



Bella Mente Academies

Family Handbook 2025-2026

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Mission and Values

The mission of Bella Mente Academies is to provide students with the opportunity to acquire an education based on a quality curriculum founded on the educational philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. We promote an educational atmosphere that encourages socioeconomic diversity. At the end of the academic year, each Bella Mente scholar will be at or above grade level. Scholars will reach their full potential as independent lifelong learners with the skills, knowledge, and values to be compassionate members of a peaceful world. Scholars will have the skills to care for their bodies through healthy eating and living.

Bella Mente Academies (“BMA”) provides a Montessori curriculum, integrated with the common core standards, for students ranging from transitional kindergarten through eighth grade. ***Bella Mente is committed to serving the best interest of the student.*** Parental participation is strongly encouraged and highly valued in terms of the contribution it makes to the child's education and the school community. However, parental involvement is not a requirement for acceptance to, or continued enrollment at BMA.

High academic standards and expectations of achievement, with emphasis on core subjects, are maintained through adherence to these values:

- Creative, passionate, progressive teachers who are committed to the Montessori philosophy
- Responsibility, accountability, and freedom for individual student progress within the academic framework
- Challenges to develop critical reasoning, openness to encourage creativity, and opportunities to facilitate service
- High, unwavering standards of conduct, emphasizing respect for self and others, honesty, responsibility, and courtesy
- Emphasis on collaboration, peer governance, problem-solving, and goal-setting according to developmental readiness
- High parental involvement and collaboration in education and service

Core Beliefs

Dr. Montessori’s fundamental goal was to prepare the child for the “real world” and recognized that each student is a unique individual with unique personal, social, and educational needs. As a result, interactions with individual students may be unique in nature. In response to this, BMA has chosen to adopt a “principles-based” approach to professional conduct and school-wide behavior management. Under such an approach, BMA staff members have met and agreed upon a common set of principles, which shall serve as the basis for all interactions and decisions that may arise within the school community.

Empirical research has shown us that people learn in two ways: Through experience and by modeling. Recognizing that each person comes to our community with a different personality and a different set of life experiences, it is almost impossible to achieve total consistency of beliefs and actions within a staff. As we strive to acknowledge the unique nature of each student and staff member, consistency is achieved when social, academic and professional decisions are handled in a manner consistent with an agreed set of principles. Thus, staff members are encouraged to approach situations and decisions with the understanding that the coaching, counseling, and/or

consequences implemented shall be consistent with the set of values and principles agreed upon by the staff.

The following list of core beliefs outlines the professional attitudes and actions of all staff members of this school:

1. Our professional attitude is a mindset with a core belief that our actions and our words should always maintain the dignity and respect of both child and adult.
2. Adults will model appropriate and respectful behavior for students and will guide students to solve their own problems in any way that does not create a problem for others.
3. Students will be given opportunities to make decisions and live with the consequences, both positive and negative. These experiences shall serve as valuable learning opportunities for our students.
4. Students will be given the opportunity to make decisions about issues that affect themselves. Outcome of choices, including misbehavior, will be handled with natural and/or logical consequences instead of punishment, whenever possible.
5. Outcomes of choices and misbehavior will be viewed as opportunities for individual problem solving and preparation for the real world. Staff acknowledge that misbehaviors are not necessarily a personal attack on school or staff and acknowledge that other underlying personal or emotional issues may need to be considered.
6. In the event a consequence appears to be unfair, students are encouraged to request an opportunity to fully communicate their viewpoints and any additional facts regarding a situation with which they were involved.
7. School problems will be handled by school personnel. Criminal activity will be referred to the proper authorities.

Nondiscrimination Statement

The Charter School does not discriminate against any person on the basis of actual or perceived disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, immigration status, religion, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes in the California Penal Code.

The Charter School Board of Directors shall not refuse to approve the use or prohibit the use of any textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or other curriculum for classroom instruction or any book or other resource in a school library on the basis that it includes a study of the role and contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans, LGBTQ+ Americans, persons with disabilities, or members of other ethnic, cultural, religious, or socioeconomic status groups. The Charter School Board of Directors shall not adopt or approve the use of any textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or curriculum for classroom instruction if the use of such would subject a student to unlawful discrimination pursuant to Education Code section 220.

The Charter School adheres to all provisions of federal law related to students with disabilities, including, but not limited to, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (“ADA”), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (“IDEIA”).

The Charter School does not discourage students from enrolling or seeking to enroll in the Charter School for any reason, including, but not limited to, academic performance, disability, neglect or delinquency, English proficiency, for being homeless or a foster/mobile youth, economic disadvantage, nationality, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. The Charter School shall not encourage a student currently attending Charter School to disenroll or transfer to another school based on any of the aforementioned reasons except in cases of expulsion and suspension or involuntary removal in accordance with the Charter School’s charter and relevant policies.

The Charter School does not request nor require student records prior to a student’s enrollment.

The Charter School shall provide a copy of the California Department of Education Complaint Notice and Form to any parent, guardian, or student over the age of 18 at the following times: (1) when a parent, guardian, or student over the age of 18 inquires about enrollment; (2) before conducting an enrollment lottery; and (3) before disenrollment of a student.

The Charter School is committed to providing an educational atmosphere that is free of unlawful harassment under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (sex); Titles IV, VI, and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (race, color, or national origin); The Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the IDEIA; and Section 504 and Title II of the ADA (mental or physical disability).

The Charter School also prohibits sexual harassment, including cyber sexual bullying, and harassment based upon pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, race, religion, religious affiliation, creed, color, immigration status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital status, age, sexual orientation, or any other basis protected by federal, state, local law, ordinance or regulation.

The Charter School does not condone or tolerate harassment of any type, including discrimination, intimidation, or bullying, including cyber sexual bullying, by any employee, independent contractor or other person with which the Charter School does business, or any other individual, student, or volunteer. This applies to all employees, students, or volunteers and relationships, regardless of position or gender.

Pursuant to California law and the California Attorney General’s guidance to K-12 schools in responding to immigration issues (“Guidance”), Charter School provides equal access to free public education, regardless of a student’s or their parent’s or guardian’s immigration status or religious beliefs. The complete Guidance, including *Appendix G – Know Your Rights* can be found here: <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/bcj/school-guidance-modek12.pdf>.

The Charter School will promptly and thoroughly investigate any complaint of harassment and take appropriate corrective action, if warranted. Inquiries, complaints, or grievances regarding harassment as described in this section, above, should be directed to the Charter School Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) Compliance Officer:

Erin Feeley, Executive Director
Bella Mente Academies
1737 W. Vista Way
Vista, CA
760-621-8931
efeeley@bellamentecharter.org

The lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission or participation in the Charter School's programs or activities. The Charter School prohibits retaliation against anyone who files a complaint or who participates or refuses to participate in a complaint investigation.

Academic Program and Overview

Who was Maria Montessori?

Maria Montessori was a doctor, research scientist, and educator from the late 1800s – early 1900s who made observations about how children learn. The Montessori Philosophy of Education is based on Dr. Maria Montessori's observation that children have a natural desire to learn and that stages of development exist for which there should be corresponding educational environments and trained adults who prepare these environments. Children can learn independently in a prepared environment with teachers who guide and serve as the links between the student and the environment. By providing freedom of choice, this enriched learning environment cultivates individuals who learn to make independent decisions and to solve problems creatively. They learn to develop healthy social relationships, to develop skills in concentration, and to master basic academic and life skills. At BMA students are challenged to create, explore and imagine.

Montessori Education provides children with a lifetime gift – the opportunity to fully develop their innate intellectual, physical, social and emotional potential. BMA encourages parents to be an integral part of their child's education by learning about the Montessori philosophy, observing in the classrooms, and volunteering for events in the school. Volunteering in the classroom is not allowed to ensure a prepared and distraction free environment.

Montessori: "A Cosmic Approach to Education"

The Montessori philosophy was originally developed in the early 1900s by Dr. Maria Montessori to enhance a child's opportunities for learning, relevant to the student's relationship to the world around him/her. Over the years, the philosophy has evolved to challenge the whole child's personality and intellect in a variety of multicultural settings. Her teaching system is based on a strong integration of adult to child observation and practical hands-on activities. From her observations, she designed functional learning environments created to support and enhance a child's innate desire to learn about the world around him/her. Classroom materials offer learning experiences in a clear, concrete manner. Students are encouraged to use motor and intellectual discovery when working with these materials. There is an emphasis on the sequential and orderly acquisition of both motor and cognitive skills. This ordered work method also allows for individualization and usually offers a two to three-year age span within the classroom; enabling students to work and learn at their own pace, as well as in group settings. The integration of varied age spans allows older students to gain confidence by working and role modeling materials with

younger students. Collaborative learning and projects completed in groups encourage students to teach and learn with each other. This combination of order and freedom is facilitated by what is called "*the prepared environment*".

A well-prepared Montessori learning environment is given careful attention, allowing and encouraging the child accessibility to all materials she/he needs in performing and experiencing the step-by-step process of individual work. The classroom is thus arranged in a series of easily accessible shelves designed to accommodate specific work areas. This framework of organization gives accessibility to the necessary learning materials and frees the student to concentrate on the work, allowing an increase in independence and responsibility. This, in turn, decreases the need for direction from the teacher. As a result, children develop internal rather than external referencing. The teacher is also better able to observe the total classroom environment. Within Bella Mente, each classroom follows Montessori's concepts and is carefully designed to provide for the developmental needs of its students.

The areas of the classroom consist of materials to support learning in the core subjects of language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, and geometry while also providing concentrations in the areas of history, geography, and natural sciences (biology: botany, zoology; astronomy, etc.). Cultural subjects such as art, music, second languages and physical education are interwoven. Each class contains materials that teach specific concepts for the particular age range. The materials are designed in a logical sequence of skill acquisition and concept building while reinforcing the development of abstract thinking. In this way, the students observe and experience a movement toward self-set goals. The learning materials initially isolate knowledge to one concept at a time in a concrete manipulative style. Eventually, the child progresses toward an abstract, more divergent level of evaluation.

The Montessori teacher acts as a facilitator of information and is always responsible for what is called "making the match". Through observation and standardized assessments, the teacher assesses the needs and level of each student to guide him/her towards a path to meet his/her individual interests, maturity levels, capabilities and educational needs. As a result of these assessments, teachers can make adjustments in individual learning plans, both academically and behaviorally. The student who is in a period of self-directed activity can be given much freedom regarding choice. All students can work at their own speed and must demonstrate mastery of material before moving on.

BMA offers these prepared classrooms in a variety of age/grade combinations. In the early grades, students receive the foundation of the Montessori curriculum by learning and practicing the cornerstone concepts of:

- Care of Self
- Care of Environment
- Control of Movement, and *very importantly*,
- Grace and Courtesy

The elementary or cosmic approach to learning introduces educational opportunities in a new and exciting light. It is designed to begin with the aspects of impressions. For the first six years of life (first plane of development), the child has absorbed the world around him/her: visually, auditorily, and tactually. Mastery of concrete experiences has taken place. Moving into the second plane of

development, we can now begin an adventure of building abstractly on these early concrete experiences.

The following information is an overview of BMA’s philosophy for elementary (second plane of development) and middle school (third plane of development) Montessori programs. For this experience to be a successful adventure, it calls for a fully participating and committed team. We look forward to working with your child(ren) and your family and we welcome you as a member of this team dedicated to providing the most optimum learning environment for your child(ren).

Planes of Development

Developmental levels consist of distinct planes with certain characteristics that should be considered in formulating a plan for the child’s education. These varying characteristics may be considered from four distinct aspects:

Intellectual

Social

Emotional

Moral

Intellectual: Dr. Montessori identified two sensitive intellectual periods during the second and third planes: Imagination and the understanding of the abstract. Imagination is the great power of this age. This special mental ability enables us to imagine what exists or has existed but cannot be seen because of time or distance. Not only can imagination travel through infinite space but also through infinite time. So, the child aged 6 to 12, and then 12 to 16, uses a creative imagination based on reality in order to psychologically conquer the world.

At these ages, the student’s need to assimilate concepts using the concrete Montessori materials is still prevalent, and many appropriate materials are provided. The elementary and middle schoolaged child develops the ability to move from the concrete into abstraction of a concept, based on this repeated opportunity for concrete experience.

Between the ages of 6 to 16 is the period of life during which the elements of all science should be given. This time frame could be called the “sensitive period of culture.” In the early years of life, the child takes in her/his immediate environment. After the age of six, the child becomes involved in the greater community, growing into global awareness. In Montessori education the child is able to do this through “Cosmic Education.”

The starting point of Cosmic Education is to introduce a vision of the world as a whole. To offer culture in terms of a cosmic vision means to show the intimate and interrelated relationship between things, living nature, and humankind. It also means the ability to understand the cosmic task of each element and of each force in the cosmos, including our human society and each of us as individual members of society.

Social: In the second and third planes, the group beyond the family, the peer group, now attracts the child. Children begin to form a society of their own peers and resist adult control as far as possible. The basic moral principle in operation during these periods requires a commitment from the individual: The commitment of the individual to the peer group.

Emotional: The child aged 6 to 16 is generally less accommodating to adults. Dr. Montessori explained this developmental change in terms of Nature’s logic, whose aim is to arouse in the child not only a hunger for knowledge and understanding but also a claim to mental independence, a

desire to distinguish good and evil by one's own power, and to resist limitation by arbitrary authority.

Moral: During the second and third planes, a sensitive period of morality comes to the forefront. A concept of justice is born at this age, together with a growing understanding of the relationship between our acts and the needs of others. Children at these ages will react strongly against anything they regard as unjust or unfair.

According to Dr. Montessori, nature has equipped the children of this age (6-16) with the qualities of loyalty, generosity, a sense of responsibility, a strong sense of justice, admiration for what is outstanding and progressive, and a distaste for trivialities. The children of this age want to become self-sufficient, prove their new independence, and help their neighbor.

One of Montessori's basic principles is that the adult should understand the natural tendencies driving the child at each plane of development and cooperate with those tendencies rather than go against nature.

Basic Academic Areas of BMA's Montessori Educational Program

Montessori education offers a wide variety of academic study for all students, in a way that interrelates each subject to the others, which in turn supports the development of a better-rounded individual. One of the classic components of the Montessori approach is to provide uninterrupted units of work time for the students, to allow them ample opportunity to work through various academic tasks each day. At BMA, breaking the academic day into two distinct parts provides these units of work time: Core academics (Language Arts, Math, and Geometry) are most often presented in the morning, and cultural subjects, such as History, Geography, and Science are usually presented in the afternoon. Practical Life lessons are practiced daily (care of self, care of environment, control of movement, grace and courtesy), and subjects traditionally referred to as cultural in nature (fine art, performing art, second languages, etc.) are interwoven throughout the week.

Core Subjects

Reading and Language are essential for all areas of learning. Children learn phonetically through the use of tactile materials such as sandpaper letters, through auditory repetition and visual identification. Then they progress into reading and working independently through study cards (e.g. Albanesi) that give direction to their individualized program and to their research. Reading and language are integral parts of all cultural lessons.

Writing is used in almost every academic experience. Printing and cursive are developed in the early years, as the child is ready. Later, students develop formal writing and composition skills.

Basic Math facts (counting, addition and subtraction) are stressed as the prerequisite for accomplishing the more-advanced math that follows: fractions, long multiplication and division, powers of numbers, systems of numeration, squaring, and cubing.

Geometry is studied as it assists in the development of a creative capacity in the child. It is the foundation toward the construction of reality. This progression flows naturally from the 3-6 year old experience with sensorial materials.

Cultural Subjects

Subjects such as History, Geography, and Science are referred to as Cultural Lessons and are studied as interrelated aspects of the same world.

History begins with the concept of time and evolves each year through a study of the Fundamental Needs of Humans, the Timeline of Life, and Stages in the Progress of Civilization. Geography continues from the preschool period with completed work in maps. Successive work includes a study of landforms and their classified nomenclature in conjunction with the study of the earth as our home. Geology continues this study of the earth and its historical relationships.

Science encompasses units of study in areas such as Biology, Astronomy, and Chemistry in the later grades, and is presented in a way that allows the student to explore and observe the world around him/her. Biology is initially presented to younger students through dual studies divided between Botany and Zoology; beginning with Botanical and Zoological Classified Nomenclature. These units of study continue with experiments on vital functions of the plant kingdom and a comparative study of the vital functions of the different phyla and classes of the animal kingdom, progressing into a study of human functions and structure.

Research and Projects

Within the Montessori method, opportunities for study and projects on various levels of thinking are essential. Critical and creative-thinking skills are an integral link to the Montessori Cosmic philosophy and curriculum. Furthering a child's study and understanding of concepts is accomplished by applying their learning in research projects and presentations.

Homework Policy

Homework is not necessarily a traditional component of the Montessori philosophy but is crucial to the success of students at BMA. While students will not be given a burdensome amount of homework, teachers recognize the importance of their students completing follow-up activities in the home to supplement work completed in class. In addition, work which is not completed by the student during traditional in-class work periods will be sent home for the student to complete and return.

BMA teachers have developed their own homework practices that will be shared with parents/guardians during orientation at the beginning of each school year. When there is no assigned homework, we recommend that you encourage your child to read.

Character Education and Peace Education

Teaching Students to Become Contributing Members of Their Society

BMA recognizes that the role of the parent/guardian is paramount in developing civic values and ethical behavior in their children. Montessori curriculum is developed to encourage and support students in the further development of the civic values and ethical behaviors that support them to become responsible and caring citizens, family members, and workers within society. Character education is interwoven throughout the educational program and fosters qualities such as: honesty, respect for self, others and property, morality (understanding what is right, legal and ethical), responsibility, human dignity, empathy, justice, civility, courage, and concern for the common

good. BMA encourages all students to participate in community service projects to learn the importance of giving back to their community.

BMA believes in the dignity of all and that everyone, including students, families and staff, should be treated with dignity and respect. There is a great deal of diversity in the families we serve, and we strive to ensure that everyone feels welcome within our schools. Differences are celebrated! As a part of Cosmic Education (a study of each cosmic unit in relation to the whole), Maria Montessori was an advocate of Peace Education: the idea that the study and understanding of different cultures and societies would lead to acceptance and peace between nations. The breadth of the Montessori curriculum is designed to provide students with this exposure to a variety of cultures, societies, and beliefs, and to support students to be good citizens, as well as, progressive and compassionate thinkers and high-level communicators.

In accordance with this aim, BMA will not tolerate behavior by students, families, staff or visitors which is insulting, degrading or stereotyping of any disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in California Penal Code section 422.55.

Animal Dissections

Students at the Charter School may perform animal dissections as part of the science curriculum. Any student who provides their teacher with a written statement, signed by their parent/guardian, specifying the student's moral objection to dissecting or otherwise harming or destroying animals, or any parts thereof, may be excused from such activities if the teacher believes that an adequate alternative education project is possible. The alternative education project shall require a comparable time and effort investment by the student. It shall not, as a means of penalizing the student, be more arduous than the original education project. The student shall not be discriminated against based upon their moral objection to dissecting or otherwise harming or destroying animals, or any parts thereof.

