



Community Handbook

For 2026-2028 School Year

Last reviewed/approved by Sankofa Montessori Board 6/24/26

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 electronically on the [school website](#).

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SECTION 1: ABOUT SANKOFA MONTESSORI

Welcome to Sankofa Montessori!

Vision

To design more purposeful futures.

Mission

At Sankofa Montessori, we bridge standards-based instruction with the Montessori approach to provide a culturally responsive, child and family-centered education that empowers 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



Love	We act in service of love by building deep and meaningful relationships and always going above and beyond for each other.
Ownership	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.
Purpose	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.
Reflection	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.
Joy	We have fun, we celebrate each other, and we show up as our full selves.

Governing Board

The Sankofa Montessori Governing Board of Directors oversees the operations of Sankofa Montessori, Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. The Board is responsible for upholding the school's mission and ensuring it operates in alignment with all applicable laws, its Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and the terms of its charter.

As stewards of public funds, the Board is committed to maintaining the school's long-term financial stability and the integrity of its charter. The Board sets the school's strategic vision and is accountable for monitoring the effective and faithful execution of that vision through the school's programs and day-to-day operations.

Each Board member is expected to actively contribute their time, talents, and resources to support the ongoing success of Sankofa Montessori.

To learn more about the responsibilities of the Governing Board and view a list of current members, please visit: www.sankofamontessori.org.



Leadership Staff

Founder and Executive Director

Sarah Harvey

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. Sarah 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. Sarah, 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, alongside the community, Sankofa Montessori. Ms. Sarah 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.



Head of School

Rhushanda Barnes

Rhushanda Barnes is an experienced and mission-driven educator with over 15 years of service in both public and charter school settings. She has held a variety of roles—including Special Education Teacher, Response to Intervention Specialist, Content Facilitator, Instructional Coach, Student Support Coordinator, and Assistant Principal—each grounded in her deep commitment to student equity and success. As the Head School, Ms. Rhushanda manages and leads the day-to-day operational and administrative duties at Sankofa Montessori. Rhushanda is passionate about building school environments where belonging, joy, and high expectations coexist, and where SEL is not an add-on, but a daily practice that strengthens relationships and learning. She holds a B.A. in Political Science from Howard University and an M.Ed. in Special Education from Kennesaw State University. Outside of work,





you can find her exploring Atlanta with her husband and son or enjoying a good concert or brunch with family and friends.

Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Krista Harrell

Krista Harrell holds a bachelor of science degree in Health, Kinesiology and Recreation from Southern Arkansas University. Ms. Krista also earned two master degrees at Southern Arkansas University in the fields of K-12 Special Education and K-8 School Administration. Ms. Krista also earned an Educational Specialist degree in Education Administration from Harding University. As an instructional coach and facilitator, she strives to empower educators to unlock their full potential and create transformative learning experiences for their students. Ms. Krista has supported students and teachers from the district level as a district support specialist in grades K-12 and as an assistant and middle/high school principal for grades 7-12. During her free time, she enjoys cleaning, organizing, spending time with her family, and visiting any Disney Park, but Dave and Buster's will do when a Disney Park isn't readily available



Associate Director of Operations
Jasmine See

Jasmine See is a certified Montessorian with 4 years of teaching experience in Georgia Montessori schools. Upon graduating from Spelman College in 2016 with a B.A in Psychology, Ms. Jasmine pursued a career in education after discovering the capacity of children in the school setting. Ms. Jasmine had the opportunity to work with a non-profit group that advocated for equity in education and encouraged Montessori in the public sector. From then, Ms. Jasmine realized that the work of connecting people to the resources that they may need to drastically change their experience was and is truly the peace and joy of her life. Through her work with Sankofa Montessori, Ms. Jasmine hopes to continue expanding her impact on the Georgia Educational landscape.





Sankofa Leadership Structure

At Sankofa Montessori, we believe it's important that families understand how our school is structured and governed—especially when it comes to communication, decision-making, and leadership responsibilities.

Sankofa as its own Local Educational Agency (LEA)

This means that Sankofa Montessori is not part of a larger district like Clayton County Schools, Henry County, or Fulton. Instead, we function as our own school district, with all of the same responsibilities and requirements that public districts must meet—ensuring compliance with state and federal education laws and regulations.

In most traditional public schools, the leadership team at the school handles day-to-day operations, while a separate district office oversees things like compliance, curriculum selection, HR, and budgeting. At Sankofa, our school leadership team does both.

Our leaders are based at the school and are deeply involved in daily instruction, student culture, and family engagement—but they also take on the responsibilities typically handled by a district office. This means the same leaders you see in our classrooms and hallways are also responsible for big-picture decisions like compliance reporting, hiring, and strategic planning.

The Role of the Board of Directors

The Sankofa Montessori Board of Directors serves a similar role as a traditional Board of Education. Board members bring expertise from various industries and are responsible for supporting, advocating for, and ensuring the success of our school.

Responsibilities of the board:

- **Sets Strategic Priorities:** The Board helps shape the long-term vision of the school and ensures we stay aligned with our mission.
- **Hires and Evaluates the Superintendent/Executive Director:** They hold leadership accountable to performance and growth goals.
- **Approves Budgets and Policies:** The Board oversees financial decisions and ensures resources are allocated equitably and effectively.
- **Ensures Accountability:** The Board ensures that we meet the requirements of our authorizer and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE).



Not the responsibility of the board:

- Manage the day-to-day operations of the school.
- Give opinions on the school's curriculum, schedules, culture practices or make classroom-level decisions.

This unique structure ensures that the people making the big decisions for your child's education are also the people who see them learning, growing, and thriving every day.

If you ever have questions about roles, responsibilities, or how to connect with the right person, our team is always here to help.

Community Norms

At Sankofa Montessori, we are committed to maintaining a respectful, collaborative, and safe school environment. Our community norms guide how we communicate and work together to ensure that all students are supported and that our learning environment remains joyful and purposeful.

What We Ask of Our Families

1. **Mutual Respect:** We expect all members of our school community—students, families, and staff—to treat each other with kindness, empathy, and respect in every interaction.
2. **Appropriate Communication:** Please use respectful and professional language at all times. This applies to in-person conversations, phone calls, emails, and messages. Profanity, threats, and aggressive language or behavior are not acceptable.
3. **Scheduled Meetings:** Meetings with school staff must be scheduled in advance. Our team is unable to accommodate spontaneous meetings, as we prioritize instructional time and student supervision.
4. **Safe Campus Environment:** All visitors must follow check-in procedures and depart the campus promptly when asked by staff. These measures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and staff.
5. **Collaborative Problem-Solving:** Concerns should be raised through appropriate channels such as scheduled meetings or written communication. We ask families to engage with staff in a solutions-oriented and respectful manner.

Consequences for Violating Community Norms

To maintain a safe and respectful school environment, the following actions may be taken when community norms are not upheld:



1. **Warning:** Individuals who engage in inappropriate behavior will receive a verbal or written warning from school leadership outlining the specific concern.
2. **Campus Restrictions:** Individuals who continue to display disruptive or unsafe behavior may be restricted from attending school events or entering school property.
3. **Formal Removal:** Repeated or serious violations may result in a formal ban from school property under state and local laws.
4. **Involvement of Authorities:** If threats, violent actions, or refusal to comply with requests occur, local authorities may be contacted to protect the safety of the school community.

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-3:30 PM

Who to Contact with Questions

Question area	Who to contact
I want to learn more about Sankofa’s Montessori model and how it’s used at Sankofa	Montessori Academic Coach & Director of Curriculum &



	Instruction
I have questions about my child's academic and/or social-emotional progress	Your child's lead guide
I have questions about homework	Your child's lead guide
I have questions about school activities (field trips, etc.)	Your child's lead guide
I have questions about after-school or enrichment programming	Manager of Front Office Operations
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 student, occurs during school, and/or occurs during a school-related activity. Please also see our bullying policy for more information.	Manager of Student Culture & School Climate
I have a question about my child's IEP/504/ESOL plan	Your child's case manager
I think my child may be in need of additional support and will need an evaluation.	Manager of School Culture and Climate
My child has an allergy	Manager of Front Office Operations
I have concerns about classroom behavior expectations or discipline	Manager of Student Culture & School Climate
I'm not receiving school updates	Manager of Front Office Operations
My child needs medication during the day	Manager of Front Office Operations
I don't know whether to send my child to school because they may be sick	Manager of Front Office Operations



My child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness	Manager of Front Office Operations
My child will be absent or late	Manager of Front Office Operations
I will be picking up my child early on a given day	Manager of Front Office Operations
I need to get an emergency message to my student during the day	Manager of Front Office Operations
I need help ordering uniforms	Manager of Front Office Operations
I need help with free/reduced lunch	Manager of Front Office Operations
I need a copy of the calendar or other materials	Manager of Front Office Operations
I would like to enter my student's siblings into the lottery for next year	Associate Director of Operations
I would like to volunteer	Manager of School Culture and Climate
My family would like support with housing, food, clothing, or community resources	Manager of School Culture and Climate
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 Grievance Policy. We ask that you start with your child's teacher and then go on to the Associate Director of Curriculum and Instruction, 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 48 - 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, 470-713-8930, info@sankofamontessori.org
- Founder/Executive Director: sharvey@sankofamontessori.org
- Head of School: rbarnes@sankofamontessori.org
- Director of Curriculum & Instruction: kharrell@sankofamontessori.org
- Associate Director of Operations: jsee@sankofamontessori.org

Parent Bill of Rights

In accordance with the requirements found in Georgia House Bill 1178, GCA maintains the following Parents' Bill of Rights Policy to promote and facilitate parental involvement in the School.

SECTION 1. Right to Access the Following Information

Parents/guardians may request access to the following information under this Policy, by submitting a request in writing to the Associate Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

- Instructional Materials:** Parents/guardians shall have the right to learn about their child's course of study, which includes the right to access instructional materials intended for use in their child's classroom. Such instructional materials shall be made available for review during the first two weeks of each grading period. Your child's teacher(s) will provide you information on where and how to access these materials.
- Records Relating to Your Child:** Parents/guardians shall have the right to review records relating to their child, including, but not limited to, current grade reports and attendance records. A request for this information should be made in writing and delivered to the Principal.
- Promotion, Retention, and High School Graduation Policies and Requirements:** Parents/guardians shall also have the right to access information relating to promotion and retention policies and high school graduation requirements.

Information requested under this policy shall be made available for inspection within a reasonable amount of time not to exceed three school days of receipt of a request. In those instances where some, but not all, of the information requested is available for inspection within three school days, the Principal shall make available within that time period such information as is available. In any instance where some or all of the information is unavailable



within three school days of receipt of the request, and such information exists, the Principal shall, within such time period, provide the requester with a description of such information and a timeline for when the information will be available for inspection and shall provide the information or access thereto as soon as practicable but in no case later than 30 days of receipt of the request.

SECTION 2. Right to Object to Instructional Materials

If a parent/guardian objects to any instructional materials intended for use in their child's classroom or recommended by their minor child's teacher, the parent/guardian shall first, as soon as possible after becoming aware of the objection, raise the objection with the child's teacher in which classroom the material is intended for use and/or who recommended the material. The teacher shall respond to the objection within five school days of its receipt, or as soon thereafter as is reasonably practicable.

