homeless students occurs at the appropriate grade level. School Operations team is trained and attentive to the identification of homeless students during the enrollment process. Any identification of a homeless student/ family will be immediately identified to the Homeless Liaison for investigation. If Sankofa Montessori is contacted by another school for a homeless student's records, requested information will be provided and sent to the requesting school district within 10 business days of receiving the request.

### ***Program Training and Information Dissemination***

The Homeless Liaison or designee annually conducts training and sensitivity/awareness activities each fall to heighten the awareness of the following personnel of the specific needs of unaccompanied and homeless youth: school leadership, teachers, and support personnel. Homeless liaison will lead and coordinate the schools' compliance with this policy and will receive training annually. Meeting documentation includes the PowerPoint presentation, agenda, and sign-in sheets. The Homeless Liaison or designee distributes posters and brochures in throughout the school and the Family Resources center in the lobby. Posters and brochures are also distributed to the community throughout the year at various locations including but not limited to the following: Department of Family and Children's Services, Community Centers, Local Churches, Health Department, Fire Department, Hospital, Soup Kitchen, Local Law Enforcement, Safe Haven, and Local Doctor Offices.

### ***Transportation***

Sankofa Montessori will put into place a transportation plan for any identified homeless students (e.g., MARTA cards, or other supports).

### ***Academic Credit***

A student's homeless status shall not be a barrier to receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school.

### ***Disputes and Resolution of Complaints***

Any complaints will be submitted in writing to the Governing Board who will resolve the issue. The parent and the student will be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute. If a dispute arises under the McKinney-Vento Act over eligibility, school selection, or school enrollment, the Act requires LEAs to take the following steps:

1. The child or youth shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless education liaison (Manager of Family



Engagement and Student Culture - hereafter local liaison) must ensure that the youth is enrolled immediately in the school in which the youth seeks enrollment pending final resolution of the dispute. While disputes are pending, students have the right to participate fully in school and receive all services for which they are eligible.

2. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth must be provided with a written explanation of any dispute-related decisions made by the school/LEA involved, including the right of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to appeal such decisions
3. The LEA (Governing Board) must provide this written explanation, including the reasons for its determination and information regarding the right to appeal, in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.
4. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth can file a complaint to the Georgia Department of Education at:  
Georgia Department of Education  
Federal Programs Director  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive SE  
1854 Twin Towers East  
Atlanta, Georgia, 30034

## **Homework**

### **Philosophy of Homework**

In the Montessori view, play and work are intimately connected. Learning does not stop at the end of the school day, but continues in different ways. We recognize that through their own self-directed play, children develop skills and strengths that prepare them for school success as well as success in life. We believe that homework should be developmentally-appropriate, meaningful, and supportive of our educational goals. We also strongly feel that students need to make family connections, engage in extracurricular activities, and relax after school and on the weekends. That said, each night we expect children to spend some time doing the following:

Children in kindergarten and lower elementary (grades 1-3) should read or be read to for at least 30 minutes a day, in addition to spending one hour doing some of the activities listed below:

- Take a meaningful role in the life of the family: help with yard work, table setting, meal planning and preparation, participating in errands, caring for pets
- Play outdoors: running, playground time, bike riding, swinging, exploring natural spaces



- Play by themselves (not mediated by a screen): playing games, making art, making music, playing with simple toys, writing stories, daydreaming. Sometimes this play will extend lessons the child was doing in school– they might be excited to measure the rooms of their house, calculate the perimeter of a table, read a book about sharks, or try writing in Egyptian hieroglyphs.
- Engage in open-ended play with friends and/or siblings
- Share conversation with a trusted adult

Children in upper elementary (grades 4-6) should spend at least one hour a day reading, in addition to completing any specific assignments provided to them by their guide.

### ***Students Needing Additional Support***

Sometimes, a child struggling with a particular academic challenge will benefit from working in a more structured way with parents, guardians, or older siblings at home. If this is the case, the child's teacher will contact the family to share ideas for specific homework activities.

## **Classroom and School Technology**

### **Student Cell Phone Policy**

Students are not allowed to use cellphones in school, at school-sponsored activities, or on school field trips, unless specified by a staff member or chaperone in specific circumstances. This includes any cell phone features and applications such as camera, video recorder, calculator, texting or social media. If, during these times, a cell phone is used, rings, vibrates, flashes, or is seen by a staff member or chaperone, your child will be asked to turn it off and place it in the child's backpack.

For repeated instances, and at the school's discretion, the cellphone will be confiscated (secured in a locked location) and returned to either the student by the end of the day or to a parent/guardian at an agreed upon time. The school may pursue disciplinary consequences found in the Code of Conduct depending on how disruptive the incident is and/or if a student has had multiple violations. Cell phones brought to school must be powered off, stored away in a locker or backpack area and cannot be taken out until the end of the instructional day.

Sankofa Montessori assumes no responsibility or liability for the theft loss or damage to a cellular telephone nor does it assume responsibility for the unauthorized use of any device.



### **Student Toy, Game, & Special Item Policy**

At Sankofa Montessori students are not permitted to bring toys, board games or loveys (small reminders of home like small teddy bears, blankets, or photos) to the school from home.

While we strongly urge families to label all personal possessions, Sankofa Montessori assumes no responsibility or liability for the theft, loss, or damage of children's personal possessions.

### **Technology and Media in the Classroom**

At Sankofa Montessori, screen-based technology is not emphasized. Students are instead offered lots of hands-on, active, brain-building activities, especially at the elementary level (1st-6th grade). These hands-on activities support collaborative work and the ability to work on a team.

To support familiarity with computer functions and in preparation for standardized testing, technology use will be monitored and computer access will be available to students as practical life activity in the classroom through laptops and/or tablets. All technology use must comply with Sankofa Montessori's Acceptable Use Policy.

The organization may use various media to educate students. Teachers are welcome to occasionally use videos in the classroom and at school sponsored events, provided that teachers follow the legal copyright requirements of videos and media within the classroom.

### **Media at Home**

Sankofa Montessori strongly encourages families to significantly limit screen time at home. Children's developing brains need activities that use the hand and mind together (arts and crafts; cooking; building things; and other play); active time outdoors; opportunities to support in the work of the household; and time to daydream and engage in self-directed play.

To support the safe use of media at home, families can utilize the following resources:

- Internet Access:
  - The Georgia Department of Community Relations has compiled internet connectivity resources from Georgia telecom companies.
  - The Emergency Broadband Program can support families in purchasing high-speed internet and/or a home device.
  - The Clayton County Library has prepaid hotspots available for checkout to cardholders aged 18+ for up to 21 days.
  - Comcast Internet Essentials is a \$9.95/month option that is free for 60 days.
- Managing family technology:



- Non-technical adult actions that have a positive influence on students' healthy use of technology:
  - Adults role modeling healthy use of technology.
  - Clear, regularly-reviewed expectations about acceptable technology use.
  - Regular conversations about children's online experiences.
  - Adults and students exploring together the positive ways technology can connect families, support learning, and contribute to society.
- Common Sense Media provides resources for families to vet a variety of content, including apps and online resources.
- Google's "Be Internet Awesome" is designed to "teach kids the fundamentals of digital citizenship and safety so they can explore the online world with confidence."
- National PTA "PTA Connected"
- Stay Safe Online: Published in partnership with the National Cyber Security Alliance, this site provides articles and tips regarding basic online security and privacy.
- Devices and apps: Apple, Google, and Microsoft develop the operating systems that run on most of the computers, phones, and tablets that all have family controls for filtering content, managing screen time, accessing apps, etc.
  - Apple: For iPhone, iPad, Mac, Apple Watch, and Apple TV
  - Google: For Android, iPhone, and Chromebooks
  - Microsoft: For Windows 10 devices, Android, and Xbox.