Availability of Prospectus

Upon request, the Charter School will make available to any parent or legal guardian, a school prospectus, which shall include the curriculum, including titles, descriptions, and instructional aims of every course offered. Please note that, pursuant to law, the Charter School may charge for the prospectus in an amount not to exceed the cost of duplication.

Sexual Health Education

The Charter School offers comprehensive sexual health education to its students in grades 7-8. A parent or guardian of a student has the right to excuse their child from all or part of comprehensive sexual health education, HIV prevention education, and assessments related to that education through a passive consent ("opt-out") process. The Charter School does not require active parental consent ("opt-in") for comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education. Parents and guardians may:

- Inspect written and audiovisual educational materials used in comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education.
 - Excuse their child from participation in comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education in writing to the Charter School.
 - Be informed whether the comprehensive sexual health or HIV/AIDS prevention education will be taught by Charter School personnel or outside consultants. When the Charter School chooses to use outside consultants or to hold an assembly with guest speakers to teach comprehensive sexual health or HIV/AIDS prevention education, be informed of:
 - The date of the instruction
 - The name of the organization or affiliation of each guest speaker ●
- Request a copy of Education Code sections 51930 through 51939.

Anonymous, voluntary, and confidential research and evaluation tools to measure students' health behaviors and risks (including tests, questionnaires, and surveys containing age-appropriate questions about the student's attitudes concerning or practices relating to sex) may be administered to students in grades 7-12. A parent or guardian has the right to excuse their child from the test, questionnaire, or survey through a passive consent ("opt-out") process. Parents or guardians shall be notified in writing that this test, questionnaire, or survey is to be administered, given the opportunity to review the test, questionnaire, or survey if they wish, notified of their right to excuse their child from the test, questionnaire, or survey, and informed that in order to excuse their child they must state their request in writing to the Charter School.

A student may not attend any class in comprehensive sexual health education or HIV prevention education, or participate in any anonymous, voluntary, and confidential test, questionnaire, or survey on student health behaviors and risks if the Charter School has received a written request from the student's parent or guardian excusing the student from participation. An alternative educational activity shall be made available to students whose parents or guardians have requested that they not receive the instruction or participate in the test, questionnaire, or survey.

The Montessori Classroom Environment

In Montessori education, the whole child must always be considered. Thus, it is in the best interest of the student that home and school environments are consistent. For positive development of the body, mind, and spirit; the physical, mental, emotional, social, and academic needs of the child must constantly be taken into consideration. At BMA, this is our first priority. To be successful, staff AND parents need to be committed to the following precepts:

- BMA has chosen to implement the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori versus a traditional educational approach. Therefore, BMA classrooms and school environment will operate using the concepts and methodology of Montessori.
- BMA believes that children need proactive and positive affirmation regarding self- image and esteem.
- BMA provides guidance in the area of behavior and attitudes; and recognizes that each child has a unique personality, likes and dislikes, values, strengths and challenges. Uniqueness of the child will be honored while providing guidance.
- Each class establishes rules within the first week of the school year. It is the expectation that these rules are set with the understanding that everyone will respect and follow them. This

provides the child with the ability to reason and think for her/himself and to experience natural consequences for her/his choices.

- At BMA, children are encouraged to communicate in a respectful, assertive and socially acceptable manner. An atmosphere in which students feel safe to express their differing viewpoints will be provided, as well as guidance with conflict resolution.
- All levels and styles of learning are encouraged. BMA references both Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theories and Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Thought Process structures to enhance the critical thinking skills of all students.
- Placement, pretests and posttests are conducted in language arts and mathematics. Reading assessments will be conducted for reading readiness.
- At BMA, personal responsibility and accountability is taught and practiced. Guidelines, limits, freedom of choice, and consequences will be made understandable to the students.
- BMA will provide clear and timely communication to families in all areas of the educational program.

TK/Kindergarten Program: (culmination of ages 4 to 6 years)

TK/Kindergarten is the culmination of the early childhood program which addresses the needs of the child during the first plane of development. Within this class, students transition from parallel play to an attitude of cooperative play. During this stage of development, the child gravitates toward a desire to work along with her/his peers. The TK/Kindergarten classroom allows these concepts to develop naturally through the role modeling of the teachers as well as the integration of age levels and interests.

In the TK/Kindergarten environment, the students *explore Montessori materials*. In mathematics, the Golden Bead Material is used to introduce the decimal system and progresses into the four mathematical operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) in a concrete fashion. The Sensorial area concentrates more on geometry that eventually ties in with concepts in math. Language and reading materials guide the child toward recognition of the alphabet both by letter name and phonetically. "Sight words," those words in the English language not phonetically pronounced, are introduced gradually.

Upon mastery of the above foundational tasks, pre-reading and reading skills are integrated with the use of small primer books designed to allow the child to read successfully at their own level. Writing extensions are now integrated to strengthen the interest in reading. D'Nealian style manuscript handwriting is incorporated in all areas of the classroom, both in pre-writing or tracing activities, along with actual experience stories. The students move through writing of lower case letters first, and follow with the upper case, capital letters.

The Practical Life area of the classroom enables the child to extend her/his concentration, coordination, and independence into a stronger sense of order for the future. In Kindergarten, the cultural lessons explore the areas of zoology, botany, geography, history, art and music. Within each area, specific units of study are presented. Physical Education is also explored within a group process, both indoors and out.

Lower Elementary Program: First through Third Grade Levels (ages 6 to 9)

BMA focuses on the aspects of the Cosmic Curriculum of Montessori philosophy. We work toward continuously increasing self-direction and independence of the junior child, age 6- 9 years. In

achieving these goals, the students gain strong self-concepts and effective roles of direction in self responsibility. Our staff believes that to provide an appropriate learning environment for the child, we must encourage opportunities for reflective thinking, problem solving, and critical evaluation. Our environment provides opportunities for creative expression and encourages divergent thinking skills. We can allow and encourage your child's personal rate of learning, and can vary our teaching strategies to accommodate the needs of each individual student.

The curriculum is specifically designed with the elementary child in mind. We integrate the structure of Dr. Montessori's methodology, by using the core subjects of Language Arts, Mathematics, and Geometry, within the Cultural Subjects (including but not limited to: History, Geography, Zoology, and Botany) as our foundation of knowledge. Chromebooks are used to familiarize students with the workings of technology, keyboarding skills, and simple research are available in each classroom. Physical Education is based on California standards and occurs within the school week.

BMA integrates the expectations of the common core standards for this age and developmental stage and has paid careful attention to aligning the Montessori curriculum with state standards across the board. If you would like to view the curriculum for a particular level, please feel free to ask the teacher.

Upper Elementary Program: Fourth through Sixth Grade Levels (ages 9 to 12)

The philosophy of Montessori education is to encourage the student to classify, analyze, and evaluate information based on the introduction of any given academic subject matter from an impressionistic viewpoint. The goal for the student is to take information and apply it to real life experiences. These experiences then create opportunities for critical thinking and logical analysis.

The upper elementary curriculum continues to be specifically designed with the elementary child in mind. Core subjects of Language Arts, Mathematics, and Geometry are integrated throughout the Cultural Subjects (including but not limited to: History, Geography, and Science) as they remain the base for further knowledge and deeper exploration. Computer technology and research skills are taught to enhance the students' academic experience and prepare them for future academic and professional applications. Physical Education is a regular component of the curriculum, as well.

The upper elementary expectations of the common core standards for this age and developmental group serve as a minimum standard, with the Montessori curriculum often surpassing these minimum standards and offering students personal challenges toward academic excellence.

“Normalization”

Dr. Montessori used the terms “normal” and “normalization” to describe a unique process she observed in child development. When children are allowed freedom in an environment suited to their needs, they blossom. After a period of intense concentration, working with materials that fully engage their interest, children appear to be refreshed and content. Through continued concentrated work at their own academic level, children grow in inner discipline and peace. This progression of self-development and harmony is what Dr. Montessori referred to as the “normalization process”. Dr. Montessori cited “normalization” as “the single most important result of our work” (“The Absorbent Mind”, by Dr. Maria Montessori, 1949).

At the beginning of each school year, you will hear teachers and other staff members refer to the period of normalization. This is a time when students are acclimating to their new environment, their new teachers, and their new classmates. This is also the time when students will be learning how to use the bulk of new classroom materials and working to establish expectations and order within their classroom peer group. Once students have had a chance to “normalize”, parents will begin to observe a very wonderful routine and structure to the daily and weekly classroom activity.

Materials in the Montessori Classroom

BMA has developed a process for carefully reviewing and selecting all of the instructional materials, textbooks, and library books used in our school. Our review process is very important to ensure that your children have the best possible instructional tools and to assure consistency throughout our program.

For the younger students in the Montessori classroom, learning materials are arranged invitingly on low, open shelves. The materials are beautiful and inviting, increasing the child’s interest in using them. During specified periods of uninterrupted work time, children may choose from all the lessons that have been demonstrated to them, particularly those that attract their interest, and work with them as long as they hold the child’s interest (independence and freedom of choice). When students have finished with each lesson (job), they return it to the shelf from which it came (care of environment and self-responsibility).

Each lesson in a Montessori classroom isolates one specific quality. In this way, the concept that the child is to discover is presented more clearly. Moreover, the materials are self-correcting. When a piece does not fit, or is left over, the child easily perceives the error, thus eliminating the need for adult correction. The child is able to solve problems independently; building self- confidence and analytical thinking skills, and earning the satisfaction that comes from accomplishment.

For the older students, instructional materials are appropriate to their level of learning and a higher level of independent work takes place. New concepts are introduced using the Montessori materials, and as understanding takes place, the students move to abstract work with the concept. Many of the same Montessori materials introduced in the lower grades are utilized once again in the upper elementary classroom, but are used for more complex curriculum.

Movies shown in class

Occasionally educational movies will be shown at school. These movies have been reviewed by staff and are shown specifically for their educational content in conjunction with the relative curriculum. “G” rated non-educational movies may be shown on occasion. Appropriate PG movies will require prior parental permission. No movies rated PG-13, R, X, or NC-17 by the motion picture industry are shown at any grade level.

Instructional Use of the Internet: School Use of Internet Services is a Privilege

BMA recognizes the necessity for students of today to be computer literate, and computers are provided in each classroom for student use. Before students may use the Internet at school, they must have parent/guardian permission on file and meet with their teachers to review school policies regarding Internet use, along with the consequences for not following these policies. Students wishing to use the Internet will sign an agreement to abide by these policies. The policy details

what is expected of anyone using the Internet, email services, designing a webpage, researching, or using education programs online. Content filters are installed by BMA to eliminate exposure to undesirable Internet sites.

School Use of Internet Guidelines include:

- Use of the Internet is a privilege.
- Those under 18 may not reveal their last names, addresses, or phone numbers.
- All content on school computers, servers, emails, and drives is subject to periodic review and that by using these resources, the user acknowledges that there is no guarantee of privacy.
- Messages related to or supporting illegal activities will be reported to authorities, and messages are subject to the same restrictions as any material prepared for distribution.
- Transmission or reception of copyrighted material; material protected by trade secret; product advertisement or political lobbying; material that is obscene, libelous, slanderous, gangrelated, incites students and/or staff to create a clear and present danger by promoting unlawful acts on school grounds, violation of school regulations, or disrupts orderly operation of school are prohibited and will result in termination of the user's Internet privileges. Additionally, the user will be subject to all applicable consequences.
- Acts of vandalism, such as knowingly downloading or uploading computer viruses, will result in termination of the user's Internet privileges and will subject the user to all applicable consequences, including but not limited to financial restitution from the family to repair/replace damaged equipment and resources.

The Technology Use Agreement signed by students, parents, and teachers may be viewed on the BMA website and the end of this document.

Special Education and Students with Disabilities

BMA desires and is dedicated to the belief that all students can learn and must be guaranteed equal opportunity to become contributing members of the academic environment and society. The Charter School provides special education instruction and related services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act ("IDEA"), Education Code requirements, and applicable policies and procedures of the SELPA. California law requires public schools, including charter schools, to provide a free appropriate public education to all students, including those with exceptional needs. Although most students' needs are met through the traditional Montessori curriculum, occasionally supplemental services are needed. BMA may arrange for outside agencies or a neighboring school district to provide these services if they are not available at the BMA campus. We offer high quality educational programs and services for all our students in accordance with the assessed needs of each student. The Charter School collaborates with parents, the student, teachers, and other agencies, as may be indicated, in order to appropriately serve the educational needs of each student.

Pursuant to the IDEA and relevant state law, the Charter School is responsible for identifying, locating, and evaluating children enrolled at the Charter School with known or suspected disabilities to determine whether a need for special education and related services exists. This includes children with disabilities who are homeless or foster youth. The Charter School shall not deny nor discourage any student from enrollment solely due to a disability. If you believe your

child may be eligible for special education services, please contact the Director of Special Education.

Section 504

The Charter School recognizes its legal responsibility to ensure that no qualified person with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program of the Charter School. Any student who has an objectively identified disability which substantially limits a major life activity, including, but not limited to learning, is eligible for accommodations by the Charter School. The parent of any student suspected of needing or qualifying for accommodations under Section 504 may make a referral for an evaluation to the Executive Director. A copy of the Charter School's Section 504 policies and procedures is available upon request from the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Education of Foster and Mobile Youth

Definitions: For the purposes of this annual notice the terms are defined as follows:

- *“Foster youth”* means any of the following:
 1. A child who has been removed from their home pursuant to Section **309** of the California Welfare and Institutions Code (“WIC”).
 2. A child who is the subject of a petition filed pursuant to WIC section 300 or 602 (whether or not the child has been removed from the child’s home by juvenile court).
 3. A child who is the subject of a petition filed pursuant WIC section 602, has been removed from the child’s home by the juvenile court, and is in foster care.
 4. A nonminor under the transition jurisdiction of the juvenile court, as described in WIC section 450, who satisfies all of the following criteria:
 - a. The nonminor has attained 18 years of age while under an order of foster care placement by the juvenile court.
 - b. The nonminor is in foster care under the placement and care responsibility of the county welfare department, county probation department, Indian tribe, consortium of tribes, or tribal organization.
 - c. The nonminor is participating in a transitional independent living case plan.
 5. A dependent child of the court of an Indian tribe, consortium of tribes, or tribal organization who is the subject of a petition filed in the tribal court.¹
 6. A child who is the subject of a voluntary placement agreement, as defined in WIC section 11400.

- *“Former juvenile court school student”* means a student who, upon completion of the student’s second year of high school, transfers from a juvenile court school to the Charter School.

¹ The Charter School shall not require an Indian tribe or tribal court representative to certify that any student is a dependent of an Indian tribe, consortium of tribes, or tribal organization.

- *“Child of a military family”* refers to a student who resides in the household of an active duty military member.
- *“Currently Migratory Child”* refers to a child who, within the last 12-months, has moved

with a parent, guardian, or other person having custody to the Charter School from another Local Educational Agency (“LEA”), either within California or from another state, so that the child or a member of the child’s immediate family might secure temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity, and whose parents or guardians have been informed of the child’s eligibility for migrant education services. This includes a child who, without the parent/guardian, has continued to migrate annually to secure temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity.

- *“Newcomer pupil”* is a person aged 3 to 21 years, who was not born in any of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and has not been attending one or more schools in any one or more of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, for more than three (3) full academic years.
- *“Educational Rights Holder” (“ERH”)* means a parent, guardian, or responsible adult appointed by a court to make educational decisions for a minor pursuant to WIC sections 319, 361 or 726, or a person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student pursuant to Education Code section 56055.
- *“School of origin”* means the school that the foster youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the foster youth was last enrolled. If the school the foster youth attended when permanently housed is different from the school in which the student was last enrolled, or if there is some other school that the foster youth attended within the immediately preceding 15 months, the Charter School liaison for foster youth, in consultation with and with the agreement of the foster youth and the ERH for the youth, shall determine, in the best interests of the foster youth, the school that shall be deemed the school of origin. For a foster youth who is an individual with exceptional needs as defined in Education Code section 56026, “school” as used in the definition of “school of origin” includes a placement in a nonpublic, nonsectarian school as defined in Education Code section 56034, subject to the requirements of Education Code section 56325.
- *“Best interests”* means that, in making educational and school placement decisions for a foster youth, consideration is given to, among other factors, the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational program and the foster youth’s access to academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all Charter School students.
- *“Partial coursework satisfactorily completed”* includes any portion of an individual course, even if the student did not complete the entire course.

Within this notice, foster youth, former juvenile court school students, a child of a military family, a currently migratory child, and a newcomer pupil will be collectively referred to as “Foster and

Mobile Youth.” Within this notice, a parent, guardian, or other person holding the educational rights for a Foster and Mobile Youth will be referred to as a “parent/guardian” or “ERH.”

Foster and Mobile Youth Liaison: The Executive Director or designee designates the following staff person as the Liaison for Foster and Mobile Youth:

Gladys Espino, Director of Support Services and Child Nutrition Services
1737 W. Vista Way
Vista, CA 92083
760-621-8948
gespino@bellamentecharter.org

The Foster and Mobile Youth Liaison’s responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

1. Ensuring and facilitating the proper educational placement, enrollment in school, and checkout from school of foster children.
2. Assisting foster children when transferring from one school to another school in ensuring proper transfer of credits, records and grades.

School Stability: The Charter School will work with foster youth and their parent/guardian to ensure that each student is placed in the least restrictive educational programs, and has access to the academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all students, including, but not necessarily limited to, interscholastic sports. All decisions regarding a foster youth’s education and placement will be based on the best interest of the child and shall consider, among other factors, educational stability and the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress.

Foster youth, currently migratory children and children of military families have the right to remain in their school of origin if it is in their best interest. The Charter School will immediately enroll a foster youth, currently migratory child or child of a military family seeking reenrollment in the Charter School as the student’s school of origin (subject to the Charter School’s capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the Charter School’s charter and Board policy). If a dispute arises regarding a foster youth’s request to remain in the Charter School as the school of origin, the foster youth has the right to remain in the Charter School pending the resolution of the dispute. The Charter School will also immediately enroll any foster youth, currently migratory child or child of a military family seeking to transfer to the Charter School (subject to the Charter School’s capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the Charter School’s charter and Board policy) regardless of the student’s ability to meet normal enrollment documentation or uniform requirements (e.g., producing medical records or academic records from a previous school).

Foster youth, currently migratory children, and children of military families have the right to remain in their school of origin following the termination of the child’s status as a foster youth, currently migratory child or child of a military family, as follows:

For students in Kindergarten through eighth grade, inclusive, the student will be allowed to continue in the school of origin through the duration of the academic year in which the student's status changed.

If the Charter School operates an intersession program, Charter School shall grant priority access to foster youths. Notwithstanding any other law, if the foster youth will be moving during an intersession period, the pupil's educational rights holder, or Indian custodian in the case of an Indian child, shall determine which school the pupil attends for the intersession period, if applicable. "Intersession program" means an expanded learning program offered by the Charter School on non school days, including, but not limited to, summer school. "Indian custodian" is as the term is defined in Section 1903 of Title 25 of the United States Code.

Acceptance of Course Work: The Charter School will accept any coursework satisfactorily completed at any public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency by a Foster and Mobile Youth.