If the parent/guardian is unsatisfied with the teacher's response, then within five school days of receiving the response, the parent/guardian shall submit a written objection to the Executive Director. Such objections should include a description of the allegedly objectionable material, the course in which the material is intended or recommended to be used, why the parent/guardian believes the material is objectionable, and, where possible, should attach a copy of the objectionable material.

The Executive Director will review the objection and within five school days of receiving the written objection, or as soon thereafter as is reasonably practicable, respond in writing to the parent/guardian to offer a resolution to the objection.

If the parent/guardian disagrees with the Director's proposed resolution, the parent/guardian may appeal to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will review the matter as is reasonably practicable, and notify the parent/guardian, relevant teacher, and Executive Director of its decision on the matter in writing.

SECTION 3. Right to Withdraw Child from Sex Education

To the extent that any sex education is proposed as part of your child's course of study, you will be notified in advance by your child's teacher. Upon notification, you have the right to withdraw your child from the School's prescribed course of study in sex education by providing written objection to your child's teacher of your child's participation.

SECTION 4. Right to Opt-Out of Photographs, Videos, and Voice Recordings of Your Child



Parents/guardians shall have the right to provide written notice that photographs, videos, or video recordings of their child(ren) are not permitted. This opt-out is subject to applicable public safety and security exceptions. All students at the School will be subject to being recorded in the School's online classes.

SECTION 5. Review Procedures

If the Executive Director denies a request for information or does not provide existing responsive information within 30 days, the parent/guardian may appeal such denial or failure to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors must place the appeal on the agenda for its next public meeting. If it is too late for such an appeal to appear on the next meeting's agenda, the appeal must be included on the agenda for the subsequent meeting.

A parent aggrieved by the decision of the Board of Directors may appeal to the State Board of Education, as provided in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1160(b).

Enrollment and Attendance Zones

Sankofa Montessori will accept applications for Kindergarten, First, Second, Third, and Fourth Grades for the 2025 - 2026 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 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 on our school [website](#).

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 Main Office, 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. 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. An email to info@sankofamontessori.org will also suffice. 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 Main Office 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 Main Office 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 2:00 PM will have to wait until our dismissal time of 2:30PM.

Late pickup

Dismissal is from 2:30pm-3:00pm. At 3:00 pm all remaining students will be automatically placed in aftercare with a drop in fee determined by the AfterCare provider.

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 or emergency 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: The Associate Director of Operations will contact the police department and Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS).
 - A 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
 - A staff member will provide details of the event and parent contact information to the officer and/or case manager
 - A staff member will record all contact information of the police officer and case manager which should include name badge/ID number and phone number
 - A staff member will release student into the custody of the police officer or DFCS case manager if necessary
 - A staff member will document the event using the Student Incident Report Form. A copy should be provided to the Manager of Culture & School Climate 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 Culture & School Climate will follow-up with the family, police department, and/or DFCS.

Activities, Field Experiences, and Field Trips

At Sankofa Montessori, we make a clear distinction between *field experiences* and *field trips*, both of which are important parts of our program.

Field experiences are curriculum-connected outings designed to deepen what students are learning in class. These experiences are planned and facilitated by lead guides to help bring academic topics to life. For example, students learning about plants and soil might visit a community garden, or a class studying animals might take a trip to a local pet store or nature center. These experiences are directly tied to the standards and lessons being taught and help students make real-world connections to their learning.

Field trips, on the other hand, are often used as incentives to celebrate student achievement and positive behavior. These trips may be tied to our school culture initiatives and earned through our Sky Miles reward system. Examples of field trips might include a visit to the skating rink, bowling alley, children's museum, or an afternoon at the movies. These trips recognize and reward students for consistently showing our core values and making strong choices.

Together, field experiences and field trips help foster academic growth, build classroom community, and create joyful learning memories for our students.

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.

Permission slips for all field trips will be sent out via ParentSquare prior to each event. A signed permission slip must be returned for a student to attend. Verbal consent will not be accepted—written authorization from a parent or legal guardian is required.

Please note that student eligibility for field trips may be impacted by:

- Recent involvement in a Level 3 infraction (per the Sankofa Code of Conduct)
- Behaviors that pose a safety risk to the student, peers, or staff



If a student is deemed ineligible for an upcoming trip, families will be notified at least 48 hours in advance. Students not attending the trip will be required to attend school and will be provided with alternative academic activities.

Student Counts

Before transporting students to or from any field trip, lead guides and at least one other staff member 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

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 child's lead guide or the Sr. Director of Student Support & 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. Please note that the family may be required to provide proof of financial hardship.

Inclement Weather/Emergency Dismissal

When severe weather creates hazardous conditions, Sankofa Montessori may adjust or suspend the regular school schedule to ensure the safety of students and staff. Please note that Sankofa Montessori is its own school district and does not follow Clayton County School District's weather-related decisions.

If a potentially hazardous weather event occurs before the start of the school day, families will be notified through:

- ParentSquare
- Infinite Campus
- **School website:** www.sankofamontessori.org
- **Social media platforms** (Instagram, Facebook, etc.)
- **Local news outlets** (radio/TV, if applicable)

If an emergency early dismissal is necessary during the school day, we will promptly communicate dismissal plans via:

- ParentSquare



- Infinite Campus
- Social media platforms and other internet-based channels

We encourage all families to ensure their contact information is up-to-date in Infinite Campus to receive timely updates.

Emergency Drills

Each classroom displays a chart identifying designated exits and safe areas to be used during safety drills. Fire drills are conducted twice during the first month of school and then monthly for the remainder of the year. During fire drills, students are expected to exit the building quietly, calmly, and without running. Classes will remain in the designated evacuation area until an “all clear” signal is given by the Associate Director of Operations or a member of the leadership team.

Sankofa Montessori also participates in statewide tornado drills and follows a comprehensive school safety plan, which includes drills for a variety of emergency situations throughout the year. For more detailed information, please reach out to our front office operations team.

In summary, our emergency procedures cover:

Lockdown Procedures

In the event of a lockdown, school staff will be notified by Administration or Operations either in person or via the intercom system on classroom telephones.

- Interior Lockdown: Used when a threat is inside the building. Staff should immediately close and lock all classroom doors and open exterior window blinds or curtains to allow visibility into the classroom from the outside.
- Exterior Lockdown: Used when a threat is outside the building. All students and staff must remain in their current location until the lockdown is officially lifted.
- Full Lockdown: Used when there is a confirmed threat inside the building. All students and staff must remain in their current location until given the “all clear.”
- Shelter in Place: Used to protect students and staff from external threats such as tornadoes, chemical spills, or other natural/man-made disasters. Follow specific protocols for the nature of the threat.
- All Clear: Indicates the threat has passed. Staff and students should resume normal activities.

Bomb Threat & Fire Evacuation Procedures



- Teachers must bring the emergency backpack, which includes a current student roster and emergency contact information.
- Teachers are the last to exit the classroom, ensuring all students have evacuated safely.
- Teachers will assist students with mobility or other special needs.
- Students must evacuate calmly and quietly to the designated meeting area.
- Upon arrival, teachers will take attendance using the student roster and display green/red cards to indicate status.

Shelter in Place / Tornado / Earthquake Procedures

- All students and staff will move to the hallway closest to their classroom door.
- Everyone will assume the “Duck, Cover, and Hold On” position: crouched low to the ground, as close to the wall as possible, head down and hands covering the back of the head.
- No one may move or leave the hallway until the “All Clear” is announced.
- **Medical Emergency:** see [Medical Emergency Response section.](#)

Illness, Injury, Health, and Wellness

General Health Guidance

The health and safety of all students are a top priority at Sankofa Montessori. Before a student may enroll, the following forms must be completed and submitted:

- **Medical Requirements Checklist**

This form verifies that the student:

- Has up-to-date immunization records, and
- Has parental/guardian consent for vision, hearing, and scoliosis screenings.

- **Health Information Form**

This form provides essential details, including:

- Emergency contact information
- Health care provider and insurance details
- Consent for the school to initiate emergency medical treatment if a parent or guardian cannot be reached



Nursing Policy

Sankofa Montessori will maintain a designated First Aid Team available throughout the full instructional day. This team will be on duty during all school hours to support the medical needs of students, staff, and families.

The First Aid Team will serve as the primary point of contact for any health-related concerns during the school day. If a student experiences a medical issue, the team will assess the situation and promptly contact the student's parent or guardian as needed.

Sick Policy

At Sankofa Montessori, student health and safety are top priorities. When a child becomes ill at school and displays symptoms of illness, our First Aid Team will contact families immediately. We ask that students be picked up within one hour to ensure they receive timely care and to minimize the risk of spreading illness.

We rely on families to keep emergency contact information updated at all times—including all working phone numbers and emergency contacts.

When to Keep Your Child Home

Please do not send your child to school if they show any of the following symptoms:

- **Fever:** 100.4°F or higher
- **Vomiting:** Two or more episodes within 24 hours
- **Diarrhea:** Two or more loose stools or any bloody stool in 24 hours
- **Rash:** Especially with fever or itching
- **Eye Discharge / Pink Eye:** Until eyes are clear or 24 hours after antibiotic treatment
- **Behavioral Changes:** Lethargy, distress, or inability to participate in daily activities
- **Head Lice:** If live lice are present or the condition is untreated

Children must be symptom-free for 24 hours without the use of medication before returning to school. If the illness is contagious, a doctor's note is required.

Why It Matters

In early childhood, students are still learning hygiene habits and frequently interact in close physical proximity—on the rug, during group work, and at recess. This makes it easy for illness to spread quickly, which can:

- Jeopardize the health of classmates and staff
- Disrupt instruction and daily operations



- Emotionally distress a sick child unable to self-regulate

When we call to request pickup, please know our team is following standard school health protocols to protect all students—not making individual or personal decisions.

Partnership Expectations

- Keep sick children home and monitor for symptoms
Wait 24 hours symptom-free (without medication) before returning
- Ensure emergency contacts are current
- Email info@sankofamontessori.org to report any sick-related absences
- Treat all staff with kindness and respect when contacted

Upholding this policy is not just about rules—it’s how we show love for one another and protect our shared learning environment.

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 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 first aid team 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:

- The parent must submit a medication dispensation form from the physician to our front office. The front office will then provide the form to our first aid team.
- 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.
- 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 Main Office.
- 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 Main Office.

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 first aid team and Associate Director of Operations
 - Associate Director of Operations or other designated school staff will administer first aid procedures as indicated by the nature of the accident.
 - First aid team 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 first aid team and Associate Director of Operations
 - 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.
 - Designated Leadership Team member 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 Main Office, 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 school nurse, 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 Manager of Culture & School Climate 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 providing a safe and inclusive educational environment for all students, including those with food allergies. Food allergies, especially to peanuts and tree nuts, can be life-threatening. Anaphylactic reactions may occur through ingestion, skin contact, or even airborne exposure. These risks require proactive, schoolwide collaboration among students, families, medical professionals, and staff.

To protect the health and safety of students with life-threatening allergies, Sankofa Montessori is a nut-free campus. This means that no peanut butter or products containing peanuts or tree nuts are permitted during the school day or at any school-sponsored before/after school events, field trips, or enrichment activities.