## Montessori Curriculum

### The Montessori Approach

Over a century ago, Dr. Maria Montessori developed a comprehensive approach to education based on her observations of children's needs and her understanding of children's natural learning tendencies. The Montessori approach draws its principles from the natural development of the child and is designed to help children with their task of inner construction as they grow from childhood to maturity. The child's innate passion for learning is encouraged by giving him/her opportunities to engage in spontaneous, purposeful activities with the guidance of a trained adult. Through their work, children develop concentration and joyful self-discipline. Within a framework of order, children progress at their own pace and rhythm, according to their individual capabilities.



### **Mixed Age Groups**

One of the hallmarks of the Montessori method is that children of mixed ages work together in the same class. Age groupings are based on developmental planes. Children from 3-6 years of age are together in Primary classes, 6-12 year olds share the elementary classes, often grouped as Lower Elementary for 6-9-year-old children and Upper Elementary for children ages 9-12 years. Because the work is individual, children progress at their own pace; there is cooperation rather than competition between the ages. Younger children learn from older children and older children naturally become classroom leaders. Since Sankofa Montessori does not have a Pk 3 and Pk4, our Kindergarten students will not be in multi-age groupings.

### **The Prepared Environment**

The “prepared environment” is Dr. Montessori’s concept that the classroom environment should be designed by the adult to facilitate maximum, independent learning and exploration by the child. Attributes of a prepared environment include order and reality, beauty and simplicity. Everything is child-sized to enhance children’s independent functioning. In the Montessori classroom, learning materials are arranged invitingly on low, open shelves. Children may choose any materials they would like to use and may work for as long as the material holds their interest after they have been given a lesson on the material. When they are finished with each material, they return it to the shelf from which it came.

### **Kindergarten Program**

#### **A. Practical Life**

- This area is where children learn basic skills that improve their independence, like dressing themselves, pouring water, cleaning messes, sewing, etc. This also helps to develop fine motor skills that prepare them for writing.

#### **B. Sensorial Exercises**

- Children use sensorial materials to define their senses of touch, smell, sight, sound, and taste. These materials help to prepare the brain for mathematics and their ability to understand dimensions, shapes, colors, and quantity.

#### **C. Language**

- In the Children’s House, children first learn the language around them. Then, they learn the sounds of the words they know (not the letter names), followed by



a journey into cursive writing. This process culminates into children's ability to read and write with a basic understanding of conventional grammar.

**D. Mathematics**

- All children have a mathematical mind, and are doing math intuitively. But the curriculum materials begin with an exploration of quantity and symbol and build skills such as operations, skip counting (beginning multiplication), numeration, place value, and an understanding of basic geometry.

**E. Science**

- This is a revolving set of materials based on the interests of the class. This often includes things the children observe about their world, such as types of leaves, bugs in the garden, seasons and weather, and states of matter.

**F. Geography and Cultural Studies**

- We begin our exploration of geography with a basic understanding of the world and the continents, and include studies of the people, animals, flags, and culture of our world.

### **Elementary Program**

The elementary curriculum is called “Cosmic Education,” and encompasses all the magic and glory of the cosmos. It celebrates the natural world and encourages curiosity and “deep dive” explorations into student interests. Students learn in a multi-age classroom using a multi-disciplinary approach to learning that creates a vast web of knowledge for children. Each curriculum area is introduced with what we call “Great Stories,” impressionistic tales that pique children's curiosity and wonder. Students follow their interests and teachers (or “Guides”) give them lessons along the way so that they keep learning to their maximum potential. These are the areas of our elementary classroom:

- Language
- Biology (botany and zoology)
- Geography (cultural and physical)
- Art
- History
- Mathematics
- Geometry
- Music



- Intermediate Science (anatomy and microbiology)

Students in elementary are also encouraged to learn a variety of skills related to care of the environment, care of self, care of plants and animals, and care of each other. Older students serve as mentors to younger students, and younger students look to older students as guides and helpmates. Students also learn a variety of handcrafts, including sewing, crocheting, knitting, weaving, spinning, felting, origami, pottery, whittling, cooking, and drawing. These serve to stimulate the brain and develop critical thinking, creativity, fine motor skills, and attention to detail.

### Assessments

Teachers and administrators at Sankofa Montessori use a computerized record keeping system, Transparent Classroom, in order to monitor each student's significant work, social and emotional development, and academic growth and to record their observations. Students are assessed throughout the year using various assessment methods including formative and summative assessment, both formal and informal. Formative assessments are those that provide teachers with information needed to adjust individual and group lessons while they are happening. Summative assessments are used to determine a student's knowledge base. All students at Sankofa Montessori will participate in the following assessments:

Assessment	Grade/ Domain	Issued
<b>NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)</b> is a computer-adaptive benchmark assessment for reading and math. It provides a different, personalized test for each student. Depending on how a student answers each question, the test adjusts in difficulty. This allows students with widely varying skill levels – from struggling to advanced – to take a test that is well-suited to their needs. Teachers are able to access student scores immediately after students complete a test. Each test provides detailed teacher reports that show the skills students are proficient in and what they are ready to work on next.	K-6/ Math and Reading	Three times a year
<b>Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS)</b> assesses executive function skills using a brief, standardized instrument administered	K-6/ Executive	Twice a year



on an iPad. Executive function refers to the neuro-cognitive skills needed for successful learning and performance in school, at work and in life. They include cognitive flexibility, working memory and inhibitory control.	Function	
<b>Georgia Milestones</b> Assessments assess students to garner information about how well students are mastering the state-adopted content standards in the core content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.	3-6: Math 3-6: ELA 5-6: Science 5-6: Social Studies	Once/ a year

### Grading & Progress Reports

Sankofa Montessori will use a curriculum-based system for tracking student learning. We do not give conventional letter grades (i.e. no A, B, C). Instead, our consistent, school-wide approach to reporting is that parents will periodically receive regular report cards indicating what students are working on and have mastered, as well as attendance and behavior records, and standardized test scores. We also hold three conferences to discuss children's growth. When students transfer to another school, Sankofa Montessori will provide the aforementioned detailed information about student progress. The receiving school may determine what if any conventional letter "grade" corresponds to student mastery. Conversely, because of our curriculum- and standards-based "grading" system, grades received from prior schools for transferring-in will be considered in determining division placement (as per below), but will not be translated into grades at Sankofa Montessori; our progress reports and report cards will be based on work completed at Sankofa Montessori.