The Charter School will provide Foster and Mobile Youth credit for the partial completion of courses taken while attending a public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency. If the student did not complete the entire course, the Charter School shall not require the student to retake the portion of the course the student completed unless the Charter School, in consultation with the holder of educational rights for the student, finds that the pupil is reasonably able to complete the requirements in time to graduate from high school. When partial credit is awarded in a particular course, the Foster and Mobile Youth shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so that the student may continue and complete the entire course. These students shall not be prevented from taking or retaking a course to meet California State University or the University of California admission eligibility requirements.

Student Records: When the Charter School receives a transfer request and/or student records request for the educational information and records of a foster youth from a new local educational agency ("LEA"), the Charter School shall provide these student records within two (2) business days. The Charter School shall compile the complete educational record of the student, including but not limited to a determination of seat time, full or partial credits earned, current classes and grades, immunization and other records, and, if applicable, a copy of the student's special education records including assessments, IEPs, and/or 504 plans. All requests for student records will be shared with the Foster and Mobile Youth Liaison, who shall be aware of the specific educational recordkeeping needs of Foster and Mobile Youth.

The Charter School shall not lower a foster youth's grades as a result of the student's absence due to a verified court appearance, related court ordered activity, or a change the placement of the student made by a county or placing agency. If a foster youth is absent from school due to a decision to change the placement of the student made by a county or placing agency, the grades and credits of the pupil will be calculated as of the date the student left the Charter School.

In accordance with the Charter School's educational records and student information Policy, under limited circumstances, the Charter School may disclose student records or personally identifiable

information contained in those records to certain requesting parties including but not limited to a foster family agency and state and local authorities within a juvenile justice system, without parent/guardian consent.

Discipline Determinations: If the Charter School intends to extend the suspension of any foster youth pending a recommendation for expulsion, the Charter School will invite the student’s attorney and an appropriate representative from the relevant county agency to participate in the meeting at which the extension of the suspension will be discussed.

If the Charter School intends to suspend for more than ten (10) consecutive school days or expel a student with a disability who is also a foster youth due to an act for which the recommendation for expulsion is discretionary, the Charter School will invite the student’s attorney and an appropriate representative from the relevant county agency to participate in the Manifestation Determination Review meeting.

Complaints of Noncompliance: A complaint of noncompliance with any of the requirements outlined above may be filed through the Charter School’s Uniform Complaint Procedures. A copy of the Uniform Complaint Policy and Procedures is available upon request at the Front Office.

Availability of Complete Policy: For any Foster and Mobile Youth who enrolls at the Charter School, a copy of the Charter School’s complete foster youth policy shall be provided at the time of enrollment. A copy of the complete Policy is available upon request at the Front Office.

Education of Homeless Children and Youth

The term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. It includes children and youths who (42 U.S.C. § 11434a):

1. Are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
2. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
3. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and/or
4. Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition of “homeless.”

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the parent or guardian. In the case of unaccompanied youth, status is determined by the Charter School Liaison.

School Liaison: The Executive Director or designee designates the following staff person as the School Liaison for homeless students (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii))

Gladys Espino, Director of Support Services and Child Nutrition Services
1737 W. Vista Way
Vista, CA 92083
760-621-8948

gespino@bellamentecharter.org

The Charter School Liaison shall ensure that (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)):

1. Homeless students are identified by Charter School personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies and through the annual housing questionnaire administered by the Charter School
2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at the Charter School.
3. Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act, early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, any other preschool programs administered by the Charter School, if any, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
4. Parents/guardians are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places frequented by parents or guardians of such youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, and in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless youth and unaccompanied youth.
6. Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with law, the Charter School's charter, and Board policy.
7. Parents/guardians and any unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
8. Charter School personnel providing services receive professional development and other support.
9. The Charter School Liaison collaborates with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.

10. Unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school; have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth; and are informed of their status as independent students under section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and that the youths may obtain assistance from the Charter School Liaison to receive verification of such status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid described in section 483 of the Act.

The California Department of Education publishes a list of the contact information for the Homeless Education Liaisons in the state, which is available at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>

Housing Questionnaire: Charter School shall administer a housing questionnaire for purposes of identifying homeless children and youth. Charter School shall ensure that the housing questionnaire is based on the best practices developed by the CDE. Charter School shall annually provide the housing questionnaire to all parents/guardians of students and to all unaccompanied youths at Charter School. The housing questionnaire shall include an explanation of the rights and protections a student has as a homeless child or youth or as an unaccompanied youth. The housing questionnaire shall be available in paper form. The housing questionnaire shall be available in English, and if fifteen (15) percent or more of the students enrolled at Charter School speak a single primary language other than English, it shall also be written in the primary language. The questionnaire shall be translated into other languages upon request of a student's parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth. Charter School shall collect the completed housing questionnaires and annually report to the CDE the number of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled. (Education Code Section 48851.)

School Stability: The Charter School will work with homeless students and their parent/guardian to ensure that each student is placed in the least restrictive educational programs, and has access to the academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all students, including, but not necessarily limited to, interscholastic sports. All decisions regarding a homeless student's education and placement will be based on the best interest of the child and shall consider, among other factors, educational stability and the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress.

Homeless students have the right to remain in their school of origin if it is in their best interest. The Charter School will immediately enroll a homeless student seeking reenrollment in the Charter School as the student's school of origin (subject to the Charter School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the Charter School's charter and Board policy). The Charter School will also immediately enroll any homeless student seeking to transfer to the Charter School (subject to the Charter School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the Charter School's charter and Board policy) regardless of the student's ability to meet normal enrollment documentation or uniform requirements (e.g., producing medical records or academic records from a previous school).

Homeless students have the right to remain in their school of origin following the termination of the child's status as a homeless student as follows:

For students in Kindergarten through eighth grade, inclusive, the student will be allowed to continue in the school of origin through the duration of the academic year in which the student's status changed.

If the Charter School operates an intersession program, Charter School shall grant priority access to homeless students. Notwithstanding any other law, if the homeless student will be moving during an intersession period, the pupil's parent, guardian, educational rights holder, Indian custodian ² in the case of an Indian child, or, if none of the preceding are applicable, an accompanied homeless student themselves shall determine which school the pupil attends for the intersession period, if applicable. "Intersession program" means an expanded learning program offered by the Charter School on non school days, including, but not limited to, summer school. "Indian custodian" is as the term is defined in Section 1903 of Title 25 of the United States Code.

Acceptance of Course Work: The Charter School will accept any coursework satisfactorily completed at any public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency by a homeless student.

The Charter School will provide homeless students credit for the partial completion of courses taken while attending a public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency. If the student did not complete the entire course, the Charter School shall not require the student to retake the portion of the course the student completed unless the Charter School, in consultation with the holder of educational rights for the student, finds that the student is reasonably able to complete the requirements in time to graduate from high school. When partial credit is awarded in a particular course, the homeless student shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so that the student may continue and complete the entire course. These students shall not be prevented from taking or retaking a course to meet California State University or the University of California admission eligibility requirements.

Complaints of Noncompliance: A complaint of noncompliance with any of the requirements outlined above may be filed through the Charter School's Uniform Complaint Procedures. A copy of the Uniform Complaint Policy and Procedures is available upon request at the Front Office or can be found online at www.bellamentecharter.org.

Availability of Complete Policy: For any homeless student who enrolls at the Charter School, a copy of the Charter School's complete policy shall be provided at the time of enrollment. A copy of the complete Policy is available upon request at the Front Office.

The Faculty of Bella Mente Academies

The Montessori teacher observes and participates in all classroom activities. The goal of each staff member is to assure that each student's needs are being met from the perspectives of safety, physical and emotional well-being, and academic excellence.

The style of teaching in a Montessori "prepared environment" is quite different from that of the teacher in a traditional classroom, who imparts the same lesson to all the children at the same time.

² "Indian custodian" means any Indian person who has legal custody of an Indian child under tribal law or custom or under State law or to whom temporary physical care, custody, and control has been transferred by the parent of such child. *Section 1903 of Title 25 of the United States Code*

In a Montessori "prepared environment," the teacher's role is more of a guide or facilitator of the many different concurrent learning projects. To do this effectively requires special training to observe each child for signs of readiness, and to select the appropriate material to introduce at the appropriate time.

BMA is committed to the preservation and implementation of Montessori methodology, principles and curriculum within its educational program. All teachers shall hold a California Commission on Teacher Credentialing certificate, permit, or other document equivalent to that which a teacher in other public schools would be required to hold, except that flexibility shall be given with regard to teachers of noncore, non-college preparatory courses who were employed at BMA in 2019/2020. One of the goals of Bella Mente Academies is for all teachers to have both their Montessori and California credentials. When a teacher has only one of these credentials, she/he will enroll in an approved program to obtain the other. In each Primary and Lower Elementary classroom, an instructional assistant will be available to assist the teacher. BMA instructional assistants have knowledge and/or background in early childhood education as well as previous successful experience working with children and have met the criteria set forth in the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("ESEA"), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA"). These staff positions are supervised by the lead teacher.

BMA promotes and teaches the concepts and skills of positive discipline through verbal reasoning and conflict resolution. BMA believes that by role modeling these aspects of growth within a consistent program, students will develop a sense of responsibility and a desire to work and learn in a cooperative manner with others.

As a learning environment, BMA is committed to providing faculty with a highly professional environment within which they are safe to grow, to continue their own professional development, and to nurture their own personal love of learning. In keeping with this goal, BMA has designed a comprehensive teacher support program and regularly offers a variety of staff development opportunities throughout the school year.

As a Montessori teacher, preparation of self is equally important to preparation of the environment. All BMA teachers are provided with morning and afternoon preparation time to allow them an opportunity to feel well organized prior to greeting their first student of the day. Staff are encouraged to take a few minutes each morning for self-reflection to allow for proper mental preparation before class begins. Please be respectful of these preparation times by keeping interruptions before school to a minimum. Teachers are always willing to schedule in advance a convenient time to meet with parents/guardians and answer questions or address concerns. Parents/guardians are also encouraged to send in written notes or communicate through the classroom email to which the teacher should respond within one or two school days.

Teacher Qualification Information

As the Charter School receives Title I federal funds through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("ESEA"), as reauthorized and amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA"), all parents/guardians of students attending the Charter School may request information regarding the professional qualifications of classroom teachers and/or paraprofessionals, including at a minimum:

1. Whether the student's teacher:

- a. Has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
 - b. Is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria have been waived; and
 - c. Is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher; and
2. Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

Upon request, the Charter School will provide the information to the parents/guardians in a timely manner. Parents/guardians may contact the Executive Director to obtain this information.

Montessori Assessments, Testing, Progress Reports and Report Cards

Assessment in the Montessori classroom is the hourly, daily, and weekly appraisal of student progress at BMA. Early in their educational career at BMA, students learn self-assessment from the prepared environment of self-correcting materials and the examples/modeling provided by the adult teaching staff. Self-assessment, self-reflection and self-correction are important lifelong skills that students acquire from the earliest years in a Montessori environment. Additionally, students also learn from their earliest years that their learning is a partnership with their teachers and parents.

Adults and students establish and agree upon daily, weekly, and monthly goals. Teachers maintain written records of the work presented and mastered, and each child has an individualized “work plan” which is used to guide them through the lessons and academic work required for that week.

At any given time, a Montessori teacher knows precisely where a child is: academically, developmentally, socially and emotionally. With frequent one-on-one interaction and individual, personalized assessment of student work by the classroom teacher, issues and concerns are quickly addressed as they emerge.

BMA teachers conduct assessments for placement in Math. Posttests are conducted to assess student mastery of concepts. Reading assessments are conducted for appropriate reading levels, and additional assessment tools are utilized to determine areas where a student may need reinforcement, as well as to demonstrate a student’s academic advancement in any subject area.

In such a highly structured program, parents/guardians are alerted quickly to any concerns throughout the year. Additionally, BMA provides formal documentation of the student’s progress two times each year: Progress reports are presented to the parents/guardians at Parent/Teacher Conferences twice each year (in the Fall and the Spring), and end-of-semester reports are sent home in January and June). BMA’s grade reports have been carefully designed to give parents/guardians and students a progressive account of the student’s academic mastery with the common core standards.

Mastery of concepts at a student’s ability level is balanced with information pertaining to the state grade level standards. A student’s goal is to attain proficiency/mastery in all subject areas, yet we recognize that some students may require more time to reach this goal. Effort put forth in their lessons at their ability level is also a necessary element in determining a child’s progress. Conversely, a student whose abilities are above grade level will be challenged academically, and the assessments will reflect that advanced work.

Through this multi-level approach, performance and progress, not grades, become the focus of assessment and the heart of any discussion about the child.

Annual State Testing

As a public school, BMA shall annually administer required state testing assessments (e.g., the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress [“CAASPP”]) for all students in grades 3 through 8. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a parent’s or guardian’s written request to Charter School officials to excuse their child from any or all parts of the CAASPP shall be granted. Upon request, parents have a right to information on the level of achievement of their student on every State academic assessment administered to the student.

The process and results of such state measurements can be used as one of many indicators of an individual child’s progress from year to year. Seen in this light, state assessments can be useful - to help parents/guardians, teachers and the student develop individual academic work plans.

Each spring BMA participates in the state’s official assessment system, the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP):

- Smarter Balanced English language arts/literacy and mathematics assessments (grades three through eight)
- California Alternate Assessment (CAA)
- California Science Test (CAST)
- CAA for Science
- English Language Proficiency Assessments of California (English Learners)

Testing materials are processed by state specified agencies and individual results are usually available in late summer/early fall. All assessment reports are sent to the school and will be loaded into our student management system, PowerSchool, for parent viewing.

School Records and Student Privacy

Your child’s school record is available for your access by making a request to the Front Office. You may request an amendment of your student’s education records if you believe that there is an inaccuracy. These records are confidential and unavailable to other outside unauthorized parties. For more information about student records, please see the section below regarding the Educational Records and Student Information within this Handbook.

Special Occasions and Events

Birthdays

Children love to share their birthdays. BMA prefers parents/guardians bring an item such as a book to donate to the classroom library to honor their child’s birthday instead of a snack. If a parent/guardian desires to bring a snack, it must follow BMA’s Student Food and Beverage Snack List. Please see the section in this Handbook for more information.

School Holidays and Vacation Periods

Please see the BMA school calendar for a schedule of days off and intersession services throughout the year. The calendar is located at www.bellamentecharter.org.

BMA Religious Holiday Policy

BMA recommends that teachers, school officials, parents/guardians, and students, approach this discussion as an opportunity to work cooperatively for the sake of good education rather than at cross-purposes.

BMA's religious holiday policy was developed based on the shared commitment of respect for individual religious beliefs expressed in the constitutional guarantee of religious liberty. This means that BMA neither promotes nor inhibits religious belief or non-belief. Because Montessori classrooms are rich in cultural lessons and materials, BMA takes into account the role of religion in history and cultures.

BMA is aware of the legal issues surrounding the guidelines about the teaching of religion in public schools. Within the current legal framework, BMA, the Board of Directors, administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, and students must make practical decisions regarding religious holidays. We have done this by showing sensitivity to the needs of every student and a willingness to steer a course between avoidance of all references to religion on one hand and the promotion of religion on the other.

The Supreme Court has ruled that public schools may not sponsor religious practices (*Engel v. Vitale* (1962) 370 U.S. 421; *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963) 374 U.S. 203) but may teach about religion. While having avoided making a definitive ruling on religious holidays in public schools, the Supreme Court let stand a lower federal court decision stating that recognition of holidays may be constitutional if the purpose is to provide secular instruction about religious traditions rather than to promote the particular religion involved (*Florey v. Sioux Falls School District* (1980) 619 F.2d 1311 (8th Cir.)).

BMA policy allows for the study of religious holidays in our school as opportunities for teaching about religions of various cultures and societies. Such study is to serve the academic goals of educating students about history and cultures, as well as learning about the traditions of particular religions within a pluralistic society.

Teaching about religious holidays will be conducted when natural opportunities arise during the course of the year as students study different cultures and communities. Teachers are alerted to the distinction between teaching about religious holidays, which is permissible, and celebrating religious holidays, which is not. Recognition of and information about holidays may focus on how and when they are celebrated, their origins, histories and generally agreed-upon meanings. Our approach needs to be sensitive, neither promoting nor inhibiting religion. We desire to foster understanding and mutual respect for differences in belief and culture.

Teachers are to avoid asking students to explain their beliefs and customs. An offer to do so should be treated with courtesy and accepted or rejected depending upon educational relevancy. Teachers will not use the study of religious holidays as an opportunity to proselytize or to inject personal religious beliefs into class discussions.

Teachers may use religious symbols as examples of cultural and religious heritage. Religious symbols may be displayed only on a temporary basis as part of the academic program. Students may choose to create artwork with religious symbols, but teachers should not encourage or discourage such creations.

Sacred music may be sung or played as part of the academic study of music. School concerts that present a variety of selections may include religious music. Concerts should avoid programs dominated by religious music, especially when these coincide with a particular religious holiday. Seasonal activities such as parent/guardian holiday programs are to serve an educational purpose for all of the students. Children should not be made to feel excluded or identified with a religion not their own.

Holiday concerts in December may appropriately include music related to Christmas and Hanukkah, and religious music should not dominate. Dramatic productions should emphasize the cultural aspects of the holidays. Nativity pageants or plays portraying the Hanukkah miracle are not appropriate in the public-school setting.

Students may be excused from classroom discussions or activities related to particular holidays. BMA acknowledges that some holidays considered by many people to be secular (for example, Halloween and Valentine's Day) are viewed by others to have religious overtones. Excusal requests will be granted for holidays that are marked by classroom parties and similar non-academic activities.

Students may be allowed a reasonable number of excused absences, without penalties, to observe religious events within their traditions. Students may be asked to complete makeup assignments or examinations in conjunction with such absences, please see the Attendance Policy within this Handbook for more information.

Family/School Community Partnership. Parent Participation & Parent Education

BMA strives to partner with parents and guardians to best serve the needs of the children. This is accomplished through parent/guardian education and orientation, frequent and positive communication between staff and families, and regular /guardian involvement.

Parent and Family Engagement Policy

The Charter School aims to provide all students in our school significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps while abiding by guidelines within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("ESEA"). The Charter School staff recognizes a partnership with families is essential to meet this goal. Our Parent and Family Engagement Policy leverages and promotes active involvement of all families as partners with schools to ensure student success. A copy of the Charter School's complete Policy is available upon request in the Front Office.

Parent/Guardian Education and Orientation

BMA provides a variety of parent/guardian education opportunities and events throughout the year. Within the first few weeks of school, an official orientation Sneak Peek and/or Back-to-School

Night will take place. This is a very important evening to provide parents/guardians with information about the curriculum, classroom schedule, field trips, and other pertinent policies.

On-going throughout the school year are volunteer orientation trainings, which focus on preparing parents/guardians for the volunteer opportunities available at the school. This is especially important for new families, but does vary in content each year to encourage all parents/guardians to attend.

Later in the year, teachers may schedule curriculum informational evenings. Information about these events will be provided in the campus calendars and weekly newsletters. At times, BMA will also arrange for educational professionals to provide workshops or presentations for families and teachers.