Additional guidelines are as follows:

- Do not send peanuts, tree nuts, or foods that contain these ingredients for lunch, snack, or classroom treats.
- If a student brings a food item containing nuts, it will be sealed in a Ziploc bag, labeled with a reminder, and returned home at the end of the day.
- All food provided through school-based activities (before care, after care, clubs, etc.) will be nut-free. An ingredient label must be included with all pre-packaged items. Products manufactured in facilities that also process nuts may pose a risk and must be clearly labeled.
- Teachers will not use nuts or nut shells in any classroom projects.
- If food is included as part of a curricular activity (e.g., a cultural lesson or gardening project), families will be notified at least one week in advance, and all known student allergies will be considered when selecting food items.
- Celebrations & Events: Sankofa Montessori hosts various school wide celebrations throughout the year. Please note that our nut-free policy remains in effect during these events, including evenings and weekends, to maintain a safe environment for all children.

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, emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation. Mandatory reporters are required to report child abuse immediately, but no later than 24 hours, to the person in charge of the school or designated delegate. Mandatory reporters are required to report regardless of whether it is based on privileged/confidential communication. 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 School Culture & Climate.

The Manager of School Culture & Climate 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.
- 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
 - Trevor Lifeline Text/Chat Services, available 24/7 Text "TREVOR" to 678-678
 - Crisis Text Line: Text TALK to 741-741 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 26-27 School year.

Rideshare and Taxi Service Policy

Sankofa Montessori does not permit the use of taxis or for-hire personal transportation services—including, but not limited to, Uber or Lyft—for students traveling to or from school without a parent or guardian present. Most rideshare companies explicitly prohibit unaccompanied minors from using their services, and this poses both legal and safety concerns.

At Sankofa Montessori, we believe education is most powerful when it is a partnership between school and home. As a Montessori learning community, we value the whole child—and we know that children thrive when their families are engaged and invested in their development. We ask that parents and guardians help model a focused, intentional environment by avoiding the use of cell phones or screens while on campus, preserving the calm and presence we strive for in our Montessori environments.

Ways to Participate

In keeping with our Montessori philosophy of collaboration and community, families are invited to engage with the school in the following ways:

- Active participation in the Sankofa Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
- Attendance at Family Education Nights, parent-teacher conferences, and other informational events
- Volunteer service to the school to support classrooms, events, and ongoing operations

Bridge to Montessori: Enriching the Parenting Journey

Because we understand that many families are new to our bridge program, we provide Family Education events throughout the year. These gatherings offer opportunities to learn about our educational methods, understand what your child is working on in the classroom, and gain strategies for supporting independence, concentration, and curiosity at home. These sessions are also a space for building relationships and sharing in the joy of your child's developmental journey.

Service to the School

In a Montessori environment, we prepare not only the child but the community. Family involvement is a vital part of that preparation. Research shows that when students see their families engaged in school life, they demonstrate greater confidence, responsibility, and



academic success. At Sankofa, service to the school is more than volunteering—it is modeling grace and courtesy, shared responsibility, and love for learning.

There are a range of ways families can contribute, including projects that can be completed from home, in the evenings, or on weekends. Whether you're helping in a classroom, preparing materials, assisting with events, or offering a special skill, your involvement strengthens our community and honors the Montessori principle that education is not a service to the child alone, but to the whole family.

Sankofa Montessori continues to grow and flourish because of the collective energy and dedication of our families. Your presence, partnership, and participation make our shared vision possible: a learning environment where every child is seen, nurtured, and empowered to reach their full potential—academically, socially, and emotionally. 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](#).

Volunteers are also required to complete FERPA training. To meet the requirements of the law, an online training course is offered at the following link: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/content/online-training-modules>

Once the online course is completed, please email training certificate to info@sankofamontessori.org.

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 review this document [HERE](#) to learn more about scheduling visits and observations.

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.

Classroom Observations vs. Parent Shadow Days

Classroom observations and parent shadow days serve different purposes and are not interchangeable.

Classroom observations are short, scheduled visits intended to provide a general glimpse into classroom instruction and culture.

Parent Shadow Days, on the other hand, are a consequence used as part of our progressive discipline policy and are rooted in our commitment to family partnership, as outlined in our Code of Conduct. These are assigned by our Culture Team in response to ongoing or significant behavior concerns. During a shadow day, a parent or guardian is invited to spend part or all of the school day with their child to observe, reflect, and collaborate on strategies for growth and accountability.

While both are valuable tools, Parent Shadow Days are not optional observations—they are a targeted intervention and disciplinary response aimed at restoring behavior and strengthening student success through shared responsibility.

Birthday Celebrations

At Sankofa Montessori, we honor each child's birthday through the Montessori Celebration of Life - a reflective and joyful ceremony that marks your child's unique journey around the sun. Rooted in Montessori tradition, this celebration is more than a party; it is an opportunity to celebrate growth, build community, and deepen students' understanding of time and self.

What is the Celebration of Life?

This ceremony:



- Centers your child's milestones and development
- Encourages appreciation, reflection, and belonging
- Connects personal growth to Montessori cosmic education

During the celebration, your child walks around a symbolic sun while sharing meaningful memories from each year of their life.

Scheduling the Event

- Celebrations are held only during the morning meeting block.
- Contact your child's lead guide at least two weeks in advance to schedule.
- Once confirmed, the lead guide will notify the front office and school leadership.

Preparing for the Celebration

To support a meaningful experience

- Photos and Timeline: Provide one photo per year of your child's life (e.g., for a 6th birthday, include photos from birth through age six). These will be used to create a visual timeline.
- Timeline Sheet: You will receive a form to complete with your child, highlighting significant milestones and special memories.
- The classroom will provide materials to symbolize the sun and the earth for the birthday walk.

On the Day of the Celebration

- Arrive 10 minutes early for setup and to allow your child to settle in.
- The celebration typically includes:
 1. A welcome and explanation by the lead guide
 2. Your child walking around the sun for each year of life
 3. You sharing a brief story or memory aligned with each photo and year



Snacks and Favor Bags

- Families may bring prepackaged, nut-free, healthy snacks to share after the ceremony.
- Please confirm snack plans with your child's lead guide in advance.
- Cupcakes, cakes, and sugary items are not permitted.

Birthday Favor Bags

- Allowed only if they contain approved healthy snacks.
- Toys, trinkets, or non-food items are not permitted to avoid classroom distractions.

Tips for Families

- Keep stories brief, engaging, and developmentally appropriate
- Focus on themes of growth, learning, and community
- Be mindful of all students' diverse experiences and attention spans

The Celebration of Life is more than a birthday tradition. It is an educational experience that supports academic, social, and emotional growth. By participating, families help build Sankofa's school culture rooted in love, reflection, joy, purpose, and ownership. If you have any questions or would like to begin planning your child's celebration, please contact their lead guide or the front office. We're here to ensure the experience is meaningful and memorable.

Holiday Policy

At Sankofa Montessori, our approach to holidays is guided by our Montessori philosophy, alignment with Georgia state standards, and a deep respect for the diverse identities and experiences of our school community. Holiday celebrations are thoughtfully planned to reflect both the needs and interests of children and the values of inclusion, respect, and cultural awareness.

- **School-wide Celebrations:** We celebrate three to four holidays school-wide each year. These events are intentionally selected to build community and foster joy.
- **Classroom Recognition:** In the classroom, children may learn about up to five holidays per month through stories, discussions, or hands-on activities. These moments are centered on recognition and education—not full celebrations.

We believe that holidays can serve powerful purposes in a child's development. Our approach is designed to:

1. Honor family traditions and validate children's lived experiences
2. Expose children to multiple perspectives, including different ways of celebrating the same holiday



3. Introduce new cultures, traditions, and religions in a respectful and developmentally appropriate way
4. Build a sense of community, connection, and belonging within the classroom
5. Promote accurate, age-appropriate understanding of holidays and their histories
6. Encourage critical thinking about perspective, inclusion, and bias

Family Involvement

We value our families as partners in this work. Whenever a holiday is celebrated or recognized in your child's classroom or across the school, we will communicate in advance so that you feel informed and included. If you would like to share a tradition or experience with your child's class, we encourage you to connect with their lead guide.

Supplies

At Sankofa Montessori, we believe in fostering peaceful, community-centered classrooms where shared responsibility and care for the environment are at the heart of learning. This year, families are asked to support that mission by providing the supplies needed for their child's classroom experience.

Each student is expected to bring:

- A full backpack with all items from the classroom supply list
- A refillable water bottle
- A full change of clothes (including socks and undergarments) in a labeled bag
- A lunch bag if bringing food from home

Click [here](#) to access the 2026–2027 Sankofa Montessori Supply Lists for each grade level.

What to Avoid

- No roller bags or messenger bags
- Please avoid sending in toys, personal electronics, or non-essential items

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

At Sankofa Montessori, we believe that strong family partnerships are essential to our children's success. Clear and consistent communication is a vital part of that relationship.

ParentSquare is the preferred method of communication for all school-related updates. Teachers and parents are able to message and call each other directly through the platform, making it a convenient and reliable way to stay connected.

All classroom and school-wide announcements, reminders, and updates will be sent through ParentSquare. Families are expected to activate their ParentSquare accounts before the start of the school year. Invitations will be sent via email and text message.

If you have an urgent message for your child or need to reach their teacher during the school day, please call the Front Office at (470) 713-8930. We will ensure the message is delivered promptly.

Regular Communication Includes:

- Annually: Families are invited to attend Meet the Teacher at the start of the year.
- Monthly: Expect a monthly update from your child's Lead Guide and a school-wide newsletter sent via ParentSquare.
- If you're not receiving communications, please contact the Front Office to update your contact information.

While email may still be used for non-urgent matters, ParentSquare is the primary and most effective way to communicate with your child's teacher and receive timely school information.

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 or call the Main Office with updates to this information.

SECTION 3: THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Start	End	Sample Primary Daily Schedule
7:30 AM	8:00 AM	Doors Open & Breakfast in Classrooms
8:00 AM	8:15 AM	Morning Meeting
8:18 AM	9:08 AM	Reading Block
9:11 AM	10:01 AM	Writing Block
10:04 AM	10:34 AM	Lunch
10:34 AM	11:04 AM	Recess
11:07 AM	11:57 AM	Math Block
12:00 PM	12:50 PM	Practical Life Centers
12:53 PM	1:43 PM	Enrichment
1:46 PM	2:20 PM	Intervention (Reading or Math)
2:20 PM	2:30 PM	Dismissal Prep
2:30 PM	3:00 PM	Dismissal



In our Elementary spaces, lead guides are content-specific, which means students transition between classrooms throughout the day for core subjects. This model mirrors the Montessori value of freedom within structure and allows students to engage with guides who are deeply knowledgeable in specific content areas. Students benefit from movement, choice, and consistency while mastering grade-level skills through intentional, structured content delivery.

Start	End	Sample Elementary Daily Schedule
7:30 AM	8:00 AM	Doors Open & Breakfast in Classrooms
8:00 AM	8:15 AM	Morning Meeting & Community Connection
8:18 AM	9:08 AM	Content Block 1 (Reading, Writing, or Math depending on classroom)
9:11 AM	10:01 AM	Content Block 2
10:04 AM	10:54 AM	Content Block 3
10:57 AM	11:27 AM	Lunch or Recess (rotates by community)
11:27 AM	11:57 AM	Lunch or Recess (rotates by community)
12:00 PM	12:50 PM	Enrichment
12:53 PM	1:43 PM	Truncated Montessori Work Cycle
1:46 PM	2:20 PM	Reading or Math Intervention (M/W/F: Reading, T/Th: Math)
2:20 PM	2:30 PM	Dismissal Prep
2:30 PM	3:00 PM	Dismissal

Uniforms and Dress Code

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



Dress Code Philosophy and Equity Statement

At Sankofa Montessori, we believe that every child should be able to dress comfortably and confidently for school without fear of unnecessary discipline or body shaming. Our approach bridges traditional expectations with Montessori values while emphasizing respect, safety, equity, and pride in representing what it means to be a Sankofa passenger.

