

# Breakthrough

MONTESSORI



## Family Handbook

[www.breakthroughmontessori.org](http://www.breakthroughmontessori.org)

6923 Willow St. NW . (202) 864-1979

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# **WELCOME TO BREAKTHROUGH!**

Dear family,

Welcome to Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School! On behalf of our faculty and staff, we are delighted you are here.

At Breakthrough, our classrooms inspire children to explore. We respect the unique learning style of each student, and hundreds of materials invite hands-on learning. We look forward to a journey of discovery and growth with your family.

We hope this family handbook provides helpful information to you throughout your time at Breakthrough. If you have questions, please ask. If you have suggestions, we welcome them.

Thank you for joining our school community.

Sincerely,

Emily Hedin  
Executive Director

# ABOUT BREAKTHROUGH MONTESSORI

## Mission

The mission of Breakthrough Montessori is to enable students to develop within themselves the power to shape their lives and the world around them.

## Statement of Values

*“The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind.”*

— Maria Montessori

At Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School, we believe in the unbounded potential of all children. Students of all races, classes, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, and backgrounds deserve a personalized education that enables them to shape their world and the world around them.

- *We support all children.* We believe every child is capable of self-construction and deserving of profound respect.
- *We support all families.* We serve not just the whole child, but the whole family. We welcome all families and partner with them to create a robust network of support. We listen to -- and honor -- each person's narrative. We respect differences of beliefs and require behavior that protects all children, families, and staff members.
- *We strive for equity.* We seek to provide public Montessori education to a greater number of families, and we actively work to close the opportunity gap. In our pursuit of equity, we strive to meet the needs of children, families, and staff members by challenging systemic oppression and marginalization.

- *We believe in education for peace.* Our vision of education is deeply linked to a vision of social reform driven by the power inherent in children. We teach all children to embrace their identity while celebrating and respecting the identities of others. By following children, attending to their needs, respecting their interests, and guiding their growth, we come to see the possibilities of a better world.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### School address & phone number

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School  
6923 Willow St. NW  
Washington, DC 20012

(202) 864-1979

[info@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:info@breakthroughmontessori.org)

### Board of Trustees

Breakthrough Montessori is governed by a Board of Trustees. Some of their specific responsibilities include: evaluating the executive director, overseeing school finance, approving the budget, tracking school performance, and representing Breakthrough in front of the Public Charter School Board. Two of the board positions are reserved for parents/guardians of current Breakthrough Montessori students. You can see a roster of current trustees on our website at [www.breakthroughmontessori.org/boardgovernance](http://www.breakthroughmontessori.org/boardgovernance). You can contact the Board of Trustees by e-mailing [board@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:board@breakthroughmontessori.org).

The Breakthrough Montessori Board of Trustees meets at least six times per year. All meetings of the Board of Trustees are Open Meetings, which means members of the public (including Breakthrough staff, parents, guardians and other family members) are welcome to attend. Meetings will be displayed on the school's calendar, as well as on the website at [www.breakthroughmontessori.org/boardgovernance](http://www.breakthroughmontessori.org/boardgovernance).

## Calendar and Schedule

### *School Year Calendar*

The complete school year calendar, including family events and celebrations, can be found on our website at [www.breakthroughmontessori.org/calendar](http://www.breakthroughmontessori.org/calendar). We encourage you to sync it with your own calendar by clicking the + sign in the bottom right corner.

### *Daily Schedule (Tuesday through Friday)*

7:30 – 8:15 am	Before care Breakfast is served from 7:30 to 8:15 am  Please note that all students participating in before care <u>must arrive by 8am</u> . From 8-8:15am, the school doors are closed as our team prepares for arrivals. Students arriving after 8am must wait until 8:15am to enter the school.
8:15 am	Classrooms open Children in before care transition into their classrooms. Children arriving at school go straight to their classrooms.
8:15 – 11:30 am	Morning work period

11:30 – 1:15 pm	Outside time and lunch in classroom Primary Classrooms (grades PK3-K) Lunch from 11:30am-12:15pm Recess from 12:15-1:15pm Elementary Classrooms (grades 1-6) Recess from 11:30am-12:30pm Lunch from 12:30-1:15pm
1:15 – 3:15 pm	Afternoon work period and napping for younger children
3:15 – 3:30 pm	Dismissal
3:30 pm	Transition to after care activities
3:30 - 6:00 pm	After care

## ***Early Release Schedule (Monday)***

Every Monday, the instructional day at Breakthrough Montessori ends at 1:15pm. School staff transition to professional development, collaborative work time, and planning time. Students will transition to one of the following:

- Dismissal to their families or other caregivers
- Nap at Breakthrough (for students who are in PK3)
- Dismissal to Intersession program leaders

7:30 – 8:15 am	Before care and breakfast
8:15 – 8:30 am	Morning arrivals
8:15 – 11:30 am	Morning Work Cycle
11:30 – 1:00 pm	Lunch and Outside Time



1:00 – 1:15 pm	PK3 students transition to nap
1:15 pm	Dismissal to families or Intersession Program Leaders  Intersession Program leaders walk students to program location OR students board buses to program location
1:15 – 3:15 pm	Intersession programming
3:15 – 3:30 pm	End of Intersession programming  Families not participating in aftercare must pick their students up from the program partner's location at this time.  Programs that offer aftercare transition to the extended day

## Arrival and Dismissal

### *Arrival*

The school opens for before care and breakfast at 7:30 am. If your child participates in before care, please park your car in a legal parking spot and accompany your child to the front door of the school. There, you can sign in, and your child can proceed to before care.

Families may drop children off for before care between 7:30 and 8:00 am. Families arriving after 8:00 am must wait until arrival begins at 8:15 am to enter the building. Students who are waiting outside should be accompanied by an adult, if younger than 9 years old. Breakthrough is not liable for any accidents that occur before 8:15am while students are waiting outside.

The school opens for arrivals at 8:15 am. Breakthrough conducts car line drop off from 8:15 to 8:30 am. If participating in car line, please follow these steps:

- Note: students participating in car line must exit on the sidewalk after a member of the Breakthrough staff opens the car door. If your child uses a car seat and requires assistance unbuckling, please ensure the car seat is installed behind the front passenger seat. If you have multiple children, please ensure your youngest child sits closest to the sidewalk.
- Upon arrival at Breakthrough, wait in the car line for an administrator to usher you into the drop-off lane.
- Pull as far up in the drop-off lane as possible.
- Instruct your child to collect the items they will bring to school (e.g., backpacks, lunches, coats, and gloves) and unbuckle their seatbelt.
- An administrator will open your back passenger car door from the Willow Street sidewalk and assist your child(ren) in exiting the car. Administrators can assist your child with coats and backpacks if needed. Administrators will then ensure your child safely enters the school.
- As soon as your child has exited the car, please pull out of the drop-off lane and drive straight on Willow towards the intersection with Carroll Avenue. Do not attempt a U-turn on Willow Street.
- Do not park and exit your car while in the drop-off lane.

If you wish to accompany your student to the front door, you must find a legal parking space. There is 2-hour parking on Willow, Aspen, and Laurel. You may not park in the drop-off lane, in front of a neighbor's driveway, or in a reserved parking spot. Members of our staff will greet children at the door of the school. Parents/guardians say goodbye to their children at the front door.

Parents/guardians do not accompany children to the classrooms.

## ***Transitioning from Home to School***

Separation from parents/guardians can be difficult for young children, especially at the beginning. We have found the process to run most smoothly when drop-off is swift, confident, and focused on school. You can help your child separate, and avoid a struggle during arrival, by leaving favorite toys at home, reassuring your child that they will have a good day, and refraining

from lingering.

## ***Half-Day Dismissal (11:30 am)***

If you would like your PK3 or PK4 child to have a half-day schedule, you may pick them up at 11:30 am each day. Please park in a legal parking spot and come to the front desk.

## ***Regular dismissal (3:15-3:30 pm)***

Breakthrough dismisses all students at 3:15pm. Elementary students wait to be dismissed from their classrooms while primary classes gather in a designated dismissal location on the first floor.

If you participate in car line pick-up:

- Please place the car line sign provided by Breakthrough in your windshield. This will help us quickly dismiss students.
- Upon arrival at Breakthrough, wait in the car line for a member of the Breakthrough staff to usher you into the pick-up lane.
- Pull as far up in the pick-up lane as possible.
- Using the car line sign in your windshield, administrators will inform your child's guide that you are present for pick-up. If you do not have the sign in your windshield, you may have to wait longer for your child to be dismissed.
- All children will be dismissed to the car line through the front door of the school. Administrators will accompany children to the car.
- As soon as your child is buckled in the car, please pull out of the pick-up lane and drive straight on Willow towards the intersection with Carroll Avenue. Do not attempt a U-turn on Willow Street.
- Do not park and exit your car while in the pick-up lane.

If you do not participate in car line pick-up (if you walk, use public transportation, or prefer to park elsewhere):

- Please walk to the Breakthrough playground alongside the building. Parents may not walk up to the front entrance, walker families must pick up from the playground.

- An administrator will be present in the playground. The administrator will inform your child's guide that you are present for pick-up. Your child will be dismissed from the side door that leads into the playground.
- As soon as your child is dismissed, please move away from the playground space to avoid congestion on the sidewalk.

## ***After Care Dismissal (3:30 – 6:00 pm)***

Students are officially enrolled in aftercare by 4:00pm. Students may be picked up from after care activities by parents and guardians. Please sign your child out at the front desk using the iPad, and your child will proceed to the front desk for dismissal.