Parent/Guardian Participation is a BMA Priority

BMA recognizes that parents/guardians are the most important educators in their children's lives. Studies show that children whose parents/guardians are involved in their education perform better in school than children whose parents/guardians are not involved. This is why we encourage parents/guardians to be active with their children's school at all grade levels.

BMA also encourages parents/guardians to be active with their children's learning at home. *Read to them regularly. Ask them about their day and listen. Enjoy dinners as a family.* Parent/guardian involvement can easily be woven into even today's busy schedules. Parents and guardians are encouraged to schedule visits to their child(ren)'s school.

A variety of service opportunities exist and include: Chaperoning field trips and serving on campus committees to enhance the learning community. Volunteer activities can be done at the campus or at home. Parent/guardian education nights, fundraising, school events, and parent/guardian workdays provide enough additional opportunities to assure a comfortable level of participation. BMA is grateful for the contribution volunteers make on behalf of the school and in the lives of all of our students. We do not allow volunteers in the classroom in an effort to ensure a prepared and distraction-free environment.

It is our goal to work with each family to best meet the needs of the families and school.

Parents/Guardians can offer Special Units of Study: an Important Part of our Montessori Curriculum

If parents/guardians, relatives, or family friends have special talents or training, please let us know so that we may schedule some time for you to participate in the appropriate curriculum unit. Students often enjoy the opportunity to share their special adults with their classmates.

Student Safety: Livescan Fingerprinting and TB Tests

Student safety is a priority at BMA. In an effort to provide the highest level of safety for our students, all BMA staff, contractors and volunteers who interact with students are required to successfully complete an electronic fingerprinting process known as a "livescan" report through the Department of Justice. Volunteers who are in frequent or prolonged contact with students are required to undergo a tuberculosis risk assessment, and, if tuberculosis risk factors are identified, the person must be examined and found to be free of infectious tuberculosis. These two

requirements must be on file with the school office prior to commencing work/volunteering at any BMA campus. Visitors who wish to come on campus to observe a class, for example, are not obligated to fulfill these requirements, but must be under the direct supervision of a school employee at all times.

The livescan report by the Department of Justice (DOJ) looks for the same things all our employees are checked for – convictions for drug crimes, sexual crimes, violent felonies and DUI crimes. Livescan reports can be initiated at various LiveScan locations or directly at the Department of Justice and usually take three (3) to five (5) days or longer to generate a report to the school.

Because the Department of Justice has not yet developed a process for cross reporting, all parents/guardians must obtain a livescan clearance specifically for BMA regardless of whether the parent/guardians has previously received clearance through an employer or another organization.

Tuberculosis is an airborne disease, which means it can be passed from one person to another simply by sharing the same air. TB tests can be obtained through your private healthcare provider, healthcare clinic (i.e. Doctors on Duty), or through the county department of health. For those with a positive TB test, a chest x-ray is required prior to clearance.

A clear livescan report and TB test result must be on file with the school office PRIOR to the first time a parent/guardian volunteers in any role where he/she is in direct contact with students. This includes participation in school-sponsored field trips.

Working from home or serving on parent/guardian committees does not require these clearance checks.

Parent/Guardian Participation on Field Trips

Parent/guardian participation plays a key role in the success of field trips, and parents/guardians are asked to assist with chaperoning. All adults attending field trips must fulfill screenings to ensure the safety of the children. **Please note that any adult without these clearances may not attend the field trip, including other adult family members.** Adult chaperones must have on file in the campus office:

- Cleared livescan fingerprint report from the Department of Justice for Bella Mente Montessori Academy (to be completed only once)
- Cleared TB test result (required every four years) or the annual the TB Risk Assessment form completed by a healthcare provider.
- Attendance at an in-person training and completion of required training videos
- Volunteers assisting in an overnight field trip setting must have both DOJ and FBI fingerprint clearance through Livescan

Bella Mente Academies Welcomes Parents to Observe our Classrooms and Daily Activities

Any time you would like to observe the daily activity at our school, please feel free to schedule a time with your child's teacher. While it is standard procedure to advocate an "Open Door Policy," we also want to be sure to limit the amount of potential interruptions and distractions each day. Contacting your child's teacher to schedule an observation in advance will help alleviate

scheduling conflicts. The only exception is the first month of school: No observations will be permitted to allow for students to adjust to their new setting without interruption.

Parents/guardians are also reminded that an appointment for a classroom observation is just that: a time for you to observe your child's class and make any notes regarding questions that may arise. Observers should be courteous and quiet guests during the entire observation period. Observers must refrain from student interaction and must save discussions with the teacher until she/he is relieved of her/his student supervision duties. Additionally, parents should remain aware of the length of the observation period and keep it to a reasonable length of time, usually 20-25 minutes, or less. Parents/guardians should be aware they must make an appointment to observe in a classroom. Walk-ins are generally not permitted as they are a disruption to the students' working environment. While observing, parents/guardians must adhere to policies regarding student confidentiality. Parents/guardians shall not talk about any student to another student, parent/guardian or other third party. Breach of this policy is a breach of confidentiality and will jeopardize the parent/guardian's opportunities for further classroom observation or participation. Policies for observations have been developed to assure a positive experience for all parties. Upon check-in at the front office, observers will be provided with a set of rules to follow while in the classroom setting. Observers who choose to ignore these policies will be asked to end their observation immediately.

Visitors are required to provide a government issued ID at the Front Desk. This will allow each visitor to be vetted through the Department of Justice sexual offender database. Visitors on campus who have not been cleared previously as a volunteer must be escorted by a BMA staff member while in the school building. All visitors on campus shall be issued a visitor's pass to be worn in a visible location on the upper portion of the visitor's body to allow ready identification to staff that the visitor has been cleared to be on campus.

Child Custody

BMA follows child custody decisions made by the courts. In order to do this, the family must provide court stamped copies of all relative legal documents to the school. It is not BMA's responsibility to obtain these documents. School staff cannot modify or make exceptions to court orders. If a child custody arrangement has changed, a parent or guardian must provide copies of the applicable legal documents to the school, stamped by the court. If any dispute arises at school regarding visitation or child custody, BMA staff will call the local authorities to resolve the situation. BMA requests that separating and divorced parents place their child's wellbeing as their number one consideration. When divorce occurs, families are still co-parenting and the child(ren)'s welfare must come first. BMA wishes to support families as much as possible in achieving positive implementation of this goal. BMA will not provide letters of support or other documentation that is not already included within the student's cumulative file unless subpoenaed.

Tobacco Use and Vaping

BMA is a tobacco, e-cigarette, vape-free, and drug-free environment. Smoking/Vaping and use of any tobacco and other products are prohibited at all times on school campus and surrounding areas, including outdoor areas. Smoking of any substance/Vaping is also prohibited during school functions and field trips off site, regardless if smoking/vaping is permitted in that particular environment.

Tobacco-Free Schools

Ample research has demonstrated the health hazards associated with the use of tobacco products, including smoking and the breathing of secondhand smoke. The Charter School provides instructional programs designed to discourage students from using tobacco products. The Charter School's Governing Board recognizes that smoking and other uses of tobacco and nicotine products constitute a serious public health hazard and are inconsistent with the goals of the Charter School to provide a healthy environment for students and staff.

In the best interest of students, employees, and the general public, the Board therefore prohibits the use of tobacco products at all times on Charter School property and in Charter School vehicles. This prohibition applies to all employees, students, visitors, and other persons at school or at a school-sponsored activity or athletic event. It applies to any meeting on any property owned, leased, or rented by or from the Charter School.

Smoking or use of any tobacco-related product or disposal of any tobacco-related waste is prohibited within 25 feet of any playground, except on a public sidewalk located within 25 feet of the playground. Smoking or use of any tobacco-related product is also prohibited within 250 feet of the youth sports event in the same park or facility where a youth sports event is taking place. In addition, any form of intimidation, threat, or retaliation against a person for attempting to enforce this policy is prohibited.

The Executive Director or designee shall inform students, parents/guardians, employees, and the public about this policy. All individuals on Charter School premises share in the responsibility of adhering to this policy. Additionally, the Charter School will post signs stating "Tobacco use is prohibited" prominently at all entrances to school property.

Parent Communications at BMA

Parent-Teacher Conferences

BMA identifies parents and teachers as two integral parts of the student's academic success team. As such, BMA encourages parents and teachers to stay in close communication regarding each student's progress toward subject mastery. In addition to informal discussions and communications throughout the year, BMA offers formal opportunities each school year for parents and teachers to meet individually to discuss the child's progress. These parent-teacher conference periods are scheduled at two specific intermittent periods: in the fall to provide an overview of the goals and objectives of the child's academic plan for the year, and toward the end of the school year to provide a final update on the child's progress toward subject mastery before moving on to the next level.

Weekly Newsletters and Updates

Each week, BMA will publish email newsletter updates to include information regarding special projects and events, holiday activities, field trips, fundraising, and various other informational items of interest to our BMA families. Campus newsletters are emailed. Look for these updates and read them to keep informed of important school information.

Team Newsletters and Updates

Each teaching team composes their own lessons and newsletter information. This information will be published at regular intervals and is another way for you to stay informed about your child's education. As you read through the information, please let your child's teacher know if there are any areas you are knowledgeable in and wish to share. We also encourage you to share this newsletter with your child.

Parents/Guardians are Vital to Every Child's Success: Developing a Plan of Support for Your Child

BMA recognizes that parents are vital to every child's academic success. The following points are offered to assist you in developing a plan of support for your child:

- Schedule an appointment to visit your child's school; you are a welcomed visitor!
- Make sure that your child gets enough sleep, eats a healthy breakfast every day, brings a healthy lunch if they are not participating in BMA's free breakfast and lunch program, and snacks for school, wears appropriate clothing for the weather, and arrives at school on time and ready to learn.
- Read to your child every day, or encourage your child to read independently.
- Insist that your child treat him/herself, other students, teachers and staff with respect and obey home and school rules.
- Call your child's teacher or the school office, write a note, or email the teacher at her/his email address when you have a question, a compliment, or a concern.
- Volunteer your time. Many volunteer tasks can be done at home.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences to discuss your child's progress and any challenges he/she may be encountering.
- Carefully review your child's report cards, school newsletters, and other information from school.
- Participate in school activities. Encourage your child to do the same. These activities and events have been planned to provide families with the opportunity to participate in the school community and enhance relationships between students, parents, and school staff.

School Evaluations

Each year BMA will conduct surveys of parents/guardians and staff regarding their perception of the school/teachers and program. We invite you to provide us with feedback to help us continually improve. The results of these surveys will be shared with the Executive Director, Principal, the BMA Governing Board, and staff, and will be used to effectively implement positive program change. Many of our best ideas have come from parents/guardians and staff!!

California Healthy Kids Survey

The Charter School may administer the California Healthy Kids Survey ("CHKS") to students at grades five, and seven whose parent or guardian provides written permission. The CHKS is an anonymous, confidential survey of school climate and safety, student wellness, and youth resiliency that enables the Charter School to collect and analyze data regarding local youth health risks and behaviors, school connectedness, school climate, protective factors, and school violence.

Surveys About Personal Beliefs

Unless the student's parent/guardian gives written permission, a student will not be given any test, questionnaire, survey, or examination containing any questions about the student's, or the student's parents' or guardians' personal beliefs or practices in sex, family life, morality, or religion.

Use of Student Information Learned from Social Media

The Charter School complies with all federal, state, and local guidelines regarding the gathering and/or maintenance of information about any enrolled student obtained from social media in the student's educational record. The Charter School gathers student information from social media. Such information shall be maintained in the Charter School's records with regard to the student and shall be destroyed within one (1) year after a student turns 18 years of age or within one (1) year after the student is no longer enrolled in the Charter School, whichever occurs first. A nonminor student or a student's parent or guardian may access the student's records for examination of the information, request the removal of information or corrections made to information gathered or maintained by the Charter School by contacting the Executive Director.

Guidelines for Arrivals & Departures

Due to traffic and facility configurations, BMA has a specific drop-off and pick-up procedure. This will be explained during parent orientation, Open House, and/or Back-to-School Night.

In general, parents/guardians should plan to drop off their children at the designated location, and provide a warm, affectionate goodbye. Extending the drop-off procedure on a regular basis can create separation problems and can take away the child's opportunity to establish healthy patterns of self-confidence and responsibility. As noted in the Academic Overview portion of this handbook, students are encouraged to develop self-reliance and positive esteem. These characteristics are best developed and practiced through effective care of self and care of the environment. Once students have worked through the initial "First Day of School" experience, students are very capable of getting themselves settled in and ready for the academic day without the help of mom or dad. ***Parents will not be allowed to walk students into class (even the first week).***

Likewise, parents/guardians should plan to pick up their students at the end of the day in the same designated location to alleviate traffic and campus congestion.

If you have a need to come on to the campus during the school day, please be sure to park in only the designated parent/guardian/guest parking areas. Parking for people with disabilities (and displaying a proper permit) is available near the school entrance.

As explained in the Academic Overview, students are provided with uninterrupted units of time to support their ability to concentrate on the lessons of the day.

Forgotten homework, lunches, etc., may be delivered to the school office.

For a detailed discussion regarding tardies and early pick-ups, please refer to the section on Attendance Policies. For purposes of this section, students arriving at school late or departing early must be cleared through the school office. When late to school, parents/guardians should plan to:

- Accompany their child(ren) into the school office

- Sign them in using the designated office log book
- Assist each child in obtaining a tardy slip from an office staff member
- To keep disruption to a minimum, you are not permitted to enter the classroom with your child as long as she/he has the tardy slip to give to the teacher.

If your child is frequently tardy to school, consequences may be given and a family meeting may be scheduled with the Principal to discuss a plan of action that will correct this problem.

Children arriving late are often self-conscious and feel uncomfortable entering the room. It also affects their ability to settle into the business of learning when they are in this emotional state. The class often takes care of a variety of business and/or begins quiet activities at this time. Students arriving late create an unwelcome disruption to the rest of the class. Please support your child to be on time. This is a life skill which will be of great benefit as the child gets older.

In the Montessori classroom, a great amount of learning happens at all times of the day, including the afternoon hours. Afternoon lessons are filled with all the cultural activities of history, science, art, etc., and incorporate practice of core academic subject material as well. BMA stresses the importance of the afternoon curriculum. Parents/guardians need to understand this importance and respect the need for the student to attend school for the entire day.

When an early pickup from school is necessary and unavoidable, parents/guardians should plan to:

- Contact the teacher in advance of the early pick up so that staff can assist the child and the class to prepare for the interruption and transition.
- At the time of pickup, parent/guardian must check in at the school office and sign the student out in the designated office log book.
- The office staff will facilitate getting the student from class for you while you wait in the office. Adult visitors are not permitted to be unattended on the campus. ● Leave as quietly as possible.

Safety of our students is a priority at all times. During enrollment/registration, parents/guardians may provide names of any adults who will be able to pick up their student during school hours. Other arrangements may be agreed upon on a case by case basis.

If there is an occasion where someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up your child from school, please contact the office by telephone and with a written note or email.

Due to custodial agreements, and for every child's safety, it is vital that we have the appropriate, complete, and most up-to-date information regarding who is authorized to transport your child(ren).

Children attending before and after school programs are required to sign their student in and out with the designated program.

Separation: TK/ Kindergarten/First Grade Students and Parents

Sometimes it is difficult for both parent and young child to adjust during the first few days of school. If you anticipate tears or other expressions, we offer a few suggestions based on our experiences.

- ***Please bring your child by the campus for a visit prior to the first day of school.*** Providing a visual reference to the place where the child will be spending his/her day can sometimes make a world of difference!
- Make sure that your child knows when school is over and who is picking her/him up. This reinforces the abstract concept that you WILL be returning to pick him/her up at the end of the day.
- Express your own happiness about school. Give the child something to focus on during your absence (e.g. “I’m really looking forward to hearing the names of your new friends ... can you try to remember some of them for me?”)
- Encourage a hug and kiss, etc. and **promptly** leave. ***Try to avoid struggles by remaining with the student!*** The child will usually engage in an activity within five minutes of your departure.

You are invited to call us to assure yourself that she/he is doing all right.

School Hours and Extended Day Programs

BMA adheres to and usually exceeds the state’s required number of instructional minutes. The school day is between 8:15 and 3:10 for Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Middle School Tuesday-Friday and 9:15-3:10 on Mondays. The school day for Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten students is 8:30-2:45 Tuesday-Friday and 9:30-2:45 on Mondays.

BMA offers a before and after school care program and enrichment program through the Boys Club Girls Club to provide care options for our BMA families. Informational fliers are available from the Front Office.

Calendar

BMA has a school calendar which adheres to the number of instructional days required by the state. School starts in August and ends in June, with fall, winter, and spring breaks. The school calendar is established and approved on an annual basis by the BMA Governing Board of Directors and is subject to change and is located at www.bellementecharter.org.

Montessori Attire / Dress Code

Montessori education is concerned with the inner development of the child’s mental, emotional, physical and spiritual being. As such, we seek to limit undue focus of attention on external appearances. After much discussion about the relative values of a dress code and individual freedom, BMA has adopted the following Dress Code. Please contact our front office for details.

Dress Code Policy

Tops

Expectations

Light blue or navy collared polo **with BMA** or **BMA** logo (short or long sleeve).

Outdoor jackets must be **navy**. **No other colors allowed.**

Navy pull-over sweatshirt or navy zip-up jackets **with BMA** or **BMA** logo may be worn inside.

BMA t-shirts may be worn during Friday School Spirit Days.

- *Undershirts or turtlenecks worn under the polo must be plain white, khaki, navy, or black (no graphics or other designs).*

NOT Acceptable

- Shirts one size **larger** than the student's body size.
- Modifications to shirts such as, **but not limited to**, pinning, rolling, knotting or any other modifications.
- Undershirts or turtlenecks may not have hoods.

Bottoms

Acceptable

- Khaki or navy skorts, shorts, jumpers, and pants.
- **Jeans may be worn ONLY on assigned School Spirit Days, and must accompany a shirt or outfit that fits the Spirit Day theme.**
- *Leggings worn under skorts or shorts must be plain white, khaki, navy, or black (no graphics or other designs).*

NOT Acceptable

- Bottoms must fit properly, be worn at the waist, and not altered or modified in any way.
- Bottoms that are too large (saggy/baggy) or too tight (skinny) are not allowed.
- Shorts and skorts must be 2” above the knee or longer (shorts must also not be more than 2” below the knee) and may not be form-fitting. They must fit properly.
- No cargo pants or pants with side-leg pockets.
- No distressed or altered jeans of any kind.

Shoes

Expectations

- Shoes must have closed toes.
- Shoes should be chosen with discretion.

*Athletic shoes are **highly** recommended during PE days*

NOT Acceptable

- Boots, house shoes, heels, sandals, “Crocs,” or slippers.
- Shoes with offensive logos.
- Heelies or platform shoes.
- Shoes that can be a distraction to others (i.e. shoes with lights).

Accessories & Grooming

Expectations

- Belts without offensive logos or design.
- Hats with the BMA provided logo may be worn outdoors. **BMA hats are the only hats allowed to be worn on campus.**
- Headgear worn for religious purposes is permitted indoors and outdoors at all times.