### Retention and Promotion

#### Initial placement

At Sankofa Montessori, students work in multi-age classrooms: Lower Elementary (generally age 6-9, i.e. 1st-3rd grades), Upper Elementary (generally age 9 to 12, i.e. 4th - 6th grades). Students enrolling or transferring-in will generally be assigned to the division equivalent to their age and plane of development; however, our faculty may also complete an academic screening (e.g., GKIDS assessment for school age students) as well as review incoming students' academic records to determine optimal placement.



### **Extended time in environment**

Generally, a student shall move to the next level environment based both on demonstrating proficiency in the current class level as well as meeting the developmental criteria for the next level. Sometimes it may be deemed best for developmental reasons to have the child continue for a more extended time in the same level environment. Special consideration for extended time in environment shall be given to students with special academic, social, and emotional needs. These decisions are made by the school based on the recommendation of the teacher and support staff and in consultation with families. Decisions about transitions between environments generally occur during the second half of a school year, although students can transition between environments during the school year as needed. Extended time in an environment does not necessarily impact a student's grade level assignment.

### **Grade level retention**

Students may also be retained in their grade level assignment if the school is concerned about a child's readiness to succeed at the next level. Teachers will inform families of concerns as they arise. Teachers will also submit concerns to the Child Study Team to develop and monitor interventions and complete a thorough review process, considering data listed below. Families will receive communication during the second half of the year about the process, and have the opportunity for meetings with school staff as needed. Upon completion of the review process, a final recommendation will be made to school administration, which will notify families in writing by the end of the year of the decision to retain or promote grade level. Please note that the timeline may be altered for students entering during the course of the school year, or who have other extenuating circumstances. "Social promotion" is not a practice of Sankofa Montessori.

Factors to be considered in the decision to retain may include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- Current knowledge and skill level, as determined by formal and informal assessments; Social-emotional needs;
- Readiness to learn the knowledge and skills required at the next grade or course level;
- Plane of child development and sensitive periods for learning materials;
- Record of previous intervention;
- Number of absences;
- Previous retention;
- Student conduct that may impact academic performance;
- Extenuating circumstances that may have adversely affected the student's participation in either the required instruction and/or assessments;
- Expected benefits and risks of promotion or retention for the student.



For potential extension of environment or grade level retention of students with disabilities, the school will consider the following factors:

- Retention is a change of placement and must be an IEP team decision;
- The IEP team should consider the student's growth on IEP goals and performance on cognitive assessments;
- The IEP team should also consider whether another year in the division will lead to the student's ability to gain further access to and/or excel in the general education curriculum.

### **Appeal**

The parent or guardian has the right to appeal the school's decision to retain a student's grade level. If a parent or guardian of a student attending Sankofa Montessori is not satisfied with the school's decision, the parent may address their concern through our grievance policy.

### **Discipline**

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.

The school's discipline plan, the Nautilus Approach, is founded on varied positive, pro-social strategies and interventions, expectation-setting and accountability.

### **<sup>2</sup>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.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from DeKalb Brilliance Discipline Philosophy and Equity Statement



- 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. The vast majority of disciplinary issues should be addressed at the classroom level by teachers. 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.
- 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.
- Addressing Racial Disparities in School Discipline: While overly harsh school discipline policies can affect all students, they have disproportionately impacted students of color. Black, Latino/Hispanic, and Native American students, in particular, are far more likely to be suspended, expelled, and arrested than their White peers, even for the same behavior. Students of color also tend to receive harsher punishments than their peers receive for the same offenses. School staff is responsible for implementing this Policy and eliminating disparities for students from racial and ethnic groups or other



protected classes that have historically been over-represented among those students who are suspended or expelled.

- **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.

### **Code of Conduct & Discipline Responses Matrix**

At Sankofa Montessori, we categorize child misbehavior into eight phases. We then use these levels to respond in different ways with the use of our systems. These behaviors and our responses are outlined in our [Code of Conduct & Discipline Response Matrix](#).

## **SECTION 4: STUDENT & FAMILY RIGHTS**

### **Policy Prohibiting Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation**

Sankofa Montessori does not tolerate the harassment of applicants, employees, students, parents, vendors, or any other member of or visitor to the School community. Any form of harassment relating to an individual's race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, pregnancy, genetic information, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship status, service member status, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local law is a violation of this policy.



Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment.

At a minimum, the term “harassment” as used in this policy includes:

- Offensive remarks, comments, jokes, slurs, or verbal conduct pertaining to an individual’s race, color, religion, genetic information, national origin, sex (including same sex), pregnancy, age, disability, citizenship status, service member status, sexual orientation, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local law;
- Disseminating or displaying Offensive pictures, drawings, photographs, figurines, or other graphic images, conduct, or communications, including e-mail, faxes, and copies pertaining to an individual’s race, color, religion, genetic information, national origin, sex (including same sex), pregnancy, age, disability, citizenship status, service member status, sexual orientation, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local law;
- Offensive sexual remarks, sexual advances, or requests for sexual favors regardless of the gender of the individuals involved; and
- Offensive physical conduct, including touching and gestures, regardless of the gender of the individuals involved.

Sankofa Montessori absolutely prohibits retaliation, which includes: threatening an individual or taking any adverse action against an individual for (1) reporting a possible violation of this policy, or (2) participating in an investigation conducted under this policy.

Our managers, supervisors, and administrators are covered by this policy and are prohibited from engaging in any form of harassing, discriminatory, or retaliatory conduct. No manager or supervisor has the authority to suggest to any applicant or employee that employment or advancement will be affected by the individual entering into (or refusing to enter into) a personal relationship with the supervisor or manager, or for tolerating (or refusing to tolerate) conduct or communication that might violate this policy. Such conduct is a direct violation of this policy.

Similarly, no employee has the authority to suggest to a student that the student’s continued attendance, grade, or promotion will be affected by the individual entering into (or refusing to enter into) a personal relationship with the employee, or for tolerating (or refusing to tolerate) conduct or communications that might violate this policy. Such conduct is a direct violation of this policy.



Non-employees are also covered by this policy. Sankofa Montessori prohibits harassment, discrimination, or retaliation of our employees in connection with their work by non-employees. Immediately report any harassing or discriminating behavior by non-employees. Any employee who experiences or observes harassment, discrimination, or retaliation should report it using the guidelines listed below.

### **Reporting**

If you have any concern that our Policy Prohibiting Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation may have been violated by anyone, you must immediately report the matter. Due to the very serious nature of harassment, discrimination and retaliation, you must report your concerns to the Executive Director. If your concern is about the Executive Director, you must report your concern to the Board Chair. You should report any actions that you believe may violate our policy no matter how slight the actions may seem.

Sankofa Montessori will investigate the report and then take prompt, appropriate remedial action. Sankofa Montessori will protect the confidentiality of employees reporting suspected violations of this or any other School policy to the extent possible consistent with our investigation. However, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

You will not be penalized or retaliated against for truthfully reporting improper conduct, harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or other actions that you believe may violate this policy.