Aftercare is available for all members of our community. Students and families who participate in after care must abide by the Community Values policy (found within this handbook). Families that are unable to uphold our Community Values may be removed from the before/after care program.

## ***Early Release/Intersession Dismissal (1:15 – 1:30 pm, every Monday)***

Every Monday, the instructional day at Breakthrough Montessori ends at 1:15pm. School staff transition to professional development, collaborative work time, and planning time. Students will transition to one of the following:

- Dismissal to their families or other caregivers
- Nap at Breakthrough (for students who are in PK3)
- Dismissal to Intersession program leaders

On Monday afternoons, dismissal protocol is as follows:

- Breakthrough staff members accompany PK3 children to the multi-purpose room for nap.
- Primary classes gather in their assigned dismissal location (same as Tuesday through Friday).

- Elementary classes gather in their classrooms (Same as Tuesday through Friday)
- From 1:15 - 1:30pm, Breakthrough dismisses students by Intersession program. Faculty accompany groups of students to meet their Intersession program leader. Intersession program leaders ensure they have an accurate roster of students participating for that day.
- Students who are not participating in Intersession are accompanied to the playground. Families may pick their students up from the playground.
- Please note there is no car line pick-up on Monday afternoons. All families must park elsewhere and walk to the playground to greet their student.

## Snack, Lunch, Recess, Naptime

### *Snack*

Students are offered snack each morning in the classroom. Your guide will circulate a sign-up sheet where we invite families to volunteer to provide snack for one week during the school year. We recommend string cheese, clementines, pretzels, or crackers (please select options with low salt and low sugar). Snacks do not need to be individually packaged. You can, for example, purchase a large carton of goldfish crackers. Please note that Breakthrough is a nut-free environment, and we therefore request that you do not send any snacks containing peanuts or nuts. This includes all foods prepared with peanut oil as well as peanut butter!

Breakthrough has a supply of classroom snack options as well, in the event that families are unable to provide snack for the classroom.

### *Lunch*

Families are welcome to purchase school lunches or pack lunches each day for their children.

If you choose to purchase school lunches, you can do so at the beginning of the month via EZ Child Track. Breakthrough offers standard and vegetarian lunches each day. The cost of each lunch is

\$3.30. You can review the menu on our website. Certain dietary restrictions such as dairy-free can be accommodated.

If you choose to send lunch with your child, please note that Breakthrough is a nut-free environment, and we therefore request that you do not send any foods containing peanuts or nuts in your child's lunch. This includes all foods prepared with peanut oil as well as peanut butter! Also please note that Breakthrough cannot refrigerate or reheat student lunches from home. If you send food from home, please ensure it can be safely stored in your child's cubby at room temperature.

Breakthrough Montessori offers free and reduced-price meals and free milk for children who qualify. All school- aged children in income-eligible households can receive school meal benefits regardless of a child's immigration status.

## **Recess**

Primary children have recess daily from 12:15 - 1:15 pm. Elementary children have recess daily from 11:30 am - 12:30 pm. Primary students have recess on the Breakthrough playground or the Takoma Playground. Elementary students have recess on the Takoma Playground.

Primary children have outside recess as long as the temperature is 31 degrees or higher. Elementary children may have recess when the temperature dips below 31, provided it is still safe to do so. If the temperature dips below 31, elementary children may have a shorter recess period. Children do not go outside when it is raining. Additionally, children do not go outside when the Mayor has issued a red, purple, or maroon air quality alert for the District of Columbia.

To maximize the amount of time outside, we ask families to leave multiple pairs of hats, gloves, and mittens at school. We also encourage families to send children to school with appropriate jackets and footwear for the season.

## ***Naptime***

We invite PK3 children to nap or rest each day between 1:00 to 2:45 pm. Please leave a crib sheet and light blanket in your child's cubby for naptime. PK4) children can nap or rest in the classrooms, if their development needs still necessitate a nap. Naptime is a quiet time at Breakthrough, and interrupting the sleep schedule by waking children to leave can produce significant disruption for all the children in the napping group. For this reason, we ask that you refrain from picking up your child during naptime unless it is an emergency.

## **Extended Day Programming**

### ***Before Care (7:30-8:15 am)***

Families may drop their student off for before care between 7:30 and 8:00 am. The before care program is led by Breakthrough staff, in collaboration with staff from our partner organization. When children arrive, they go to the multi-purpose room. Breakfast is served from 7:30 to 8:00 am. Starting at 8:15 am, children transition to their regular classrooms.

### ***After Care (3:30-6:00 pm)***

The after care program is led by our afternoon classroom assistants. Following dismissal at 3:30, the afternoon assistants become the after care classroom leads and provide enrichment activities for students. Children who stay for after care also spend time outside when weather and daylight hours allow.

Expectations for Student Behavior and Support Systems for Students

Breakthrough's Discipline Policy (found in the Family Handbook) is in effect during before care, aftercare, and school transportation. Additionally, families should note that the school's aftercare

program has a different structure, staffing model, and support structures when compared to the instructional day. Students who receive accommodations during the school day (such as a dedicated aide, frequent movement breaks, or one-on-one support) may not have access to these same supports during the aftercare program. Thus, supporting students with specific needs during aftercare merits special consideration.

- If a student exhibits behavior that is dangerous, destructive or demeaning, aftercare staff will call parents to inform them of what happened. Parents will need to come to the school immediately to meet with aftercare staff and their student. At this meeting, families and staff will discuss the behavior and strategies to support the student in making positive decisions while in aftercare. These strategies may include special considerations during transition times (e.g. when going out for recess), separation from peers with whom the conflict arose, identification of particular activities/creation of a schedule for the student, etc.
- If the strategies identified are ineffective and there is a second instance of dangerous, destructive or demeaning behavior, aftercare staff will call parents to inform them what happened. Once again, the parent will need to come to the school immediately to meet with aftercare staff and their student. In this case, the school may dismiss the student from aftercare for up to a week to allow the aftercare staff, school staff, and family time to develop an action plan to support the student. In the event that a student is dismissed from aftercare, this time must be used by the school and the family to determine what resources are available to better support the student during aftercare.
- Once an action plan is in place (and shared in writing with the family), the student may return to aftercare. If the action plan is unsuccessful and there is a third instance of such behavior, the school may conclude that the aftercare program is not suited to support the student's needs. In this case, the student may be removed from the program for the rest of the year, and the school will work with the family to determine another aftercare school provider that can meet the child's needs.
- If a student engages in serious harm to other students (such as physical violence), the consequences may also affect the student's school day, as we have the same expectations for students and adults during aftercare as we do during the school day.



## *Aftercare Pickup and Payment Policies*

For the 2023-24 school year, before care is \$5/day and after care is \$15/day. Breakthrough offers a 10% sibling discount as well as a reduced rate for students who qualify for free and reduced price meals (FARM). No student will be turned away due to inability to pay. If cost is a barrier to your family, please reach out to Emily Hedin ([emily.hedin@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:emily.hedin@breakthroughmontessori.org)). Families can sign up and pay for before and after care through the EZ Child Track portal.

Please note that families must pick up their children by 6:00 pm. After 6:00 pm, families will be charged a \$50 late fee for pick-up's between 6:01-6:05, an additional \$50 for pick-up's between 6:06-6:10pm, and an additional \$1/minute following 6:10pm from 1-5min \$50, 6-10 min \$50 every min after that will be \$1/minute (barring emergency circumstances).

If students are not picked up by 6:15pm and Breakthrough cannot reach a parent/guardian, approved adult, or emergency contact, the School will report the circumstances to Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).

Aftercare is available for all members of our community. Students and families who participate in after care must abide by the Community Values policy (found within this handbook). Families that are unable to uphold our Community Values may be removed from the before/after care.

Moreover, families with an outstanding balance exceeding \$100 will not be eligible to participate in before or after care until a plan is in place to clear the balance.

## **Busing**

Breakthrough provides a busing service to and from the Petworth neighborhood. All students, ages PK3 through 6th grade, are welcome to ride the bus.

As families consider transportation, we would also like to remind you that all students in grades K and above can receive a Kids Ride Free Metrocard that allows them to ride all Metro trains and buses free of charge.

Students can take the bus one-way (either to or from school) or round-trip. Families will sign up and pay on a monthly basis. The monthly cost depends on the number of school days in the month.

Breakthrough offers a 10% sibling discount as well as a reduced rate for students who qualify for free and reduced price meals (FARM). No student will be turned away from the bus due to inability to pay. If cost is a barrier to your family, please reach out to Emily Hedin ([emily.hedin@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:emily.hedin@breakthroughmontessori.org)).

Ridership	Daily Fee
One-way, full fare	\$5.40
One-way, sibling discount	\$4.86
One-way, FARM eligible	\$1
Round-trip, full fare	\$10.80
Round-trip, sibling discount	\$9.72
Round-trip, FARM eligible	\$2

If your child qualifies for transportation through OSSE, they will still have access to their designated bus (Breakthrough's bus does not replace OSSE transportation services).

Families can sign up and pay for the bus through the EZ Child Track portal.

Families must ensure that an approved adult is present at the bus stop in the afternoon to meet their student. We offer a 10 minute grace period for families to pick up their students. After 10 minutes, we will apply a late fee to your account. Families that are routinely late to pick up their students may become ineligible for bus services.