We believe students should come to school clean, well-dressed, and prepared for learning. Uniforms should be neat, appropriately fitting, and free of excessive holes, rips, or damage. Our uniform policy helps foster school pride, promotes a focused learning environment, and reinforces our core values of Ownership and Purpose by encouraging students to take pride in themselves and their presentation.

Why We Have a Uniform Policy

- To promote pride in being a Sankofa passenger
- To reduce social pressures about clothing brands and styles
- To provide predictable, accessible daily clothing choices
- To maintain a safe learning environment in areas like PE, art, and science
- To allow students to choose from a variety of uniform options and express their gender identity
- To respect religious attire
- To prohibit clothing or accessories with offensive, violent, hateful, or illegal imagery or language

Equity and Inclusion

We 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.

Key Principles

- Certain body parts must be covered at all times
- Clothes must fully cover undergarments, buttocks, upper thighs, and chests with opaque fabric
- Uniforms should be clean, appropriately fitting, and in good condition
- Dress code enforcement should never create barriers to learning or participation



- Staff will always use student- and body-positive language when discussing dress code expectations
- Teachers should be able to focus on teaching, not policing attire

Uniform Vendor

- All uniforms must be purchased from our exclusive vendor due to contractual obligations.
- Families are not permitted to create or purchase additional items with the Sankofa Montessori logo.
- The school cannot license or lend our logo for unofficial use.

At Sankofa Montessori, all students are required to wear the school uniform every day to promote a focused, equitable, and safe learning environment.

Uniform Requirements

At Sankofa Montessori, we want to ensure expectations regarding the student uniform are crystal clear.

Students should arrive at school neat, clean, and in full uniform each day, representing what it means to be a Sankofa passenger.

In alignment with our school policy, daily uniform wear is mandatory for all students unless otherwise communicated by the school for an approved dress-down or special event day. Undershirts, leggings, tights, and accessories should support the overall uniform appearance and should not distract from or replace the uniform itself.

Tops

Approved Sankofa-branded polos or dresses purchased through our authorized uniform vendor or school store must be worn daily.

- Long or loose shirts must be tucked in.
- Undershirts are permitted under uniform tops with the following expectations:
 - Solid white or navy blue only
 - No patterns, graphics, or logos
 - Undershirts should not take away from the overall uniform appearance

Bottoms



Students may wear solid navy or khaki uniform:

- Pants
- Shorts
- Skirts
- Skorts

Bottoms must be free of:

- Logos
- Patterns
- Distressing
- Holes or excessive markings

The following are not permitted:

- Sweatpants
- Athletic wear (except on designated PE days)
- Leggings worn as pants
- Jeggings
- Jeans (unless approved for a designated dress-down day)

Leggings and tights are permitted only under skirts or shorts with the following expectations:

- Leggings: Solid white or navy only
- Tights: Solid white or navy only
- No patterns, stripes, graphics, or fishnet material
- Leggings and tights should complement the uniform and not distract from the overall uniform appearance

Pants must be worn at the waist at all times. Sagging is not permitted.

Physical Education (PE) Uniform

On their designated PE day, students are expected to wear the PE uniform to ensure comfort, safety, and ease of movement during physical activity.

The PE uniform consists of:

- Any Sankofa-branded t-shirt (blue or orange with the Sankofa logo)
- Solid navy athletic shorts, joggers, or sweatpants



The following are not permitted on PE days:

- Leggings worn as pants
- Tight-fitting athletic shorts
- Athletic wear that is not school-approved

PE shirts may be purchased through the Sankofa School Store.

Outerwear

Only the following may be worn inside Sankofa classrooms:

- Sankofa-branded sweaters, fleeces, sweatshirts, and crewnecks purchased through the authorized vendor or school store
- Solid navy cardigan-style sweaters without logos or patterns

Students may not wear hoodies inside the building.

Students may not wear non-Sankofa outerwear underneath their Sankofa polo or uniform shirt. Any additional layers worn during the school day must comply with the approved uniform guidelines.

Outside coats and jackets may be worn outdoors but must be removed upon entering the classroom and instructional spaces.

Footwear

- Students must wear closed-toe shoes appropriate for movement and safe play.
- The following are not permitted:
 - Crocs
 - Slides
 - Flip-flops
 - Open-toed sandals
 - Heels
 - Heelys

Change of Clothes

- Kindergarten students, and any student who may require it, should keep an emergency change of clothes at school.
- Clothing should:
 - Be labeled with the student's name
 - Be placed in a Ziploc bag



- Remain in the student's backpack

Field Lessons

- Sankofa's full uniform must be worn on all field lessons unless otherwise communicated by the school for safety and student identification purposes.

Students Cannot Wear:

- Violent language or images
- Images or language depicting drugs, alcohol, or illegal items/activities
- Hate speech, profanity, pornography, or obscene language/images
- Images or language that create a hostile, intimidating, or disruptive environment
- Clothing that reveals undergarments
- Swimsuits (except as required for class activities or approved events)
- Accessories or items that could be considered dangerous or weapon-like
- Hats, scarves, ties, bowties, or accessories that are not part of the approved uniform and could easily become lost or disruptive
- Headpieces, accessories, or attire that significantly distract from the school uniform or interfere with the learning environment of others

Students may wear religious or culturally significant head coverings consistent with the school's equity and inclusion policy.

Students who wear items that do not meet these requirements will be asked to remove or adjust them.

Dress Code Enforcement

At Sankofa Montessori, we are committed to ensuring all students follow the uniform policy so they can focus on learning in a safe, welcoming, and equitable environment. To ensure consistent implementation of the dress code policy, the Manager of Student Culture and School Climate will be responsible for completing an informal uniform check as a part of Morning Arrival.

Steps for Addressing Uniform Infractions

- **First Incident:** The student will receive an Out of Uniform Notice that details the specific uniform infraction and serves as a reminder of the expectations.



- **Second Incident:** A parent phone call will be made to inform the family of the specific uniform infraction.
- **Third Incident:** A referral to the Student Support Services Team will be made to discuss and address the issue collaboratively.
- **Fourth Incident:** The parent/guardian will be required to attend an in-person conference to address the uniform concerns.
- **Fifth Incident:** The student will receive an in-school suspension for repeated uniform non-compliance.

Additional Information:

If a student repeatedly comes to school out of uniform, the school will hold a conference with the family to identify and resolve any barriers to consistent uniform use. When necessary, parents/guardians may be called during the school day to bring alternative clothing for their child.

Equity Commitment:

No student will face different or stricter dress code enforcement because of their race, sex assigned at birth, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, cultural or religious identity, household income, body size/type, or body maturity.

Dress code enforcement will be implemented with respect and sensitivity. Students will never be asked to display their body in front of others. This means:

- No kneeling or bending over to check fit
- No measuring straps or skirt length
- No asking students to explain or defend their attire in front of others
- No calling out students in hallways or classrooms about dress code in front of others
- No confronting students about visible waistbands or bra straps, since these are permitted

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 is a CEP school, which means all children are provided with free breakfast and lunch. Parents are welcomed to pack a nutritious breakfast and lunch for their child if they do not want their child to eat the school provided meals. Sankofa partners with a third party vendor to provide nutritious delicious meals that meet all federal nutrition regulations to our children. A sample menu can be found [HERE](#).

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 partner with us in creating a calm, focused learning environment that aligns with our values around health and community. We ask that certain food items **not be sent to school** with your student, including:

- Sugary juices
- Soda or carbonated drinks
- Chocolate
- Candy
- Hot chips
- Cookies and cakes

If these items are brought to school, your child's Lead Guide or an administrator may respectfully collect the item or ask your child to put it away and take it home. We appreciate your partnership in supporting healthy choices and limiting distractions during the school day.

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 Sankofa Montessori if packing a lunch from home.

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 support students with documented disabilities or needs through an Individualized Education Program, 504 plan, Gifted Learning Plan, or English as a Secondary Language. Sankofa will implement interventions and conduct evaluations for any student suspected of benefitting from additional supports or accommodations in order to access the curriculum, in accordance with its child find obligations.

Annual Information Session

At Sankofa Montessori, we believe families are essential partners in every child's educational journey. To ensure families are informed and empowered, we host an annual Student Support Information Session each fall. This session is open to all families and provides an overview of how student support services work at Sankofa Montessori.

During the session, families will learn about:

- The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) at Sankofa and how it helps identify and support students' academic and behavioral needs
- How Sankofa Montessori partners with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) to implement services for students with IEPs, 504 plans, and ESOL needs
- The types of academic and behavioral interventions available



- The referral process for special education evaluations and who can initiate it
- What to expect during a special education evaluation
- How families can request behavioral supports for their child
- Both formal and informal ways to communicate concerns about special education or student supports

This session helps build transparency, trust, and shared understanding. We encourage all families to attend, whether they currently receive services or are simply seeking to learn more.

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 Student Support services and partner with Sankofa Montessori in support of their child.

Multi-tiered System of Supports

At Sankofa Montessori, we follow the Georgia Department of Education’s guidance for implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to ensure that all students receive the academic and behavioral interventions they need to thrive. MTSS is a proactive, data-driven approach to identifying and supporting students who may require additional help—even if they do not currently have an IEP or 504 Plan.

Students in Kindergarten through Grade 6 may receive additional support through our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) if they meet the following criteria:

- They are performing below grade level in reading or math, and
- They fall within the bottom 20% of their grade level in either academic performance or behavioral data

Step-by-Step MTSS Process at Sankofa

1. Universal Screening

All students participate in school-wide screening assessments in reading and math to provide an initial snapshot of academic performance. Behavior data is also tracked through daily observations, incident reports, Liveschool paycheck data, and individualized interventions.

2. Identification of Intervention Groups

Grade-level teams meet monthly to review screening data and identify students in need of support.

- Cut scores and trends are used to group students based on need.
- Behavior data is reviewed weekly to identify students showing patterns of concern.



- For eligible students, teams create small, targeted groups to receive specific interventions.

3. Designing and Implementing Interventions

Intervention plans are developed for each group based on identified needs. These may include:

- Phonics instruction or math fluency support
- Behavioral supports, such as structured check-ins or de-escalation strategies
- Social-emotional learning tools, such as reflection spaces or behavior trackers

4. Using Multiple Data Points

In MTSS student support meetings, teams review a range of data to confirm that a student needs continued support. This includes:

- Progress monitoring assessments
- Teacher observations
- Behavior logs or incident data. If needed, additional data may be collected to better understand the student's needs or triggers.

5. Monitoring Progress and Adjusting Supports

Each month, teams evaluate student progress to determine next steps:

- Students making strong progress may move from Tier 3 to Tier 2, or Tier 2 to Tier 1
- Students needing more intensive support may move from Tier 2 to Tier 3
- Students may continue in their current tier if progress is steady but still developing

Early Intervention Program

At Sankofa Montessori, we are committed to ensuring that all students meet grade-level expectations. The Early Intervention Program (EIP) is designed to support students in Kindergarten through 5th grade who are at risk of not reaching or maintaining grade-level academic performance. This program follows the Georgia Early Intervention Program Guidelines and aims to help students reach grade-level proficiency as quickly as possible.