Please write student's name on inside tag

NOT Acceptable

- Hats may not be worn indoors.
- Accessories, such as backpacks or notebooks with writing, pictures or any other insignia which are crude, vulgar, profane, provocative, or sexually suggestive are prohibited. Neither may they advocate racial, ethnic or religious prejudice or the use of drugs or alcohol.

BMA is in compliance with the provisions of Article IX, section 5 of the California Constitution, and Assembly Bill 1575 (effective January 1, 2013), which prohibit the charging of any student fees for participation in an educational activity at a public school.

Discipline and Behavioral Guidelines

The Montessori philosophy and educational model emphasizes respect for all individuals which is a key component in building a strong school community. Adults serve as models in the way they address the children. Lessons of “Grace and Courtesy” begin at the earliest grades, and students have the opportunity to learn peaceful ways to work through their conflicts. When issues and misbehaviors do occur, a positive discipline approach, based on respectful, relevant, and related consequences, is utilized.

The BMA staff is trained in positive discipline. The classroom strategies include Peace Education, with an emphasis on personal peace and tolerance of others’ differences. Conflict resolution tools, such as the Peace Table, as well as Peer Mediation techniques and Restorative Justice assist the children in learning these important life skills.

Students are presented with lessons, which include scenarios for all areas of the school, discussing the reasons for safety, respect, and responsibility in those locations. Positive reinforcement is stressed, and students are “caught” following the rules and guidelines.

Generally, once a child has completed a designated amount of work, they are invited to return to their own classroom.

Communicating with parents/guardians is an important element in building a team of staff and families. Phone calls and written notes or reports sent home are ways the school can keep parents/guardians informed about how their child is doing in the school environment. When necessary, parent/teacher conferences and meetings with the administrator will be scheduled to assist teachers and parents/guardians in finding the most beneficial ways to support a student’s success at school.

Student Discipline Procedures

BMA staff will enforce disciplinary rules and procedures fairly and consistently. Discipline may include the counseling of students, conferencing with parents/guardians, detention during or after school hours, suspension, and expulsion.

When a student is observed not following a rule, the student is asked if they know the rule and is then redirected to show the appropriate behavior. Only when a child repeatedly misbehaves are they referred to the school office and parents/guardians contacted. Data is collected to determine if further training is necessary for all of the students when issues occur often and by numerous students. The emphasis is on training and positive reinforcement for the desired behavior, as opposed to a punitive approach.

Physical violence will result in an immediate office referral. Parents/guardians will be notified and informed of any school-based consequences and/or if referral has been made to law enforcement. Students disrupting their classroom may be temporarily removed to reset/to do work in another room or in the office. Generally, once a child has completed a designated amount of work, they are invited to return to their own classroom.

Communicating with parents/guardians is an important element in building a team of staff and families. Phone calls and written notes or reports sent home are ways the school can keep parents/guardians informed about how their child is doing in the school environment. When necessary, parent/teacher conferences and meetings with the administrator will be scheduled to assist teachers and parents/guardians in finding the most beneficial ways to support a student's success at school.

When behavior that is unacceptable occurs, the following steps will be taken:

- For minor incidents and with younger students, staff will provide opportunities for re-direction and a chance to “try again.”
- Repeated offenses may initiate a progressive system of Student Success Team (SST) meetings starting with a conference between the parents/guardians and teachers. At this meeting, an Action Plan is developed.
- Teachers, administrators, or designees may utilize discretion when determining the consequences. Consequences vary based on severity/circumstances of the violation.

Should the behavior(s) continue, a SST meeting may be scheduled with a campus administrator, the teacher(s), and the parents/guardians. Other school staff and family members may also be included if deemed appropriate. In the SST process, the team identifies concerns, works together on solutions, and creates an action plan. It is customary for follow-up meetings to take place to discuss progress or the need for additional interventions.

Serious incidents will lead to an immediate referral to a campus administrator. Parents/guardians will be notified by phone or in writing.

Serious infractions will result in one or more days of suspension from school if applicable (refer to the Suspension Policy at the end of this Handbook).

Corporal punishment will never be used as a disciplinary measure. Corporal punishment does not include the use of reasonable force to protect students, staff, or school property.

Parents/guardians will be notified in writing or by phone following any disciplinary action taken in response to a student's misconduct. A follow-up parent conference with the teacher or administrator may be required. Parents/guardians may also request a meeting to discuss the incident and disciplinary action.

BMA maintains a comprehensive suspension and expulsion policy in order to promote learning and protect the safety and wellbeing of all students. A student may be suspended or expelled for misconduct as specified below while on the school grounds, coming and going to school, or at a school-related activity. These policies are developed to conform to applicable state and federal law regarding students with exceptional needs. Please see the Suspension and Expulsion Policy and Procedures in this Handbook.

An administrator may suspend students who fail to comply with BMA discipline policies at any time in accordance with the Suspension and Expulsion Policy. Students who fail to comply with this policy or who present an immediate threat to the health and/or safety of others may be suspended pending a recommendation for expulsion to the BMA Governing Board by the Executive Director.

Prior to expulsion, students will be provided progressive discipline unless the student's conduct presents an immediate threat to the health or safety of others. BMA will notify the chartering authorizer of any expulsions and will include suspension and expulsion data in its annual performance report to the sponsoring school district.

Student Intervention/Action Plan

A student who, at the end of a grading period is performing below the minimum standard of grade level expectations academically or has not met the behavior or attendance expectations of Bella Mente may be placed on an Action Plan developed during the SST meeting process. A meeting may be held with the student, parent(s)/guardian(s), teacher and/or administration. During this meeting, a written plan of action will be determined to support the student engaging expectations and commitments from school, student, and parent.

A student who fails to implement or violates the agreed-upon action plan for behavior will receive a Notice of Non-Compliance. Continued non-compliance may result in a recommendation for involuntary removal in accordance with BMA's involuntary removal process. Students who fail to improve academically may be recommended for an assessment for special education or an alternative placement to ensure the student's academic and social emotional needs are met.

Student Intervention/Action Plan Policy

Student Non-Compliance and Involuntary Removal Procedures: Satisfactory attendance and behavior are required for continued enrollment in BMA. Behavioral expectations and policies are outlined in this handbook. Each student and parent/guardian is responsible to review and understand the information presented herein. Administration is available to provide additional clarification of the Handbook upon request.

Classroom policies are distributed by individual teachers to the student/parent/guardian at the beginning of each school year. Such policies align with the BMA charter, policies, and procedures outlined in this Handbook and the Bella Mente Board-adopted policies, procedures, and regulations.

Administration regularly monitors individual student attendance, behavior, and academic standing. **A student's failure to maintain compliance with academic and/or behavioral expectations may result in the implementation of the following intervention strategies:**

- Administrator, teacher, designee, and/or counselor meets with the student and creates an *Action Plan* (for Academics and Behavior) that documents concerns and indicates methods of resolution to address the student's needs. The *Action Plan* will be provided to the student, parent(s)/guardian(s), and teacher(s).
- Should those concerns outlined in the Action Plan (for Academics and Behavior) continue, and the student fails to follow through on expectations, a *First Letter of Non-compliance* is sent to the parent/guardian and an SST meeting is convened to discuss additional interventions and supports. For behavioral violations, consequences may also be imposed.
- If the non-compliant status continues or recurs, a *Second Letter of Non-Compliance* is sent to parent/guardian. For behavioral violations, consequences may be imposed and/or a parent conference may be held with administration. For students who continue to struggle in maintaining their academic standing, BMA will convene another SST meeting, an Individualized Education Program ("IEP"), or Section 504 Plan meeting, as applicable to determine what additional supports and/or services the student may need to be successful. The student is also placed on Probation.*

*A student who receives the *Second Letter of Non-Compliance* will be placed on Probation and may lose privileges of participating in co- and extracurricular activities including, but not limited to, athletics, school activities, field trips, dances, and other before, during, and after-school events. Students placed on Attendance, Behavior, or Academic Probation remain on Probation at the discretion of administration. Prior to excluding a student from a co-curricular activity, such as a school activity or a field trip, BMA will convene an SST, IEP, or Section 504 team meeting to discuss the student's exclusion and alternative, comparable educational activity if the student is excluded.

Students who violate the Suspension and Expulsion Policy may be subject to expulsion.

A decision to involuntarily remove or expel a student from BMA will result in a formal notification of the involuntary removal or expulsion. Additionally, the parent/guardian will be informed of California's compulsory attendance laws and rights of appeal (See "**Grounds for Suspension, Involuntary Dismissal, and Expulsion of Students**"). Should the Hearing Officer uphold BMA's recommendation for expulsion, the student will be referred back to the student's school district of residence and is subject to the policies of that district regarding student placement.

Weapons and Dangerous Substances:

Due to concerns for safety, weapons of any kind may not be brought to school; this includes the parking lots and surrounding areas of the school. We are required by law to take immediate and strong action should a child bring weapons to school. This consists of, but is not limited to, all knives, including pocket knives, daggers and martial art weapons, air guns, replica guns, ammunition, incendiary devices, and fireworks. Parents/guardians are asked to discuss this with their children in an age-appropriate manner to help them understand the seriousness of these items.

Parents/guardians are ultimately responsible for their child bringing such items to school and will be called immediately to pick up their child should he/she be discovered to have a dangerous object. School officials have the right to search student backpacks, lockers, or other containers if the possession of a weapon or dangerous substance is reasonably suspected. Please see the Campus Search and Seizure notice below.

Additionally, possession or use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, or any products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including, but not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets, betel, and other paraphernalia related to tobacco and/or its use; possession or use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), such as e-cigarettes, e-hookahs, vape, and other vapor-emitting devices will result in immediate suspension, and/or Expulsion and possible referral to law enforcement.

Campus Search and Seizure

The Charter School recognizes and has determined that the occurrence of incidents which may include the possession of firearms, weapons, alcohol, controlled substances, or other items of contraband prohibited by law or Charter School rules and regulations, jeopardizes the health, safety and welfare of students and Charter School employees.

The California Constitution requires that all students and staff of public schools have the inalienable right to attend campuses which are safe, secure, and peaceful. As such, Charter School has adopted a Policy outlining the reasonable search of students and their property, student use areas, and/or student lockers and the seizure of illegal, unsafe, unauthorized or contraband items and materials through a search based upon reasonable suspicion.

A student's personal cell phone, smartphone, or other personal electronic device shall not be searched by school officials without a warrant, the student's consent, or a legitimate emergency, unless the device is lost or abandoned. An emergency is any *situation involving danger of death or serious physical injury to any person, that requires access to the information located or reasonably believed to be located on the electronic device*. If the Charter School has a good faith belief that the device is lost, stolen, or abandoned, the Charter School may only access electronic device information in order to attempt to identify, verify, or contact the owner of the device.

The Charter School is not prohibited from seizing/confiscating a student's personal electronic device, without searching its contents, if the student's use or possession of the private electronic device is in violation of Charter School rules or regulations.

Sexual Harassment

The BMA Governing Board prohibits sexual harassment of or by any individual. Teachers should discuss the policy with their students in age-appropriate ways and should assure them that they need not endure any form of sexual harassment.

The Board expects all individuals on campus or who are participating in a BMA educational activity to immediately report incidents of sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator or notify an adult staff member including, teacher, counselor, or an administrator who will report it to the Title IX Coordinator. Please see the complete policy Title IX Policy Prohibiting Discrimination on the Basis of Sex in this Handbook's Appendices and on the BMA website. No individual will suffer reprisals from reporting incidents of sexual harassment or making any complaint. If a student is found to have committed or attempted to commit sexual assault, they will be recommended for expulsion.

Lost or Damaged School Property

If a student willfully damages the Charter School's property or the personal property of a Charter School employee, or fails to return a textbook, library book, computer/tablet or other Charter School property that has been loaned to the student, the student's parents/guardians are liable for all damages caused by the student's misconduct not to exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), adjusted annually for inflation. After notifying the student's parent or guardian in writing of the student's alleged misconduct and affording the student due process, the Charter School may withhold the student's grades and transcripts until the damages have been paid. If the student and the student's parent/guardian are unable to pay for the damages or to return the property, the Charter School will provide a program of voluntary work for the minor in lieu of the payment of monetary damages. Upon completion of the voluntary work, the student's grades and transcripts will be released.

Threat of Harm

All threats will be taken seriously. Students are not to threaten, bait, harass, or intimidate other students. Subject to administrative discretion, in addition to parental/guardian notification, possible consequences that may be imposed for issuing a threat include suspension, noncompliance action, and/or expulsion. In such cases, notification to law enforcement agencies leading to discussion with the student committing the act and/or possible arrest and prosecution for disorderly conduct or criminal mischief may be made.

BMA is committed to providing a safe and orderly learning environment. In keeping with that commitment, the BMA Board adopted a policy to deal with threats in a serious manner. The types of behavior that will be considered threatening include:

- Stating that one has a weapon or bomb in his or her possession at school
- Stating that one plans to bring a weapon or bomb to school
- Stating that one plans to cause physical harm to a student or staff member
- Making a false statement that there is a bomb or other destructive device at school

In such cases, in addition to parent/guardian notification, possible consequences that may be imposed for issuing a threat include suspension, non-compliance action, and/or expulsion. In such cases, notification to law enforcement agencies leading to discussion with the student committing the act and/or possible arrest and prosecution for disorderly conduct or criminal mischief may be made.

In addition to having a right to feel safe at BMA, everyone also has a responsibility to contribute to keeping the school safe. These responsibilities include:

1. Reporting any knowledge of possession of weapons, or a person’s plans to engage in actions that would cause physical injury or death
2. Never fabricating a report as a joke or to cause problems with another student.
3. Avoiding promising other students that a secret will be kept in regards with anything related to physical safety

Behavior Matrix

The following chart is a guideline for most disciplinary situations. This list of offenses and potential consequences is not all-inclusive. The teacher, administrator, or designee may utilize discretion when determining the final consequence. Consequences may vary based on severity and circumstances of the violation. Additional behavior interventions may be provided if necessary.

Offenses of disciplinary violations pursuant to the Suspension and Expulsion Policy and Procedures may result in an immediate Suspension or Expulsion

Violation	1st Offense	2nd Offense	3rd Offense	Repeat Offenses
Academic Dishonesty	Redo assignment Parent/guardian contact Unsatisfactory citizenship on grade report Detention	Zero on assignment Teacher/parent/guardian conference STOP* Notice of noncompliance Unsatisfactory citizenship on grade report	Zero on assignment Admin conference STOP* Notice of noncompliance Unsatisfactory citizenship on grade report	Zero on assignment Admin conference STOP* Notice of noncompliance Unsatisfactory citizenship on grade report Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan

Class Disruption	Warning/ Break Detention Parent/guardian contact Administrator designee referral	Detention Parent/guardian contact Administrator designee referral STOP*	Detention Parent/guardian contact Administrator designee referral STOP*	Administrator or designee referral Parent Contact STOP* Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan
Defiance/ Refusal	Warning/ Break Detention Parent/guardian contact Administrator designee referral STOP*	Detention Parent/guardian contact Administrator designee referral STOP*	Detention Parent/guardian contact Administrator designee referral STOP*	Administrator or designee referral Parent Contact STOP* Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan
Inappropriate Physical Act/ Horseplay	Warning / Break Restitution Detention Parent contact Administrator or designee referral STOP* Suspension	Restitution Detention Parent contact Administrator or designee referral STOP* Suspension	Restitution Detention Parent contact Administrator or designee referral STOP* Suspension	Restitution Administrator or designee referral Parent Contact STOP* Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan Suspension

Dress Code Violation	Send to Office to change/fix clothing Parent contact to bring proper clothes	Send to Office to change/fix clothing Parent contact to bring proper clothes	UE/MS - Detention Parent Contact	Parent/guardian Conference
Hat/headgear/ item Violation; chewing gum	Warning Remove item/ dispose of gum	Item confiscation by Staff; dispose of gum Parent/guardian pick up item after school	Item confiscation to Administration/ dispose of gum Detention Parent/guardian pick up item after school	Item confiscation to Administration/ dispose of gum Detention Parent/guardian pick up after school STOP*

Cell Phone/Personal Devices Violation	Warning Confiscation to teacher Parent/guardian contact Student pick up after school	Confiscation to Office Parent/guardian pick up after school	Confiscation to Office Parent/guardian pick up after school Detention	Confiscation to Office Parent/guardian conference for pick up Detention
No show to Detention (Recess/After School)	Detention reassigned plus additional detention assigned Parent/guardian contact	Detention reassigned plus additional detention assigned Parent/guardian conference	STOP*	STOP* Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan
Tardy to class / Inappropriate location	Warning	Warning Parent/guardian contact	Detention Parent/guardian contact	STOP* Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan
Class cut	Warning Parent/guardian Contact	Detention Parent/guardian Contact	STOP* Parent/guardian Conference	STOP* Parent Conference Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan

Inappropriate Use of Technology or School Equipment	Warning Loss of equipment use for time Restitution Parent Contact Detention	STOP* Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan Suspension, if applicable Payment of Damages Police Contact, if applicable Recommended for Expulsion, if applicable	STOP* Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan Suspension, if applicable Payment of Damages Police Contact, if applicable Recommended for Expulsion, if applicable	STOP* Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan Suspension, if applicable Payment of Damages Police Contact, if applicable Recommended for Expulsion, if applicable
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Bullying/ Profanity/ Vulgarity/ Hate Speech	Warning Restitution Parent contact Detention	Parent Contact Restitution Detention	STOP* Student Support Team Referral/ Behavior Support Plan	Suspension Notice of Dismissal Recommendation for Expulsion, if applicable
Possession or use of alcohol/drugs/drug paraphernalia, vape pen, or tobacco	Parent Contact Confiscation Counseling Police Contact STOP* Suspension Recommended for Expulsion	Same	Same	Same
Furnishing or selling alcohol/drugs/drug paraphernalia	Parent Contact Confiscation Counseling Police Contact STOP* Suspension Recommended for Expulsion	Same	Same	Same

Theft	Parent Contact Administrator or designee conference Detention STOP* Suspension if applicable Restitution Recommendation for Expulsion, if applicable	Same	Same	Same
Vandalism/ Destruction of Property	Restitution Parent/guardian Contact Police Contact Detention STOP* Suspension, if applicable Recommendation for Expulsion, if applicable	Same	Same	Same

Weapons/Explosives	Confiscation Parent/guardian Contact Police Contact Suspension Recommendation for Expulsion	Same	Same	Same
Fighting/Mutual Combat	Restitution STOP* Suspension Parent/guardian Contact Police Contact Recommendation for Expulsion	Same	Same	Same
Harassment Bullying Cyber-Bullying Threats Intimidation etc.	Mediation Detention STOP* Suspension, if applicable Police Contact if applicable Recommendation for Expulsion, if applicable	Same	Same	Same

*STOP=Student Time Out Place--students may be removed from the classroom for a "reset." . At administrative discretion, students assigned to STOP may necessitate beginning the Student Intervention/Action Plan Policy as outlined above.