An individual who retaliates against someone who has reported a concern in good faith is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Sankofa Montessori is serious about enforcing our policy against harassment. We cannot resolve a potential policy violation unless we know about it. You are responsible for reporting possible policy violations to us so that we can take appropriate actions to address your concerns. Managers and supervisors are required to report possible policy violations and failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Any questions about this policy should be addressed to:

Asaata Hatch  
Associate Director of Operations  
ahatch@sankofamontessori.org



For complaints that fall under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX"), please refer to the [Sexual Harassment Policy](#).

### **Rights Under Section 504**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, commonly referred to as "Section 504," is a nondiscrimination statute enacted by the United States Congress. The purpose of Section 504 is to prohibit discrimination and to assure that disabled students have educational opportunities and benefits equal to those provided to nondisabled students.

The implementing regulations for Section 504 as set out in 34 CFR Part 104 provide parents and/ or students with the following rights:

1. Your child has the right to an appropriate education designed to meet his or her individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students. 34 CFR 104.33.
2. Your child has the right to free educational services except for those fees that are imposed on non-disabled students or their parents. Insurers and similar third parties who provide services not operated by or provided by the recipient are not relieved from an otherwise valid obligation to provide or pay for services provided to a disabled student. 34 CFR 104.33.
3. Your child has a right to participate in an educational setting (academic and nonacademic) with non-disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate to his or her needs. 34 CFR 104.34.
4. Your child has a right to facilities, services, and activities that are comparable to those provided for non-disabled students. 34 CFR 104.34.
5. Your child has a right to an evaluation prior to a Section 504 determination of eligibility. 34 CFR 104.35.
6. You have the right to not consent to the school system's request to evaluate your child. 34 CFR 104.35.
7. You have the right to ensure that evaluation procedures, which may include testing, conform to the requirements of 34 CFR 104.35.
8. You have the right to ensure that the school system will consider information from a variety of sources as appropriate, which may include aptitude and achievement tests, grades, teacher recommendations and observations, physical conditions, social or cultural background, medical records, and parental recommendations. 34 CFR 104.35.
9. You have the right to ensure that placement decisions are made by a group of persons, including persons knowledgeable about your child, the meaning of the evaluation data,



the placement options, and the legal requirements for least restrictive environment and comparable facilities. 34 CFR 104.35.

10. If your child is eligible under Section 504, your child has a right to periodic reevaluations, including prior to any subsequent significant change of placement. 34 CFR 104.35.
11. You have the right to notice prior to any actions by the school system regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child. 34 CFR 104.36.
12. You have the right to examine your child's educational records. 34 CFR 104.36.
13. You have the right to an impartial hearing with respect to the school system's actions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement, with opportunity for parental participation in the hearing and representation by an attorney. 34 CFR 104.36.
14. You have the right to receive a copy of this notice and a copy of the school system's impartial hearing procedure upon request. 34 CFR 104.36.
15. If you disagree with the decision of the impartial hearing officer (school board members and other district employees are not considered impartial hearing officers), you have a right to a review of that decision according to the school system's impartial hearing procedure. 34 CFR 104.36.

You have the right to, at any time, file a complaint with the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

### **Notification of Rights Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 ("FERPA")**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day Sankofa Montessori (the "School") receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect their child's or their education records should submit to the Associate Director of Operations a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.



Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the School to amend their child's or their education record should write to the Associate Director of Operations, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it should be changed. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to provide written consent before the School discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School or the school district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a school board member or director; a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by School, performs an institutional service or function for which the School would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the School with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. (Note: FERPA requires a school or school district to make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request or the disclosure is initiated by the parent or eligible student).

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education



400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

### **Directory Information**

FERPA allows the School to disclose appropriately designated “directory information” from a student’s education record without written consent. “Directory Information” is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released. The School has designated the following as "Directory Information:" the student’s name, address, email address, grade level, date and place of birth, telephone number, and his/her parents' or guardians’ names, mailing addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, awards and honors received, photographs and videos of students participating in school or school-sponsored activities that have appeared in school publications, and dates of attendance. Student social security number or student identification or unique student identifier will not be designated as Directory Information.

The School may disclose Directory Information to the general public, including military recruiters, the media, colleges and universities, prospective employers, and other outside organizations, such as companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, the School may reach out to parents to inform them of, and/or connect them with, opportunities to engage civically, including to advocate for educational issues that impact their student and school. The School may release Directory Information, namely parent names and contact information (mailing addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers), to contractors and partners involved in those efforts. The School does not engage directly in any electoral activities, and does not support or oppose any political party or candidate for public office.

Parents can object to the release of Directory Information regarding their student, which includes parent contact information. Please contact our Associate Director of Operations, within 14 days of provision of this notice if you do not wish for your student's Directory Information to be released.

### **Notification of Rights Under O.C.G.A § 20-2-786 (Parents’ Bill of Rights)**

The Parents' Bill of Rights (Bill of Rights) acknowledges the fundamental rights of parents to direct the upbringing of their minor children, including, by way of illustration only, the right to review instructional materials; to access and review educational and other records; and, in many cases, the right to consent in writing before a photograph or video recording of their minor child is made. The Bill of Rights allows parents to make written requests for information subject to its provisions and prescribes procedures and timelines for school responses and governing board appeals.



At Sankofa Montessori, all families consent to or decline photography or video recording of their minor child as part of their annual registration process.

Generally, when written requests for instructional materials are made, the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture must respond within three business days. If the request is denied or existing information is not provided within thirty days, the parent may appeal the denial or failure to respond to the governing board through Sankofa Montessori's [grievance process](#). The appeal must be placed on the agenda for the next or subsequent public board meeting.

### **Notification Under O.C.G.A § 20-1-11 (Divisive Concepts)**

The Governing Board of Sankofa Montessori adopts this compliant policy as required by [O.C.G.A. § 20-1-11](#) to address complaints regarding divisive concepts.

1. **Who may bring a complaint?** Only a parent of a student enrolled in Sankofa Montessori or an individual employed as a school administrator, teacher or other school personnel at Sankofa Montessori may file a complaint under this policy. If a student is over 18 years old or lawfully-emancipated, he or she may also bring a complaint under this policy while he or she is enrolled.
2. **What does a complaint need to include?** A complaint under this policy must be submitted in writing to the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture of Sankofa Montessori. The complaint must provide a reasonable detailed description of the alleged violation within ten (10) working days after the most recent event upon which the complaint is based.
3. **What is the procedure for resolving the complaint?**
  - a. The Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture will respond to the complainant with confirmation of receipt and explanation the complaint process and timeline.
  - b. Within five school days of receiving the complaint, the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture or designee shall review the complaint and take reasonable steps to investigate the allegations in the complaint;
  - c. Within ten school days of receiving the complaint, unless the complainant and the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture agree to another timeline, the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture or designee shall confer with the complainant and inform the complainant whether a violation occurred, in whole or in part, and, if such a violation was found to have occurred, what remedial steps have been or will be taken; provided, however,



that the confidentiality of student or personnel information shall not be violated;  
and