Program Qualification

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

Special Education Enrollment Procedures

When a student with a disability enrolls at Sankofa Montessori, we are committed to ensuring a smooth and timely transition of services. Within 10 business days of the student's first day of school, an IEP meeting will be held to review the student's existing records and either adopt, amend, or develop a new IEP that reflects the student's current needs.

A complete Special Education Record includes:

- Current IEP
- Comprehensive Eligibility Report
- Most recent Eligibility or Redetermination
- Parent Notification of Meetings
- Consent for Evaluation
- Consent for Placement



For all enrollment scenarios, Sankofa Montessori remains focused on providing timely, individualized support to ensure a smooth and compliant transition for students with disabilities.

General Guidance for Enrollment

Type of Record	Action Required
Current Comprehensive Eligibility Report	No action is needed
Expired Comprehensive Eligibility Report	If a current redetermination report is also on file, no action is needed. If a current redetermination report is not on file, a redetermination meeting must be held to obtain consent for evaluation and refer for testing.
Expired Eligibility, Current IEP	Determine if evaluation is needed Obtain Consent to Evaluate Complete Eligibility Process Amend IEP to reflect comparable services at Sankofa.
Current Eligibility, Expired IEP	Develop and Implement IEP
Expired Eligibility, Expired IEP	The Director of Student Support and Culture will review the records to determine the appropriate action needed.
Missing Documents	If after the records request process has been exhausted and complete records are still not received, the Director of Student Support and Culture will review the records to determine the appropriate action needed.

Special Education Eligibility Decision-Making

At Sankofa Montessori, we are committed to ensuring that all students—including those with exceptional learning needs—receive a high-quality, individualized education aligned with both



the Montessori philosophy and the Georgia state standards. Our eligibility process follows the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) and Georgia State Rule 160-4-7-.05.

Our Philosophy

In line with Montessori principles, we honor the whole child and recognize that each child develops at their own pace. Our process emphasizes early intervention, family collaboration, and thoughtful observation, ensuring that students receive appropriate support when they truly need it—not based on labels, but based on demonstrated need.

I. Alignment with MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports)

Before special education is considered, students must receive layered academic and behavioral support through Georgia’s MTSS framework. A student may be referred for a comprehensive evaluation if:

- They demonstrate insufficient progress despite Tier I and Tier II supports.
- Evidence-based interventions have been implemented over time with fidelity.
- Data indicates that specially designed instruction may be necessary for success.

II. Exclusionary Factors

A student may not be found eligible for special education if the primary cause of their academic or behavioral difficulties is any of the following exclusionary factors:

- Lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading as defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
- Lack of appropriate instruction in math
- Limited English proficiency
- Chronic absenteeism or inconsistent attendance
- Cultural differences
- Environmental or economic disadvantage
- Recent school moves or transitional instability
- Situational trauma or crisis
- Other non-disability-related factors

III. Criteria for Eligibility

Eligibility is based on the convergence of multiple data sources and must demonstrate the following:



- **Performance Gap**
The student shows a significant difference between current performance and grade-level standards (e.g., MAP, benchmarks, work samples).
- **Rate of Learning**
Progress monitoring indicates that, despite intervention, the student is learning at a significantly slower rate than peers.
- **Adverse Educational Impact**
There is documented evidence that the student's academic or functional performance is negatively affected, requiring specially designed instruction.
- **Exclusionary Review**
The team must confirm that the cause is not due to the exclusionary factors listed above.

IV. Evaluation & Eligibility Team

Once evaluations are completed, the Eligibility Team—which includes both school staff and the child's parent(s)/guardian(s)—will review:

- Standardized achievement and cognitive test scores
- Classroom performance data and student work
- Teacher and parent input
- Behavioral and health information
- Adaptive functioning and developmental history

The team will then issue one of the following:

- A formal Eligibility Report (may also serve as the comprehensive evaluation)
- A finding of ineligibility, with rationale and documentation provided to the parent at no cost

V. Georgia Eligibility Categories (Ages 3–21)

Students may qualify under one or more of these categories:

1. Autism Spectrum Disorder
2. Deafblind
3. Deaf/Hard of Hearing
4. Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD)
5. Intellectual Disability
6. Orthopedic Impairment



7. Other Health Impairment (OHI)
8. Significant Developmental Delay (ages 3–7)
9. Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
10. Speech-Language Impairment
11. Traumatic Brain Injury
12. Visual Impairment

VI. Parent Communication and Documentation

- Parents will receive a copy of the evaluation report and eligibility determination at no cost.
- A Prior Written Notice (PWN) will document decisions made and outline next steps.
- If eligible, the IEP team will convene within 30 calendar days to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that reflects the student's strengths and needs.

VII. Implementation of Services

Once consent is obtained:

- IEP services will be implemented by Sankofa staff and/or licensed contracted providers.
- Related services (e.g., speech, OT, PT) will be delivered as outlined in the IEP.
- Progress toward IEP goals will be monitored and shared with families.

Ongoing Communication

Parents and guardians will be informed and involved throughout the process. Sankofa prioritizes transparency, collaboration, and continuity of services for all incoming students receiving special education support.

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") and meets criteria for one of the eligibility categories as defined by the state of Georgia
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 an IEP under the IDEA. The creation of the IEP must be completed within 30 days of the student being found eligible for special education services. 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 creation and consent from parent(s)/guardian(s), all services 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.

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.

Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against individuals whose physical or mental impairment substantially limits one or more major life activities, including:

- Caring for one's self
- Performing manual tasks
- Walking
- Seeing
- Hearing
- Speaking
- Working
- Learning



504 Accommodation Plans

Upon receiving medical documentation and meeting eligibility requirements, a 504 Accommodation Plan may be developed for qualified students. A 504 Plan is a legal document, which is primarily a classroom accommodation plan. It is not an IEP. The 504 Team, which includes the (parent(s)/guardian(s), classroom teacher, Director of Student Support and Services, and Manager of Family Engagement will be responsible for determining the special accommodations and services that are needed to ensure that the student receives a free appropriate education. The Plan will specify how services will be provided and by whom.

Annual Review

The teacher or other person(s) designated by the Section 504 Team shall monitor the student's progress and the effectiveness of the student's plan. The teacher or other designated person will meet with the parent(s) at least annually to determine whether the Section 504 Plan continues to be appropriate or whether any changes are thought to be necessary. A Section 504 team meeting will be convened at any time to review the changes in student need or other appropriate concerns.

Reevaluation

A multi-source evaluation for eligibility purposes should be completed at minimum every 3 years to re-determine eligibility under Section 504 and/or before any significant changes are made in the Section 504 Plan.

Manifestation Hearing

In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Sankofa Montessori follows specific procedures when a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan faces a long-term suspension (defined as more than 10 consecutive school days, or more than 10 cumulative days of suspension in a school year).

When this occurs, a Manifestation Determination Meeting is required. This meeting includes:

- The student's parent(s)/guardian(s)
- The student's general education teacher
- The student's special education teacher or case manager
- The Head of School
- The Executive Director
- Other relevant school staff, as needed

During the meeting, the team will carefully review:



- The events leading up to the behavior (antecedents)
- The behavior itself and the student's intent
- The consequences and outcomes
- The student's IEP or 504 Plan and its implementation

The team will determine the answers to two key questions:

1. Was the behavior caused by, or directly and substantially related to, the student's disability?
2. Was the behavior a direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP or 504 Plan?

If the answer to either question is "yes", the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability. In this case:

- The student cannot be subject to further disciplinary removal for that behavior.
- The IEP or 504 team will reconvene to consider any needed changes to the student's support plan or its implementation.

If the answer to both questions is "no", the behavior is not a manifestation. The school may proceed with disciplinary action, but must also:

- Consider conducting a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)
- Develop or revise a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) to proactively support the student moving forward

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.

Notice of procedural safeguards

(a) General. A copy of the procedural safeguards available to the parents of a child with a disability must be given to the parents only one time a school year, except that a copy also must be given to the parents—

- Upon initial referral or parent request for evaluation;
- Upon receipt of the first State complaint under §§ 300.151 through 300.153 and upon receipt of the first due process complaint under § 300.507 in a school year;



- In accordance with the discipline procedures in § 300.530(h); and
- Upon request by a parent.

(b) Internet Web site. A public agency may place a current copy of the procedural safeguards notice on its Internet Web site if a Web site exists.

(c) Contents. The procedural safeguards notice must include a full explanation of all of the procedural safeguards available under § 300.148, §§ 300.151 through 300.153, § 300.300, §§ 300.502 through 300.503, §§ 300.505 through 300.518, §§ 300.530 through 300.536 and §§ 300.610 through 300.625 relating to—

- Independent educational evaluations;
- Prior written notice;
- Parental consent;
- Access to education records;
- Opportunity to present and resolve complaints through the due process complaint and State complaint procedures, including—
 - The time period in which to file a complaint;
 - The opportunity for the agency to resolve the complaint; and
 - The difference between the due process complaint and the State complaint procedures, including the jurisdiction of each procedure, what issues may be raised, filing and decisional timelines, and relevant procedures;

(6) The availability of mediation;

(7) The child's placement during the pendency of any due process complaint;

(8) Procedures for students who are subject to placement in an interim alternative educational setting;

(9) Requirements for unilateral placement by parents of children in private schools at public expense;

(10) Hearings on due process complaints, including requirements for disclosure of evaluation results and recommendations;

(11) State-level appeals (if applicable in the State);

(12) Civil actions, including the time period in which to file those actions; and

(13) Attorneys' fees.

(d) Notice in understandable language. The notice required under paragraph (a) of this section must meet the requirements of § 300.503(c).

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. A student who may be an English Learner must be screened for such status within 30 days of enrollment in a school in the state. Parents will be notified within 30 calendar days after the start of school year that their child was placed in LIEP, and if occurs during school year, 2 weeks after placement.

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 Recruitment and Family Resources) 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 Recruitment and Family Resources).
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 Recruitment and Family Resources - 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 Policy

At Sankofa, we believe that homework should be purposeful, manageable, and inclusive of all families. Our approach is grounded in our school's core values—Love, Ownership, Purpose,



Reflection, and Joy—and is designed to reinforce learning without placing unnecessary stress on students or families.

General Overview

- Homework accounts for 10% of a student’s final grade.
- Students can earn up to 5 points per week based on completion and return of all components by Friday.
- Homework is graded for completion and effort, not accuracy.

Weekly Reading Log

- Purpose: Encourage joyful and consistent reading habits at home.
Time Expectation: 10 minutes per evening (Monday–Thursday), totaling 40 minutes per week.
Due: Every Friday, submitted with the Orange Communication Folder.
- Log Must Include:
 - Date and start/end time
 - Title of book, article, or material
 - Signature of a family member or student

Reading activities may include:

- Reading to a sibling, pet, or stuffed animal
- Listening to an audiobook or family member read
- Reading environmental print (menus, signs, instructions)
- Shared reading of poems, comics, recipes, or classroom texts

Orange Communication Folder

- Purpose: Extend school learning into the home in a manageable way.
- Sent Home: Every Monday
- Due Back: Every Friday
- Contents: No more than four short activities aligned to classroom learning
- Weekly Time Commitment: Activities and reading log should take no more than 20 minutes each evening

Our Commitment

- Make homework accessible to all families
- Ensure tasks are aligned with current classwork



- Provide flexibility for family routines
- Treat homework as a shared responsibility, not a source of stress

We appreciate your support in helping students build strong habits, confidence, and a lifelong love of learning.