Suspension and Expulsion Policy and Procedures

Policy

The Suspension and Expulsion Policy and Procedures have been established in order to promote learning and protect the safety and wellbeing of all students at Bella Mente Montessori Academy ("Charter School"). In creating this policy, the Charter School has reviewed Education Code Section 48900 *et seq.* which describe the offenses for which students at non-charter schools may be suspended or expelled and the procedures governing those suspensions and expulsions in order to establish its list of offenses and procedures for suspensions, expulsions and involuntary removal. Although exempt from the Education Code processes that apply to non-charter schools, the language that follows is largely consistent with the language of Education Code Section 48900 *et seq.* The Charter School is committed to annual review of policies and procedures surrounding suspensions, expulsions, and involuntary removals, and, as necessary, modification of the lists of offenses for which students are subject to suspension, expulsion, or involuntary removal.

Consistent with this Policy, it may be necessary to suspend or expel a student from regular classroom instruction. This shall serve as the Charter School's policy and procedures for student

suspension, expulsion, and involuntary removal, and it may be amended from time to time without the need to seek a material revision of the charter so long as the amendments comport with legal requirements. Charter School staff shall enforce disciplinary policies and procedures fairly and consistently among all students. This policy and its procedures will be printed and distributed annually as part of the Student Handbook which will clearly describe discipline expectations.

Discipline includes but is not limited to advising and counseling students, conferring with parents/guardians, detention during and after school hours, use of alternative educational environments, suspension (both in-school and out-of-school) and expulsion.

In-school suspension will be held under the supervision of administrative staff including, but not limited to the Principal or Executive Director or Designee. Students will complete work assigned by their classroom teacher.

Corporal punishment shall not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a student. For purposes of this policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee's use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff or other persons or to prevent damage to school property.

The Charter School administration shall ensure that students and their parents/guardians³ are

notified in writing upon enrollment of all discipline and involuntary removal policies and procedures. The notice shall state that this policy and its procedures are available upon request at the Executive Director's office.

Suspended or expelled students shall be excluded from all school and school-related activities unless otherwise agreed during the period of suspension or expulsion.

A student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom the Charter School has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 ("IDEA") or who is qualified for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") is subject to the same grounds for suspension and expulsion and is accorded the same due process procedures applicable to general education students except when federal and state law requires additional or different procedures. The Charter School will follow all applicable federal and state laws including but not limited to the applicable provisions of the California Education Code, when imposing any form of discipline on a student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom the Charter School has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability or who is otherwise qualified for such services or protections in according due process to such students.

³ The Charter School shall ensure that a homeless child or youth's educational rights holder; a foster child or youth's educational rights holder, attorney, and county social worker; and an Indian child's tribal social worker and, if applicable, county social worker have the same rights as a parent or guardian to receive a suspension notice, expulsion notice, manifestation determination notice, involuntary transfer notice, involuntary removal notice, and other

No student shall be involuntarily removed by the Charter School for any reason unless the parent/guardian of the student has been provided written notice of intent to remove the student no less than five (5) school days before the effective date of the action. The written notice shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent/guardian, and shall inform the student, and the student's parent/guardian, of the basis for which the student is being involuntarily removed and the student's parent/guardian's, right to request a hearing to challenge the involuntary removal. If a student's parent/ guardian requests a hearing, the Charter School shall utilize the same hearing procedures specified below for expulsions, before the effective date of the action to involuntarily remove the student. If the student's parent/ guardian requests a hearing, the student shall remain enrolled and shall not be removed until the Charter School issues a final decision. As used herein, "involuntarily removed" includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not include removals for misconduct which may be grounds for suspension or expulsion as enumerated below. Students may be involuntarily removed for reasons including, but not limited to, failure to comply with the terms of the student's independent study Master Agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747(c)(4).

Procedures

A. Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion of Students

A student may be suspended or expelled for prohibited misconduct if the act is related to school activity or school attendance occurring at any time including but not limited to: a) while on school grounds; b) while going to or coming from school; c) during the lunch period, whether on or off the school campus; or d) during, going to, or coming from a school-sponsored activity.

B. Enumerated Offenses

documents and related information. For purposes of this Policy and its Procedures, the term "parent/guardian" shall include these parties.

1. Discretionary Suspension Offenses: Students may be suspended when it is determined the student:
 - a) Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.
 - b) Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except self-defense.
 - c) Unlawfully possessed, used, or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 1105311058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.
 - d) Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered or otherwise furnished to any person

another liquid substance or material and represented same as controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.

- e) Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
- f) Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- g) Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- h) Possessed or used tobacco or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets and betel. This section does not prohibit the use of a student's own prescription products by a student.
- i) Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- j) Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5.
- k) Knowingly received stolen school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- l) Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.
- m) Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.
- n) Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.
- o) Engaged in, or attempted to engage in, hazing. For the purposes of this policy, "hazing" means a method of initiation or preinitiation into a student organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective student. For purposes of this policy, "hazing" does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.
- p) Made terroristic threats against school officials and/or school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases. For purposes of this

policy, “terroristic threat” shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for their own safety or for their immediate family’s safety, or for the protection of school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases, or the personal property of the person threatened or their immediate family.

- q) Committed sexual harassment, as defined in Education Code Section 212.5. For the purposes of this policy, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual’s academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This provision shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 8, inclusive.
- r) Caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause or participated in an act of hate violence, as defined in Education Code Section 233(e). This provision shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 8 inclusive.
- s) Intentionally harassed, threatened or intimidated school personnel or volunteers and/or a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting class work, creating substantial disorder and invading the rights of either school personnel or volunteers and/or student(s) by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment. This provision shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 8 inclusive.
- t) Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act.
 - 1) “Bullying” means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a student or group of students which would be deemed hate violence or harassment, threats, or intimidation, which are directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:
 - i. Placing a reasonable student (defined as a student, including, but is not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of their age, or for a person of their age with exceptional needs) or students in fear of harm to that student’s or those students’ person or property.
 - ii. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on their physical or mental health.

- iii. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their academic performance.
 - iv. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the Charter School.
- 2) “Electronic Act” means the creation or transmission originated on or off the school site, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
- i. A message, text, sound, video, or image.
 - ii. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:
 - (a) Posting to or creating a burn page. A “burn page” means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in subparagraph (1) above.
 - (b) Creating a credible impersonation of another actual student for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. “Credible impersonation” means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a student for the purpose of bullying the student and such that another student would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the student was or is the student who was impersonated.
 - (c) Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. “False profile” means a profile of a fictitious student or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual student other than the student who created the false profile.
 - iii. An act of cyber sexual bullying.
 - (a) For purposes of this policy, “cyber sexual bullying” means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a student to another student or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in subparagraphs (i) to (iv), inclusive, of paragraph (1). A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.
 - (b) For purposes of this policy, “cyber sexual bullying” does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic,

educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.

- 3) Notwithstanding subparagraphs (1) and (2) above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.
 - u) A student who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, except that a student who has been adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (3)(a)-(b).
 - v) Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any knife or other dangerous object of no reasonable use to the student unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Executive Director or designee's concurrence.
2. Non-Discretionary Suspension Offenses: Students must be suspended and recommended for expulsion when it is determined the student:
- a) Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, explosive, or other destructive device unless, in the case of possession of any device of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Executive Director or designee's concurrence.
 - b) Brandished a knife at another person.
 - c) Unlawfully sold a controlled substance listed in Health and Safety Code Section 11053, et seq.
 - d) Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Penal Code Sections 261, 266c, 286, 287, 288, or 289 or former Section 288a of the Penal Code, or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Section 243.4
3. Discretionary Expellable Offenses: Students may be recommended for expulsion when it is determined the student:
- a) Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.
 - b) Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except self-defense.

- c) Unlawfully possessed, used, or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.
- d) Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid substance or material and represented same as controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.
- e) Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
- f) Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to electronic files and databases.
- g) Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- h) Possessed or used tobacco or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets and betel. This section does not prohibit the use of a student's own prescription products by a student.
- i) Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- j) Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5.
- k) Knowingly received stolen school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- l) Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.
- m) Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.
- n) Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.
- o) Engaged in, or attempted to engage in, hazing. For the purposes of this policy, "hazing" means a method of initiation or preinitiation into a student organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal

degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective student. For purposes of this policy, “hazing” does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.

- p) Made terroristic threats against school officials and/or school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases. For purposes of this policy, “terroristic threat” shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for their own safety or for their immediate family’s safety, or for the protection of school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases, or the personal property of the person threatened or their immediate family.
- q) Committed sexual harassment, as defined in Education Code Section 212.5. For the purposes of this policy, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual’s academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This provision shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 8, inclusive.
- r) Caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause or participated in an act of hate violence, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 233 of the Education Code. This provision shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 8, inclusive.
- s) Intentionally harassed, threatened or intimidated school personnel or volunteers and/or a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting class work, creating substantial disorder and invading the rights of either school personnel or volunteers and/or student(s) by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment. This provision shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 8 inclusive.
- t) Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act.
 - 1. “Bullying” means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a student or group of students which would be deemed hate violence or harassment, threats, or intimidation, which are directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- i. Placing a reasonable student (defined as a student, including, but is not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of their age, or for a person of their age with exceptional needs) or students in fear of harm to that student's or those students' person or property.
 - ii. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on their physical or mental health.
 - iii. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their academic performance.
 - iv. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the Charter School.
- 2) "Electronic Act" means the creation or transmission originated on or off the school site, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
- i. A message, text, sound, video, or image.
 - ii. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:
 - (a) Posting to or creating a burn page. A "burn page" means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in subparagraph (1) above.
 - (b) Creating a credible impersonation of another actual student for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. "Credible impersonation" means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a student for the purpose of bullying the student and such that another student would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the student was or is the student who was impersonated.
 - (c) Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. "False profile" means a profile of a fictitious student or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual student other than the student who created the false profile.
 - iii. An act of cyber sexual bullying.
 - (a) For purposes of this policy, "cyber sexual bullying" means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a student to another student or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can

be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in subparagraphs (i) to (iv), inclusive, of paragraph (1). A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.

- (b) For purposes of this policy, “cyber sexual bullying” does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.
3. Notwithstanding subparagraphs (1) and (2) above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.
- a) A student who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, except that a student who has been adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (3)(a)-(b).
 - b) Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any knife or other dangerous object of no reasonable use to the student unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Executive Director or designee’s concurrence.
4. Non-Discretionary Expellable Offenses: Students must be recommended for expulsion when it is determined pursuant to the procedures below that the student:
- a) Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, explosive, or other destructive device unless, in the case of possession of any device of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Superintendent or designee’s concurrence.
 - b) Brandished a knife at another person.
 - c) Unlawfully sold a controlled substance listed in Health and Safety Code Section 11053, et seq.
 - d) Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Penal Code Sections 261, 266c, 286, 287, 288, or 289, or former Section 288a of the Penal Code or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Section 243.4.

If it is determined by the Administrative Panel and/or Board of Directors that a student has brought a firearm or destructive device, as defined in Section 921 of Title 18 of the United States Code, on to campus or to have possessed a firearm or destructive device on campus, the student shall be expelled for one year, pursuant to the Federal Gun Free Schools Act of 1994. In such instances, the student shall be provided due process rights of notice and a hearing as required in this policy.

The Charter School will use the following definitions:

- The term “knife” means (A) any dirk, dagger, or other weapon with a fixed, sharpened blade fitted primarily for stabbing; (B) a weapon with a blade fitted primarily for stabbing; (C) a weapon with a blade longer than 3½ inches; (D) a folding knife with a blade that locks into place; or (E) a razor with an unguarded blade.
- The term “firearm” means (A) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (B) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (C) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or (D) any destructive device. Such term does not include an antique firearm.
- The term “destructive device” means any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas, including but not limited to: (A) bomb; (B) grenade; (C) rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces; (D) missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one quarter ounce; (E) mine; or (F) device similar to any of the devices described in the preceding clauses.

C. Suspension Procedure

Suspensions shall be initiated according to the following procedures:

1. Conference

Suspension shall be preceded, if practicable, by a conference conducted by the Executive Director or designee with the student and the student’s parent/guardian and, whenever practicable, the teacher, supervisor or Charter School employee who referred the student to the Executive Director

The conference may be omitted if the Executive Director or designee determines that an emergency situation exists, or if the student or the student’s parent waives their right to a conference.. An “emergency situation” involves a clear and present danger to the lives, safety or health of students or Charter School personnel. If a student is suspended without this conference, both the parent/guardian and student shall be notified of the student’s right to return to school for the purpose of a conference.

At the conference, the student shall be informed of the reason for the disciplinary action and the evidence against the student and shall be given the opportunity to present their version and evidence in their defense in accordance with Education Code Section 47605(c)(5)(J)(i). This conference shall be held within two (2) school days or as soon thereafter as is practicable, unless the student waives this right or is physically unable to attend for any reason including,

but not limited to, incarceration or hospitalization. Penalties shall not be imposed on a pupil for failure of the pupil's parent or guardian to attend a conference with school officials. Reinstatement of the suspended pupil shall not be contingent upon attendance by the pupil's parent or guardian at the conference.

2. Notice to Parents/Guardians

At the time of the suspension, an administrator or designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent/guardian in person, by email, or by telephone. Whenever a student is suspended, the parent/guardian shall be notified in writing of the suspension and the date of return following suspension. This notice shall state the specific offense(s) committed by the student as well as the date the student may return to school following the suspension. If Charter School officials wish to ask the parent/guardian to confer regarding matters pertinent to the suspension, the notice may request that the parent/guardian respond to such requests without delay.

3. Suspension Time Limits/Recommendation for Expulsion

Suspensions, when not including a recommendation for expulsion, shall not exceed five (5) consecutive school days per suspension. Upon a recommendation of expulsion by the Executive Director or designee, the student and the student's parent/guardian will be invited to a conference to determine if the suspension for the student should be extended pending an expulsion hearing. In such instances when the Charter School has determined a suspension period shall be extended, such extension shall be made only after an attempt is made to hold a conference with the student and the student's parent/guardian, unless the student and the student's parent/guardian fail to attend the conference.

This determination will be made by the Executive Director or designee upon either of the following: 1) the student's presence will be disruptive to the education process; or 2) the student poses a threat or danger to others. Upon either determination, the student's suspension will be extended pending the results of an expulsion hearing.

4. Homework Assignments During Suspension

In accordance with Education Code Section 47606.2(a), upon the request of a parent, a legal guardian or other person holding the right to make education decisions for the student, or the affected student, a teacher shall provide to a student in any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, who has been suspended from school for two (2) or more school days, the homework that the student would otherwise have been assigned.

In accordance with Education Code Section 47606.2(b), if a homework assignment that is requested pursuant to Section 47606.2(a) and turned into the teacher by the student either upon the student's return to school from suspension or within the timeframe originally prescribed by the teacher, whichever is later, is not graded before the end of the academic term, that assignment shall not be included in the calculation of the student's overall grade in the class.

D. Authority to Expel

Students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing before a neutral officer appointed by the Executive Director to determine whether the student should be expelled. The procedures herein provide for such a hearing and the notice of said hearing.

E. Expulsion Procedures

Students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing to determine whether the student should be expelled. Unless postponed for good cause, the hearing shall be held within thirty (30) school days after the Executive Director or designee determines that the student has committed an expellable offense and recommends the student for expulsion.

The student and the student's parent(s) or guardian shall be provided a timely written notice of the charges against the student and an explanation of the student's basic rights, including the right to a hearing before the Hearing Officer to determine whether the student should be expelled (the "Written Notice"). The parent(s) or guardian shall have ten (10) calendar days from issuance of the Written Notice to file a written request for a hearing to be presided over by the Hearing Officer. If no hearing is timely requested, the expulsion becomes final as of the 11th calendar day following the Written Notice.

If a hearing is timely requested, the Hearing Officer shall hold a confidential hearing within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of the request for a hearing. During the hearing, the student shall have the right to be represented by legal counsel or an advocate, the right to present evidence, testimony, and witnesses, the right to cross-examine adverse witnesses, and the right to question BMA representatives.

Written notice of the hearing shall be provided to the student and the student's parent/guardian at least ten (10) calendar days before the date of the hearing. Upon mailing the notice, it shall be deemed served upon the student. The notice shall include:

1. The date, time and place of the expulsion hearing.
2. A statement of the specific facts, charges and offenses upon which the proposed expulsion is based.
3. A copy of the Charter School's disciplinary rules which relate to the alleged violation.
4. Notification of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to provide information about the student's status at the Charter School to any other school district or school to which the student seeks enrollment.
5. Notification of the opportunity for the student and/or the student's parent/guardian to appear in person or to employ and be represented by counsel or a non-attorney advisor.
6. Notification of the right to inspect and obtain copies of all documents to be used at the hearing.
7. Notification of the opportunity to confront and question witnesses who testify at the hearing.
8. Notification of the opportunity to question evidence presented and to present oral and documentary evidence on the student's behalf including witnesses.

F. Special Procedures for Expulsion Hearings Involving Sexual Assault or Battery Offenses

The Hearing Officer may, upon a finding of good cause, determine that the disclosure of either the identity of the witness or the testimony of that witness at the hearing, or both, would subject the witness to an unreasonable risk of psychological or physical harm. Upon this determination, the testimony of the witness may be presented at the hearing in the form of sworn declarations that shall be examined only by the Hearing Officer. Copies of these sworn declarations, edited to delete the name and identity of the witness, shall be made available to the student

1. The complaining witness in any sexual assault or battery case must be provided with a copy of the applicable disciplinary rules and advised of their right to (a) receive five (5) days' notice of their scheduled testimony; (b) have up to two (2) adult support persons of their choosing present in the hearing at the time the complaining witness testifies, which may include a parent/guardian or legal counsel; and (c) elect to have the hearing closed while testifying.
2. The Charter School must also provide the victim a room separate from the hearing room for the complaining witness' use prior to and during breaks in testimony.
3. At the discretion of the Hearing Officer conducting the expulsion hearing, the complaining witness shall be allowed periods of relief from examination and cross-examination during which the complaining witness may leave the hearing room.
4. The Hearing Officer conducting the expulsion hearing may also arrange the seating within the hearing room to facilitate a less intimidating environment for the complaining witness.
5. The Hearing Officer conducting the expulsion hearing may also limit time for taking the testimony of the complaining witness to the hours the complaining witness is normally in school, if there is no good cause to take the testimony during other hours.
6. Prior to a complaining witness testifying, the support persons must be admonished that the hearing is confidential. Nothing in the law precludes the Hearing Officer presiding over the hearing from removing a support person whom the presiding person finds is disrupting the hearing. The Hearing Officer conducting the hearing may permit any one of the support persons for the complaining witness to accompany the complaining witness to the witness stand.
7. If one or both of the support persons is also a witness, the Charter School must present evidence that the witness' presence is both desired by the witness and will be helpful to the Charter School. The Hearing Officer presiding over the hearing shall permit the witness to stay unless it is established that there is a substantial risk that the testimony of the complaining witness would be influenced by the support person, in which case the presiding official shall admonish the support person or persons not to prompt, sway, or influence the witness in any way. Nothing shall preclude the presiding officer from exercising their discretion to remove a person from the hearing whom they believe is prompting, swaying, or influencing the witness.