# Clothing Guidelines

BMPCS does not require a uniform. However, we do provide the following guidelines for appropriate dress:

- Please choose clothing that allows freedom of movement, comfort, and independence.
- We emphasize care of clothing and use aprons, but spills can happen, so “special” clothing should be avoided.
- If children wear skirts or dresses, shorts should be worn underneath.
- For primary students, indoor shoes or slippers are worn in the classroom. Soft soled, ballet-type slippers are easiest for function. You can see examples at Soft Star Shoes ([www.softstarshoes.com](http://www.softstarshoes.com)) or Robeez ([www.robееz.com](http://www.robееz.com)).
- **Please clearly label all clothing with your child’s first name and last initial** (jackets, gloves, hats, boots, shirts, pants, socks, undergarments) and personal items with your child’s name using a permanent marker. Children should have a complete change of weather- appropriate clothing at all times. If your child is developing bathroom independence, several spare sets of clothing including underpants and socks are necessary. Should an item become misplaced, please check with the front desk.
- Please note Breakthrough will put all misplaced clothing or items in the lost and found. However, Breakthrough is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

# PREPARING FOR THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

## Welcoming New Families and Children to Breakthrough

If this is your first year at Breakthrough, we are so excited you have joined us! Here is a list of steps we take to welcome you and your child into our school.

### July

- New students will learn their classroom assignments
- We host playdates and new family orientations to help you meet other families and learn more about the school

### August

- Faculty send welcome letters to new students.
- We invite new students to come for a welcome visit. During this time, children meet one-on-one with their teacher, see their classroom, and learn how to use some of the classroom materials so they feel confident and ready to start their first day.
- Back to School Night. This is a great opportunity for parents and guardians to get to know their child's teacher better! Make sure you mark your calendar for this special event.

# Back to School Checklist

For both new and returning families, here is a check-list to review every August to make sure you and your children are ready for the new year:

- Complete and submit your child's medical paperwork. This includes:
  - DC Universal Health Certificate
  - Immunization Records
  - DC Oral Health Certificate
  - Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment
  - Authorization for Medication Administration (if your child will use any type of medication, including sunscreen, during the school day).
  - If necessary, your child's Plan of Action for Anaphylaxis or Asthma
- Make sure the school has all necessary medication (EpiPen, inhaler, sunscreen, etc.) on or before the first day of school
- If your child is in primary, make sure they have indoor shoes for the classroom. Any soft-soled shoe works (e.g. ballet shoes, slippers, etc.) You can see examples at Soft Star Shoes (<http://www.softstarshoes.com/>) or Robeez (<http://www.robееz.com/country.asp>).
- Send a labeled hat and water bottle for your child to use during recess.
- Send at least one change of season-appropriate clothing to stay at the school. If your child is working towards bathroom independence, please send multiple sets of underwear, pants and socks (please label every item).
- If your child is napping, please send a crib sheet and light blanket (please label every item).

# OUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

## Montessori 101

A Montessori education is based on human development. It develops the whole child so that they can become the best version of themselves, engaging meaningfully and responding thoughtfully throughout their lives. The experiences a child has in a Montessori environment develops independent thinking, self-sufficiency and creative problem solving; all skills that will provide them with a wealth of tools to navigate the world ahead. At Breakthrough Montessori, we provide a learning experience that can serve the human potential by investing in trained faculty, prepared environments, self-guided work, authentic materials, multi-age classrooms and a whole child approach.

### *Faculty*

Every classroom lead is tasked with the responsibility to guide children through lessons toward mastery of concepts that will equip them with the skills necessary to navigate a world full of information. Each guide has a Montessori teaching credential. All supporting classroom faculty are trained by their guides and supported through professional development to meet the unique needs of the Montessori environment.

### *Prepared Environment*

One indicator of a Montessori classroom is a refined and aesthetically beautiful space, hinged on order and ease of navigation for the child. Our environments are carefully curated with child-sized furniture and beautiful materials, made to attract and serve the needs of the child. These materials encourage use and repetition and serve as the link between the child and their mastery of concepts. By doing these works, the children develop their intellect, executive functioning, and concentration.

The environment is maintained by the members of the classroom community, returning materials to their designated spaces after being used, neatening the space at the end of the day, preparing it to start each day anew.

## ***Self-Guided Work***

In a Montessori environment, children play an active role in their education, led by their inherent curiosity, and are encouraged to play an active role in their learning. Once guides introduce lessons, children select their own work to complete during our morning and afternoon work cycles. This is like a symphony of freedom and discipline.

Children engage in the freedom to choose their own work and spend as much time as they deem necessary to master it, with the understanding that they show discipline in choosing thoughtfully, using appropriately and interacting respectfully with others. As children move from early investigation and evolve into mastery, the student and teacher adjust the lesson, or the student assists fellow classmates on the same task. A well known quote from Maria Montessori is to “follow the child.” This environment allows just that. As children are choosing work based on their knowledge and interest, guides are able to support their learning in a way that is both interesting and fulfilling.

## ***Authentic Materials***

Authentic Montessori materials offer purposeful, hands-on learning experiences for the child. Each classroom contains a full complement of Montessori materials, which children use at will, based on the lessons they have received. The materials are beautiful, unique (found nowhere else), self-correcting and represent a wide array of ideas and concepts. Each material has a specific purpose and yet also links to others in the environment.

## ***Multi-Age Classrooms***

Children at our school are all meaningful members of the Breakthrough community, and benefit from the close interaction with peers of different ages that our Montessori classrooms provide. We ensure that established Montessori classrooms have an age span of three years (3-6), (6-9) and (9-12). A mixed-age environment encourages children to teach each other, as well as ask for support from their peers. This type of interaction fosters community, a sense of empathy, and collaboration amongst the group. Just as in society, we interact with people of varying ages, younger children learn alongside and with older children. Lessons are mastered and reiterated as children progress from learning to teaching.

## ***The Whole Child***

Breakthrough Montessori believes that each student is an individual with inherent potential, preferences, and learning styles. Every child learns in a different way. We look at the educational experience of each child as an opportunity to develop the whole child to become an engaged learner and thinker for life. In this environment, all children are respected for their independence and valued as members of our community.

## **Primary**

Each classroom has one lead Montessori teacher and two Montessori assistants.

The primary classroom is full of hands-on learning materials that inspire exploration in all areas of the curriculum. These materials are organized sequentially. Building upon one another, the materials move children from simple to complex concepts.

The Montessori primary curriculum is designed to foster core executive functions such as inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility, judgment, collaboration, and leadership.

In the primary classroom, students complete an integrated curriculum that includes:



- Language
- Math
- Geography
- Science
- Sensorial
- Practical Life
- Music and Art

## Elementary

### *Lower Elementary*

Our lower elementary classrooms serve children in first, second, and third grades (ages six through nine).

The Montessori elementary curriculum encourages children to explore their world and the interconnectivity of the universe. The curriculum interweaves academic disciplines so students learn to make connections across different fields, including:

- Mathematics (arithmetic and algebra)
- Geometry
- Language (phonics, spelling, grammar, sentence analysis, foreign language, creative and expository writing, and literature)
- History
- Geography
- Biology (natural sciences, physical sciences, and environmental sciences)
- Art (music, drama, and visual arts)

## Upper Elementary

Our upper elementary classrooms serve students in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

Students continue the elementary curriculum, which focuses on the complexity of the universe and the interdisciplinary nature of human society and civilization. As students transition to abstract thinking, they work less with Montessori materials and begin to demonstrate their learning through projects, research, and performances.

## Student Support and Special Education

At Breakthrough, we believe that all students, including students with disabilities and learning challenges, are capable of shaping their lives and the world around them.

We envision a school where:

- Students with and without disabilities or learning challenges are integrated into a cohesive and supportive learning environment.
- All faculty members implement best practices for supporting students with disabilities in the full recognition that these practices support *all* students.
- Educators working in student support (including Special Education) and general education build authentic, collaborative, and respectful partnerships.
- Families of students with disabilities or learning challenges are embraced as partners by the school.

To reach this vision, we begin with personalized and differentiated instruction for all students in our Montessori classroom environments. When students experience challenges, our multi-tiered support system - called Breakthrough Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) - uses observation, data, and a language of reverence to implement classroom-based support. We refer students to Special Education if and when we have exhausted all evidence-based interventions in Breakthrough's MTSS process. Students in Special Education remain as valued members of their classroom community,

and all Special Education services are geared towards scaffolding students so that they may access grade level content in their Montessori environment. Robust professional development and abundant collaborative planning time ensure all educators (Special Education and general education) are prepared to support students in a consistent, evidenced-based manner. Families of students with disabilities or learning challenges receive regular, transparent, data-driven information about their student, and their input is highly valued and incorporated into the student's plan.

Please see our website for Breakthrough's Child Find policy, which governs our process for referral, assessment, and eligibility for Special Education services. Any questions about Special Education can be referred to LeCheyna Sparrow, Special Education Coordinator LaCheyna Sparrow ([spedcoordinator@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:spedcoordinator@breakthroughmontessori.org)).

## Learning Goals

Our vision is for students to matriculate from our school with the ability to develop within themselves the power to shape their lives and the world around them. We believe that strong academic skills in all areas afford children the opportunity to seek knowledge and use that knowledge to make good decisions for their own lives and in society.

This document details the learning goals for what students should know and be able to do upon completing each level (primary, lower elementary, and upper elementary). We meet these learning goals through implementation of the Montessori curriculum.

For more information on Breakthrough's Learning Goals by Levels, please view them by visiting our website.

# Grading

At Breakthrough Montessori, students do not receive letter grades on their work, nor do they receive summative grades for each subject at the end of each term. In this section, we explain why Breakthrough does not follow the conventional approach to grades as well as what information families will receive to help understand and track their child's progress.

