

COUNTRYSIDE MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL



STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK GRADES 1-8 2021-2022

CMCS adopts the Pasco County Schools Student Progression Plan and Student Code of Conduct. All policies and guidelines hereby included in those documents are to be followed by our students and parents. This handbook is a work in progress. Frequent revisions may be made as we strive to improve our learning environment for students and families. In an effort to become good stewards of our planet resources and lower our costs, we ask that you refer to our website to download a PDF copy of our Official Student/Parent Handbook. Thank you.

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MISSION

Our mission at Countryside Montessori Charter School (CMCS) is to provide a strong Montessori foundation in a safe, diverse, and collaborative community.

VISION

Igniting a community of lifelong learners by guiding and nurturing each whole child.

CORE VALUES

CMCS enables our students to achieve their full potential and become responsible citizens of the world by:

- maintaining excellence in Montessori education
- cultivating a community of eager learners, engaged parents, and dedicated teachers and staff
- consistently challenging, nurturing, and supporting each child's individual growth and development
- modeling principles of respect for self, respect for others, and respect for the environment

SCHOOL OF CHOICE

Charter schools are public schools of choice, meaning teachers and students choose them. They generally offer teachers and students more authority to make decisions than most traditional public schools. We are accountable for compliance with rules and regulations, but our priority is to be accountable for academic results and for upholding our charter.

HOURS

Office hours:	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Student hours:	8:30 am – 3:00 pm
Before and After School Care hours:	7:00 – 8:05 am and 3:30 - 6:00 pm

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

GENERAL RULES

- All vehicles must drive slowly upon entering and exiting the car line, follow staff directions, and watch for children.
- Please do not engage in conversations with CMCS staff and others for safety and efficiency reasons.
- During both morning arrival and afternoon dismissal, parents will enter the campus and make two car lines.
- We have established a “loading dock procedure” at arrival and dismissal. The first six vehicles will pull-up to the six yellow slots in front of Building B. Once all cars have come to a complete stop, the children will be waiting to be unloaded from their car (arrival) or loaded into their car (dismissal) as quickly as possible. Please put your car in park for this process. Once all students have been removed/placed

safely, the car line will move again allowing for the next six cars to move to the pick-up slots.

- Please follow the instructions of our traffic patrol person (stop sign).
- CMCS car line is a NO CELL PHONE zone.
- **No students will be allowed to be checked out of the office between 2:45 p.m. and 3:15 p.m.**

ARRIVAL

- Morning car line is from 8:05 a.m. until 8:30 a.m.
- **Students will be marked tardy after 8:30 a.m.**
- Please make every effort to arrive as close to the beginning of car line as possible.
- ALL students must go through car line (with the exception of students in Before Care).
- Children must be ready **before** they arrive at the drop-off zone. Please don't wait to put on shoes and grab school materials while you pull up.
- Parents may **NOT** drop their child in the parking lot and allow them to walk into school on their own or walk up and drop their student(s) off at the courtyard gates. Under no circumstances should a parent enter the courtyard gates during morning arrival.
- When car line is over at 8:30 a.m., a sign will be placed across the driveway. Once the sign has been placed, arriving vehicles must park and walk their children to the office.

DISMISSAL

For dismissal, please help us prevent traffic congestion by arriving within your pick up times as follows:

Lower Elementary (without UE & MS siblings):	3:00 - 3:15 p.m.
Upper Elementary & Middle School (including LE Siblings):	3:15 - 3:30 p.m.

We ask that parents arrive at their designated times rather than arriving to school prior to their designated dismissal time. This will alleviate the back-up from Ehren Cut-Off to Hwy 41. Parents must display the current school-issued car sign from their rearview mirror with the name of the student(s) they will be picking up.

Students will not be dismissed in car line if the car sign is not visible. CMCS will issue two car signs to each student per year. Additional signs may be purchased at the school office for **\$2.00** each. Those without car signs must park and sign students out in the front office. **No student will be called from the office between 2:45 pm and 3:15 pm.** Proper photo ID **MUST** be shown, or students will **NOT** be released. There will be a "caller" standing in the driveway that will read off the name(s) from the sign. Once a student's name is called, that student will be directed outside and escorted to the waiting area. A staff member will meet the students at their assigned pick-up slot to assist them with getting into

the car. Students should not open their own car doors/load themselves; a staff member will assist them.

SAFETY RULES

- **No students will be allowed to be checked out of the office between 2:45 p.m. and 3:15 p.m.** This interrupts the dismissal process. If parents need to pick up children early, they are asked to do so before **2:45 p.m.** for all students.
- **No changes for bus riders will be accepted after 2:45 pm.** Students will be placed on the bus unless office staff is notified prior to 2:45 pm.
- If a student is not at the appropriate pick-up slot when their car arrives, the car will be directed to go back through car line.
- **Once you are in car line/on campus, please discontinue use of your cell phone.**
- Please do **NOT** park on the green areas or step out of your car. This is a safety hazard.
- All children will be loaded on the passenger side of the car **only**.
- If your child is not picked up by **3:30 p.m.**, they will be escorted to the After Care program and you will be charged appropriately.

ATTENDANCE

Punctuality and regular attendance is an absolute necessity for successful progress in school. Poor attendance or excessive absences will be taken into consideration when evaluating a student for promotion and may affect the student's placement at CMCS. If a student is absent, we ask that parents report the absence using the *Report an Absence* button on the homepage of our website.

Florida Law 1003.26(1)(b) states that if a student has had at least five unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a 90-calendar-day period, the student's primary teacher shall report to the school principal or his or her designee that the student may be exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance, and the school must take action.

Multiple unexcused absences, tardies, and/or early pick-ups may result in a referral to the school Social Worker or to Youth and Family Alternatives, Inc. for inclusion in the CINS/FINS Program (Children in Need of Services/Families in Need of Services), and/or the filing of a truancy petition with the court (Florida Statute 984.12).

We expect our families to make every effort to arrange all appointments for their children after school hours. In the case of absences due to a reportable communicable condition (such as pink eye, chicken pox, measles, ringworm or Coronavirus/COVID-19), we require an immediate call to the office. Upon the discretion of the administration, we may require a doctor's note prior to a student's return to school.

Absences will be marked excused ONLY for reasons listed in the Pasco County Schools Code of Conduct. All other absences will be marked unexcused.

SCHOOL DRESS CODE POLICY

In order to promote an orderly and safe environment that is conducive to learning, all students at CMCS are required to wear school uniforms from Monday through Thursday. Uniforms are ordered through Lands' End and/or Cheer It On Sports, a local uniform supplier. NO other vendors are approved to embroider clothing using the CMCS logo or name. Information regarding uniforms and how to purchase uniforms can be found on our website under the *Parent Links* tab then *Uniform Policy*.

Students who arrive at school without their uniforms/out of dress code may be sent to the office, and a notice may be sent home. Students will be allowed to look through donated uniforms and/or parents may be notified by staff to bring an appropriate uniform to school. Students may be sent home for inappropriate clothing. Dress code violations/decisions are up to the discretion of CMCS staff.