8. The testimony of the support person shall be presented before the testimony of the complaining witness and the complaining witness shall be excluded from the courtroom during that testimony.
9. An alternative procedures may include videotaped depositions or contemporaneous examination in another place communicated to the hearing room by means of closed-circuit television.
10. Evidence of specific instances of a complaining witness' prior sexual conduct is presumed inadmissible and shall not be heard absent a determination by the entity conducting the hearing that extraordinary circumstances exist requiring the evidence be heard. Before such a determination regarding extraordinary circumstances can be made, the witness shall be provided notice and an opportunity to present opposition to the introduction of the evidence. In the hearing on the admissibility of the evidence, the complaining witness shall be entitled to be represented by a parent, legal counsel, or other support person. Reputation or opinion evidence regarding the sexual behavior of the complaining witness is not admissible for any purpose.

G. Record of Hearing

A record of the hearing shall be made and may be maintained by any means, including electronic recording, as long as a reasonably accurate and complete written record of the proceedings can be made.

H. Presentation of Evidence

While technical rules of evidence do not apply to expulsion hearings, evidence may be admitted and used as proof only if it is the kind of evidence on which reasonable persons can rely in the conduct of serious affairs. A recommendation by the Hearing Officer to expel must be supported by substantial evidence that the student committed an expellable offense. Findings of fact shall be based solely on the evidence at the hearing. While hearsay evidence is admissible, no decision to expel shall be based solely on hearsay. Sworn declarations may be admitted as testimony from witnesses of whom the Hearing Officer determines that disclosure of their identity or testimony at the hearing may subject them to an unreasonable risk of physical or psychological harm.

I. Expulsion Decision

The decision of the Hearing Officer shall be in the form of written findings of fact and constitutes a final determination regarding the expulsion. The Hearing Officer shall make the final determination regarding the expulsion within ten (10) school days following the conclusion of the hearing. The decision of the Hearing Officer is final.

If the Hearing Officer decides not to recommend expulsion the student shall immediately be returned to their previous educational program.

J. Written Notice to Expel

The Executive Director or designee, following a final decision of the Hearing Officer to expel, shall send written notice of the decision to expel, including any adopted findings of fact made by the Hearing Officer if a hearing was requested and held, to the student and student's parent/guardian. This notice shall also include the following: (a) notice of the specific offense committed by the student; and (b) notice of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to inform any new district in which the student seeks to enroll of the student's status with the Charter School.

The Executive Director or designee shall send a copy of the written notice of the decision to expel to the chartering authority

This notice shall include the following:

- a. The student's name
- b. The specific expellable offense committed by the student

K. Disciplinary Records

The Charter School shall maintain records of all student suspensions and expulsions at the Charter School. Such records shall be made available to the chartering authority upon request.

L. No Right to Appeal

The student shall have no right of appeal from expulsion from the Charter School as the Hearing Officer's decision to expel shall be final.

M. Expelled Students/Alternative Education

Students who are expelled shall be responsible for seeking alternative education programs including, but not limited to, programs within the County or their school district of residence. The Charter School shall work cooperatively with parents/guardians as requested by parents/guardians or by the school district of residence to assist with locating alternative placements during expulsion.

N. Rehabilitation Plans

Students who are expelled from the Charter School shall be given a rehabilitation plan upon expulsion as developed by the Hearing Officer at the time of the expulsion order, which may include, but is not limited to, periodic review as well as assessment at the time of review for readmission. The rehabilitation plan should include a date not later than one (1) year from the date of expulsion when the student may reapply to the Charter School for readmission.

O. Readmission or Admission of Previously Expelled Student

The decision to readmit a student after the end of the student's expulsion term or to admit a previously expelled student from another school district or charter school who has not been readmitted/admitted to another school or school district after the end of the student's expulsion term, shall be in the sole discretion of the Board of Directors following a meeting with the Executive Director or designee and the student and student's parent/guardian to determine whether the student has successfully completed the rehabilitation plan and to determine whether the student poses a threat to others or will be disruptive to the school environment. The Executive Director or designee shall make a recommendation to the Board of Directors following the meeting regarding the Executive Director's or designee's determination. The Board shall then make a final decision regarding readmission or admission of the student during the closed session of a public meeting, consistent with the requirements of the Brown Act. The student's readmission is also contingent upon the Charter School's capacity at the time the student seeks readmission or admission to the Charter School.

P. Notice to Teachers

The Charter School shall notify teachers of each student who has engaged in or is reasonably suspected to have engaged in any of the acts listed in Education Code Section 49079 and the corresponding enumerated offenses set forth above.

Q. Involuntary Removal for Truancy

As charter schools are schools of choice and as a charter school student who fails to attend school is potentially depriving another student of their opportunity to enroll, a student may be involuntarily removed as described within the Charter School's Board adopted Attendance Policy for truancy and only after the Charter School follows the requirements of the Attendance Policy and only in accordance with the policy described above which requires notice and an opportunity for a parent, guardian, educational rights holder to request a hearing prior to any involuntary removal. Students who are involuntarily removed for truancy will be given a rehabilitation plan and will be subject to the readmission procedures set forth herein.

R. Special Procedures for the Consideration of Suspension and Expulsion or Involuntary Removal of Students with Disabilities

1. Notification of SELPA

The Charter School shall immediately notify the SELPA and coordinate the procedures in this policy with the SELPA of the discipline of any student with a disability or student that the Charter School or the SELPA would be deemed to have knowledge that the student had a disability.

2. Services During Suspension

Students suspended for more than ten (10) school days in a school year shall continue to receive services so as to enable the student to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting (which could constitute a change of placement and the student's IEP would reflect this change), and to progress toward meeting

the goals set out in the child's IEP/504 Plan; and receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention services and modifications, that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur. These services may be provided in an interim alternative educational setting.

3. Procedural Safeguards/Manifestation Determination

Within ten (10) school days of a recommendation for expulsion or any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct, the Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team shall review all relevant information in the student's file, including the child's IEP/504 Plan, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parent/guardian to determine:

- a. If the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability; or
- b. If the conduct in question was the direct result of the local educational agency's failure to implement the IEP/504 Plan.

If the Charter School, the parent/guardian, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team determine that either of the above is applicable for the child, the conduct shall be determined to be a manifestation of the child's disability.

If the Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team make the determination that the conduct was a manifestation of the child's disability, the IEP/504 Team shall:

- a. Conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavioral intervention plan for such child, provided that the Charter School had not conducted such assessment prior to such determination before the behavior that resulted in a change in placement;
- b. If a behavioral intervention plan has been developed, review the behavioral intervention plan if the child already has such a behavioral intervention plan, and modify it, as necessary, to address the behavior; and
- c. Return the child to the placement from which the child was removed, unless the parent/guardian and the Charter School agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the behavioral intervention plan.

If the Charter School, the parent/guardian, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team determine that the behavior was not a manifestation of the student's disability and that the conduct in question was not a direct result of the failure to implement the IEP/504 Plan, then the Charter School may apply the relevant disciplinary procedures to children with disabilities in the same manner and for the same duration as the procedures would be applied to students without disabilities.

4. Due Process Appeals

The parent/guardian of a child with a disability who disagrees with any decision regarding placement, or the manifestation determination, or the Charter School believes that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others, may request an expedited administrative hearing through the Special Education Unit of the Office of Administrative Hearings or by utilizing the dispute provisions of the 504 Policy and Procedures.

When an appeal relating to the placement of the student or the manifestation determination has been requested by either the parent/guardian or the Charter School, the student shall remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer in accordance with state and federal law, including 20 U.S.C. Section 1415(k), until the expiration of the forty-five (45) day time period provided for in an interim alternative educational setting, unless the parent/guardian and the Charter School agree otherwise.

In accordance with 20 U.S.C. Section 1415(k)(3), if a parent/guardian disagrees with any decision regarding placement, or the manifestation determination, or if the Charter School believes that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others, the parent/guardian or Charter School may request a hearing.

In such an appeal, a hearing officer may: (1) return a child with a disability to the placement from which the child was removed; or (2) order a change in placement of a child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 school days if the hearing officer determines that maintaining the current placement of such child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others.

5. Special Circumstances

Charter School personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether to order a change in placement for a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct.

The Executive Director or designee may remove a student to an interim alternative educational setting for not more than forty-five (45) school days without regard to whether the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability in cases where a student:

- a. Carries or possesses a weapon, as defined in 18 U.S.C. Section 930, to or at school, on school premises, or to or at a school function;
- b. Knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance, while at school, on school premises, or at a school function; or
- c. Has inflicted serious bodily injury, as defined by 20 U.S.C. Section 1415(k)(7)(D), upon a person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function.

6. Interim Alternative Educational Setting

The student's interim alternative educational setting shall be determined by the student's IEP/504 Team.

7. Procedures for Students Not Yet Eligible for Special Education Services

A student who has not been identified as an individual with disabilities pursuant to IDEA and who has violated the Charter School's disciplinary procedures may assert the procedural safeguards granted under this administrative regulation only if the Charter School had knowledge that the student was disabled before the behavior occurred.

The Charter School shall be deemed to have knowledge that the student had a disability if one of the following conditions exists:

- a. The parent/guardian has expressed concern in writing, or orally if the parent/guardian does not know how to write or has a disability that prevents a written statement, to Charter School supervisory or administrative personnel, or to one of the child's teachers, that the student is in need of special education or related services.
- b. The parent/guardian has requested an evaluation of the child.
- c. The child's teacher, or other Charter School personnel, has expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the child, directly to the director of special education or to other Charter School supervisory personnel.

If the Charter School knew or should have known the student had a disability under any of the three (3) circumstances described above, the student may assert any of the protections available to IDEA-eligible children with disabilities, including the right to stay-put.

If the Charter School had no basis for knowledge of the student's disability, it shall proceed with the proposed discipline. The Charter School shall conduct an expedited evaluation if requested by the parents; however, the student shall remain in the education placement determined by the Charter School pending the results of the evaluation.

The Charter School shall not be deemed to have knowledge that the student had a disability if the parent/guardian has not allowed an evaluation, refused services, or if the student has been evaluated and determined to not be eligible.

Communications and Dispute Resolution

Do you have a Compliment or a Concern?

BMA has confidence in the competency and professionalism of its staff. However, if the school your child attends is not measuring up to your expectations, we would like to know about it.

BMA encourages open and respectful communication from individuals and groups within the community regarding compliments, suggestions, questions, and complaints about any part of the school program or any employee of BMA utilizes this information to effect improvement and positive change in our program whenever possible.

At BMA we use the communication style of first talking about what is working, and then discussing what needs improvement. We find that this style of communication is easier heard and received. Additionally, we model this communication style for the children because we believe it helps people achieve positive outcomes. We invite you to join us in this style of communication.

To express a compliment about school personnel:

If you would like to share a compliment, feel free to call anyone on the Leadership Team or our Community Liaisons, send a note, and/or speak directly to the person you are complimenting. Families can access our full staff and contact information on our school website on the Parent Information Page.

To express a concern the following informal dispute resolution process was adopted by the Governing Board of BMA:

Dispute Resolution Process – General Complaint Process

Misunderstandings and problems arise from time to time in any situation. Differences of opinion will exist. BMA intends for the school environment to be a safe and supportive environment for students, teachers, staff, and parents. We are committed to creating an honest and open atmosphere in which any problem, complaint, suggestion, or question will receive a timely and respectful response. It is requested that all parties conduct themselves in a congenial manner and communicate with each other with mutual respect at all times.

Any disputed issue should be brought to the attention of the respective party as soon as possible with the intention to resolve the issue. If it cannot be resolved at this level, then an appointment should be made with the Principal, Executive Director, or Designee to attempt further resolution.

If a parent/guardian disagrees with the established rules on conduct, policies, procedures, or practice, they can express this concern directly to the Principal, Executive Director, or Designee. No parent/guardian will be penalized, formally or informally, for voicing a concern or complaint with BMA in a reasonable, business-like manner, or for using this dispute resolution process.

The Executive Director is the official representative between parents/guardians and the Governing Board. He/she or any Principal/designee is accessible and ready to hear suggestions, concerns, and complaints. BMA cannot act on any problem unless it is aware of it, so we request that concerns or disputes be brought to the appropriate party as soon as possible.

While not every problem may be resolved to the complete satisfaction of all parties, effort will be made on the behalf of BMA, and its staff, to bring resolution to any problem. This will only be possible through both parties' willingness to listen, attempt toward understanding, and exploration of all aspects of the issue at hand. Through this process, parents/guardians, teachers, and administration will be able to develop confidence in each other. This confidence is important to the smooth, effective operation of BMA and will directly benefit the students. BMA will strive to provide such an atmosphere at all times. Parents/guardians are encouraged to offer positive and constructive criticism, and to take the following steps if they believe they have dissatisfaction, or believe that an injustice has occurred, or that a decision affecting them or their child is unjust or inequitable:

1. When a problem first arises, the concerned person should discuss the matter with the respective party as soon as possible.
2. If they are unable to resolve the issue at this level, the concerned person should then contact the Principal to make an appointment to discuss the issue as soon as possible.
3. If the problem cannot be resolved informally through discussion or meeting, the concern or complaint shall be reduced to writing by the concerned person and submitted to the Principal. The concerned person should specify the problem to the fullest extent possible and any remedies sought.
4. Following any necessary investigation, the Principal shall prepare a written response to the concerned person no later than ten (10) working days from the date of receipt of the concern, unless for good cause, additional time is required for the response.
5. If the matter is still unresolved at this level, the complainant may request a meeting with the Executive Director. The request for this meeting will be written and will include any and all documentation related to the complaint along with any solutions that have been proposed by the concerned person, the Principal, and any other related parties. The request for the meeting is to be delivered to the Executive Director who, unless sick or out of town, will meet with the concerned person within (10) working days of receiving the written request, or as soon thereafter as is practicable.

After the meeting, the Executive Director may conduct an investigation of the matter if appropriate prior to making any decisions or recommendations. The Executive Director will provide the complainant with a response and outcome within a reasonable amount of time, not to exceed thirty (30) days from the date of the meeting.

For complaints related to discrimination on basis of sex, please see the Title IX policy for its procedures and timelines. Please see the Uniform Complaint Procedures to determine if your complaint should be filed using that policy.

Uniform Complaint Procedures

BMA has the primary responsibility for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations for students who attend our school. In addition to our informal dispute resolution process described above, we have established Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP).

BELLA MENTE ACADEMIES
ANNUAL NOTIFICATION OF THE UNIFORM COMPLAINT PROCEDURES (UCP)
2025-26 School Year

Uniform Complaint Procedure (“UCP”)

The Charter School is the local agency primarily responsible for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations governing educational programs. The Charter School shall investigate and seek to resolve complaints using policies and procedures known as the Uniform Complaint Procedure (“UCP”) adopted by our Governing Board for the following types of complaints:

1. Complaints alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying against any protected group on the basis of the actual or perceived characteristics of age, ancestry, color, mental disability, physical disability, ethnic group identification, immigration status, citizenship, gender expression, gender identity, gender, genetic information, nationality, national origin, race or ethnicity, religion, medical condition, marital status, sex, or sexual orientation, or on the basis of a person’s association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics in any Charter School program or activity. Unlawful discrimination includes, but is not limited to, noncompliance with Education Code section 243(a) or 244(a).

2. Complaints alleging a violation of state or federal law or regulation governing the following programs:
 - Accommodations for Pregnant, Parenting or Lactating Students;
 - Adult Education;
 - Career Technical and Technical Education;
 - Career Technical and Technical Training;
 - Child Care and Development Programs;
 - Consolidated Categorical Aid;
 - Education of Students in Foster Care, Students who are Homeless, former Juvenile Court Students now enrolled in a public school, Migratory Children and Children of Military Families;
 - Every Student Succeeds Act;
 - Migrant Education Programs;
 - Regional Occupational Centers and Programs;
 - School Safety Plans; and/or
 - State Preschool Programs.

3. Complaints alleging noncompliance with laws relating to pupil fees. A student enrolled in a public school shall not be required to pay a pupil fee for participation in an educational activity. A pupil fee includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:
 - A fee charged to a pupil as a condition for registering for school or classes, or as a condition for participation in a class or an extracurricular activity, regardless of whether the class or activity is elective or compulsory or is for credit.
 - A security deposit, or other payment, that a pupil is required to make to obtain a lock, locker, book, class apparatus, musical instrument, clothes, or other materials or

- equipment.
- A purchase that a pupil is required to make to obtain materials, supplies, equipment, or clothes associated with an educational activity.

Complaints of noncompliance with laws relating to pupil fees may be filed with the Executive Director identified below.

4. Complaints alleging noncompliance with the requirements governing the Local Control Funding Formula (“LCFF”) or Local Control and Accountability Plans (“LCAP”) under Education Code sections 47606.5 and 47607.3, as applicable. If the Charter School adopts a School Plan for Student Achievement (“SPSA”) in addition to its LCAP, complaints of noncompliance with the requirements of the SPSA under Education Code sections 64000, 64001, 65000, and 65001 shall also fall under the UCP.

Complaints alleging noncompliance regarding child nutrition programs established pursuant to Education Code sections 49490-49590 are governed by Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations (“C.F.R.”) sections 210.19(a)(4), 215.1(a), 220.13(c), 225.11(b), 226.6(n), and 250.15(d) and Title 5, California Code of Regulations (“C.C.R.”) sections 15580 - 15584.

Complaints alleging noncompliance regarding special education programs established pursuant to Education Code sections 56000-56865 and 59000-59300 are governed by the procedures set forth in 5 C.C.R. sections 3200-3205 and 34 C.F.R. sections 300.151-300.153.

Complaints other than complaints relating to pupil fees must be filed in writing with the following Compliance Officer:

Erin Feeley, Executive Director
Bella Mente Academies
1737 W. Vista Way
Vista, CA 92083 760-621-8931
efeeley@bellamentecharter.org

Only complaints regarding pupil fees, LCAP, or noncompliance with Education Code section 243 or 244 may be filed anonymously and only if the anonymous complainant provides evidence or information leading to evidence to support an allegation of noncompliance with the respective applicable laws.

Complaints alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, must be filed within six (6) months from the date the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, occurred or the date the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying. All other complaints under the UCP shall be filed not later than one (1) year from the date the alleged violation occurred. For complaints relating to the LCAP, the date of the alleged violation is the date on which the Charter School’s Board of Directors approved the LCAP or the annual update was adopted by the Charter School.

The Compliance Officer responsible for investigating the complaint shall conduct and complete the investigation in accordance with California regulations and the Charter School’s UCP Policy. The Compliance Officer shall provide the complainant with a final written investigation report (“Decision”) within sixty (60) calendar days from the Charter School’s receipt of the complaint.

This sixty (60) calendar day time period may be extended by written agreement of the complainant.

The complainant has a right to appeal the Charter School's Decision to the California Department of Education ("CDE") by filing a written appeal within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the Charter School's written Decision, except if the Charter School has used its UCP to address a complaint that is not subject to the UCP requirements. The appeal must include a copy of the complaint filed with the Charter School, a copy of the Charter School's Decision, and the complainant must specify and explain the basis for the appeal of the Decision, including at least one of the following:

1. The Charter School failed to follow its complaint procedures.
2. Relative to the allegations of the complaint, the Charter School's Decision lacks material findings of fact necessary to reach a conclusion of law.
3. The material findings of fact in the Charter School's Decision are not supported by substantial evidence.
4. The legal conclusion in the Charter School's Decision is inconsistent with the law.
5. In a case in which the Charter School's Decision found noncompliance, the corrective actions fail to provide a proper remedy.