At Breakthrough, we focus on the process, rather than the product, and we emphasize the experience of developing new skills through enjoyment of work. A central goal is to protect each student's natural, internal motivation to learn and grow, while helping them gain skills to support their ever inquisitive nature. Imagine if we were to judge the efforts of a scientist who was working through many versions of a vaccine or an opera singer as they practiced scales and trained their voice. Subject to such judgment, these people might never bring us the groundbreaking vaccine or the aria. In order to become our best selves, we all need the gift of time, freedom from judgment, the ability to fail on our own, and encouragement to work toward our personal goals. By refraining from awarding grades, this is what we seek to offer students at Breakthrough.

As a parent/guardian of a Breakthrough student, you will receive meaningful assessments of your student's growth. Three times a year, we invite you to participate in conferences. During this time, your child's guide will share their progress, offering clear and honest information about all the skills your child is developing and their successes and struggles along the way. Twice a year, you will receive lengthy progress reports that indicate how your child is progressing towards the learning goals established for their level (to review these learning goals, please visit [www.breakthroughmontessori.org](http://www.breakthroughmontessori.org), click on "For Parents" and select "Learning Goals by Level.")

## Promotion and the Gift of the Fourth Year

A key tenet of Montessori philosophy is giving children the opportunity to move from being one of the youngest children in the environment who is still learning from their older peers, to being among the oldest, most capable students who can help their younger peers to learn and grow. This

is a key experience that children need before being ready to move on to the next level, and for some students, it may take longer than the average three years. This is called the “gift of the fourth year.”

At Breakthrough Montessori, this is a decision that is made collaboratively between the school and parents - without the agreement of both parties, the decision cannot move forward. This is a decision that is most often made within the last year of the 3 year cycle, but may, in rare cases, happen earlier if it is most developmentally appropriate for the student.

## **Evaluative Measures**

Several measures are used to evaluate children’s readiness for the next 3 year cycle, or the next level. Our main areas of assessment will be children’s social emotional development. Because Montessori is a pedagogy of child-led, individually paced learning, children can learn at their level in any grade or environment. However, children who are not emotionally or socially ready may benefit from extra time at the previous level. Some of the measures we use to evaluate children’s social and emotional level are:

- Montessori Transition Checklist for students moving from primary to elementary
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire (for students younger than 5)
- Normalization or Adaptation Checklists
- Progress Reports
- Parent and teacher input
- Student input (for students in Elementary)

## **The concept of mastery**

Mastery is an important concept in the Montessori environment, and one of the key experiences that define students’ experiences at each level. Mastery is a deep concrete and conceptual understanding of an area or idea that allows a child not only to explain that idea to others, but to apply and build off of their knowledge and to make connections to other concepts. Mastery can be used in reference to academic concepts, but also the social and executive functioning skills that are

fostered by the Montessori environment, such as impulse control, self-discipline, conflict resolution, and communication.

As students spend time in their classroom, their mastery of various concepts increases, and with it their self-confidence and ability to be a leader in the classroom. We don't expect all students to have mastery of all areas within the three year cycle, but we do want all students to have the full experience of being one of the oldest, most informed, most capable, most responsible students in the classroom. Some of the factors that we consider are the following:

- Is the student able to choose and complete work independently?
- Is the student friends with children of his/her own age group, or mostly friends with younger children?
- Is the student able to independently problem-solve and resolve conflicts with peers within the classroom environment?
- Has the student mastered enough of the core concepts of the previous level to be successful at the next level? (We rarely make decisions to retain based on academic performance, but this is considered)

## Considerations

- For a child to be considered, they must have gone through the Child Study process, showing that the school has made reasonable efforts to remediate the issue(s).
- When a request for retention or promotion is made, the first step is a meeting with the family and the Principal. If the request is coming from the school, the family will be informed no later than February of the academic year of the proposed retention. Our goal is to work with families to make the best decision for students, which is a process that takes time. A final decision must be made by the team on or before May 30 of each school year.

## Coaching Model

To ensure a culture of continuous improvement, Breakthrough is a coaching school. This means we offer ongoing support for our classroom staff. Our primary and elementary coaches observe each classroom regularly, and each teacher has a weekly one-on-one coaching meeting.

Thanks to our coaching model, families can feel confident that our faculty is constantly striving for improvement! It also means that families can expect to interact regularly with members of our coaching team, as well as their classroom guide. If you have a question about your child's growth or development, we always encourage families to reach out to their child's guide first. If questions remain after your initial meeting with the guide, we invite you to contact the coach for your child's level: Primary Coach, Zareena Mohamed ([zareena@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:zareena@breakthroughmontessori.org)) or Elementary Coach.

## Equity at Breakthrough

### Anti-Bias Education

Our Statement of Values establishes Breakthrough as a community united by our commitment to equity and to the unbounded potential of all children. To make this Statement of Values a reality for all children, we implement anti-bias education in every classroom and in every interaction with our students.

As a school, we have adopted the Four Goals of Anti-Bias Education, established by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards in their book *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves* (2012). Every adult in our community --guides, assistants, Special Education staff, administrators, and board members-- commits to upholding and pursuing these goals in their work with children and with one another.

The following goals are found in Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves, pages 4-6.

### Goal 1: “Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.”

At Breakthrough, all staff intentionally work to support a children’s development of a sense of individual, family, and social group identity. Children learn about themselves, their identities, their cultures, and their communities.

Children hear adults validate and celebrate their unique identity. Children see themselves represented in classroom books, materials, and artwork. Children observe adults modeling how to speak about their identity with pride and confidence.

### Goal #2: “Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.”

At Breakthrough, we recognize that children notice differences among people from a very early age, and they are naturally curious about these differences. We do not discourage children from noticing difference. We teach children that diversity is wonderful. Adults model how to celebrate the identities of others. Adults also model how to explore differences in a respectful and appropriate manner. We teach children that everyone is deserving of profound respect.

### Goal #3: “Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.”

At Breakthrough, we seek to teach children (and ourselves) “how to identify and resist hurtful, stereotypical, and inaccurate messages or actions directed toward them or others” (Derman Sparks and Olsen Edwards, pg 5).

### Goal #4: “Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.”



At Breakthrough, we seek to equip each child with the tools and language to respond when they are treated unfairly or they see a classmate treated unfairly.

*Source*

Derman-Sparks, Louise and Julie Olsen Edwards. 2012. Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILIES

To make our Statement of Values a reality at Breakthrough, we take a number of concrete steps, and we invite families to join us in this work.

### ***School Home Association***

The School Home Association (SHA) is a volunteer group devoted to supporting the Breakthrough pillar of family and community engagement. Composed of parents and/or guardians of current students as well as Breakthrough staff, the SHA undertakes projects designed to promote robust, reciprocal connections between home and school. Feedback from the SHA informs decisions related to family and community engagement, fundraising, and other areas of the school's life. The SHA also supports the school's ongoing efforts to provide families with opportunities to learn more about Montessori education and how the Montessori philosophy informs the school's decisions.

### ***Breakthrough ART***

This group, composed of Breakthrough families, staff and other stakeholders, will guide our efforts to transform our school into an authentically antiracist organization. The ART will facilitate the implementation of a framework for antiracist, anti-bias education. They will envision new structures of accountability to monitor the school's progress towards its antiracist, anti-bias goals. They will foster community trust, reconciliation and reparation. They will serve as a point of reference for

families and educators and also provide a safe space for community members to bring issues of injustice to the forefront, especially in advocacy of children. This team will ground its work in abolitionist teachings that promote justice, healing, joy, and liberation for all Black, Brown, and Indigenous people, inclusive of all intersecting identities.

## ***Monthly Themes***

As per our Statement of Values, Breakthrough Montessori serves all children and families. An important part of this work is to honor one another's narratives and help children to celebrate their own identities as well as the identities of their classmates. To this end, each month Breakthrough celebrates a specific theme, culture, or community. Classroom teams introduce lessons and read books that highlight each monthly theme. We invite family members to help us learn about the world around us through participating in these themes. If you identify with any of the themes listed below, please contact your child's teacher to see how you can participate. We invite family members to visit classrooms to read stories; share art, food, music or cultural artifacts; or talk to children about the monthly theme.

- **September:** Our Community Values
- **October:** Hispanic and Latinx Heritage and Cultures
- **November:** Indigenous Heritage and Cultures
- **December:** Holidays around the world
- **January:** Middle Eastern and North African Heritage and Cultures
- **February:** Black History Month
- **March:** Women's History Month
- **April:** Neurodiversity/Climate Justice
- **May:** Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage and Cultures
- **June:** Pride

# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

## Communication – Who do I ask?

At Breakthrough we strive to foster clear and robust communication between home and school. The chart below offers guidance regarding the proper channels to use for gaining information and solving problems.

When e-mailing Breakthrough staff members (including your child's guide), please allow a 24-48 hour period for a response. Please note that faculty members are not expected to read/respond to emails on the evenings and weekends.