Classroom and School Technology

Student Cell Phone Policy

To preserve a focused and respectful learning environment, students are not permitted to use cell phones during the school day, on school-sponsored field trips, or at school events—unless explicitly authorized by a staff member or chaperone for a specific purpose. This includes all cell phone functions, such as calling, texting, taking photos or videos, using the calculator, and accessing social media or other apps.

If a cell phone is seen, heard, or used without permission:

- The student will be asked to turn the device off and store it in their backpack.
- If the behavior is repeated, or at the school's discretion, the phone may be confiscated and secured in a locked location.
- Confiscated phones may be returned to the student at the end of the school day or to a parent/guardian at a scheduled time.

Additional Considerations:

- Cell phones must remain powered off and stored in a locker or backpack during the entire instructional day.
- Repeated violations may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
- Sankofa Montessori is not responsible for any loss, theft, damage, or unauthorized use of cell phones brought to school.

Student Toy, Game, & Special Item Policy

At Sankofa Montessori, students are not permitted to bring toys, board games, or loveys (such as small stuffed animals, blankets, or personal comfort items) from home to school.



While we strongly encourage families to label all personal belongings, please note that Sankofa Montessori is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of any personal items brought to school.

Technology and Media in the Classroom

At Sankofa Montessori, we intentionally bridge standards-based instruction with the Montessori approach, providing a unique learning experience that honors both academic rigor and the developmental needs of children.

While hands-on, collaborative learning remains central to our instructional model, technology is thoughtfully integrated to supplement core instruction, close academic gaps, and build essential digital literacy skills.

Sankofa Montessori is a 1:1 school, meaning every student has access to a dedicated device (laptop or tablet) to support their learning. Technology is used during specific blocks of the day and always with clear academic purpose.

Students use programs such as:

- Lexia – to support literacy growth through personalized reading instruction
- IXL – to strengthen foundational math skills and reinforce grade-level content

Technology is not used for passive screen time. Instead, students engage with software aligned to their individual learning needs and classroom instruction. Usage is:

- Monitored by staff
- Targeted to specific academic goals
- Designed to reinforce or reteach core skills in reading and math
- Used as a tool to help students meet benchmarks and prepare for assessments

To ensure readiness for standardized testing and modern academic expectations, students will also build competency with computer-based tasks such as typing, navigation, and digital assessments.

Lead guides may occasionally incorporate educational videos or media to deepen content understanding. All media used complies with copyright laws and is selected for its developmental appropriateness and direct alignment to learning goals.



Distraction Free Policy

Social Media Policy

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.

Academics at Sankofa

The Sankofa Way

At Sankofa Montessori, we draw inspiration from Dr. Maria Montessori’s philosophy of education, which centers the child as a natural learner who thrives in a thoughtfully prepared environment with purposeful work. Montessori believed that children develop concentration, independence, and a love of learning when given freedom within limits and meaningful materials to explore. While Sankofa is a public charter school and therefore differs from traditional private Montessori schools, we intentionally incorporate core Montessori principles into our instructional design, learning environments, and school culture. Our goal is to nurture curious, capable, and compassionate learners - while also ensuring that all students meet the rigorous expectations of Georgia’s state standards.

This means we bridge Montessori philosophy with standards-based instruction, combining the best of both worlds to create a holistic and academically robust experience for children.

What This Looks Like at Sankofa

Multi-Age Classrooms

One of the hallmarks of Montessori education is the use of multi-age groupings. At Sankofa, our lower and upper elementary classrooms (grades 1–5) combine age groups to promote peer learning, mentorship, and leadership. Older students reinforce their learning by helping younger peers, while younger students benefit from observation and support. In our Primary (Kindergarten) classrooms, students are grouped by age but still experience Montessori elements such as self-direction, independence, and choice within structure.

Prepared Environment

Our classrooms are designed to foster independent exploration, purposeful movement, and hands-on learning. Materials are beautifully organized and accessible to encourage student responsibility, choice, and concentration. As a public school, our environments may not mirror



traditional Montessori schools exactly, but our classrooms still reflect Dr. Montessori's principles of order and developmentally appropriate design.

Small Group Instruction

Students receive intentional, small-group lessons tailored to their readiness and needs. Whether working with Montessori materials or using standards-aligned curriculum resources, this structure allows for individualized attention, skill development, and collaborative learning that respects each child's pace and pathway.

Goal-Setting and Ownership

At Sankofa, students track their academic progress through data binders, reflect on their learning, and set personal goals. This practice nurtures metacognition, responsibility, and student agency - key components of both Montessori and high-quality academic instruction.

Grace and Courtesy

Our school-wide commitment to Grace and Courtesy - a foundational element of Montessori education - guides how we teach social-emotional learning. Students practice kindness, respect, conflict resolution, and community care, which leads to peaceful, connected classrooms and a strong sense of belonging.

Practical Life in Primary

In our Primary classrooms, students engage in Practical Life work such as sweeping, plant care, and organizing materials. These activities foster fine motor development, independence, and pride in their environment, reinforcing Montessori's emphasis on responsibility and purposeful action.

Hands-On Science and Inquiry

Science at Sankofa is deeply rooted in exploration and discovery. Montessori science materials and methods encourage children to observe, classify, experiment, and ask questions about the world around them, building a strong foundation for critical thinking and inquiry.

Assessments

At Sankofa Montessori, we use a variety of assessments throughout the school year to monitor academic growth and guide instruction. These assessments include both formative assessments—which inform daily instruction—and summative assessments—which measure



student progress over time. All assessments are developmentally appropriate and designed to support the success of each child.

Assessment	Grade/ Domain	Issued
NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Students in grades K–6 take MAP assessments in reading, math, and language three times a year. MAP Growth is a nationally recognized, computer-based assessment developed by NWEA. The test adapts in real time to each student’s responses—providing easier or more challenging questions based on how they answer. This ensures every child receives a test that meets them at their current level. MAP is not a high-stakes test. Instead, it offers valuable information that helps teachers tailor instruction, form small groups, and set personalized learning goals. After each testing window, families receive a detailed report to better understand their child’s academic growth and progress.	K-6 Math, Reading, and Language	Three times a year
DIBELS is a quick 1:1 assessment used to monitor key reading skills such as letter naming, phonemic awareness, word reading, and fluency that is used to help teachers understand each child’s reading development and plan the right support.	K–6	Three times a year
NWEA MAP Reading Fluency assessment is used to monitor early reading skills and screen for characteristic signs of dyslexia and reading difficulties. Please note that this assessment does not diagnose dyslexia. This computer-based tool uses voice-recording technology to measure how well students read aloud, understand what they read, and recognize sounds and words. It helps teachers identify students who may	K-6	Two times a year



benefit from additional reading support.		
SEL Web is a computer-based, interactive assessment to better understand students’ social-emotional learning (SEL) skills in areas like self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. SELweb helps us identify student strengths, tailor classroom instruction and supports, and monitor growth in SEL skills over time. This ensures we are meeting the social-emotional needs of every child while building a kind, respectful, and emotionally healthy school community.	K-6/ Social Emotional Learning	Twice a year
Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS), a state-required assessment that tracks growth in important areas such as language, literacy, math, motor skills, social-emotional development, and work habits. GKIDS is not a traditional test. Instead, teachers observe students during their normal daily activities, gathering information in a natural and child-friendly way. This approach helps us understand each child’s development, celebrate growth, and provide support where needed—without added stress. GKIDS is administered within the first six weeks of school and completed during the final six weeks of the year.	K	2 times a year
Georgia Milestone Assessments is a computer-based assessment system designed by the Georgia Department of Education. These assessments measure	3-6: Math 3-6: ELA 5-6: Science	Once a year



how well students are mastering the state-adopted standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The results help families and educators understand student progress, identify learning needs, and determine readiness for the next grade level.	5-6: Social Studies	
Georgia Alternative Assessments 2.0 (GAA 2.0) is the state’s alternate assessment designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in the general assessment program, even with accommodations. At Sankofa Montessori, GAA 2.0 ensures that every student has an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the Georgia alternative content standards.	3-6: Math 3-6: ELA 5-6: Science 5-6: Social Studies	Once a year
ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) is a state-mandated, computer-based assessment given annually to all students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) in Kindergarten through 12th grade.	K- 6	Once a year
Gifted Testing is offered twice each year—once in the fall and again in the spring—for students in Kindergarten through 6th grade. Students may be referred for testing based on their performance on the MAP assessment or through nominations by teachers, parents, or school staff. The evaluation process includes assessments in four areas: mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation, in alignment with Georgia Department of Education guidelines. Students who qualify receive enrichment opportunities through small group instruction led by a	K-6	Twice a year



Gifted-endorsed teacher weekly.		
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Grading & Progress Reports

At Sankofa Montessori, we use a standards-based system aligned with the Georgia Standards of Excellence to track and communicate student progress. Our instructional model blends Montessori methods with curriculum-aligned assessments and emphasizes continuous growth. Families will receive regular updates throughout the school year, including:

- **Progress Reports** that reflect what students are working on and have mastered.
- **Standardized assessment data** such as MAP Growth, DIBELS, and Georgia Milestones.
- **Three scheduled parent-teacher conferences** to discuss student development and next steps.

Grading at Sankofa includes classwork, assessments, family partnership activities (e.g., reading logs), and real-time academic performance tracked through platforms like IXL and Lexia.

If a student transfers to another school, Sankofa will provide a comprehensive academic summary, including performance data, attendance, and behavior history, to support a seamless transition. To read more about our grading policy, please click the link [HERE](#).

Retention and Promotion

At Sankofa Montessori, promotion and retention decisions are made with deep consideration of each child's academic progress, developmental readiness, and overall well-being. Our approach blends state expectations with Montessori principles, ensuring that students are supported and challenged appropriately.

Promotion is based on mastery, not age. Students advance when they have demonstrated sufficient progress across academic and social-emotional domains—not just based on their time in school. Our team considers classroom performance, assessment data, and the child's independence, focus, and self-regulation skills.

Retention is not automatic or punitive. When concerns arise, teachers initiate early conversations with families and refer students to our student support team. This team collaborates to design and monitor interventions. A final review occurs in the spring, and families are informed in writing of the outcome.

Decisions are informed by multiple data points, which may include:



- Results from MAP, DIBELS, Milestones, and other assessments
- Classroom work and teacher observations
- Progress through intervention plans (MTSS or IEP goals)
- Attendance and behavior data
- Readiness to succeed at the next level

Students with disabilities follow the same process, with decisions made collaboratively by the IEP team. Retention must be determined by the team with careful review of the student's unique needs and access to the general education curriculum.

Appeal

If a parent disagrees with a retention decision, they may submit a written appeal to our Executive Director within 10 business days of receiving the decision letter. Our complete promotion and retention procedures can be found [here](#).

School Culture

At Sankofa Montessori, we believe that a strong, values-aligned school culture is essential to creating a joyful, productive, and equitable learning environment. Rooted in both Montessori principles and modern Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), our approach to student culture fosters independence, accountability, and community.

Our Culture Framework

We use a PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) framework to proactively teach, model, and reinforce positive behavior. PBIS is a nationally recognized, research-based approach that supports all students in developing social-emotional and behavioral skills. Rather than focusing solely on consequences after a behavior occurs, PBIS emphasizes prevention, positive reinforcement, and teaching expectations explicitly.