On Fridays, students are allowed to wear CMCS spirit shirts and jeans. CMCS also participates in Charity Fridays; a program where money collected is given to local charities. For an optional contribution, students can wear casual clothes that abide by our Dress Code policy. Students who are unable to donate for Charity Fridays are still able to participate in wearing casual clothing within our Dress Code.

Our Student Dress Code Policy can be found on our website under *Parent Links* then *Dress Code*.

COMMUNICATION

CMCS is committed to openness, honesty, and public involvement in our communications. We believe that good communication builds credibility, improves relationships, and supports teaching and learning.

In order to keep parents and community members informed throughout the year. We have put in place a proactive plan for disseminating information:

- ParentSquare - Posts, Monday Messages, Letters from Administration, Alerts, Teacher/Classroom Posts
- CMCS Radio 107.9 FM
- School website
- School-wide flyers, newsletters, memos, e-mails, and other materials
- Teacher messages entered in student's folder/agenda
- Teacher phone calls and/or emails
- Student Progress Reports and Report Cards
- Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)
- Marquee in front of school

EXPRESSED CONCERN POLICY

There are times when parents need to express concerns or questions to the school regarding a variety of topics. CMCS strongly believes that parents should contact the individual(s) most appropriate to address their area of concern/question.

For the most part, all communication should start with the teachers. If you have concerns/questions, please contact your child's teachers first. If the issue is not clarified, you would then contact the Principal and/or Assistant Principal. Contacting the CMCS Board of Directors would be the last step if your concern/question has not been satisfactorily addressed by the teachers or CMCS Administration. Please see the CMCS website for a complete list of contact information for our staff. We have provided a link on the CMCS website under *Parent Links* to the Pasco County School's District website concerning any ethical violations.

RESPECT AND CIVILITY POLICY

CMCS believes that a safe, secure, nurturing, and civil environment is essential to accomplishing its mission to create a community which works together so all students will reach their highest potential.

This policy promotes mutual respect, civility and orderly conduct among all school employees, students, parents and the general public. The policy is not intended to deprive any person of his or her right to freedom of expression. Rather, it is intended to maintain, to the extent that is possible and reasonable, a safe, harassment-free workplace for students, families, and staff, that is free of disruptive, demeaning, intimidating, threatening or aggressive behaviors.

1. School staff will treat students, parents, fellow staff members, and members of the public with respect and will expect the same in return.
2. School staff will not conduct business with those who use obscenities or otherwise speak in a demanding, loud, insulting or threatening manner.
3. Volatile, hostile or aggressive actions and words will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in these activities may face penalties up to, and including, criminal prosecution.

CONFERENCES

CMCS encourages parents to participate in one Parent-Teacher-Student Conference per school year. Conferences may be scheduled at any time during the year as recommended by the teachers. When appropriate, CMCS strongly encourages students to be active participants in Parent-Teacher Conferences.

Middle School students will set-up and lead one Student-Led Conference with their parents with guidance from their teachers. A parent may also request a private parent-teacher conference, if desired.

For the first quarter, conferences will be held virtually.

Teachers/Administration will not hold conferences that have not been pre-arranged, especially when the staff member has the responsibility of direct supervision of children.

STUDENT INFORMATION CHANGES

Information you provide to CMCS is vital to the welfare and safety of your child. Please be sure you provide any address, phone number, emergency contact, or other important information to the school when the change occurs to ensure that our records are current.

CLASS PLACEMENT

CMCS professional staff makes a great effort to place children in classrooms to assure the greatest likelihood of success. Parent input is welcome but must be submitted in writing. While CMCS does not accept requests for specific teachers/class placement, we do take parent input into consideration. The Administrative team makes decisions regarding class placement based on many factors with the intent of creating a balance within the classrooms. Placement is the responsibility of CMCS and we cannot guarantee any requests. Final placement decisions are made by the Principal.

CMCS reserves the right to refuse to allow any student to take an online course (FLVS, Pasco eSchool) that is offered on campus during the student's daily schedule.

MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSES & PLACEMENT

Students are placed in courses based on many factors, including standardized assessments, classroom-based assessments, teacher recommendation, student portfolio, and observation. Final placement decisions are made by the Principal.

According to Florida Statute, middle school students must successfully complete Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies **each year (6th – 8th)** to be promoted to high school. Successful completion of these courses requires the earning of a grade of "D" or higher. Students who fail a course will be required to retake the course via the Course Recovery system. In addition, one semester course that includes Career & Technical Education Planning must be completed by the end of the 8th grade year.

Intensive Reading is **highly recommended** for students who score a Level 1 or 2 on the FSA English Language Arts assessment. Students who are enrolled in Intensive Reading will have to forfeit an elective (i.e., Research, PE/Art/Music, Spanish); the forfeited class is up to CMCS's discretion.

REPORT CARDS AND PROGRESS REPORTS

Grades 1-2 Primary Report Card

- E = Excellent - student demonstrates consistent exceptional performance
- S = Successful - student displays an understanding of the concepts or behaviors
- N = Needs Improvement – student needs more practice with particular concepts and cannot work independently with the concept

- U = Well Below Expectations – student is struggling with concepts and has not yet demonstrated knowledge of the concept and is not performing at grade level

Grades 3-8 Intermediate & Middle School Report Card

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- D = 60-69
- U = 59 and below

Lower Elementary Grades (Grades 1-3) will be based on the following rubric: 70-30

- 70% Daily Classwork: 10% time management, 10% organization, 15% assignment completion, 15% lesson mastery, 10% participation, 10% homework
- 30% Assessments

Upper Elementary Grades (Grades 4-5) will be based on the following rubric: 60-40

- 60% Daily Classwork (individual work, projects, reports, class observation/participation, writing rubrics, cooperative work), homework
- 40% Assessments

Middle School Grades (Grades 6-8) will be based on the following rubric: 40-60

- 40% Work Cycle (individual work, projects, reports, group work, class participation, homework)
- 60% Assessments
- End Of Course (EOC) examinations count for 30% of a student's grade in that subject area.

Progress Reports will be posted on the myStudent platform mid-quarterly and Report Cards will be posted quarterly. We will not be sending home paper copies of these documents.

Parents of students in Grades 6-8 will have access to Pasco County's online grading system, myStudent, to monitor their student's performance and grades. Parents should be aware that grades in myStudent are not always up-to-date, as teachers need time to grade work and input into the system. We ask for patience from parents regarding the myStudent platform.

PROMOTION/RETENTION POLICY & GRADUATION

CMCS takes your child's education, development, and individual needs seriously. Additionally, CMCS adopts the Pasco County School District's Student Progression Plan, which can be found on the district's website.