Question or Concern	First Contact
Child's academic, emotional, and social progress; child's current classroom work; details about child's daily experience	Classroom teacher <a href="mailto:FirstName@breakthroughmontessori.org">FirstName@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>
If you have further questions about your child's classroom speaking and would like to continue the conversation after speaking with your guide, you can also reach out to the Montessori coach for your child's level.	Zareena Mohamed, Primary Coach <a href="mailto:zareena@breakthroughmontessori.org">zareena@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>
Special needs, individualized educational program (IEP), 504 plans	LaCheyna Sparrow <a href="mailto:spedcoordinator@breakthroughmontessori.org">spedcoordinator@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>
Student support, special needs, 504 plans, ELL services, school social work services	Ashley Anderson, Director of Student Support <a href="mailto:ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org">ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>
Child's medical needs or records	Emuah Ammi, School Nurse <a href="mailto:emunah@breakthroughmontessori.org">emunah@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>

Notes of absence, late arrival, early pick-up	Please email <a href="mailto:attendance@breakthroughmontessori.org">attendance@breakthroughmontessori.org</a> as well as your child's guide.
Enrollment, requests for student's records, billing (including EZ Child Track)	Landy Cervantes, Manager of Operations and Data Compliance <a href="mailto:landy@breakthroughmontessori.org">landy@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>
Curriculum, assessments, daily schedule, classroom guidelines and protocols, Montessori education	G, María Carvajal, Principal <a href="mailto:maria@breakthroughmontessori.org">maria@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>
Breakthrough's strategic growth, school-wide policies	Emily Hedin, Executive Director <a href="mailto:emily.hedin@breakthroughmontessori.org">emily.hedin@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>
School finance, facilities, compliance, human resources, and daily operations	Ino Okoawo, Director of Operations <a href="mailto:ino@breakthroughmontessori.org">ino@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>
Anti-racist, anti-bias education; Breakthrough Antiracism Team, family events or engagement opportunities	Ana Schwartz, Director of Equity and Engagement <a href="mailto:ana@breakthroughmontessori.org">ana@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>
Aftercare programming	Travis Sherlin, Outdoor Educator and Extended Day Coordinator <a href="mailto:travis@breakthroughmontessori.org">travis@breakthroughmontessori.org</a>

## Learn About Your Child's Classroom Life

In addition to the above guidelines for channeling the flow of communication, we call your attention to the following elements of our program designed to enhance the school/home relationship:

### ***Classroom Observation***

There is no better way to gain an understanding of your child's experience here than by observing in the classroom. Knowing what is going on in the classroom provides a common point of reference

for you and your child to talk about school. It also enhances communication with teachers. Breakthrough offers periods for family observations in the fall and the spring

## ***Lesson Share Day***

Lesson Share Day (held twice a year) is an opportunity for you to connect with your child in their Montessori environment. It gives you a chance to observe the joy and concentration our students experience as they explore the materials and give you mini lessons on one or two materials they have enjoyed working with in the classroom.

## ***Conferences***

Conferences are formally scheduled three times a year, in the fall, winter and spring. School is closed to accommodate these events, and parents/guardians arrange individual appointments. At the primary level, children do not participate in conferences. However, at the elementary level, students may join and lead their family/guide conference. In addition, you may schedule a conference with your child's teachers at any time by contacting them either by note, e-mail, or phone call.

## ***Progress Reports***

All students receive two formal progress reports. Like classroom observations, they provide a concrete point of reference for discussing the nature of your child's work. You will receive a final progress report at the end of the school year.

Below is an example progress report for a student in PK4. On each primary progress report, there are 12 domains (below you can see an example for one domain: writing). Within each domain, there are specific skills the child should master by the end of their three-year cycle in the primary classroom (in other words, by the time they finish kindergarten). For each skill, the student has a mark of "N" (this skill has not yet been introduced to the child), "D" (the child has been introduced to the skill and is in the process of practicing and developing it), or "C" (the child can consistently demonstrate this skill).

In addition to this information, each progress report will include narrative sections on gifts, gains, and goals where your child's guide will provide detailed insight into how your child is growing.

Key
N = Not Yet
D = Developing
C = Consistently

## Writing

	Winter	Spring
Recognizes shapes and sounds of letters	C	C
Uses correct pencil grip	D	C
Uses Metal Insets with care	N	N
Builds words phonetically with Moveable Alphabet	N	D
Practices writing individual letters and numbers	D	D
Writes words phonetically	N	N
Writing is legible and neat	N	N
Writes on lined paper	N	N
Expresses self creatively through writing	N	N
Is aware of spelling conventions	N	N

## Family Education

We offer regular family seminars, or family education events. These gatherings are usually organized around a Montessori-related topic. They are opportunities to share information about making the most of a Montessori education. These events will be advertised as we develop them; we encourage you to join us.

## Digital Communication

To minimize paper waste, Breakthrough relies heavily on digital communication to share information with families. Please review the following digital resources, and let us know if you need help connecting to any of them.

## ***Website***

The Breakthrough website contains the most up-to-date information about the school, including calendar updates. Our web address is: [www.breakthroughmontessori.org](http://www.breakthroughmontessori.org).

## ***School Year Calendar***

The complete school year calendar, including family events and celebrations, can be found on our website at [www.breakthroughmontessori.org/calendar](http://www.breakthroughmontessori.org/calendar). We encourage you to sync it with your own calendar by clicking the + sign in the bottom right corner.

## ***E-mail***

Breakthrough relies regularly on e-mail as a tool for sharing important information. The school sends newsletters, calendar e-mails, and letters about school plans and progress. If you do not receive these e-mails, please check your Spam folder and mark our e-mail address as recognized.

## ***Text Messages***

Breakthrough uses a text message system called Remind ([www.remind.com](http://www.remind.com)) to alert families to school delays and closings, as well as remind families about upcoming events or important dates.

On your enrollment form, you indicated whether or not you'd like us to add your cell phone number to Remind. If you indicated "yes," we will add your number to your child's classroom. When we do, you will receive a text message that says: "I'm using Remind to send important updates. Reply YES to this text now to avoid missing my messages for [CLASS NAME]."

You can also add yourself by texting your child's class code to 81010 and replying to the confirmation text from Remind. You can also sign up for smartphone notifications:

- Download the Remind app on your Android or iOS device.

- Open the app and create an account (or log in if you already have an account)
- Tap the “+” by classes joined and enter your class code @[CLASSCODE].

The class codes are as follows:

- Baobab: @baobo
- Capuli: @dkd3ka
- Cherry Blossom: @gc9cee
- Chestnut: @mspradip
- Dogwood: @g6he2d4g
- Ginkgo: @k7f6db
- Locust: @fgb93g
- Magnolia: @886f2k
- Maple: @cc8d7d
- Olive: @f89dc7
- Palm: @c2fc4k
- Sequoia: @ea39e6c
- Tulip Poplar: @cgccd4
- Willow: @bck24d
- Upper Elementary 3: @24chc9

## ***Transparent Classroom***

Transparent Classroom is an online record-keeping platform designed by Montessorians for Montessori schools. It allows teachers to record lessons, make notes, and track progress for each student. It also allows families to get a taste of classroom life through photos and descriptions.

Transparent Classroom is available to teachers, assistants, administrative team members, parents, and family members. To set up your Transparent Classroom account, follow these steps:

- Watch for an e-mail from Transparent Classroom with subject line “Invitation Instructions.” You should receive this e-mail shortly after the start of school in September.



- Follow the link, provide your name and e-mail address, create a password, and select notification preferences.
- View your child's profile, which includes photos and notes from the teacher.
- View school directory (including families and staff)
- Read your classroom blog by selecting "All Pages" from the homepage and following the link to your child's classroom blog.
- Look out for classroom newsletters once a month from your Guide on Transparent Classroom.

## ***Konstella***

The School Home Association (SHA) also maintains a platform for families called Konstella. Please note that Konstella is not managed by Breakthrough administration. As such, it is not an official channel of school communication and may not include all important school updates and events. It is primarily a platform where parents/guardians can connect. To sign up for Konstella:

- Visit [www.konstella.com](http://www.konstella.com)
- Click on "Find Your School"
- Type "Breakthrough Montessori"
- Select our school
- Enter your family's information and click "submit"
- A member of the SHA leadership will confirm your request and grant you access to the Breakthrough page on Konstella.

# POLICIES AND PRACTICES

## Abuse Prevention

Breakthrough Montessori takes the safety of students very seriously. We have developed a robust Abuse Prevention Policy as well as a Policy on Preventing and Addressing Student on Student Acts of Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Dating Violence. We encourage families to review these policies in full on our website (under “Family Handbook, Policies, and Forms”).

Every school year, we organize training and seminars for families on abuse prevention. We encourage all families to participate in these important events.

## Admission

Any student who is of appropriate age and grade level and is a resident of the District of Columbia is eligible for admission to Breakthrough through the My School DC Lottery. The only limitation to admission is the number of slots available in a given grade. Within the My School DC Lottery, Breakthrough offers preferences in the following order: children of staff, siblings of enrolled students, twin offered and sibling offered.

For the purpose of the lottery, Breakthrough Montessori defines “sibling” as two or more children who share the same enrolling parent/guardian through birth, marriage, adoption, or legal guardianship.

Mid-year spaces may be filled through the My School DC Lottery waitlist, if applicable, or through open enrollment. Prospective students are admitted without regard to aptitude, achievement, ethnicity, nationality, gender, disability, language proficiency, sexual orientation, or any other basis prohibited by law.

Admitted families wishing to enroll their children in Breakthrough must complete an enrollment packet that includes:

- Breakthrough enrollment application
- DC Residency Verification
- home language survey
- copy of the child's birth certificate
- copy of the enrolling parent/guardian's state-issued ID.

In addition, prior to the first day of school, enrolled families must submit:

- DC Universal Health Certificate, including immunization records
- Dental Health Certificate
- Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment
- Medication Authorization Form (if applicable)
- Release of records (if applicable)
- Special education documents (if applicable)
- 504 service agreement (if applicable)

Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School permits students who were previously enrolled at the School for at least one calendar year to return in limited circumstances as outlined in our Leave of Absence Policy, which can be reviewed on our website.

## Attendance

According to the Public Charter School Board and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), a student who is absent for one day without a valid excuse is considered truant. A student who is absent from school without a valid excuse for 10 or more days within a single school year is considered a chronic truant.