The Six Core PBIS Practices at Sankofa

We follow six intentional PBIS-aligned practices to ensure consistency and community across our classrooms:

1. Define clear, values-based behavior expectations

- Our Five Core Values—Love, Joy, Ownership, Reflection, and Purpose—are the foundation for how we show up as a school community. These values are taught, modeled, and reinforced in every classroom.



2. Teach expectations explicitly and consistently

- Flight Foundation Lessons at the start of the year help students learn our norms and routines.
- Montessori Grace & Courtesy and Second Step SEL lessons teach skills like empathy, conflict resolution, and responsible decision-making.

3. Model behavior with intention and purpose

- Adults lead with love and consistency, demonstrating what our values look like in action.

4. Acknowledge and reinforce expected behavior

- LiveSchool Sky Miles are awarded when students demonstrate our core values.
- Weekly Sky Reports are sent home to families to highlight student progress. Students redeem Sky Miles for celebrations and incentives, both individual and classroom-based.

5. Respond to missteps with reteaching and reflection

- Our Classroom Consequence Ladder provides consistent and fair steps for redirection.
- Turbulence Points and Culture Referrals are used when reteaching or administrative support is needed.
- Restorative practices, when appropriate, like reflection sheets, peer mediation, and restorative lunch are used to repair harm and rebuild community.

6. Use LiveSchool and observation data to guide decisions

- We review behavior and culture data in grade-level calibration meetings and during parent conferences.
- If patterns emerge, students may be referred for additional support through our **MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports)** framework and a student support meeting including parents may be scheduled to collaboratively devise a plan of support.

Our school-wide culture systems are designed to reflect this framework while maintaining alignment with Montessori values like Grace and Courtesy, peace, and purposeful work.

Student Facing Core Values at Sankofa Montessori

Our five core values are the foundation of all behavior expectations and cultural systems:



1. **Love:** We care for ourselves, others, and our environment.
2. **Joy:** We celebrate learning and bring positive energy into our community.
3. **Reflection:** We pause to learn from our choices and consider how to grow.
4. **Ownership:** We take responsibility for our actions, learning, and space.
5. **Purpose:** We move with intention and contribute meaningfully to our community.

These values are introduced at the beginning of the year and integrated into daily life through class discussions, conflict resolution, and student-led decision-making. They are reinforced through aligned behaviors that are recognized through the Liveschool platform and on weekly Sky Reports.

Grace & Courtesy – Our Way of Being

In Montessori education, Grace & Courtesy is more than a set of lessons—it's a way of life. These lessons help children internalize respectful, calm, and mindful behaviors by modeling how to live in community with others.

At Sankofa, Grace & Courtesy guide how we:

- Greet each other respectfully
- Transition quietly and purposefully
- Care for classroom materials and shared spaces
- Apologize sincerely and repair harm
- Show empathy through everyday actions

Second Step SEL Curriculum

To complement Grace & Courtesy, we implement Second Step, a structured, evidence-based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum. It is taught explicitly during Community Morning Mission Meetings and helps students build the tools they need to manage emotions, navigate conflict, and grow socially.

Second Step lessons focus on:

- Recognizing and regulating emotions
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Practicing active listening and communication
- Solving problems peacefully
- Making responsible decisions

Our Grace & Courtesy and Second Step lessons occur during our morning mission meetings and are age-appropriate, sequenced, and connected to real-world classroom experiences. They



equip students with the "why" and "how" behind our school - wide behavioral expectations for their buy-in which is an essential part of our culture framework.

PBIS in Action at Sankofa

We bring our culture model to life through a structured system of expectations, supports, and feedback—anchored in our five core values. This system is powered by LiveSchool, the app used by both Flight Crew members and families to track and celebrate student growth in real time. Key components include:

- **Sky Miles:** Points earned for demonstrating Sankofa’s core values through positive behavior choices
- **Turbulence Points:** Documented behavior challenges that serve as non-punitive communication tools
- **Weekly Sky Reports:** Paycheck that reflects each student’s behavior and growth, shared through LiveSchool
- **Peace Table & Peer Mediation:** Tools for self-regulation, emotional processing, and conflict resolution
- **Core Value Celebrations:** School-wide and classroom recognitions aligned with Love, Joy, Ownership, Reflection, and Purpose

Our SEL approach reflects Sankofa’s broader mission to bridge traditional and Montessori methods.

- **Grace & Courtesy** fosters independence, self-respect, and social awareness.
- **Second Step** provides direct instruction, modeling, and guided practice.
- **PBIS** ensures consistency, positive reinforcement, and meaningful feedback.

Together, these systems support a culture where:

- Every student understands expectation
- Every adult models the values we teach
- Every child is supported in growing academically, socially, and emotionally

Restorative Practices



We use restorative practices to address conflict and misbehavior, when appropriate. This means students are guided to reflect on the impact of their actions, repair harm, and rebuild relationships. Strategies include:

- **Peace Table:** In each classroom, students use a peace flower to guide peer mediation conversations.
- **Restorative Lunch:** Guided conflict resolution sessions over lunch led by our Manager of Culture & School Climate
- **Student-Led Conferences:** Older students lead discussions to reflect on behavior and set goals.

LiveSchool at Sankofa

To support our Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model, we use LiveSchool, a digital platform that allows us to recognize positive behavior, build consistency across classrooms, and strengthen home-school communication.

In alignment with our Montessori values and flight-themed culture, we use the language of Sky Miles and Turbulence Points to help our passengers track their growth and reflect on areas for improvement.

Sky Miles: Celebrating Growth Aligned to Core Values

Sky Miles are earned when passengers demonstrate behaviors that reflect our school's five core values: Love, Joy, Ownership, Reflection, and Purpose.

Our students accumulate Sky Miles throughout the week, and these points contribute to:

- Eligibility for rewards (e.g., Sky Store, Sky Lounge)
- Positive reinforcement of habits of mind and heart
- A sense of ownership over their conduct and contributions

Turbulence Points: Communicating Growth Areas with Families

While we remain focused on positive reinforcement, Turbulence Points are entered when a student engages in behavior that does not align with our community expectations. These entries are not punitive—they are used to communicate with families about specific behaviors a child is still working on.

Turbulence Points:

- Are visible to staff and families but do not subtract from the student's Sky Miles balance
- Help teachers and caregivers track patterns and identify opportunities for reteaching
- Promote transparency and partnership in supporting a child's development



- Align with Montessori principles of reflection, redirection, and respectful accountability

Weekly Sky Miles Reports: Ownership Through Reflection

Each Monday, passengers will receive their Sky Miles Reports —a personalized summary of the positive choices they’ve made throughout the last week. This statement includes:

- Total Sky Miles earned
- Any Turbulence Points
- Optional comments or reflections from members of our staff

Sky Reports are opportunities for:

- Students to reflect on their week and set goals
- Families to stay informed and celebrate successes
- Teachers to initiate positive conversations about behavior and growth

The Sky Miles Reports serves as both a celebration and a tool for reflection. It encourages students to take ownership of their behavior, recognize growth, and set goals for the upcoming week. Families will also be able to view the statement as part of our ongoing effort to partner with caregivers and ensure transparency.

Weekly Individual Celebrations:

- **Sky Store Rewards:** Passengers who consistently demonstrate our core values earn access to flight-tiered rewards based on their Sky Miles balance each week during their weekly trips to their classroom Sky Store.
- **Tuesday Jeans Day:** If a student earns **\$60 or more** on their received weekly Sky Report that is sent home on Mondays in Orange folders, they qualify to participate in Jeans Day on the next Tuesday.
 - Jeans must meet uniform guidelines (no rips, tears, designs, or embellishments).
 - Students who wear jeans but did not earn the incentive will receive a uniform infraction.

Weekly Classwide Celebrations

Each classroom community can also earn collective Skymiles to unlock community-based incentives. These milestones are designed to foster teamwork, responsibility, and classroom culture, reflecting Montessori’s emphasis on community-building and collaborative responsibility.



Celebrations at Sankofa: Lifting Off with Joy

At Sankofa, we believe in proactive support, positive reinforcement, and intentional celebration. Our school culture systems are designed to help students reflect, grow, and shine—both individually and as a community. Below is an overview of the key structures and celebrations that help us live out our core values of Joy.

Celebration Name	Who It's For	How Students Earn It	When It Happens
Community Shout-Outs	Individual students or classrooms	Recognized by teachers or peers for positive actions	During Morning Mission (Daily)
Sky Store	Identified students	Earning paycheck totals over a specified threshold	Fridays
Jetsetter Award	1 student per Classroom Community	Top paycheck earner for the week	Weekly
Takeoff Celebration	Whole School	Open to all students	Every Friday
Classroom Celebrations	Classroom Communities	Class earns a collective LiveSchool point goal	As earned based on Sky Miles collected)
Sky Lounge	Top individual earners (K-6)	Top 50% of Sky Miles earned per classroom community	Monthly
Golden Jetsetter Award	1 student per Classroom Community	Consistently demonstrates all 5 Core Values and top paycheck earner for the month	Monthly

The Peace Table & Peace Flower



At Sankofa, we prioritize emotional regulation, reflection, and respectful conflict resolution. Each classroom must have a Peace Table—a staple in the Montessori learning environments—designed as a calm, intentional space where passengers can independently practice self-regulation, mindfulness, or resolve minor conflicts.

As part of each Peace Table we include a Peace Flower. The Peace Flower is a physical symbol passed back and forth by two students engaged in conflict resolution. When a child is holding the Peace Flower, it is their turn to speak; when they pass it, they listen. This practice teaches active listening, patience, and mutual respect.

The Peace Table helps build habits of peaceful communication and allows students to restore relationships using structured, peer-guided language. Adults may model or guide these conversations as needed, but the goal is to empower children to resolve small conflicts independently.

Purpose of the Peace Table

- Support for emotional regulation in moments of stress or dysregulation
- Encouragement of self-awareness and reflection
- A tool for conflict resolution through the Peace Table/Peace Flower
- Not a space for academic work or punishment

Classroom Jobs: Practicing Ownership and Community

Aligned with our core value of Ownership, Sankofa classrooms feature rotating weekly jobs that promote student leadership, contribution, and responsibility. These roles not only support daily classroom functions but also reflect Montessori's emphasis on care for the environment and self-discipline.

Here are examples of classroom jobs students can earn:

- **Cabin Crew Captain** – Leads group work and ensures students collaborate with care and efficiency.
- **Runway Guide** – Models safe and respectful transitions throughout the school day.
- **Gate Greeter** – Welcomes peers each morning with a smile and core value reminder.
- **Clean Cabin Coordinator** – Keeps the classroom tidy and organized for a peaceful learning environment.
- **Control Tower Assistant** – Delivers messages and materials to staff respectfully and on time.



- **Sky Shop Attendant** – Manages class supplies and ensures materials are in top condition.
- **Peace Ambassador** – Helps resolve peer conflict and supports classmates during emotional challenges.
- **Flight Log Keeper** – Announces schedule changes and reminds the class of upcoming transitions.
- **Tech Co-Pilot** – Assists with technology setup and helps keep devices ready for use.

Family Partnerships

We believe families are essential partners in supporting school culture. You can support your child by:

- Talking about the five core values at home
- Reviewing your child's Weekly Sky Report
- Attending Morning Missions and school celebrations when possible
- Encouraging your child to share and reflect on Grace & Courtesy lessons

Together, we are building a culture of love, joy, and purpose — where every child is known, supported, and celebrated.