Student promotion at CMCS is based upon an evaluation of each student's achievement in terms of appropriate instructional goals. The basis for making the determination should reflect teacher judgment based on consideration of the following: mid-quarterly progress reports,

quarterly report cards, classroom performance, daily observations, standardized tests, student portfolios, PMP (Progress Monitoring Plan), or IEP (Individualized Education Plan) where appropriate, and other objective data as necessary. The primary responsibility for determining each pupil's level of performance and ability to function academically, socially, and emotionally at the next grade level is that of the classroom teacher and Administration. If a student is to be retained, it is to be in accordance with Florida Law and the county Student Progression Plan. **Ultimately, promotion and retention decisions are the responsibility of the Principal.**

HOMEWORK

Your child's teachers will discuss specifics of the homework process. If your child is spending more time than the recommended homework time, please let your teacher know immediately so adjustments can be made as necessary.

STUDENT SERVICES

Students are academically, behaviorally, and emotionally assessed throughout the year. Any questions regarding Student Services areas should be directed to our Assistant Principal.

CMCS serves students as required by District, State, and Federal requirements/laws in basic education, Exceptional Student Education, Section 504, and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programs. For students who are not meeting standards in the areas of Reading, Writing, Math, and/or Science, a Progress Monitoring Plan will be developed in conjunction with the student's parents to address the student's academic needs.

SCREENING AND TESTING

All students in Grades 3-8 will be tested with the State of Florida approved standardized testing. Other diagnostic testing is done throughout the school year to assess your student's progress and academic levels.

Students may also undergo sensory screenings (hearing, vision, BMI, scoliosis) as mandated by Pasco County School District guidelines. If you do not wish for your child to undergo sensory screenings, you must submit your desire to decline sensory screenings in writing to the front office.

Requests for assessment/evaluation must be submitted in writing to the Assistant Principal.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an integral part of our philosophy and curriculum. They are an important extension of our classrooms. However, participation in field trips is a privilege. CMCS will ask for chaperones during most field trips. **Siblings and other guests are not permitted on field trips. A chaperone's primary responsibility and attention should be to CMCS students and their safety at all times.**

During a CMCS-sponsored field trip parents/guardians who serve as chaperones are expected to comply with all school policies and private bus procedures. Students must have prior written and signed permission slips for each trip. Students who do not attend a field

trip will work in another classroom and/or office but need to attend school or the absence could be considered unexcused. **Money will not be refunded for field trips that are missed or cancelled.**

Students must wear their official field trip shirts and uniform (khaki/navy blue) bottoms on field trips, unless otherwise specified.

Under NO circumstances, can a child be picked up/signed out of a field trip by a parent, unless specified by the nature of the field trip and approved by CMCS.

At this time, Field Trips will begin in Quarter 2, pending District guidelines related to COVID-19.

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION

CMCS requires a volunteer service contract to be signed by the parent(s) on an annual basis. A minimum of 15 service hours per year will be required of each family enrolled at Countryside Montessori Charter School.

Volunteer service hours will be recorded, tracked, and must be approved by our Office Coordinator. Recording these hours will be the responsibility of the parent(s). **Parents are responsible for recording their hours through ParentSquare.** Not fulfilling the required 15 volunteer hours could lead to your child's loss of eligibility or enrollment for the next school year.

All volunteers must complete the "Volunteer Application," which can be accessed from the CMCS website. Per Florida State law, school volunteers must be background checked each school year. Our volunteer policy is located on our website.

When volunteering, parents should not bring siblings/other children to school with them.

CMCS needs all families to participate in fundraising activities. Parent fundraising provides the additional funds necessary to maintain our high-quality Montessori educational program. This participation includes volunteer meetings, fundraising preparation, and fundraising events.

All families are expected to assist with the sale of a minimum of:

- Twelve (12) Cougar Cards (per child)
- Two (2) tickets to the Annual Butterfly Auction (per family)
- Two (2) Chance to Win tickets (per family)

CMCS also offers a Wall Plaque fundraiser. Families and/or business that donate \$1,000 will receive the following benefits:

- One student pass on selling Cougar Cards
- Two (2) tickets to the Butterfly Auction
- One (1) Chance to Win ticket
- Credit for 15 volunteer hours

SCHOOL FEES

Fees are requested at the time of enrollment. Fees are used for a variety of items, including classroom supplies, instructional materials, cleaning supplies, periodicals, technology accessories, supplemental software/programs. Other fees throughout the year (such as book fees and/or locker fees) will be assessed as needed.

FINANCIAL/BUSINESS FEES

CMCS will charge a \$30 fee for any checks returned from the bank. Payment and fees must be paid in full with cash or money order within 2 weeks of being notified. CMCS has the right to refuse check payments due to a history of returned checks.

Copies of your student's records are available upon request and parents will be charged \$0.50/per sheet. Please provide a written request and allow 72 hours for the copies to be made.

IPAD REPAIR & REPLACEMENT FEES & TECHNOLOGY FEES

Each student in grades 4-8 will be issued a school iPad. Students in grades 1-3 are able to use a classroom set of iPads. Prior to receiving the iPad, each family must agree to and sign a Parent iPad User Agreement as well as a Responsible Electronic Use Agreement for Students form. If an iPad is broken, lost, or destroyed, the replacement and/or repair fees will apply.

Repair and replacement fees for iPads will be cumulative over the course of the student's enrollment in grades 4-8.

A technology fee will be assessed yearly for students in grades 4-8 for wear and tear/use of technology at CMCS.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

All staff members have emergency plan procedures that will be followed when necessary. If school closure is required for any reason, CMCS follows instructions issued by Pasco County School.

VISITORS

ALL visitors must enter the front office and present a valid ID. CMCS utilizes the Raptor system to check visitors into our school. It is vital for the safety and welfare of our students that all visitors register in the office and obtain a visitor's badge. Visitors must wear their visitor's badge at all times while on campus.

Per our Montessori normalization period, there will be no visitors allowed in classrooms or at lunch for the first 6 weeks of school.

SICK POLICY

When your child is too sick to be in school, please log their absence on our website through the *Report an Absence* tab. Below are guidelines to help ensure the health and safety of all children at CMCS.

Keep your child home if he/she has:

- A fever over 100°F degrees. A child should not return to school until he/she has been fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication.
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea. A child should not return to school until he/she is symptom free, without medication, for 24 hours.
- Conjunctivitis, which is an eye infection commonly referred to as “pink eye”. The eye is generally red with some burning and secretes yellow mucus. This is quite contagious.
- Rashes that you cannot identify or have not been diagnosed by a physician. If your child has been sent home with an unidentified rash, he/she may not return to school without a doctor’s note stating he/she is not contagious.
- Impetigo - a common and highly contagious skin infection
- Any other contagious illness.

If a doctor places your child on an antibiotic, the child should not be brought to school until he/she has been on the medication for at least 24 hours.

If a child is sick while in school, parents will be called and asked to come to pick up their child immediately. Sick children cannot remain at school, as we are not authorized to provide the care needed for their recovery nor can we administer medication without written authorization.

CMCS will follow all District policies and protocols related to COVID-19.

LICE

If a student is found with live head lice, a family member will be called to take the student home for treatment. Effective treatment includes combing through wet hair with a lice comb or the proper use of an over-the-counter pediculicide. When the treated student returns to school, they must check in with the clinic assistant prior to returning to class.