- d. Following such conference, within three school days of a request by the complainant, the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture or designee shall provide to the complainant a written summary of the findings of the investigation and a statement of remedial measures, if any; provided, however, that such written response shall not disclose any confidential student or personnel information;

#### **4. What is the appeal process?**

- a. Review by Executive Director. If the complainant remains dissatisfied after administrative review, the family may, within ten (10) working days of receipt of the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture's written recommendation, submit the complaint to the Executive Director to review the determinations of the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture under this policy. The Executive Director will review the determination of the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture for and provide its decision within ten school days of receiving the request for review. Confidential student or personnel matters are not subject to review under this process.
- b. Review by Board of Directors. If the complainant remains dissatisfied after administrative review, the family may, within ten (10) working days of receipt of the Executive Director's written recommendation, may submit a written request to the Sankofa Montessori Governing Board for its review of the determinations of Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture and/or Executive Director under this policy. The Sankofa Montessori Governing Board will review the determination of the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture/Executive Director for and provide its decision within ten school days of receiving the request for review. Confidential student or personnel matters are not subject to review under this process. The decision of Sankofa Montessori Governing Board shall be subject to review by the State Charter Schools Commission, whereupon the State Charter Schools Commission shall take appropriate remedial measures. Confidential student or personnel matters are not subject to review under this process.



5. **Reviewing Records.** Any individual who may bring a complaint under this policy may submit a written request at any time, including prior to filing a complaint, to review nonconfidential records which he or she reasonably believe may substantiate a complaint under this policy. The Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture shall produce such records for inspection within a reasonable amount of time not to exceed three business days of receipt of a request. In those instances where some, but not all, of the records requested are available for inspection within three business days, the Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture shall make available within that period such records that are available for inspection. In any instance where some or all of such records are unavailable within three business days of receipt of the request, and such information exists, the Student Support Specialist shall provide the individual making the request with a description of records that exist and a timeline for when the records will be available for inspection and shall provide the records or access thereto as soon as practicable but in no case more than 30 days following the receipt of the written request to review the records.

### **Family Engagement & Collaboration Policy**

Sankofa Montessori is a public Montessori charter school working to provide a high-quality experience for all of its members. We know that children grow in a village of attachments to their families, teachers, and community, therefore our team commits to supporting you in your child's education.

To ensure these strong partnerships support our students, Sankofa Montessori will leverage the expertise of families to:

1. build strong relationships, learn about the child's strengths, and learn about the family's dreams for their child's future
2. ensure families are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making to assist in the education of their child.
3. ensure the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in Section 1116 of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

### **About the Family Engagement Policy**



In support of strengthening student academic achievement and parent engagement, Sankofa Montessori has developed a parent and family engagement policy that establishes our expectations and objectives for meaningful family engagement and guides the strategies and resources that strengthen school and parent partnerships in our Title I school. This plan describes Sankofa Montessori's commitment to engage families in the education of their children and to build the capacity in its status as a Title I school to implement family engagement strategies and activities designed to achieve our student academic achievement goals.

Title I, Part A provides for substantive family collaboration at every level of the program, such as in the development and implementation of the school plan, and in carrying out the school improvement provisions. Section 1116 of ESSA contains the primary Title I, Part A requirements for schools and school systems to involve parents and family members in their children's education. Sankofa Montessori will work to ensure that the required school-level parent and family engagement policies meet the requirements of federal law and each include, as a component, a school-parent compact.

### **Jointly Developed**

During the school's planning stages, the Board of Directors, school leadership, and community stakeholders were invited to participate and provide suggestions and ideas to create Sankofa Montessori's parent and family engagement policy for the 2023-2024 school year. In future years, Sankofa Montessori will send an email to all parents informing them about this meeting and post an announcement on the school's website. During this meeting, parents will have an opportunity to review and discuss the Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan (CLIP), the Comprehensive Support and Improvement School's Plan, and the Targeted Support and Improvement School's Plan. Additionally, our school will use its Sankofa Family Association to review the school's parent and family engagement policy before the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

Upon final revision, the initial parent and family engagement policy will be incorporated into the CLIP which will be submitted to the state. Parents are welcome to submit comments and feedback regarding the policy at any time on the school website or by submitting written comments to the school. All feedback received by July 2023 will be considered for revisions to this policy.

The school's plan to distribute this policy is to post it on the schools website and disseminate it during the annual Title I school meeting in the fall, and email the link to all parents in a format and language they can understand.

### **Strengthening Our School**



This year, the Sankofa Montessori Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture who will serve as our school family engagement coordinator (FEC) will provide technical assistance and support our school to ensure family engagement requirements are being satisfied and that family engagement strategies and activities are being implemented.

### **Reservation of Funds**

Sankofa Montessori will reserve 1 percent from the total amount of Title I funds it receives in 2023-2024 to carry out the parent and family engagement requirements listed in this policy and as described in federal law. Furthermore, Sankofa Montessori will distribute 90 percent of the amount reserved to the school to support our family engagement programs and activities. The district will provide clear guidance and communication to assist the school in developing an adequate family engagement budget that addresses their needs assessment and parent recommendations. Next year, our school will host an annual School Improvement Forum in May for parents to provide suggestions on how these family engagement funds could be used in the upcoming year at the district and school-level. Comment cards and minutes from these meetings will be reviewed by the district to determine areas of need for the upcoming school year and consider changes to the family engagement budget.

### **Opportunities for Meaningful Consultation**

Input and suggestions from parents, family members, and community partners are an essential component of the district and school improvement plans that are developed each year. All families are invited to attend two meeting opportunities described in this section to share their ideas and suggestions to help the district, schools, and students to reach our student academic achievement goals.

### **Sankofa Family Association ~ February 2024**

The school will host a forum for parents and family members to participate in roundtable discussions to review the schoolwide plan, the school's parent and family engagement policies as well as provide input on the family engagement budget and topics for school staff training. Sankofa Montessori will send invitations home as well as email and text parents to notify them about the date and time of the forum. Information regarding the Sankofa Family Association will also be made available on the school websites.

Input on the use of Title I funds to support family engagement programs may also be provided through the annual school survey. The survey will contain questions related to the family engagement budget and school staff training for families to provide their comments.

### **State of the District Meeting ~ March 2024**



All parents are welcome to hear the latest updates from Sankofa Montessori as well as review and provide input into the district parent and family engagement policy and the Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan for the 2024-2025 school year. Notices regarding this meeting will be emailed to all parents in advance of the meeting. Sankofa Montessori will also communicate information regarding this meeting on the school district website.

### **Building Capacity**

Sankofa Montessori will build partnerships between the school, families, and community with the goal of developing mutual support for student achievement. To develop capacity for this support, Sankofa Montessori will implement a variety of family and community engagement initiatives.