- Students must be in school for 80% of the school day (defined as 6 hours between 8:30 am and 3:15 pm) in order to be considered "present."

- An excused absence requires parental approval and proper notification.
- Excused absences include:
  - Illness (a doctor's note may be required if the student is absent for more than five days)
  - Doctor or dentist appointment
  - Death in the family
  - Observation of a religious holiday
  - Court appearance, including the necessity for a student to attend judiciary or administrative proceedings as a party to the action or under subpoena;
  - Visiting a parent/guardian who is in the military immediately before, after, or during deployment
  - Exclusion, by direction of DC authorities, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons;
  - If the child's only legal parent or guardian is traveling due to circumstances covered under FMLA law;
  - Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by school authorities;
  - Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other condition(s) or emergency requiring a school closing or suspension of classes;
  - Failure of DC to provide transportation in cases where there is a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student;
  - An emergency or other circumstance approved by Breakthrough Montessori.
- Unexcused absences include:
  - Family vacations
  - Oversleeping
  - Errands
  - Social events
  - Hosting visitors

- o Visiting relatives
  - o Commute/traffic
- Proper documentation includes parent notes, doctor's notes, or court documents.
- Breakthrough Montessori reports all absences as unexcused unless the school receives proper documentation.
- Parents/guardians of students with 5 or more unexcused absences will be requested to participate in a conference with the Principal.
- After ten unexcused absences, Breakthrough Montessori will submit a report to the Child and Family Services Agency, as required by law.
- Per the Attendance Accountability Amendment Act of 2013, Breakthrough must notify OSSE within two business days of a student's 10th unexcused absence. OSSE will provide the parent with a truancy prevention resource guide.

## Late arrival

1. For the 2023-24 school year, students are marked tardy if they arrive at their classroom after 8:30 am (school begins at 8:30 AM).
2. Breakthrough reports all tardies as unexcused unless the school receives proper documentation for valid late arrivals.
3. Three unexcused tardies are equivalent to an unexcused absence.

## Authorized Pick-Up

Breakthrough will only release a child to:

- The enrolling parent(s) or guardians.
- Individuals authorized by parent(s) or guardians on the enrollment form.
- Persons listed as a child's emergency contact when a parent/guardian does not arrive by closing time (6:00 pm).
- On Mondays only, Breakthrough will release students directly to the leaders of the Intersession program in which the student is enrolled.

If you would like to authorize Breakthrough to release your child to another adult, please contact your child's teacher and Landy Cervantes ([landy@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:landy@breakthroughmontessori.org)). Please note that we will release children to individuals who are 16 years or older. We will ask for identification from any individual you have authorized to pick up your child.

## Bathroom Independence and Supervision

Breakthrough requires families to work with their children toward bathroom independence before the first day of school. The Montessori primary classroom is focused on helping children achieve independence, and we support children who are still working towards bathroom independence. We ask all families to provide the school with one complete change of clothing (including underwear) for their child. For children who are working towards bathroom independence, we ask that families leave multiple changes of underwear and pants. When a child has an accident, either the teacher or the assistant helps the student change (always with a focus on enabling them to do it themselves). The Principal is available to share resources and strategies for bathroom training.

Please note that Breakthrough Montessori will not change pull-ups or diapers (unless this need is established by a student's IEP, 504, or other medical documentation on file with the school).

While we encourage independence among students, we recognize that bathrooms require a certain degree of adult supervision. Classroom staff teach new students about bathroom routines and rules. Teachers and assistants periodically check the bathrooms to ensure safety and cleanliness. Students use the bathroom before leaving school for recess. If students need to use the park bathroom facilities, an adult always stands in the doorway to ensure safety.

In alignment with our Abuse Prevention Policy (available on our website), Breakthrough adults do not enter the bathroom with the student, unless they need help. If a student needs help, and adult support is required beyond providing verbal instruction/encouragement, an adult will enter the bathroom with the door open, and a second adult will observe from the doorway.

Staff members do not wipe children after bathroom use, unless the child is unable to clean themselves in a way that protects their health and hygiene, as well as the health and hygiene of others. If your child is still working on this aspect of bathroom independence, sending a packet of wet wipes for your child to use can be helpful.

## Car Seat Safety

Breakthrough follows all applicable laws and safety guidelines for child safety seats. Please ensure that your child is in a safety seat upon arrival and departure from school. District of Columbia law requires children under 8 years of age be properly seated in an installed infant, convertible (toddler) or booster child seat, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Booster seats must be used with both lap and shoulder belts. DC continues to require that all passengers regardless of age wear their seat belts. There are significant penalties and fines for violations.

## Community Values Policy

This policy is an agreement to uphold the values of the Breakthrough Montessori community. It defines the expected behavior that should be exhibited by all adults while at Breakthrough Montessori, both inside the building and on school property.

Breakthrough Montessori PCS wants all adults, be it faculty, staff, caretakers, parents, family members, or other community members, to feel respected and safe. To achieve this end, all adults should act and speak in a way that is respectful to all members of the community.

The following guidelines must be followed at all times:

- Our school is a place for children, and everyone should act in a way that is appropriate for and beneficial to our students.
- Adults must use calm, respectful voices.
- Adults must use polite and kind words.

- Other adults should be given the benefit of the doubt, and time to explain their actions
- Any conflict or misunderstandings should be addressed directly with the person who can solve the issue.
- All words and actions must be respectful of others' beliefs, personal choices, and their ability to self-identify.

Certain actions may never occur on the property of BMPCS. These include, but are not limited to

- Cursing at others, cursing in anger, or cursing when there are children present
- Public defamation of other adults or children
- Yelling
- Threatening others
- Name calling
- Throwing items
- Refusal to leave the building when asked
- Actions that are aggressive, disrespectful or threatening to any staff member, faculty member or child
- Racist, homophobic, or other discriminatory language

The following school policies are expectations for all parents:

- Family members drop off in the lobby
- Family members wait outside at dismissal to receive their students
- Family members communicate directly with the guide (not the assistant or other staff members) as the guide is the person who has all the information about any events.

If a serious violation of this policy occurs, Breakthrough Montessori will take the following steps:

- Breakthrough administrators will consider the following factors:
  - Seriousness of the offense
  - Intent when engaged in the conduct
  - Effect of the behavior on the school environment



- The executive director will write a letter to the adult that specifies the policy violation and issues a warning that subsequent violations may lead to the involvement of law enforcement and/or barring the individual from Breakthrough Montessori property.
- A follow-up meeting (in person or virtually) must take place within 72 hours of the offense with the executive director, school resource officer, adult, and other related personnel who will discuss 1) the incident that occurred, 2) reflection of the impact the behavior had within the community from all parties, 3) improvement plan and consequences, and 4) next steps.

“Serious violation” shall be defined as those that substantially disrupt or materially interfere with the orderly process in the classroom, the school, or any school-related activity and may include persistent misbehavior. “Persistent” shall be defined as more than one instance of misconduct.

If you have concerns or need any accommodations in relation to this policy, please reach out to the administration team.

Actions in violation of this policy may result in dismissal (staff) or barring from school property (family members / community members). The ability to enter the school building or premises, or to remain on the school grounds, may be revoked for the following reasons: 1. A person has posed a disruption to school activities, school events, or classroom instruction. 2. A person has attempted to pose a disruption to school activities, school events, or classroom instruction. 3. A person poses, has posed, or attempted to pose a threat to any student or staff or otherwise compromise student or staff safety. 4. A person has endangered or intentionally caused destruction to school property. A person's privilege to enter the school building or premises may be revoked by the issuance of a Barring Notice. Violation of the terms of a Barring Notice or a verbal order to leave the school grounds or premises may result in the person being subject to arrest and prosecution.

To report an incident or offense that took place on school grounds among adults, please be sure to:

- Report the incident immediately. This can be done on site and in-person. Ask first for the coordinator for equity and engagement. If they are unavailable, please request for the executive director.
- If you are unable to report in person, please call or email the Director for equity and engagement ([ana@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:ana@breakthroughmontessori.org)) within 24 hours of the incident.

If you are witnessing a life threatening incident involving physical violence between persons on school grounds, please call 911 and immediately connect with a school administrator to rectify the situation.

## Discipline

Breakthrough Montessori is a peaceful community of families, students, and teachers. As adults in the community, we aspire at all times to model grace, courtesy, and a deep respect for our community.

At Breakthrough, discipline is highly valued as the skill of self-regulation. Maria Montessori distinguished between the “spontaneous discipline” typical of happily engaged children and adult-centered strategies for maintaining “control.” The ability to master oneself is a foundational skill for all subsequent learning.

Adults set limits through example. We always try to direct with positive rather than negative guidance. At no time may physical punishment such as spanking a child take place. At all times patience, restraint, and respect for the child’s needs for sensitive intervention govern adult interaction with children.