Discipline

We believe every child has an innate goodness that thrives when guided by consistent expectations and clear boundaries. Discipline at Sankofa Montessori is about teaching, not punishment. Our goal is to help students develop self-discipline, responsibility, and courtesy as they grow. Discipline is grounded in love and guided by logical, natural consequences.

General Principles

Discipline teaches students to behave in ways that align with our core values and our mission of fostering independence and living a life of purpose. Our approach includes:

- **School-wide Expectations** rooted in our core values of Love, Joy, Purpose, Ownership, and Reflection
- **Proactive Support Strategies**, including social-emotional learning, Montessori practices, and relationship-building
- **Responsive Interventions**, such as restorative conversations, logical consequences, community repairs, and individualized support plans when needed
- **Partnership with Families**, ensuring consistent communication and collaboration



We also prioritize:

- Effective, engaging instruction that bridges standards-based learning with Montessori practices.
- Clear routines and structures that support a positive, consistent learning environment.
- Positive relationships between staff, students, and families to build a strong, inclusive community.

Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to live out these core values and follow the Code of Conduct:

- On school grounds
- In vehicles used for school purposes
- At school-sponsored events or activities
- At any time their behavior affects the safety, health, and well-being of the school community

Maintaining a Safe Learning Environment

At Sankofa Montessori, we prioritize the safety and well-being of every student and staff member. When necessary to maintain a safe learning environment, suspensions may be used as a consequence for serious infractions. Suspensions are reserved for behaviors that pose a risk to the safety of others or significantly disrupt the educational process.

Parent Partnership

We see families as essential partners in reinforcing our core values at home and at school. We expect families to work with us to support positive behavior and respond promptly when concerns arise. Parent partnership is an expectation that helps us build a strong, respectful, and effective learning environment for every child.

Additional Guidance

When needed, consequences will be fair, timely, and age-appropriate, matching the seriousness of the behavior. We use restorative practices whenever possible to help students learn from mistakes and repair harm.

School administrators may take action if a student's behavior disrupts learning or threatens safety, including off-campus incidents that impact the school community (OCGA 20-2-751.5).



Note: If a parent, guardian, or adult affiliated with a student repeatedly engages in unsafe or disruptive behavior during school events or processes, the student may be at risk of automatic withdrawal from Sankofa Montessori.

Progressive Discipline

At Sankofa Montessori, our discipline policy aligns with our core values—Love, Joy, Reflection, Purpose, and Ownership—and supports our mission of fostering independence and helping every child learn to live a life of purpose. When a student’s choices conflict with these values and cannot be resolved within the classroom, we implement a progressive discipline process. This ensures consistency, fairness, and learning opportunities while maintaining a safe, positive, and respectful environment.

The 3 D’s (Aligned with Our Core Values)

- **Dangerous:** Behaviors that threaten the physical or emotional safety of others or oneself (e.g., intentional physical aggression, throwing dangerous objects). These actions undermine Love and Joy, which create a safe and positive community.
- **Destructive:** Damaging or destroying school property or personal belongings. These behaviors conflict with Ownership and Purpose, which emphasize responsibility and care for shared spaces.
- **Demeaning:** Harassment, bullying, or repeated verbal threats that target individuals or groups; this includes behavior that invades the privacy of others or is verbally abusive. These actions contradict Love and Reflection, which guide us to build respect, empathy, and personal growth.

Examples of Serious Behaviors

- Intentional physical aggression toward another person
- Possession of weapons or dangerous objects
- Bullying or harassment (when repeated and targeted)
- Inappropriate or unwanted physical contact
- Invasion of privacy (e.g., taking photos/videos without permission)
- Serious threats of aggression or harm
- Repeated disruptions of the classroom or school-wide learning environment
- Running out of the school building without permission



Rationale for Repeated Disruptions

Repeated disruptions of the classroom or school-wide learning environment significantly interfere with the learning of others and undermine the safe, productive, and respectful environment we are committed to building. When such disruptions persist despite interventions, they are considered a serious breach of our core values—especially Ownership (responsibility for one’s actions) and Purpose (acting with intention). These behaviors are categorized as Level 3 offenses to emphasize the importance of maintaining a learning environment where every student can thrive.

Progressive Discipline Levels

Behavior at Sankofa is classified into three levels:

- **Level 1 (Minor Offenses):** Minor misbehaviors, such as a lapse in Reflection or Ownership, like off-task behavior or minor classroom disruptions. These are generally addressed with teacher intervention, redirection, and opportunities to reflect and repair.
- **Level 2 (Moderate Offenses):** More serious acts that challenge Joy, Love, and Ownership, such as repeated defiance, moderate disruption, or disrespectful language that disrupts learning. Consequences may include a referral to the Culture Team for restorative interventions and/or an in school or out of school suspension.
- **Level 3 (Serious Offenses):** Dangerous, destructive, or demeaning acts that compromise Love, Joy, Reflection, Purpose, and Ownership by creating a hostile or unsafe environment. These behaviors include intentional physical aggression, possession of weapons, repeated bullying or harassment, repeated disruptions of the classroom or school-wide learning environment, invasion of privacy, inappropriate or unwanted touch, or other acts that seriously endanger the safety or emotional well-being of others. Consequences may include in- or out-of-school suspension, referral to the Culture Team, and/or a disciplinary hearing.

Referral to the Culture Team

At Sankofa Montessori, the Culture Team is composed of the Manager of Student Culture & Student Climate, Culture Associate, and the school’s leadership team. When a student demonstrates repeated tier 2 or a tier 3 behavior, a referral to the Culture Team is made to partner with families, apply restorative practices, and provide guidance that aligns with our core values and code of conduct. The Culture Team ensures that students are supported and that the learning environment remains safe, inclusive, and productive.



Important Note

- **Suicidal threats or ideation:** Any expression of self-harm is treated as a mental health concern, not a discipline matter. Immediate safety protocols and support services are activated.
- **Title IX Violations:** Behaviors implicating Title IX regulations are managed according to our Title IX policy.

At Sankofa Montessori, discipline is about teaching—not punishment. Our goal is to help every child grow in independence, responsibility, and respect for others while upholding our core values and maintaining a safe and positive learning environment.

Code of Conduct & Discipline Responses Matrix

At Sankofa Montessori, student behavior is addressed through a restorative, developmentally appropriate lens that prioritizes learning, accountability, and the development of self-regulation skills. We use our Student Code of Conduct to guide our responses to behavior based on the context, frequency, and severity of incidents. Our responses to behaviors not aligned to our core values are outlined in our [Code of Conduct](#).

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:

Sarah Harvey
Executive Director
sharvey@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 except to the extent the Act and 99.31 authorize 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 under 99.63 and 99.64 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 Recruitment and Family Resources 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 Recruitment and Family Resources 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 Recruitment and Family Resources 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 Recruitment and Family Resources 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 Recruitment and Family Resources agree to another timeline, the Manager of Recruitment and Family Resources 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 Recruitment and Family Resources 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 Recruitment and Family Resources written recommendation, submit the complaint to the Executive Director to review the determinations of the Manager of Recruitment and Family Resources under this policy. The Executive Director will review the determination of the Manager of Recruitment and Family Resources 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 Recruitment and Family Resources and/or Executive Director under this policy. The Sankofa Montessori Governing Board will review the determination of the Manager of Recruitment and Family Resources /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 Recruitment and Family Resources 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 Recruitment and Family Resources 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 2026-2027 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 2026-2027 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 2026 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 manager of school culture and climate will serve as our school family engagement coordinator (FEC) and 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 2026-2027 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 2027

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 School/ District Meeting ~ March 2027

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. 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, the manager of culture and school climate 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 Infinite Campus and via text through infinite campus

- **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	● Students will not post contact information (e.g., address, phone number) about him- or herself or any other person. ● 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.
Illegal Activities (see Student Code of Conduct for consequences)	● 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. ● Students will not deliberately attempt to disrupt the computer system or destroy data by spreading computer viruses or by any other means. ● Students will not use Sankofa Montessori's system to engage in any other disruptive or illegal act, such as cyberbullying, arranging for a drug sale or the purchase of alcohol, engaging in criminal gang activity, threatening the safety of a person, etc. ○ 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 StopBullying.gov.
System Security	• 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. • Students will immediately notify a teacher or the system administrator if they have identified a possible security problem. • Students will avoid the inadvertent spread of computer viruses by following virus protection procedures when downloading software.
Inappropriate Language (see Student Code of Conduct for consequences)	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.
Respect for Privacy	• Students will not repost a message that was sent to them privately without permission of the person who sent the message. • Students will not post private information about themselves or another person.
Respecting Resource Limits	• Students will use the system only for educational and career development activities and limited, high-quality, self-discovery activities. • Students will not engage in “spamming” (that is, sending an unnecessary message to a large number of people).



Plagiarism and Copyright Infringement (see Student Code of Conduct for consequences)	● 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. ● 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.
Inappropriate Access to Material (see Student Code of Conduct for consequences)	● 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. ● 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. ● 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.
Students' Rights	● Free Speech. Students' right to free speech, as set forth in the school disciplinary code, applies also to their communication on 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. ● 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. • 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 due process section). Additional restrictions may be placed on his or her use of their Internet account.
Other Acknowledgments	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.

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](#)
- [Sankofa Montessori's detailed acceptable use policy](#)



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 3rd grade will not be suspended for more than 5 consecutive or cumulative school days in a school year without first receiving a multi-tiered system of support, such as RTI, unless the student possessed a weapon or dangerous instrument, possessed illegal drugs, or the student's behavior endangers the physical safety of other students or school personnel.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

1. Tribunal Training Provider – one who has expertise and/or knowledge of:
 - a. All student disciplinary provisions in Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
 - b. due process requirements under federal and state law,
 - c. applicable rules of evidence,
 - d. leading federal and state judicial and administrative decisions, and
 - e. applicable ethical standards and the role of the hearing officer and panel member as an independent, neutral arbiter.
2. Qualified Student Discipline Hearing Officer or Disciplinary Tribunal or Panel Member – an individual selected by the local school system who is:
 - a. in good standing with the State Bar of Georgia, or
 - b. has experience as a teacher, counselor, or administrator in a public school system, or
 - c. is actively serving as a hearing officer under an existing contract/agreement with a Georgia school system provided that such individual completes the tribunal training course within 6 months of July 1, 2016.

2. Appeal of Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion

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

The request for appeal shall be presented at the next regular meeting of the Board of Directors following receipt of the notice of appeal, at which time the Board of Directors shall review the written request for appeal. The appeal may



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

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

C. Miscellaneous Provisions

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

D. Definition Of Terms

- a. "Behavior Referral Report" is a specific written record of the student's act of misconduct. It documents the date, nature of the offense, and the disciplinary action taken by the teacher and/or school administration.
- b. "Attendance Corrective Action Plan (A-CAP)" is a written document that identifies the causes for excessive tardies and/or absences and what steps will be taken to minimize the number of occurrences. It is signed by the parents, student, and staff member.
- c. "Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP)" is a written document that identifies the cause of repeated misconduct and what steps will be taken in order to help a student overcome inappropriate behavior. It is signed by the parents, student, and staff member.



- d. "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.

Student Name(s)

Parent or Guardian Name

Parent or Guardian Signature

Date