IMMUNIZATIONS

All children entering school for the first time, first grade, seventh grade, and transfer students from out of state, must comply with the Florida Compulsory Immunization Law (Florida State FS 323.032). A certificate of immunization, which may be obtained from a physician or the County Health Department, must be presented before the child will be admitted to school.

MEDICATION

Only prescribed medication can be accepted at school. The parent/guardian must hand-deliver this medication directly to the Clinic Assistant. Before medication will be administered, an official form must be completed, returned to the school for the student file

along with a doctor's note or prescription. A child can carry inhalers, epi-pens, and pancreatic enzyme supplement for self-administration **ONLY if authorized** by the healthcare provider and the proper form is completed. Otherwise, no student is to carry medication of any kind.

Medicines must be brought to CMCS in the original prescription container and will only be dispensed as directed by the prescription. Ointments and other over-the-counter drugs must have a written notice by the physician to be used at school. Please see Administration for the appropriate forms needed.

CLINIC/ACCIDENTS

School clinic officials are only permitted to wash a minor injury with soap, water, and apply a non-medicated bandage. The clinic assistant can also apply calamine lotion for bites. When students become ill, every effort will be made to notify parents, guardians, or an emergency contact person. Emergency information must be completed and on file. Students will be released only to people on the emergency form, unless otherwise notified by the parents. An Incident Report will be completed when necessary by staff and given to the parent to sign and return.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

CMCS uses Positive Discipline along with our Montessori philosophy to help us understand student Social Emotional growth and guide our responses to their behaviors.

A child's behavior becomes a problem when his/her negative actions disrupt the school environment and affect the positive values and culture defined by CMCS. If a child exhibits unacceptable behavior, CMCS staff will utilize a Tiered Response approach.

The CMCS Discipline Policy is used in conjunction with the District School Board of Pasco County (DSBPC) Student Code of Conduct. A copy of the Pasco County Student Code of Conduct is available at the school office, on the school's website, and on the District's website.

Teachers, staff, and volunteers are required to document on an Incident Report any behavior requiring disciplinary action. Disciplinary action for a student with an Individual Education Plan/504 Plan with stated behavioral objectives will be handled accordingly.

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES (PED's)/PROPERTY

If a student brings a personal electronic device (PED) (which includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, text messaging devices, iPods, MP3 players, beepers, PSPs, CD players, radios, and electronic games) to school, any school function, or on any school-sponsored transportation, the device must be silenced and stored in their backpacks and/or designated location. Students must have permission from their teacher to utilize their device during school hours. Exceptions may be made on events such as field trips, performances, and overnight stays.

CMCS shall accept NO responsibility or provide restitution for personal electronic devices or property that is brought to school and/or school-sponsored events.

Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action and the temporary loss of the electronic device(s)/or personal property. Students may not have cellular telephones, or other personal electronic devices in their possession during State testing or it may invalidate their test results.

IPAD RESTRICTIONS

At times, for students in Grades 4-8, teachers or Administration may restrict the use of the school-issued iPad for disciplinary reasons. If that occurs, the student device will remain at school. Upon verification that the family has a computer for the student to use at home, parents will be given all URL and login information for student access to textbooks and homework materials. Cloud/browser-based programs, such as Google Drive, Google Classroom, HMH, allows for the student to access materials anywhere. Parents are responsible for monitoring their child's usage of the school iPad and any other device when their child is in their care.

LOST AND FOUND

Items such as uniform shirts, clothing, and lunchboxes need to be discreetly labeled with the student's first and last name.

We will no longer have a shared lost and found. All lost and found will be housed in individual classrooms. Items found outside or in common areas and unlabeled will be discarded.

CMCS shall accept NO responsibility or provide restitution for personal clothing and/or property that has been lost at school.

HOLIDAYS, BIRTHDAYS, AND OTHER SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Birthdays and special holidays will be celebrated in a Montessori fashion during the course of our normal school day. NO FORMAL PARTIES WILL BE CONDUCTED. Please communicate with your teacher(s) a week prior to your child's birthday for further clarification about birthday celebrations in the classroom.

We encourage healthy alternatives, such as popcorn, yogurt, ginger snap cookies, non-frosted muffins, or fruit to be served during celebrations. Food served at CMCS must be in its original, store-bought packaging. Again, please communicate with your teacher in regards to healthy food alternatives and approved snacks as certain health rules and/or allergies may apply in particular classrooms.

If parents invite an entire class to their child's birthday party outside the school, invitations may be given out at school. If only a few children are invited, please distribute the invitations yourself, discreetly.

LUNCHES AND SNACKS

We ask that parents/caregivers support our healthy food initiative by providing their children with **only wholesome foods in their lunch boxes.**

Students at CMCS have several options for lunch. Hot lunches are available on a daily basis through our vendor. Qualifying families in need may sign-up for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. Forms are available under the *Parent Links* tab then *Lunch Links* on the CMCS website. Parents/students may also choose to pack their lunches.

If at any time, you choose to have your child participate in the hot lunch program, please contact the front office for details and costs. If you choose to provide lunch for your child, make sure all containers are clearly marked with your child's name. Microwaves are available for students to use; however, lunch items that need to be microwaved must be able to be heated in 30 seconds or less in a microwave-safe container.

When lunch is forgotten, an attempt will be made to contact a parent. If CMCS must provide lunch, you will be billed.

WELLNESS PLAN

The Wellness Plan can be found on our website under *Parent Links - Health Info*.

EXTENDED CARE PROGRAM

CMCS understands families are busy and many parents work outside the home. Therefore, we offer a quality Extended Care School Program. Unfortunately, we have a limited number of spaces available. All families who desire to be in the program are required to pay the registration fee upon enrollment each year. This is a first-come, first-served basis with limited space availability.

*****Extended Care Arrival and Departure – Parents must escort their child into and out of the Extended Care classroom to ensure that the Before/After Care Program Staff sign him/her in and/or out of the school.**

Students enrolled in the Before Care Program are welcome from 7:00 a.m. through 8:05 a.m. Students enrolled in the After Care Program are welcome from 3:30 p.m. through 6:00 p.m. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed for each child picked up after 6:00 p.m. All subsequent late pickups will be handled by Administration and may result in loss of use of the program. Please be courteous of the staff and pick up your children on time every day. A non-refundable registration fee will be charged once a year for each child enrolled in the program.

CMCS behavior rules remain the same as those during the school day. Failing to abide by these behavior expectations shall be cause for your child to be terminated from the Extended Care Program. **Please remember NO cell phones or electronic games are permitted to be used in our Extended Care Programs.**

Keep in mind our playground facilities are for the use of elementary age students attending CMCS. **After Care is only for those students enrolled in the program. After school enrichment/activities are only for CMCS students registered for that particular activity.**

PARTICIPATION IN AFTER SCHOOL ENRICHMENT/ACTIVITIES

Students have the right and are encouraged to participate in the programs and activities of their school in accordance with the guidelines established by CMCS for student participation.