**Of Parents** - Sankofa Montessori will provide families with information about the overall Title I program and its requirements. The district works with its Title I schools to help families understand academic expectations for student learning and progress. Specific information related to the State's challenging academic standards, and local and state assessments—including alternative assessments, will also be provided. The district also offers assistance to parents in understanding use of its online student information system and other digital resources, including the harms of copyright piracy, through its technology specialists. Notifications about these opportunities will be posted on the district website and shared through school messaging systems, newsletters, and social media postings. In addition, the district and school websites contain resources and materials such as parent guides, study guides, practice assessments, and materials for at-home learning. Hard copies of these materials are also available at all Title I schools, including copies in Spanish. Sankofa Montessori will coordinate and integrate the district's family engagement programs under this part with parent and family engagement strategies, to the extent feasible and appropriate, with other relevant Federal, State, and local laws and programs such as, the local preschool program and other federal and state funded preschool programs in the district. The district will invite faculty and staff from those programs to attend planning meetings focused on family engagement activities. In the spring, schools will host Kindergarten Ready days, Middle School Transition Nights, and College and Career Fairs so parents may receive information to help prepare them and their children for the next life stage.

**Of School Staff** - Sankofa Montessori will conduct four trainings during the school year for leadership staff and school FEC(s) to learn and discuss strategies to increase family engagement, improve school-family communication, and build ties with parents and the community. Sankofa Montessori will also host a training for appropriate school staff and faculty that will focus on creating welcoming environments.



To ensure that information related to district, school, parent programs, and activities are available to all parents, each Title I school is required to send home and post online information for parents and family members in an understandable language and uniform format. At the beginning of the year, school staff will be trained on parent notifications and resources to be sent home in parents' preferred language, where applicable, and providing interpreters at parent events. Information posted on the district website will be translated to the extent practicable. The district will also utilize school phone call systems, district and school websites, local news media, and social media to post information for parents.

### **Parent and Family Engagement Evaluation**

Each year, Sankofa Montessori will conduct an evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this parent and family engagement policy and the family engagement activities to improve the academic quality of the Title I school through an annual parent survey and the School Improvement Forums.

Beginning in April, the school will send home a survey and email a link to the survey for parents to provide valuable feedback regarding the parent and family engagement activities and programs. These surveys will also be posted on the district and school websites for parents to complete. In addition to the annual survey, the school will also use the School Improvement Forum to facilitate group discussions to discuss the needs of families of children eligible to receive Title I services to design strategies for more effective family engagement.

Sankofa Montessori will use the findings from the school forums and the survey results to design strategies to improve effective family engagement, to remove possible barriers to parent participation, and to revise its parent and family engagement policies.

### **Accessibility**

In carrying out the parent and family engagement requirements established by Section 1116 of the ESSA, Sankofa Montessori's Manager of Family Engagement and Student Culture will communicate and collaborate with the Office for Student Support Services to ensure full opportunities for participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children including providing information and school reports in a language parents can understand.

### **Rights Under Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)**

PPRA affords parents of elementary and secondary students certain rights regarding the conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include, but are not limited to, the right to:



- **Consent** before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas (“protected information survey”) if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) –
  - Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student’s parent;
  - Mental or psychological problems of the student or student’s family;
  - Sex behavior or attitudes;
  - Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
  - Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships;
  - Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
  - Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student’s parent; or
  - Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.
- **Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of** –
  - Any other protected information survey, regardless of funding;
  - Any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law; and
  - Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others. (This does not apply to the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for the exclusive purpose of developing, evaluating, or providing educational products or services for, or to, students or educational institutions.)
- **Inspect**, upon request and before administration or use –
  - Protected information surveys of students and surveys created by a third party;
  - Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and
  - Instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.

These rights transfer from the parents to a student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under State law.

Sankofa Montessori has adopted policies, in consultation with parents, regarding these rights, as well as arrangements to protect student privacy in the administration of protected information surveys and the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for



marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes. Sankofa Montessori will directly notify parents of these policies at least annually at the start of each school year and after any substantive changes. Sankofa Montessori will also directly notify, such as through the U.S. Mail or email, parents of students who are scheduled to participate in the specific activities or surveys noted below and will provide an opportunity for the parent to opt his or her child out of participation in the specific activity or survey. Sankofa Montessori will make this notification to parents at the beginning of the school year if the District has identified the specific or approximate dates of the activities or surveys at that time. For surveys and activities scheduled after the school year starts, parents will be provided reasonable notification of the planned activities and surveys listed below and be provided an opportunity to opt their child out of such activities and surveys. Parents will also be provided an opportunity to review any pertinent surveys. Following is a list of the specific activities and surveys covered under this direct notification requirement:

- Collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for marketing, sales, or other distribution.
- Administration of any protected information survey not funded in whole or in part by ED.
- Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening as described above.

Parents who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

## **Safety**

### **Security and Emergency Procedures**

During the school day one front door will be the sole entrance for students and families. Visitors will need to ring the security buzzer to enter the school. All visitors must sign in and out.

Emergency exits have been identified for each room. Maps indicating these exits will be posted in the rooms. Regular emergency drills—including fire, tornado, and lockdown drills—will take place during the year at both campuses. All areas of the Sankofa Montessori campus are on an intercom system. Teachers are issued walkie-talkies for daily dismissal and emergencies. Families are notified of emergencies via Transparent Classroom and via text/email to the information in our SchoolMint system.



- **Lockdown Protocols:** In the event of a lockdown, Administration or Operations staff will inform school staff in-person and/or via the intercom feature on class telephones.
  - **Lockdown (Interior):** Threat is inside the building; close and lock all exterior/classroom doors; open exterior window blinds or curtains to allow exterior visibility into the classroom.
  - **Lockdown (Exterior):** Threat is outside the building; all students and staff must remain in their location from the time the lockdown is announced until it is lifted.
  - **Lockdown (Full):** Threat is inside the building; all students and staff must remain in their location from the time the lockdown is announced until it is lifted.
  - **Shelter in Place:** Used to protect school occupants from external threats such as tornadoes, some chemical plumes, other natural disasters, and man-made threats.
  - **All Clear:** No longer at risk. Resume normal school day.
- **Bomb and Fire Evacuation Protocols:**
  - The teacher(s) brings their student roster/backpack that includes updated emergency contact information for students and parents.
  - The teacher(s) will be the last person to exit a classroom, and will ensure that all occupants have safely evacuated after an alarm.
  - The teacher(s) will assist any physically or otherwise handicapped students in exiting safely.
  - The teacher(s) will bring students in an orderly fashion to the designated exit and meet the rest of the school in the designated meeting place.
  - The teacher(s) will take student attendance using roster and record on green/red cards.
- **Shelter in Place/Tornado/Earthquake Drill:**
  - All teachers and students will go into the hallway by the wall closest to their door, and get in the “DUCK, COVER, and HOLD ON” position as close as possible to a wall, no one will be allowed to move or leave until the all clear is called. Head should be towards the wall with hands covering the back of the head.
- **Medical Emergency:** see [Medical Emergency Response section](#).

### Court Orders

In the case that families have court orders (e.g. custody agreement, restraining order), they should both a) share with the Office Assistant ASAP, and b) update adults authorized to pick up students in SchoolMint and PickMyKid. In the case of ongoing custody disputes, it is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to provide a copy of the most recent court order, including any temporary orders.