When students have difficulty with their responsibilities, a series of actions may be taken depending on the significance of an inappropriate behavior. Each student incident is treated individually, but the following staff responses may occur:

### Less Serious

- Student redirected by teacher
- Assigned seating near the teacher for a period of time
- Teacher temporarily adjusts the degree of independence the child exercises in the classroom
- Problem discussed with student

- Other ways of handling a situation brainstormed
- Parent/guardian note or phone call

## More Serious

- Removal from the classroom for a period of time
- Outside assistance from school personnel (such as the Nautilus Coach or Principal)
- Meeting with parent/guardians
- Development of an action plan for student, parents/guardians, and teacher
- Referral to the Child Study process

## *Unacceptable Behaviors*

Experimental behavior is a predictable feature of all developmental levels, and we strive to regard such behaviors as indicative of a child's needs. Different behavior is also typical of different age groups. Students who have limited expressive language tend to use their hands more to express themselves, whereas hitting or kicking a by a child that has full command of language is a more serious behavior. Safety is our first priority, and all actions we take are to ensure the safety of our students. Furthermore, because the community lies at the center of our approach to learning, any individual action that negatively affects the welfare of the community is considered unacceptable. As a result, Breakthrough cannot allow the following:

- Language that expresses disrespect for another person
- Violent behavior, e.g., hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, throwing objects at a person
- Causing, attempting or threatening bodily injury or emotional distress
- "Bodily injury" means a cut, abrasion, bruise, burn or disfigurement; physical pain; illness; impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty; or any other injury to the body, no matter how temporary.
- "Emotional distress" means mental suffering or distress that requires more than trivial treatment or counseling.
- Vandalism
- Inappropriate touching

# ***Resolution Process for Unacceptable Behavior***

## **Primary Level**

The first instance of unacceptable behavior will be addressed by the witnessing staff member. The staff member will first stop the behavior. Then, depending on the child's age, they will discuss with the child privately why the behavior is inappropriate and suggest strategies for preventing its recurrence. Parents/guardians will be notified of both the behavior and its resolution.

If the behavior is repeated, escalates, or targets a specific child or group of children, it will be addressed by the witnessing adult and the Principal, Nautilus Coach, Director of Student Support, or the Montessori Support Specialist. Depending on the age of the student and the seriousness of the behavior, this will result in the development of an action plan. All action plans are developed in consultation with the family and include concrete goals for resolving negative behavior.

## **Elementary Level**

The first instance of unacceptable behavior will be addressed by the witnessing staff member. The staff member will first stop the behavior. Then, depending on the child's age, they will discuss with the child privately why the behavior is inappropriate and suggest strategies for preventing its recurrence. Parents/guardians will be notified of both the behavior and its resolution.

The second occurrence will be addressed by the witnessing adult and the Principal, Behavior Coach, Director of Student Support, or the Montessori Support Specialist, and, depending on the age of the child and the seriousness of the behavior, will result in the development of an action plan. All action plans are developed in consultation with the family and include concrete goals for resolving negative behavior.

Though we are confident that well-articulated and faithfully implemented action plans will enable the child to address difficulties, in rare instances efforts to correct the behavior fail. In those instances, appropriate disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion will be considered. No student in grades kindergarten through 5 can receive an out-of-school suspension or expulsion,

unless the student has willfully caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause bodily injury or emotional distress to another person. Suspension/expulsion is only permitted to ensure safety and in response to the most serious offenses, which include:

- Serious acts of violence
- Student-on-student sexual harassment or abuse
- Illegal behavior that causes bodily injury or emotional distress
- Possession of a weapon

The decision to suspend or expel a student shall be made by the Principal and/or the Executive Director with or without the recommendation of the student's guide or other staff. The Principal will determine the number of days for suspension based on the severity of the infraction, the age of the student and previous infractions. The suspension or expulsion shall become effective immediately unless otherwise stated by the Principal and the Executive Director.

In the unlikely event that a child is suspended, the school will work with the family to ensure that the student continues his/her studies and receives all assignments during the suspension; can communicate with school staff about the assignments; and has the opportunity to make up any work missed during the suspension if he/she cannot complete it during the suspension. As per DC regulations, Breakthrough will not suspend any student for more than five consecutive school days or more than 20 cumulative school days in the year.

All disciplinary action taken at Breakthrough must be individualized, fair, equitable, developmentally appropriate, proportional to the severity of the behavior, and restorative.

## **Due Process and Appeals Procedure for Parents/Guardians**

Due process will be followed for all disciplinary actions.

**Due Process for Suspension:** Before imposing suspension, the Executive Director shall immediately notify the parents/guardians in writing that the student may be suspended from school. This notice will be in their dominant language and will provide a description of the incident(s) for which suspension is proposed. It will inform the parents/guardians of their right to request an immediate informal conference with the Principal and the Executive Director. The parents/guardians of the

student and the student shall have the opportunity to present the student's version of the incident and to ask questions of the complaining witnesses indirectly through the Principal.

Following the informal conference, the decision to suspend a student shall be made by the Principal and/or the Executive Director. The student's parents/guardians will receive written notice of the decision in their dominant language.

The student's parents/guardians have five school days to challenge the decision. They may do so by contacting the Chair of the Breakthrough Montessori Board of Trustees ([board@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:board@breakthroughmontessori.org)) and expressing their desire to challenge the decision. The Chair of the Board of Trustees organizes a hearing within 48 hours of receipt of communication from the parents/guardians. Following the hearing, the Board of Trustees makes a final determination.

Due process for expulsion: Before any expulsion, the Principal will consult with the Executive Director and the Board of Trustees and immediately notify the student's parents/guardians in writing, in their dominant language. Expulsions will only be imposed after the student has been found guilty at a formal hearing. The hearing shall include the Executive Director, the Principal, staff members involved with the incident, and the student with their parents/guardians. The student shall have the right to be represented by counsel, question witnesses, and present evidence.

## ***Students with Disabilities and Manifestation***

### ***Determination Meetings***

Students with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as other students, and may be disciplined for the same behavior listed above. A multidisciplinary team will hold a manifestation meeting to determine if the incident was a manifestation of their disability. The manifestation meeting must take place before a student with an IEP has been suspended for more than a total of ten (10) days. The Manifestation Determination team will discuss the link between the student's behavior and disability. If the team finds that there is no direct link between the student's behavior and disability, and the IEP was being implemented with fidelity leading up to and during the

behavioral infraction, the infraction is then considered not a manifestation of the student's disability, and BMPCS can move forward with processing suspension, ensuring the student receives access to adequate educational supports during the suspension. If the team finds that there is a direct link between the behavior and the disability, or the IEP was not being implemented with fidelity leading up to or during the behavior, the behavioral infraction is considered a manifestation of the student's disability, and the student will return to his or her current educational placement. BMPCS will schedule an IEP review meeting to update the student's IEP to accurately reflect the student's current level of functioning within 30 days.

## Emergency Mitigation & Response

Breakthrough Montessori takes emergency mitigation and response very seriously.

- All Breakthrough staff and students must have accurate emergency contact information on file with the school.
- All Breakthrough staff and students must participate in emergency drills each year, including 10 fire drills and 3 lockdown drills. All fire drills are unannounced to families, faculty, and students. The first lockdown drill is announced to families, faculty and students, and the subsequent drills are unannounced.

You can read our complete Emergency Mitigation & Response policy on our website under "Family Handbook, Policies, and Forms."

## Family Resources

At Breakthrough, we seek to build a robust network of support around every student, and we offer resources to families that are intended to support the child's holistic development. These resources include:

1. Monthly grocery support

2. Transportation to and from school
3. Tuition assistance for summer camps and other out-of-school time programming

To be eligible for these resources, families must have at least one student in the household enrolled in Breakthrough, and the student must reside in the household at least 50% of the time.

To learn more about these resources or request support, please contact Emily Hedin ([emily.hedin@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:emily.hedin@breakthroughmontessori.org)) or Ana Schwartz ([ana@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:ana@breakthroughmontessori.org)).

You can also learn more about the resources available and eligibility requirements by viewing the Family Resources policy located on our website (under “Family Handbook, Policies, and Forms”).

## Illness

For many communicable illnesses, we ask that students wait to return to school until they have been clear of symptoms for 24 hours and/or have undergone treatment for 24 hours. We may also ask for a note from either a parent/guardian or a licensed practitioner. Further information for specific communicable illnesses is provided below:

1. Conjunctivitis (“pink eye”): If diagnosed with a viral infection, a student may return to school after any redness and discharge have disappeared. If diagnosed with a bacterial infection, a student may return to school 24 hours after commencing antibiotic treatment if a licensed practitioner provides a note attesting to the diagnosis, the onset of treatment, and that the child is cleared to return to school.
2. Fever, vomiting, and diarrhea: A child may return to school after he/she has been free of all symptoms of illness for 24 hours. If your child goes home from school due to fever, vomiting or diarrhea, they are not eligible to return to school the next day at 8:30 am. A full 24 hours must lapse before the child may return to class.
3. Pediculosis (infestation by live head lice): A student may remain in class that day; however, parents or guardians should commence treatment at the conclusion of the school day. A child may return to school upon submitting a parent or guardian note attesting to the fact that he/she is undergoing treatment. A student with only nits (eggs) shall not be excluded



from school, however, we will notify the parents or guardians and advise them to monitor for re-infestation.

4. Ringworm: A student may return to school upon submitting a licensed practitioner's note stating that the student is under treatment
5. Strep throat: A student may return to school 24 hours after beginning antibiotic treatment, provided they are without fever and have a note from a licensed practitioner affirming the start of treatment.
6. COVID-19: Please review COVID-19 Mitigation & Response policies, available on our website (under "Family Handbook, Policies, and Forms.")

We will inform the school of health issues as needed.

In case of an absence due to a contagious disease or an illness of more than five days duration, a note from your child's physician is required before your child can be readmitted to the classroom.

If your child develops a fever while at school or shows other signs of illness, you will be contacted and requested to take them home within an hour. If you cannot be reached, an emergency contact will be called to take your child home.

Please remember that children go outside daily except in inclement weather. If your child is unable to take part in outdoor activities because of illness, please keep them at home for the day since we cannot keep individual children indoors during these activities.