If a student elects to be part of an after school activity, club, or group, he/she has the responsibility to be an active participant and to abide by the requirements and rules. **If a student is absent from school, he/she will not be permitted to participate in the after school activities on that day, including Enrichment Programs, special events, and dances.**

Students who do not abide by the applicable requirements and rules regarding these functions may lose the privilege to participate.

At this time, Enrichment Programs will begin in Quarter 2, pending District guidelines related to COVID-19.

TUTORING

CMCS strives for excellence through modeling and continued learning. Therefore, if students need extra help or have a specific need, tutoring is always a viable option. Tutoring by any CMCS staff member is a private arrangement between the teacher and student's family. CMCS is in no way responsible for tutoring services **These are private tutoring sessions and not a CMCS-sponsored tutoring program.** Teachers may not tutor his/her own student(s) in an area in which he/she is giving a grade.

Appendix A

Countryside Montessori Charter School Bylaws & Policies Students

CMCS BOD Approved 6/8/21

2260 - NONDISCRIMINATION AND ACCESS TO EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Any form of discrimination or harassment can be devastating to an individual's academic progress, social relationship and/or personal sense of self-worth. Therefore, CMCS will not discriminate nor tolerate harassment in its educational programs or activities for any reasons, including on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or genetic information. Additionally, it will not discriminate in its employment policies and practices.

CMCS is committed to providing an equal opportunity for all students, regardless of race, color, creed, disability, religion, gender, ancestry, age, national origin, place of residence within the boundaries of the District, or social or economic background, to learn through the curriculum offered in this District.

A. Curriculum Content

review current and proposed courses of study and textbooks to detect any bias based upon race, color, gender, disability, religion, national origin, ancestry, or culture; ascertaining whether or not supplemental materials, singly or taken as a whole, fairly depict the contribution of both genders, various races, ethnic groups, etc., toward the development of human society;

B. Staff Training

develop an ongoing program of in-service training for school personnel designed to identify and solve problems of color/racial, gender, religious, national, cultural, or other bias in all aspects of the program;

C. Student Access

review current and proposed programs, activities, facilities, and practices to verify that all students have equal access thereto and are not segregated on the basis of race, color, creed, gender, disability, or national origin in any duty, work, play, classroom, or school practice, except as may be permitted under State and Federal laws and regulations;

In accordance with Florida statute, CMCS may establish and maintain a single-gender non-vocational class, extra-curricular activity, or school for elementary or middle students.

D. District Support

verify that like aspects of the District's program receive like support as to staff size and compensation, purchase and maintenance of facilities and equipment, access to such facilities and equipment, and related matters;

E. Student Evaluation

verify that tests, procedures, or guidance and counseling materials, which are designed to evaluate student progress, rate aptitudes, analyze personality, or in any manner establish or tend to establish a category by which a student may be judged, are not differentiated or stereotyped on the basis of race, color, creed, gender, or national origin.

In order to achieve the aforesaid goal, CMCS directs the Superintendent to:

The Superintendent shall appoint a compliance officer whose responsibility it will be to ensure that Federal and State regulations are complied with and that any complaints are dealt with promptly in accordance with law. He shall also ensure that proper notice of nondiscrimination for Title II, Title VI, and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Act is provided to students, their parents, staff members, and the general public.

The Superintendent shall annually attempt to identify children with disabilities, ages 3-22, who reside in the District but do not receive public education. In addition, s/he shall establish procedures to identify students who are Limited English Proficient (LEP), including immigrant children and youth, to assess their ability to participate in District programs, and develop and administer a program that meets the English language and academic needs of these students. This program shall include procedures for student placement, services, evaluation, and exit procedures and shall be designed to provide students with effective instruction that leads to academic achievement and timely acquisition of proficiency in English. As a part of this program, the District will evaluate the progress of students in achieving English language proficiency in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, on an annual basis (see AP 2260F).

5517 - ANTI-HARASSMENT

General Policy Statement

It is the policy of CMCS to maintain an educational and work environment that is free from all forms of unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment. This commitment applies to all School District operations, programs, and activities. All students, administrators, teachers, staff, and all other school personnel share responsibility for avoiding, discouraging, and reporting any form of unlawful harassment. This policy applies to unlawful conduct occurring on school property, or at another location if such conduct occurs during an activity sponsored by CMCS.

CMCS will vigorously enforce its prohibition against harassment based on the traits of sex, race, color, national origin, religion, or disability that are protected by Federal civil rights laws (hereinafter referred to as unlawful harassment), and encourages those within the School District community as well as third parties, who feel aggrieved to seek assistance to rectify the problems. CMCS will investigate all allegations of unlawful harassment and, in those cases where unlawful harassment is substantiated, CMCS will take immediate steps to end such unlawful harassment. Individuals who are found to have engaged in unlawful harassment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

For purposes of this policy, "School District community" means students, administrators, teachers, staff, and all other school personnel, including Board members, agents, volunteers, contractors, or other persons subject to the control and supervision of CMCS.

For purposes of this policy, "third parties" include, but are not limited to, guests and/or visitors on School District property (e.g., visiting speakers, participants on opposing athletic teams, parents), vendors doing business with, or seeking to do business with, CMCS, and other individuals who come in contact with members of the School District community at school-related events/activities (whether on or off School District property).

Other Violations of the Anti-Harassment Policy

CMCS will also take immediate steps to impose disciplinary action on individuals engaging in any of the following prohibited acts:

- A. Retaliating against a person who has made a report or filed a complaint alleging unlawful harassment, or who has participated as a witness in a harassment investigation.
- B. Filing a malicious or knowingly false report or complaint of unlawful harassment.
- C. Disregarding, failing to investigate adequately, or delaying investigation of allegations of unlawful harassment, when responsibility for reporting and/or investigating unlawful harassment charges comprises part of one's supervisory duties.

Definitions:

Bullying

Bullying rises to the level of unlawful harassment when one or more persons systematically and chronically inflict physical hurt or psychological distress on one (1) or more students or employees and that bullying is based upon sex, race, color, national origin, religion, or disability, that is, characteristics that are protected by Federal civil rights laws. It is defined as any unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by an adult or student, that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or

offensive educational environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation; and may involve:

- A. teasing;
- B. threats;
- C. intimidation;
- D. stalking;
- E. cyberstalking;
- F. cyberbullying;
- G. physical violence;
- H. theft;
- I. sexual, religious, or racial harassment;
- J. public humiliation; or
- K. destruction of property.

Harassment

Harassment means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that:

- A. places a student or school employee in reasonable fear of harm to his person or damage to his property;
- B. has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits; or
- C. has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school.

Sexual Harassment

Pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, "sexual harassment" is defined as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

- A. Submission to such conduct is made either implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or status in a class, educational program, or activity.
- B. Submission or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or educational decisions affecting such individuals.
- C. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or educational performance; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working, and/or learning environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a class or an educational program or activity.

Sexual harassment may involve the behavior of a person of either gender against a person of the same or opposite gender.