### **Computers and Internet Acceptable Use Policy**

By virtue of using a school computer, network, or online tool, the students and parents of Sankofa Montessori agree to abide by Sankofa Montessori's Acceptable Use Policy.

Sankofa Montessori offers Internet access for student and staff use at school, and various online tools for staff, student, and parent use. This policy is the Acceptable Use Policy for use of online tools and Internet use at Sankofa Montessori. The Internet system and online tools have been established for a limited educational purpose to include classroom activities and limited high-quality, self-discovery activities as well as research. It has not been established as a public access or public forum, and Sankofa Montessori has the right to place reasonable restrictions on the material students access or post, the training students need to have before they are allowed to use the system, and enforce all rules set forth in the school code and the laws of the state of Georgia. Further, students may not use this system for commercial purposes to offer, provide, or purchase products or services through the system or use the system for political lobbying. Access to the Internet is available through this school only with permission of the Executive Director (or his or her designee) and the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) permission. This policy applies to the use of school equipment at school, or the use of services established or maintained by the school which may also be used off property.

The following uses of the organization's Internet are acknowledged:

Personal Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Students will not post contact information (e.g., address, phone number) about him- or herself or any other person.</li><li>● In general, students will not interact online with anyone they do not know personally. They will not agree to meet with someone they have met online without parents' approval. Any contact of this nature or the receipt of any message a student feels is inappropriate or makes him or her feel uncomfortable should be reported to school authorities immediately.</li></ul>
Illegal Activities (see <a href="#">Student Code of Conduct</a> for consequences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Students will not attempt to gain unauthorized access to Sankofa Montessori computer system or go beyond their authorized access by entering another person's account number or accessing another person's files.</li><li>● Students will not deliberately attempt to disrupt the computer system or destroy data by spreading computer viruses or by any other means.</li><li>● Students will not use Sankofa Montessori's system to engage in any other disruptive or illegal act, such as cyberbullying, arranging</li></ul>



	<p>for a drug sale or the purchase of alcohol, engaging in criminal gang activity, threatening the safety of a person, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If your child experiences bullying online, contact their teacher or administrator, especially if the harassment or bullying involves another Sankofa Montessori student, occurs during school, and/or occurs during a school-related activity. Even if the other party is not connected to Sankofa Montessori, your student's support team wants to know of anything that impacts your child's wellbeing. If the harassment or bullying is happening via a social media platform, use that platform's reporting tools to alert the company to the violation of its terms of service. Additional information about recognizing and preventing cyberbullying is available at from <a href="http://StopBullying.gov">StopBullying.gov</a>.</li> </ul>
System Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students are responsible for their individual accounts and should take all reasonable precautions to prevent others from being able to use their accounts. Under no condition should students give their password to another person.</li> <li>● Students will immediately notify a teacher or the system administrator if they have identified a possible security problem.</li> <li>● Students will avoid the inadvertent spread of computer viruses by following virus protection procedures when downloading software.</li> </ul>
Inappropriate Language (see <a href="#">Student Code of Conduct</a> for consequences)	<p>On any and all uses of the Internet, whether in application to public or private messages or material posted on web pages, students will not use obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude, inflammatory, threatening, or disrespectful language. Students will not post information that could cause danger or disruption or engage in personal attacks, including prejudicial or discriminatory attacks. Students will not harass another person by a persistent action that distresses another person, and they must stop if asked to do so.</p>
Respect for Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students will not repost a message that was sent to them privately without permission of the person who sent the message.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will not post private information about themselves or another person.</li> </ul>
Respecting Resource Limits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will use the system only for educational and career development activities and limited, high-quality, self-discovery activities.</li> <li>Students will not engage in “spamming” (that is, sending an unnecessary message to a large number of people).</li> </ul>
Plagiarism and Copyright Infringement (see <a href="#">Student Code of Conduct</a> for consequences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will not plagiarize materials that they find on the Internet. Plagiarism is taking the ideas or writings of others and presenting them as if they were yours.</li> <li>Students will respect the rights of copyright owners. Copyright infringement occurs when work that is protected by copyright is inappropriately reproduced. If a work contains language that specifies appropriate use of that work, students should follow the expressed requirements. If they are unsure whether or not they can use a work, they should request permission from the copyright owner. Direct any questions regarding copyright to a teacher.</li> </ul>
Inappropriate Access to Material (see <a href="#">Student Code of Conduct</a> for consequences)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will not use the organization’s computer system to access material that is profane or obscene (pornography) or that advocates illegal acts or violence or discrimination toward other people (hate literature). A special exception may be made for hate literature if the purpose of the access is to conduct research with both teacher and parent approval.</li> <li>If a student mistakenly accesses inappropriate information, they should immediately tell their teacher or another staff member. This will protect them against a claim of intentional violation of this policy.</li> <li>Parents should instruct their child(ren) if there is additional material they think would be inappropriate for him or her to access. The school fully expects that students will follow their parents’ instructions in this matter.</li> </ul>
Students' Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free Speech. Students' right to free speech, as set forth in the school disciplinary code, applies also to their communication on</li> </ul>



	<p>the Internet. The Internet is considered a limited forum, similar to the school newspaper, and therefore the school may restrict students' rights to free speech for valid educational reasons. The school will not restrict rights to free speech on the basis of its disagreement with the opinions expressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Search and Seizure. Students should expect no privacy of the contents of their personal files on the school system. Routine maintenance and monitoring of the system may lead to discovery that they have violated this policy, the school code, or the law. An individual search will be conducted if there is reasonable suspicion that a student has violated this acceptable use policy, the school disciplinary code, or the law.</li> <li>● Due Process. The school will cooperate fully with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation related to illegal activities conducted through the organization's Internet system. In the event of a claim that a student has violated this policy, the school disciplinary code, or the law in a student's use of Sankofa Montessori's system, he or she will be given written notice of suspected violations and an opportunity to present an explanation according to school code and/or state and federal law (see <a href="#">due process section</a>). Additional restrictions may be placed on his or her use of their Internet account.</li> </ul>
Other Acknowledgments	<p>The school makes no guarantee that the functions or the services provided by or through the system will be error-free or without defect. The organization will not be responsible for any damage a student may suffer including, but not limited to, loss of data or interruptions of service. The school is not responsible for the accuracy or quality of the information obtained through or stored on the system. The school will not be responsible for financial obligations arising from unauthorized use of the system. Anyone caught breaking these rules will be subjected to disciplinary procedures depending upon the severity of the infraction. Additionally, any student caught intentionally damaging or vandalizing a school computer may be disallowed from utilizing computer resources. Any such act may result in partial or full restitution being required by the student and/or family. Sankofa Montessori is not responsible for repair or replacement of family's or student's damaged, lost, or stolen equipment.</p>



### **Cybersafety Notice for Families**

As a potential recipient of e-rate funds, Sankofa Montessori is required to have in place a versatile cyber safety system. Sankofa Montessori will:

- Enhance learning through the safe use of technology, and do its best to keep the students and their data safe online. This includes working to restrict access to inappropriate, illegal, or harmful material when students use, on- or off-campus, Sankofa Montessori-owned equipment/devices and/or Sankofa Montessori-issued service credentials (e.g. Google Workspace). At a minimum, this involves using a content filter as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act (for all Sankofa Montessori-associated devices and accounts).
- Work with children and their families to develop an understanding of the importance of cybersafety through education designed to complement and support the use agreement.
- Provide children with cybersafety strategies.
- Respond to any breaches in an appropriate manner.
- Welcome inquiries from students and families about cybersafety or privacy issues.