## Medication

All medication must be given directly to the front desk for proper storage: no medication may be left in lunchboxes or backpacks. Please give medication and forms to the senior staff member present when you arrive. The school nurse or a staff member who is trained to administer medication will administer prescription OR non-prescription medication to a child only if the following criteria are met:

1. An Authorization for Medication Administration form is signed by the parent/guardian with the name and dosage of the medication, steps of administration, and dates and/or times/conditions for administration clearly written on the form (forms can be found in the school office).
2. Prescription medication is clearly labeled by the pharmacy or physician, in the original container, and specifically for your child.
3. Non-prescription medication will only be administered from its original container. If more than one dose is to be administered, a licensed health practitioner must approve the administration and dosage on the medication order form or a physician's prescription slip.

## Sunscreen

Please note that sunscreen is no longer considered a medication by the District of Columbia. Please provide a signed Basic Care Item form, and an unopened bottle of sunscreen labeled with your child's name.

## Nondiscrimination Policy

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977, as amended, District of Columbia Official Code Section 2- 1401.01 et seq. (Act), Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School does not discriminate (including employment therein and admission thereto) on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of an interfamily offense, or place of residence or business. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination, which is prohibited by the Act. In addition, harassment based on any of the above-protected categories is prohibited.

Discrimination in violation of the aforementioned laws will not be tolerated. Violators will be subject to disciplinary action.

## Notification of Rights Under FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("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 of the day the School received a request for access. Parents of eligible students should submit to the School principal (or appropriate school official) a written request that identified the record (s) 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.
1. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent of eligible student believes are inaccurate. Parents or eligible students may ask the School to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate. They should write the School principal (or appropriate school official), clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate. 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 advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent of eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
2. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with

whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or 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 in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School District 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 4000 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20202-5901

## **Notification of Rights Under PPRA**

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) affords parents certain rights regarding our conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include 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):

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent;
2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family;
3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships;
6. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents; or
8. Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.

Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of:

1. Any other protected information survey, regardless of funding;
2. 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
1. Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.

Inspect, upon request and before administration or use:

1. Protected information surveys of students;
2. Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales or other distribution purposes; and
3. 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. Breakthrough Montessori PCS has developed and adopted policies 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. Breakthrough Montessori PCS will directly notify parents of these policies at least annually at the start of each school year and after any substantive changes.

Breakthrough Montessori PCS will also directly notify, such as through 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. Breakthrough Montessori PCS 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 requirement:

- Collection, disclosure, or use of personal information 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. 20202-5901

## Resolving Complaints

We encourage family members to contact their child's teacher directly with any questions or concerns about their child's classroom experience. The Primary Coach, Elementary Coach, and Nautilus Coach can also assist a family with addressing concerns about their child's classroom experience. In addition, the Principal provides a valuable resource to families that seek additional clarification about their child's educational journey. If the family and the Principal need further assistance in resolving an issue, please contact the Executive Director. If the family and the school-based leadership do not reach a satisfactory solution, the family may contact the Chair of the Breakthrough Board of Trustees by writing to [board@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:board@breakthroughmontessori.org).

## Security

Breakthrough takes the security of our school building very seriously.

The front door to the school is locked at all times. In order to enter the school, visitors must be buzzed in.

Breakthrough is authorized to release a child only to those people permitted to pick up the child. If your child is going home with a friend, the school office must have permission in writing from the parent/guardian. Last minute phone calls from a parent/guardian in an emergency are acceptable.

You can read our complete Security policy on our website under “Family Handbook, Policies, and Forms.”

## Student Cell Phones

Students are allowed to carry cell phones to school, however they must be turned in to the front desk each morning. The front desk will store student cell phones securely during the school day and return them to students at the end of their school day.

If a staff member sees a student cell phone during the school day, the phone will be taken and will not be returned until a parent comes to the school to pick it up.

You can read our complete Student Cell Phone policy on our website under “Family Handbook, Policies, and Forms.”

## USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech

disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD- 3027) found online at: How to File a Complaint, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Also, the District of Columbia Human Rights Act, approved December 13, 1977 (DC law 2-38; DC official code

§2- 1402.11(2006), as amended) states the following:

It shall be an unlawful discriminatory practice to do any of the following acts, wholly or partially for a discriminatory reason based upon the actual or perceived: race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family responsibilities, genetic information, disability, matriculation, or political affiliation of any individual. To file a complaint alleging discrimination on one of these bases, please contact the District of Columbia's Office of Human Rights at (202) 727-4559 or [ohr@dc.gov](mailto:ohr@dc.gov).



# Use of Breakthrough Montessori Facilities

Breakthrough is grounded in a commitment to authentic and meaningful community engagement. To this end, we will open our space to host members of the community for short-term events. If you are interested in requesting use of Breakthrough's facilities, please view our Facility Use policy located on our website (under "Family Handbook, Policies, and Forms") or contact Breakthrough's Director of Operations, Ino Okoawo at [ino@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:ino@breakthroughmontessori.org).

## Visitor and School Building Access Policy

To ensure school safety, visitors (including family members of enrolled students) may enter the school building between the times of 8:45am and 3:00pm. Due to children transitioning in and out of school between 7:45-8:45am and 3:00-4:00pm, Breakthrough Montessori does not allow visitors and family members to enter the building at these times without a previously scheduled meeting.

All visitors (including family members) to Breakthrough Montessori must follow the check-in procedure:

- Visitors must ring the bell located on the front door of the building on Willow Street.
- When prompted by the front desk receptionist, the visitor must state their name and the reason for their visit through the intercom system.
- The front desk receptionist will confirm the visitor has an approved or scheduled reason for being on school grounds. After confirming, the front desk receptionist will buzz the visitor into the building.
- Visitors must proceed directly to the front desk where they check in with the front desk receptionist.
- Visitors must provide their full name and show corresponding identification. They must write their name and check-in time in the visitor log at the front desk.
- The front desk receptionist will give the visitor a visitor's sticker or lanyard to demonstrate they are approved to be in the building.

- The visitor will wait in the front lobby for the school staff member with whom they have a meeting to greet them. Alternatively, the visitor may go directly to the office/room of the individual they are visiting, as long as they are escorted by a school staff member.
- At the end of the visit, the visitor must check out at the front desk. Breakthrough Montessori reserves the right to deny visitors access to the building

At all times, visitors must uphold Breakthrough's Community Values Policy (found in this Handbook), which is designed to ensure all students, staff, visitors, and families are safe and respected. This policy identifies certain actions that may never occur on Breakthrough property (including, but not limited to: cursing, yelling, threatening others, refusal to leave the building when asked, etc.) Visitors and family members are encouraged to review this policy in its entirety to understand the steps Breakthrough takes in response to serious violations of our Community Values Policy, which may include contacting law enforcement.

In certain circumstances, Breakthrough Montessori may deny visitors access to the building. Such circumstances are detailed in school policy, including (but not limited to): Breakthrough's Community Values Policy, COVID-19 Mitigation & Response Policy, Emergency Response & Mitigation Policy, and School Safety & Security Policy.

## Volunteer Chaperone Policy

In order to ensure the safety of our students, all adult volunteers who will be with our students during Breakthrough sponsored events or activities that take place overnight and/or off campus are required to have a background check on file. Accordingly, if you wish to chaperone a field trip or otherwise volunteer with students off campus, the process is the following:

1. Please submit your full name, birthdate, gender, social security number, and email address to Emily Hedin or to the front desk staff, along with a check for \$40 made out to Breakthrough Montessori PCS to cover the cost of the background check.
2. You will receive an email from SureHire, the company we use for background checks, asking you to authorize the background check.

3. Once you authorize, we will run the background check, which usually takes about 48 hours.
4. Once cleared, the background check is valid for two years, resetting August 1. Anytime during the school year that a background check is completed, it will be valid for that school year and the next. After two years, we will run the check again.

Here are a few notes of clarification:

1. SureHire does national and local background checks as well as checking the sex offender registry. It does not require fingerprinting. Things like convictions, reckless driving, etc., show up on the background check. Many of these things do not disqualify parents from participating in field trips, as our main concern is the safety of our children, and, for example, parents will never drive children in their personal cars.
2. Because we value your privacy, the information obtained in the background check is used solely for the purpose of approving volunteer service. All communication, written or electronic, including submissions or disclosures, will be kept confidential.
3. Due to administrative processes, volunteers will only be contacted should approval for volunteering be denied or if there is any needed follow up regarding your background check.
4. Breakthrough reserves the right to refuse volunteer service from anyone for any reason.

If you wish to submit any confidential disclosures and explanations with the background check, please feel free to send an email to [emily.hedin@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:emily.hedin@breakthroughmontessori.org).

## Walking Home from School

At Breakthrough Montessori, students in grades 3-6 may walk home or use Washington Metropolitan Area Transit without adult supervision. Parents/guardians must complete a Walk Home Waiver before their student(s) may be dismissed from school to walk home or use public transportation without adult supervision.

Children who walk home from school, as well as their families, must abide by the following guidelines:

1. The Walk Home waiver may only be used for students in grades 3-6. Students in PK3-Grade 2 are not eligible to walk home from school unaccompanied by an adult.
2. Upon receiving a Walk Home waiver, a member of Breakthrough Montessori's staff will release the student at the time indicated.
3. Students must leave school property at dismissal time and will not be allowed to linger on school grounds unless they are registered in an after school program and have checked in with the supervising staff for that specific after school activity.
4. If your family's plans change and your child(ren) need to follow a different school dismissal arrangement, please contact your child's guide as well as [operations@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:operations@breakthroughmontessori.org).