Prohibited acts that constitute sexual harassment may take a variety of forms. Examples of the kinds of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- A. Unwelcome sexual propositions, invitations, solicitations, and flirtations.
- B. Physical and/or sexual assault.
- C. Threats or insinuations that a person's employment, wages, academic grade, promotion, classroom work or assignments, academic status, participation in athletics or extra-curricular programs or events, or other conditions of employment or education may be adversely affected by not submitting to sexual advances.
- D. Unwelcome verbal expressions of a sexual nature, including graphic sexual commentaries about a person's body, dress, appearance, or sexual activities; the unwelcome use of sexually degrading language, jokes or innuendoes; unwelcome suggestive or insulting sounds or whistles; obscene telephone calls.
- E. Sexually suggestive objects, pictures, videotapes, audio recordings, or literature, placed in the work or educational environment, which may embarrass or offend individuals.
- F. Unwelcome and inappropriate touching, patting, or pinching; obscene gestures.
- G. A pattern of conduct, which can be subtle in nature, that has sexual overtones and is intended to create or has the effect of creating discomfort and/or humiliation to another.
- H. Remarks speculating about a person's sexual activities or sexual history, or remarks about one's own sexual activities or sexual history.
- I. Verbal, nonverbal or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on sex or sex- stereotyping that does not involve conduct of a sexual nature.

Not all behavior with sexual connotations constitutes unlawful sexual harassment. Sex-based or gender- based conduct must be sufficiently severe, pervasive, and persistent such that it adversely affects, limits, or denies an individual's employment or education, creates a hostile or abusive employment or educational environment, or such that it is intended to, or has the effect of, denying or limiting a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the educational program or activities.

NOTE: Any teacher, administrator, coach, or other school authority who engages in sexual conduct with a student may also be guilty of a crime.

Race/Color Harassment

Prohibited racial harassment occurs when unwelcome physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct is based upon an individual's race or color and when the conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or educational performance; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working, and/or learning environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a class or an educational program or activity. Such harassment may occur where conduct is directed at the characteristics of a person's race or color, such as racial slurs, nicknames implying stereotypes, epithets, and/or negative references relative to racial customs.

Religious (Creed) Harassment

Prohibited religious harassment occurs when unwelcome physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct is based upon an individual's religion or creed and when the conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or educational performance; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working and/or learning environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a class or an educational program or activity. Such harassment may occur where conduct is directed at the characteristics of a person's religious tradition, clothing, or surnames, and/or involves religious slurs.

National Origin Harassment

Prohibited national origin harassment occurs when unwelcome physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct is based upon an individual's national origin and when the conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or educational performance; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working and/or learning environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a class or an educational program or activity. Such harassment may occur where conduct is directed at the characteristics of a person's national origin, such as negative comments regarding customs, manner of speaking, language, surnames, or ethnic slurs.

Disability Harassment

Prohibited disability harassment occurs when unwelcome physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct is based upon an individual's disability and when the conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or educational performance; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working and/or learning environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a class or an educational program or activity. Such harassment may occur where conduct is directed at the characteristics of a person's disabling condition, such as negative comments about speech patterns, movement, physical impairments or defects/appearances, or the like.

Reports and Complaints of Harassing Conduct

Students and all other members of the School District community, as well as third parties, are encouraged to promptly report incidents of unlawful harassing conduct, either orally or in writing, to a teacher, administrator, supervisor, or other District employee or official so that CMCS may address the conduct before it becomes severe,

pervasive, or persistent. Any teacher, administrator, supervisor, or other District employee or official who receives such a complaint shall file it with the District's Anti-Harassment Compliance Officer within two (2) school days.

Members of the School District community, which includes students, or third parties who believe that they have been unlawfully harassed by a student are entitled to utilize CMCS's complaint process that is set forth below. Initiating a complaint, whether formally or informally, will not adversely affect the complaining individual's employment or participation in educational or extra-curricular programs unless the complaining individual makes the complaint maliciously or with knowledge that it is false.

If, during an investigation of reported act of bullying and/or harassment in accordance with Policy 5517.01 – Bullying and Harassment, the principal or his designee believes that the reported misconduct may have created a hostile learning environment and may have constituted unlawful discriminatory harassment based on sex, race, color, national origin, religion, or disability, the principal or his designee will report the act of bullying and/or harassment to one of the Compliance Officers who shall investigate the allegation in accordance with this policy.

Anti-Harassment Compliance Officer

The Equity Manager serves as "Anti-Harassment Compliance Officer" for the school. The Equity Manager is hereinafter referred to as the "Compliance Officer".

Title: Countryside Montessori Charter School Equity Manager, Michael Picone
Address: 5852 Ehren Cut-Off, Land O'Lakes, FL 34639
Phone: (813) 996-0991

The name, title, and contact information of this individual will be published annually in the parent and staff handbooks and on the school website.

A Compliance Officer will be available during regular school/work hours to discuss concerns related to unlawful harassment, to assist students, other members of the School District community, and third parties who seek support or advice when informing another individual about "unwelcome" conduct, or to intercede informally on behalf of the student.

Any CMCS employee who directly observes unlawful harassment of a student is obligated, in accordance with this policy, to report such observations to the Compliance Officer within two (2) business days.

Thereafter, the Compliance Officer or his designee must contact the student, if age eighteen (18) or older, or the student's parents if under the age of eighteen (18), within two (2) business days, to advise them of CMCS's intent to investigate the alleged misconduct, including the obligation of the compliance officer or designee to conduct an investigation following all the procedures outlined for a formal complaint.

The Compliance Officer is assigned to accept complaints of unlawful harassment directly from any member of the School District community or a visitor to the school, or to receive complaints that are initially filed with a school building administrator. Upon receipt of a complaint either directly or through a school building administrator, the Compliance Officer will begin either an informal or formal process (depending on the request of the member of the School District community alleging harassment), or the Compliance Officer will designate a specific individual to conduct such a process. In the case of a formal complaint, the Compliance Officer will prepare recommendations or will oversee the preparation of such recommendations by a designee. All members of the School District community must report incidents of harassment that are reported to them to the Compliance Officer within two (2) calendar days of learning of the incident.

Investigation and Complaint Procedure

Any student who believes that he has been subjected to unlawful harassment may seek resolution of his complaint through either the informal or formal procedures as described below. Further, a process for investigating claims of harassment and a process for rendering a decision regarding whether the claim of legally prohibited harassment was substantiated or unsubstantiated are set forth below.

Due to the sensitivity surrounding complaints of unlawful harassment, time lines are flexible for initiating the complaint process; however, individuals should make every effort to file a complaint within thirty (30) days after the conduct occurs while the facts are known and potential witnesses are available. Once the formal complaint process is begun, the investigation will be completed in a timely manner (ordinarily, within fifteen (15) calendar days of the complaint being received).

The informal and formal procedures set forth below are not intended to interfere with the rights of a student to pursue a complaint of unlawful harassment with the United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, the Florida Civil Rights Commission, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Informal Complaint Procedure

The goal of the informal complaint procedure is to stop inappropriate behavior and to investigate and facilitate resolution through informal means, if possible. The informal complaint procedure is provided as a less formal option for a student who believes he has been unlawfully harassed. This informal procedure is not required as a precursor to the filing of a formal complaint.