Parent/guardian responsibilities:

- Read the acceptable use agreement section.
- Discuss the information with my child and explain why it is important.
- Support the school's cybersafety program by encouraging my child to follow the cybersafety rules, and to always ask the teacher any questions about technology use.
- Contact the school to discuss any questions you have about cybersafety and/or this use agreement.

Student responsibilities:

- Review acceptable use agreement section with a parent/guardian.
- Follow the cybersafety rules and instructions whenever using the school's technology.
- Follow the cybersafety rules whenever using privately-owned technology on the school site or at any school-related activity, regardless of its location. Sankofa Montessori is not responsible for repair or replacement of family's or student's damaged, lost, or stolen equipment.
- Avoid any involvement with material or activities that could put at risk the safety or privacy of any student, the school, or other members of the school community.
- Take proper care of school technology, with an understanding that being involved in the damage, loss, or theft of Sankofa Montessori-owned equipment/devices can lead to the student/family being responsible for the cost of repairs or replacement.



- Ask a teacher if they have any questions about this agreement.

#### Additional information

- [Cybersafety from the Georgia Department of Education](#)
- [CIPA consumer guide from the FCC](#)

#### **Searches by School Personnel**

In accordance with state and federal law, should a school staff member have reasonable suspicion that a crime or violation of school rules has occurred, a member of the administrative team has the authority to conduct an appropriate search.

Reasonable suspicion is defined to mean that the person initiating the search has a well founded suspicion—based on objective facts that can be articulated—of either criminal activity or a violation of school rules. Reasonable suspicion is more than a mere hunch or supposition.

If reasonable suspicion exists, and if the school staff can justify the search at its inception, a reasonable search can be conducted to prove or disprove the stated suspicion.

Student lockers and desks may be searched by school administrators or staff who have a reasonable suspicion that the lockers or desks contain drugs, alcohol, material that violates school rules, stolen properties, weapons, items posing a danger to the health or safety of students and school employees, or evidence of a violation of school policy.

Students or student property may be searched based on reasonable suspicion of a violation of school rules, policy, or state law. The privacy and dignity of students shall be respected. Searches shall be carried out in the presence of adult witnesses, preferably both the individual conducting the search and the witness will be of the same gender as the student. Students may be asked to empty pockets, remove jackets, coats, shoes, and other articles of exterior clothing for examination if reasonable under the circumstances. No employee shall perform a strip search of any student at any point.

Law enforcement officials shall be contacted if the search produces a controlled substance, drug paraphernalia, weapons, stolen goods, or evidence of a crime, or in any case involving a violation of law. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will also be contacted.



### **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 Student 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. “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.
  - e. “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.
  - f. “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.
  - g. “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.

### **Student Reporting of Alleged Sexually Inappropriate Behavior**

Any student (or parent or friend of a student) who has been the victim of an act of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by a teacher, administrator, or other school system employee is urged to make an oral report of the act to any teacher, counsel, or administrator at his/her/their school.

Any teacher, counselor, or administrator receiving a report of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct of a student by a teacher, administrator, or other employee shall make an oral report of the incident immediately by telephone or otherwise to the School Leader, and shall submit a written report of the incident to the School Leader within 24 hours. If the School Leader is the person accused of the sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, the oral and written reports should be made to the Chairperson of the Governing Board



Any School Leader receiving a report of sexual abuse as defined in O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 shall make an oral report immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused. The report should be made by telephone and followed by a written report, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Resources, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney.

Reports of acts of sexual misconduct against a student by a teacher, administrator, or other employee not covered by O.C.G.A. §§ 19-7-5 or 20-2-1184 shall be investigated immediately by School personnel. If the investigation of the allegation of sexual misconduct indicates a reasonable cause to believe that the report of sexual misconduct is valid, the Executive Director shall make an immediate written report to the Chairperson of the Governing Board, and the Professional Standards Commission Ethics Division.

**Sexual Harassment Policy ([link to public copy](#))**

**Grievance Policy ([link to public copy](#))**

**Whistleblower Policy ([link to public copy](#))**

### **Handling Of Reported Violations**

Sankofa Montessori will promptly investigate all reports filed in accordance with this policy with due care. Matters reported internally without initial resolution will be investigated to determine if the allegations are true, whether the issue is material and what actions, if any, are necessary to correct the problem. Sankofa Montessori staff will issue a full report of all matters raised under this policy to the Governance Committee. The Governance Committee may conduct a further investigation upon receiving the report from the Executive Director.

For matters reported directly to the Governance Committee or the chair of the Board, the Governance Committee shall promptly acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant if the identity of the complainant is known and conduct an investigation to determine if the allegations are true and whether the issue is material and what, if any, corrective action is necessary. Upon the conclusion of this investigation, the Governance Committee shall promptly report its findings to the Sankofa Montessori Board of Directors.

### **Authority of Governance Committee**

The Governance Committee shall have full authority to investigate concerns raised in accordance with this policy and may retain outside legal counsel, accountants, or any other resource that the Committee reasonably believes is necessary to conduct a full and complete investigation of the allegations.



### **No Retaliation**

This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable board members, advisors, employees and volunteers to raise serious concerns within the organization for investigation and appropriate action. With this goal in mind, no director, advisor, employee or volunteer who, in good faith, reports a concern shall be threatened, discriminated against or otherwise subject to retaliation or, in the case of an employee, adverse action as a result of such report. Moreover, a volunteer or employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a concern in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including dismissal from the volunteer position or termination of employment.

### **Acting in Good Faith**

Anyone reporting a concern must act in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the matter raised is a violation of law or policy or of accounting or auditing procedures. The act of making allegations that prove to be unsubstantiated and that prove to have been made maliciously, recklessly, with gross negligence, or with the foreknowledge that the allegations are false, will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense and may result in discipline, up to and including dismissal from the volunteer position or termination of employment. Depending on the circumstances, such conduct may also give rise to other actions, including civil or criminal lawsuits.

### **Confidentiality**

Sankofa Montessori will treat all communications under this policy as confidentially as possible, but may need to disclose information for business reasons, including: 1) to conduct a complete and fair investigation, or 2) for review of Sankofa Montessori operations by Sankofa Montessori board, Finance Committee, independent public accountants, and/or legal counsel.

### **FAMILY HANDBOOK SIGNATURE**

I have received and read a copy of Sankofa Montessori Family Handbook and understand and agree to the rules, regulations, and procedures of the school. I understand that if I ever have any questions regarding school policies, I can always ask a member of the school community for further explanation.

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Student Name(s)

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Parent or Guardian Name



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Parent or Guardian Signature

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Date