Students, other members of the School District community or third parties who believe that they have been unlawfully harassed may initiate their complaint through this informal complaint process, but are not required to do so. The informal process is only available in those circumstances where the parties (alleged target of harassment and alleged harasser(s)) agree to participate in the informal process. Students, other members of the school community or third parties who believe that they have been unlawfully harassed may proceed immediately to the formal complaint process and individuals who seek resolution through the informal procedure may request that the informal process be terminated at any time to move to the formal complaint process.

However, all complaints of harassment involving an employee or any other adult member of the School District community against a student will be formally investigated.

As an initial course of action, if a student feels that he is being unlawfully harassed and he is able and feels safe doing so, the individual should tell or otherwise inform the harasser that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop. The complaining individual should address the allegedly harassing conduct as soon after it occurs as possible. The Compliance Officer is available to support and counsel individuals when taking this initial step or to intervene on behalf of the individual if requested to do so. An individual who is uncomfortable or unwilling to inform the harasser of his complaint is not prohibited from otherwise filing an informal or a formal complaint. In addition, with regard to certain types of unlawful harassment, such as sexual harassment, the Compliance Officer may advise against the use of the informal complaint process.

A student who believes he has been unlawfully harassed may make an informal complaint, either orally or in writing: (1) to a teacher, other employee, or building administrator in the school the student attends; (2) to the Superintendent or other District-level employee; and/or (3) directly to one of the Compliance Officers.

All informal complaints must be reported to the Compliance Officer who will either facilitate an informal resolution as described below on his own, or appoint another individual to facilitate an informal resolution.

CMCS's informal complaint procedure is designed to provide students, other members of the School District community and third parties who believe they are being unlawfully harassed by a student with a range of options designed to bring about a resolution of their concerns. Depending upon the nature of the complaint and the wishes of the student claiming unlawful harassment, informal resolution may involve, but not be limited to, one or more of the following:

- A. Advising the student about how to communicate the unwelcome nature of the behavior to the alleged harasser.
- B. Distributing a copy of the anti-harassment policy as a reminder to the individuals in the school building or office where the individual whose behavior is being questioned works or attends.
- C. If both parties agree, the Compliance Officer may arrange and facilitate a meeting between the student claiming harassment and the individual accused of harassment to work out a mutual resolution.

While there are no set time limits within which an informal complaint must be resolved, the Compliance Officer or his designee will exercise his authority to attempt to resolve all informal complaints within fifteen (15) days of receiving the informal complaint. Those members of the School District community or third parties who are dissatisfied with the results of the informal complaint process may proceed to file a formal complaint.

All materials generated as part of the informal complaint process will be retained by the Compliance Officer or his designee in accordance with CMCS Policy 8310 Public Records, Policy 8320 Records Management, and Policy 8330 Student Records.

Formal Complaint Procedure

If a complaint is not resolved through the informal complaint process, or if the student elects to file a formal complaint initially, the formal complaint process as described below shall be implemented.

This formal complaint process is not intended to interfere with the rights of a student, other members of the School District community, or third party to pursue a complaint of unlawful harassment with the United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, the Florida Civil Rights Commission, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

A student who believes he has been subjected to offensive conduct/harassment hereinafter referred to as the "complainant", may file a formal complaint, either orally or in writing, with a teacher, principal, or other employee at the student's school, the Compliance Officer, Superintendent, or another District employee who works at another school or at the district level. Due to the sensitivity surrounding complaints of unlawful harassment, time lines are flexible for initiating the complaint process; however, individuals should make every effort to file a complaint within thirty (30) days after the conduct occurs while the facts are known and potential witnesses are available. If a complainant informs a teacher, principal, or other employee at the student's school, the Compliance Officer, Superintendent, or another employee, either orally or in writing, about any complaint of harassment, that employee must report such information to the Compliance Officer or designee within two (2) business days.

Throughout the course of the process as described herein, the Compliance Officer should keep the complainant informed of the status of the investigation and the decision-making process.

All formal complaints must include the following information to the extent it is available: the identity of the individual believed to have engaged in, or engaging in, offensive conduct/harassment; a detailed description of the facts upon which the complaint is based; and a list of potential witnesses.

If the complainant is unwilling or unable to provide a written statement including the information set forth above, the Compliance Officer shall ask for such details in an oral interview. Thereafter the Compliance Officer will prepare a written summary of the oral interview, and the complainant will be asked to verify the accuracy of the reported charge by signing the document.

Upon receiving a formal complaint, the Compliance Officer will consider whether any action should be taken in the investigatory phase to protect the complainant from further harassment or retaliation including but not limited to a change of class schedule, or possibly a change of school. In making such a determination, the Compliance Officer

should consult the complainant to assess his agreement to any action deemed appropriate. If the complainant is unwilling to consent to any change that is deemed appropriate by the Compliance Officer, the Compliance Officer may still take whatever actions he deems appropriate in consultation with the Board of Directors and/or Board Attorney.

Within two (2) business days of receiving a formal complaint, the Compliance Officer will inform the individual alleged to have engaged in the harassing conduct, hereinafter referred to as the "respondent", that a complaint has been received. The respondent will be informed about the nature of the allegations and a copy of these administrative procedures and CMCS's anti-harassment policy shall be provided to the respondent at that time. The respondent must also be informed of the opportunity to submit a written response to the complaint within five (5) business days.

Within five (5) business days of receiving the complaint, the Compliance Officer or a designee will initiate a formal investigation to determine whether the complainant has been subject to offensive conduct/harassment. A principal will not conduct an investigation unless directed to do so by the Compliance Officer.

Although certain cases may require additional time, the Compliance Officer or a designee will attempt to complete an investigation into the allegations of harassment within fifteen (15) calendar days of receiving the formal complaint. The investigation will include:

- A. interviews with the complainant;
- B. interviews with the respondent;
- C. interviews with any other witnesses who may reasonably be expected to have any information relevant to the allegations;
- D. consideration of any documentation or other evidence presented by the complainant, respondent, or any other witness which is reasonably believed to be relevant to the allegations.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Compliance Officer or the designee shall prepare and deliver a written report to the Superintendent which summarizes the evidence gathered during the investigation and provides recommendations based on the evidence and the definition of unlawful harassment as provided in Board policy and State and Federal law as to whether the complainant has been subject to unlawful harassment, or the complainant's claim was unsubstantiated. The Compliance Officer's recommendations must be based upon the totality of the circumstances, including the ages and maturity levels of those involved. The Compliance Officer may consult with the CMCS Attorney before finalizing the report.

Absent extenuating circumstances, within ten (10) business days of receiving the report of the Compliance Officer or the designee, the Principal must either issue a final decision regarding whether or not the complaint of harassment has been substantiated or request further investigation. A copy of the final decision will be delivered to both the complainant and the respondent.

If the Principal requests additional investigation, the Principal must specify the additional information that is to be gathered, and such additional investigation must be completed within ten (10) business days. At the conclusion of the additional investigation, the Superintendent must issue a final written decision as described above.

The decision of the Principal shall be final.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Principal's decision, the complainant will have an additional sixty (60) days to file a complaint with the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, Florida Commission on Human Relations, or the Equal Educational Opportunity Commission.

CMCS reserves the right to investigate and resolve a complaint or report of unlawful harassment regardless of whether the member of the School District community or third party alleging the unlawful harassment pursues the complaint. CMCS also reserves the right to have the formal complaint investigation conducted by an external person in accordance with this policy or in such other manner as deemed appropriate by CMCS or its designee.

Confidentiality

The School District will make all reasonable efforts to protect the rights of the complainant and the respondent. The School District will respect the privacy of the complainant, the respondent, and all witnesses in a manner consistent with the School District's legal obligations under State and Federal law. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed however. All complainants proceeding through the formal investigation process should be advised that their identities may be disclosed to the respondent.

During the course of a formal investigation, the Compliance Officer or his designee will instruct all members of the School District community and third parties who are interviewed about the importance of maintaining confidentiality. Any individual who is interviewed as part of a harassment investigation is expected not to disclose any information that he learns or that he provides during the course of the investigation.

All public records created as a part of an investigation of a complaint of harassment will be maintained by the Compliance Officer in accordance with State law and Board Policy 8310 Public Records. Any records that are considered student records in accordance with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* will be maintained in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Federal law and Board Policy 8330 Student Records.

Sanctions and Monitoring

CMCS shall vigorously enforce its prohibitions against unlawful harassment by taking appropriate action reasonably calculated to stop the harassment and prevent further such harassment. While observing the principles of due process, a violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including the discharge of an employee or the suspension/expulsion of a student. All disciplinary action will be taken in

accordance with applicable State law and the terms of the relevant collective bargaining agreement(s). When imposing discipline, the Superintendent shall consider the totality of the circumstances involved in the matter, including the ages and maturity levels of those involved. In those cases where unlawful harassment is not substantiated, CMCS may consider whether the alleged conduct nevertheless warrants discipline in accordance with other Board policies or consistent with the terms of the relevant collective bargaining agreement(s).

Where CMCS becomes aware that a prior remedial action has been taken against a member of the School District community, all subsequent sanctions imposed by CMCS and/or Superintendent shall be reasonably calculated to eliminate such conduct in the future.

Allegations Constituting Criminal Conduct: Child Abuse/Sexual Misconduct

State law requires any teacher or school employee who knows or suspects that a child under the age of eighteen (18) is a victim of child abuse or neglect to immediately report that knowledge or suspicion to the Department of Children and Family Services. If, during the course of a harassment investigation, the Compliance Officer or a designee has reason to believe or suspect that the alleged conduct reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of the complainant, a report of such knowledge must be made in accordance with State law and Board policy.

If the Compliance Officer or a designee has reason to believe that the complainant has been the victim of criminal conduct as defined under Florida law, such knowledge should be reported to local law enforcement.

Any reports made to the local child protection service or to local law enforcement shall not terminate the Compliance Officer's or a designee's obligation and responsibility to continue to investigate a complaint of harassment. While the Compliance Officers or a designee may work cooperatively with outside agencies to conduct concurrent investigations, in no event shall the harassment investigation be inhibited by the involvement of outside agencies without good cause after consultation with the Principal.

Mandatory Reporting of Misconduct by Certificated Employees

The Principal is required by State law and Board Policy 8141 to report alleged misconduct by certificated employees of the District that affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student. In accordance with Board policy and State law, the Superintendent shall investigate each allegation of such conduct and, if confirmed, shall report such misconduct pursuant to Policy 8141.

Education and Training

In support of this policy, CMCS requires preventative educational measures to create greater awareness of unlawful discriminatory practices. The Superintendent shall provide appropriate training to all members of the School District community related to

the implementation of this policy and Policy 5517.02. All training regarding this policy, Policy 5517.01, and harassment in general will be age and content appropriate.

Retaliation

Any act of retaliation against a person who has made a report or filed a complaint alleging unlawful harassment, or who has participated as a witness in a harassment investigation is prohibited.

2260.02 - NONDISCRIMINATION GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

It is the policy of CMCS to offer the opportunity to students to participate in appropriate programs and activities without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, marital status, or age, except as otherwise provided by State law.

The compliance officer for CMCS is identified annually and the name is published in the student handbooks. The compliance officer may be reached in the following ways:

Equity Manager, Michael Picone
5852 Ehren Cut-Off, Land O'Lakes, Florida 34639
(813) 996-0991

At each school, the compliance officer for that institution is the principal thereof. The principal may designate other persons to act in this capacity on his behalf as the demands of the institution dictate. Nevertheless, all written grievances may be properly directed to the principal of the institution alleged to be in violation of Title IX of the Florida Education Equity Act.

All written complaints alleging violations of Title IX of the Florida Education Equity Act, regardless of resolution at the individual school level, shall be forwarded to the compliance officer. CMCS's compliance officer, or his designee shall maintain all such written complaints, as well as the written response/resolution to such complaints. These documents are public records and shall be available for inspection and copying through proper public records request by any person or organization, subject to reasonable fee.

Student Grievance Procedure:

Grievance Defined

The steps described below must be followed in the submittal and resolution of student grievances.

A. Step 1

A student should first take the complaint to the person(s) and/or appropriate school official involved and try to solve the problem informally. If this does not work, then he may go on to the next step. The student may begin the process at the second step.

B. Step 2

The student (or parents) must give the principal a written and signed harassment grievance form no later than three (3) days after the date of the event giving rise to the grievance. This event is the initial response by a

school official to an accusation of harassment. A copy of the grievance is to be given to any other person involved. This should describe the problem and give all the facts. The student should tell what would be the best solution to the problem. The principal should make a decision within seven (7) days.

C. Step 3

If a student does not agree with the principal's decision, his parents may send another harassment grievance, just as in Step 2, to the Superintendent. A copy of the grievance is to be given to the principal. This must be done within seven (7) days after receiving the principal's decision. The Superintendent will make a decision within seven (7) days after receiving the grievance.

D. Step 4

If the parents of the student do not agree with the Superintendent's decision, they may send the harassment grievance to CMCS within seven (7) school days after they receive the Superintendent's decision. A copy of the harassment grievance is to be given to the Superintendent. CMCS will take action at its next regularly scheduled meeting. CMCS will communicate its decision to the grieving party within thirty (30) days.

At any time, if a student and/or his parent or guardian believes that he has been subjected to discrimination pursuant to State or Federal law, the individual may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights ("OCR") or with the Office of Equal Educational Opportunity, Florida Department of Education, as appropriate. The OCR can be reached at:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights
Atlanta Office
Sam Nunn Atlanta Federal Center, Suite 16T70 61 Forsyth Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30303-8909
404-562-7881
FAX: 404-562-7881 TDD: 404-562-7884 Web: <http://www.ed.gov/oc>