A complainant who appeals the Charter School's Decision on a UCP complaint to the CDE shall receive a written appeal decision within sixty (60) calendar days of the CDE's receipt of the appeal, unless extended by written agreement with the complainant or the CDE documents exceptional circumstances and informs the complainant.

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the CDE's appeal Decision pursuant to 5 C.C.R. section 4633(f)(2) or (3), either party may request reconsideration by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction ("SSPI") or the SSPI's designee. The request for reconsideration shall specify and explain the reason(s) for contesting the findings of fact, conclusions of law, or corrective actions in the CDE's appeal Decision.

Complaints alleging noncompliance with Education Code section 243 or 244 may be filed with the SSPI directly, and the SSPI may directly intervene without waiting for an investigation by the Charter School. The complainant shall present the SSPI with evidence that supports the basis for the direct filing and why immediate action is necessary.

If a UCP complaint is filed directly with the CDE and the CDE determines that it merits direct intervention, the CDE shall complete an investigation and provide a written decision to the complainant within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the complaint, unless the parties have agreed to extend the timeline or the CDE documents exceptional circumstances and informs the complainant.

If the Charter School finds merit in a UCP complaint, or the CDE finds merit in an appeal, the Charter School shall take corrective actions consistent with the requirements of existing law that will provide a remedy to the affected student and/or parent/guardian as applicable.

A complainant may pursue available civil law remedies outside of the Charter School's complaint procedures. Complainants may seek assistance from mediation centers or public/private interest attorneys. Civil law remedies that may be imposed by a court include, but are not limited to injunctions and restraining orders. For unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying complaints arising under state law, however, a complainant must wait until sixty (60) calendar days have elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the CDE before pursuing civil law remedies. The moratorium does not apply to injunctive relief and is applicable only if the Charter School has appropriately, and in a timely manner, apprised the complainant of the complainant's right to file a complaint in accordance with 5 C.C.R. § 4622.

A copy of the UCP shall be available upon request free of charge in the Front Office or can be accessed at www.bellamentecharter.org. For further information on any part of the complaint procedures, including filing a complaint or requesting a copy of the UCP, please contact the Executive Director.

California Charter Complaint

California *Education Code* Requirements

California *Education Code* (EC) Section 47605(e)(4)(A) through (E) states the following:

- A charter school shall not discourage a pupil from enrolling or seeking to enroll in a charter school for any reason, including, but not limited to, academic performance of the pupil or because the pupil exhibits any of the following characteristics:
 - Academically low-achieving
 - Economically disadvantaged (determined by eligibility for any free or reduced-price meal program)
 - English learner
 - Ethnicity
 - Foster youth
 - Homeless
 - Nationality
 - Neglected or delinquent
 - Race
 - Sexual orientation
 - Pupils with disabilities

- A charter school shall not request a pupil's records or require the parent, guardian, or pupil to submit the pupil's records to the charter school before enrollment.

- A charter school shall not encourage a pupil currently attending the charter school to disenroll from the charter school or transfer to another school for any reason (except for suspension or expulsion).

- This notice shall be posted on a charter school's Internet website and a charter school will provide copies of this notice (1) when a parent, guardian, or pupil inquires about enrollment; (2) before conducting an enrollment lottery, and (3) before disenrollment of a pupil.

Complaint Procedures

In order to submit a complaint, complete the Charter School Complaint Form and submit the form to the charter school authorizer, electronically or in hard copy, to the following location:

Vista Unified School District
1234 Arcadia Avenue Vista, CA 92084
superintendentsoffice@vistausd.org (760) 726-2170

Name: _____ Email _____

Mailing Address: _____

Date of Problem: _____ Phone Number: _____

Charter School (include address):

Bella Mente Montessori Academy
1737 West Vista Way Vista, CA 92083

California Education Code (EC) Section 47605(e)(4) through (E) allows a parent or guardian to submit a complaint to the charter school authorizer when a charter school discourages a pupil's enrollment, requires records before enrollment, or encourages a pupil to disenroll. Please identify the basis for this complaint below, with specific facts, which support your complaint.

Basis of complaint (check all that apply):

- Pupil was discouraged from enrolling or seeking to enroll in the charter school.
- Records were requested to be submitted to the charter school before enrollment.
- Pupil was encouraged to disenroll from the charter school or transfer to another school.

Please provide further details:

Please file this complaint with the authorizer of the charter school listed on the preceding page electronically or in hard copy.

Bella Mente Academies Attendance Policy

Absence, Tardiness/Late Arrivals, and Early Departures

At BMA, attendance is a priority and is crucial to your child's academic success. BMA is a school of choice. Families who actively choose to enroll their children at Bella Mente Academies have opted for an educational program, with all of its rich research-based Montessori materials, lesson presentations and experiential learning. This cannot be duplicated outside the classroom environment, which makes your child's daily attendance even more critical for success.

Absence from school hurts not only the student but also the class. The success of the Montessori environment relies partly upon the strength of the learning community that is developed. When the student is not in school, (s)he is missing out on critical classroom experiences, and the student's classmates are missing out on her/his contributions to the classroom community.

As illustrated in the Academic Overview portion of this handbook, ***all portions of the school day are equally important to the student's growth and mastery of learning***. When students are late to school, they create classroom interruptions which in turn result in an unsettling experience and loss of learning for the student and her/his classmates. Early departures can also adversely impact the student's success and ability to be a contributing member of the learning community.

Finally, California is a compulsory education state. State law requires parents/guardians of children ages 6 to 18 to send their children to school, unless otherwise exempt by law. Parents who fail to meet this obligation may cause their student to be classified as truant. In extreme cases of truancy, the county SARB may request intervention and prosecution through the District Attorney's office, as well as possible involvement of Child Protective Services.

BMA acknowledges the need for family time and for times of rest and rejuvenation. The administrative team has taken this into account in planning the school calendar and has included well-considered break times throughout the year. ***Please refer to the school calendar as a planning guide so that your child is able to be in school each day and receive the maximum benefits of regular participation in his/her Montessori classroom.***

If a family circumstance arises which impacts your child's ability to be at school, please let your child's teacher or Principal know so we can work on a plan to support you and your child during this time, which may include independent study

Bella Mente offers short term Independent Study. Please make an appointment with your teacher. For more information, please email IS@bellamentecharter.org.

Whether the absence is excused or unexcused, the state only provides daily funding to the school if a student is actually at school. With that said, below is a summary of BMA policies regarding absences, tardies, and early departures from school.

Definitions

- “*Tardy*”: BMA starts at the following times:
 - Mondays: 9:15 a.m. (Grades 1-8); 9:30 a.m. (TK/Kindergarten)
 - Tuesday-Friday: 8:15 a.m. (Grades 1-8); 8:30 a.m. (TK/Kindergarten)○ Students shall be classified as tardy if the student arrives after the above times.
- “*Unexcused Absence*”: A student shall have an unexcused absence if the student is absent or is tardy for more than thirty (30) minutes without a valid excuse.
- “*Truant*”: A student shall be classified as a truant if the student is absent from school without a valid excuse three (3) full days in one school year, or if the student is tardy or absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three (3) occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof. Any student who has once been reported as a truant and who is again absent from school without valid excuse one or more days, or tardy on one or more days, shall again be deemed a truant. Such students shall be reported to the Executive Director or designee.
- “*Habitual Truant*”: A student shall be classified as a habitual truant if the student is reported for truancy three (3) or more times within the same school year. This generally occurs when the student is absent from school without a valid excuse for five (5) full days in one school year or if the student is tardy or absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on five (5) occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof.
- “*Chronic Truant*”: A student shall be classified as a chronic truant if the student is absent from school without a valid excuse for ten (10) percent or more of the school days in one school year, from the date of enrollment to the current date.
- “*School Attendance Review Team (“SART”)*”: The SART panel will be composed of the Principal, Assistant Principal, and School Counselor and other members as appropriate. The SART panel will discuss the absence problem with the student’s parent/guardian to work on solutions, develop strategies, discuss appropriate support services for the student and student’s family, and establish a plan to resolve the attendance issue.
 1. The SART panel shall direct the parent/guardian that no further unexcused absences or tardies can be tolerated.
 2. The parent/guardian shall be required to sign a contract formalizing the agreement by the parent/guardian to improve the child’s attendance or face additional administrative action. The contract will identify the corrective actions required in the future, and indicate that the SART panel shall have the authority to order one or more of the following consequences for non-compliance with the terms of the contract:
 - a. Parent/guardian to attend school with the child for one day
 - b. Student retention

- c. After school detention program
 - d. Required school counseling
 - e. Loss of field trip privileges
 - f. Loss of school store privileges
 - g. Loss of school event privileges
 - h. Mandatory Saturday school
 - i. Required remediation plan as set by the SART
 - j. Notification to the County District Attorney
3. Notice of action recommended by the SART will be provided in writing to the parent/guardian.

Reporting Absences

All absences and late arrivals must be called in by a parent/guardian prior to the start of the instructional day, by contacting the Front Office at 760-621-8948.

When arriving late or departing early, the parent/guardian must sign in through the school office and obtain a tardy slip to admit the child to class or an early release slip to indicate to the teacher that you have already signed the child out for the day. Once the child has been signed in as tardy, the child may proceed to class. To limit classroom disruption, once a child has been signed out, an office staff member will send for your student to meet you at the office.

Please note that BMA maintains a closed campus. Students *must* be signed in and out by a parent or guardian or by a responsible adult who has been pre-designated by the student's parent/guardian. BMA cannot allow children the liberty to leave campus during the instructional day without properly designated adult accompaniment unless they have a valid excuse and permission from the office

Excused Absences

Excused absences are defined as:

1. Student illness, mental or behavioral health: A child is too ill to attend school if he or she has a contagious condition, a temperature of over 100, symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea, or written orders from a doctor to stay at home. If the child is ill 3 consecutive days or more, the school may require a note from a physician documenting the child's illness and the necessity of having the child stay home from school. Illness of *other* family members does not result in an excused absence for the student
Health/medical quarantine as may be designated by the school, city or county health department or medical professional.
2. Medical appointments or services lasting all day.
3. Medical, dental, optometric, or chiropractic appointments:

- a. Students in grades 7-8, inclusive, may be excused from school for the purpose of obtaining confidential medical services without the consent of the student's parent or guardian.
4. For the purpose of attending the funeral services or grieving the death of either a member of the pupil's immediate family, or of a person that is determined by the pupil's parent or guardian to be in such close association with the pupil as to be considered the pupil's immediate family, so long as the absence is not more than five (5) days per incident. "Immediate family" means the parent or guardian, brother or sister, grandparent, or any other relative living in the household of the pupil.
5. For any of the following reasons, if an immediate family member of the pupil, or a person that is determined by the pupil's parent or guardian to be in such close association with the pupil as to be considered the pupil's immediate family, has died:
 - a. To access services from a victim services organization or agency.
 - b. To access grief support services.
6. To participate in safety planning or to take other actions to increase the safety of the pupil or an immediate family member of the pupil, or a person that is determined by the pupil's parent or guardian to be in such close association with the pupil as to be considered the pupil's immediate family, including, but not limited to, temporary or permanent relocation.

Absences under this section shall not be excused for more than three (3) days per incident, unless extended on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the school administrator. "Immediate family" means the parent or guardian, brother or sister, grandparent, or any other relative living in the household of the pupil.

7. Participation in religious instruction or exercises as follows:
 - a. The student shall be excused for this purpose on no more than four (4) school days
8. Due to the illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child of whom the student is the custodial parent, including absences to care for a sick child. (The school does not require a note from the doctor for this excusal).
9. To permit the student to spend time with an immediate family member who is an active duty member of the uniformed services, as defined in Education Code section 49701, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from, deployment to a combat zone or combat support position. Absences granted pursuant to this paragraph shall be granted for a period of time to be determined at the discretion of the Charter School.

10. For the purpose of serving as a member of a precinct board for an election pursuant to Election Code section 12302.
11. Attendance at the student's naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen.
12. Authorized parental leave for a pregnant or parenting student for up to eight (8) weeks, which may be extended if deemed medically necessary by the student's physician.
13. Authorized at the discretion of the Executive Director or designee, based on the facts of the student's circumstances, are deemed to constitute a valid excuse.
14. A student who holds a work permit to work for a period of not more than five (5) consecutive days in the entertainment or allied industries shall be excused from school during the period that the student is working in the entertainment or allied industry for a maximum of up to five (5) absences per school year subject to the requirements of Education Code section 48225.5.
15. In order to participate with a not-for-profit performing arts organization in a performance for a public-school student audience for a maximum of up to five (5) days per school year provided the student's parent or guardian provides a written note to the school authorities explaining the reason for the student's absence.
16. For the purpose of participating in a cultural ceremony or event. "Cultural" for these purposes means relating to the habits, practices, beliefs, and traditions of a certain group of people.
17. For the purpose of a middle school pupil engaging in a civic or political event as indicated below, provided that the pupil notifies the school ahead of the absence. A "civic or political event" includes, but is not limited to, voting, poll working, strikes, public commenting, candidate speeches, political or civic forums, and town halls.
 - a. A middle school pupil who is absent pursuant to this provision is required to be excused for only one school day-long absence per school year.
 - b. A middle school pupil who is absent pursuant to this provision may be permitted additional excused absences in the discretion of a school administrator.
18. For the following justifiable personal reasons for a maximum of five (5) school days per school year (unless otherwise indicated), upon advance written request by the student's parent or guardian and approval by the Executive Director or designee pursuant to uniform standards:
 - a. Appearance in court.
 - b. Observance of a holiday or ceremony of the pupil's religion.
 - c. Attendance at religious retreats (not to exceed one school day per semester).
 - d. Attendance at an employment conference.

- e. Attendance at an educational conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization.

A student who is absent due to an excused absence will be allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed during the excused absence that can be reasonably provided and will receive full credit upon satisfactory completion within a reasonable period of time. The teacher of the class from which a student is absent shall determine which tests and assignments are reasonably equivalent to, but not necessarily identical to, the tests and assignments that the student missed during the excused absence.

- 19. Excused tardies are only designated for medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours.

All other absences or late arrivals are classified as unexcused, even if the /guardian notifies the school.

Whenever possible, parents are encouraged to schedule medical/dental appointments and family business during intersession periods, school holidays, and other non-school times. In the event an absence from school cannot be avoided, the best course of action is to stay in close communication with your child's teachers, and provide an opportunity for the child to make up any missed assignments. **Verification of Illness**

The statewide average absence rate for typical childhood illness is five (5) days per school year. **Anytime a child has a doctor's appointment and/or documentation that requires the child to stay home from school, documentation must be provided to the school office when the student returns to school. These absences will be recorded as "verified" and will be taken into account when reviewing the child's total attendance record.**

Students who are ill in excess of ten (10) excused and unexcused absences within a school year are required to bring verification of illness from a medical professional on their return to school for each successive absence. If the child is under the regular care of a physician for a serious or chronic condition or is directed to stay home by a medical professional, verification is to be provided to the school office at the time of the absence. Absences for excessive illnesses that are not verified with official documentation will be marked unexcused and may subject the student and/or parents to truancy review.

The following methods may be used to verify student absences:

1. Signed, written note from the student's parent/guardian or parent representative.
2. Conversation, in person or by telephone, between the verifying employee and the student's parent/guardian or parent representative. The employee shall subsequently record the following:
 - a. Name of student;
 - b. Name of parent/guardian or parent representative;

- c. Name of verifying employee;
 - d. Date or dates of absence; and
 - e. Reason for absence.
3. Visit to the student's home by the verifying employee, or any other reasonable method, which establishes the fact that the student was absent for the reasons stated. A written recording shall be made, including the information outlined above.
4. Healthcare provider verification:
 - a. When excusing students for confidential medical services or verifying such appointments, Charter School staff shall not ask the purpose of such appointments but may contact a medical office to confirm the time of the appointment.
 - b. A healthcare provider's note of illness will be accepted for any reported absence. When a student has had ten (10) absences in the school year for illness verified by methods listed in #1-#3 above without a healthcare provider's note, any further absences for illness must be verified by a healthcare provider.

Insofar as class participation is an integral part of students' learning experiences, parents/guardians and students shall be encouraged to schedule medical appointments during non-school hours.

Chronic Illness

Personal illness which recurs on a frequent basis will require a doctor's certification.

If your child has a diagnosed chronic illness, you must provide a physician's authorization in order for these recurrent absences to be excused. Such authorization requires the treating physician to verify the diagnosis and list symptoms that would require the child to stay home from school but not necessitate an office visit. With this authorization, the parent/guardian may send a note when the child returns to school listing one or more of the symptoms identified by the physician's report. These absences will be considered verified. Please contact a campus administrator or the data entry clerk for additional assistance.

Missed Assignments and Tests

A student who is absent from class or scheduled instructional activities for allowable reasons may complete missed assignments or tests that can be reasonably provided and will not have his/her grade reduced or lose academic credit if the assignments or tests are satisfactorily completed within a reasonable period of time. In some cases, the teacher shall determine a reasonable equivalency in the tests and assignments provided, but not necessarily identical to, the tests and assignments that the student missed during the absence.

Excessive Absence/Truancy Notification

While BMA maintains high expectations for student attendance, we also recognize that students may miss a few days/hours during the school year due to illness or family emergencies. For this reason, BMA has established guidelines for satisfactory student attendance. In the event that

students fall short of these guidelines, written attendance letters will be sent to the student’s parent/guardian.

These letters are to reinforce the parent/guardian’s awareness of potential attendance problems and represent the first steps in the attendance review/truancy process. Subsequent portions of this process may include mandatory parent/teacher/Principal conferences. If these remedies remain unsuccessful, the parent/guardian may be scheduled to meet with BMA’s administration and/or appear before the School Attendance Review Team (SART), consisting of the Executive Director (or Designee), the BMA Principal, and other pertinent staff. A law enforcement representative may be included at the discretion of the Executive Director or Designee.

Attendance guidelines have been established as follows:

Procedure for excessive tardies and early departures:

- **5 unexcused tardies and early departures**
 - The Attendance Clerk or Designee **will contact the child’s parent(s)/guardian(s)** to discuss the reason for these absences and to develop a plan for attendance improvement.
- **10 unexcused tardies and early departures**
 - **A meeting appointment will be set for the child’s parent(s)/guardian(s) and Administration** to discuss the child’s continued attendance issues and develop an attendance improvement plan for the student.
- **12 unexcused tardies and early departures**
 - The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified by the Attendance Clerk or School Attendance Review Team Member (SART) to schedule a SART meeting to discuss the child’s continued attendance issues and develop an attendance improvement plan for the student.
 - If a parent(s)/guardian(s) fails to attend the SART meeting the school may place a phone call to Child Protective Services (CPS) and/or Vista Police Department to request a welfare check.
 - The parent/guardian may be referred to the **Vista School District Attendance Review Board and a hearing will be scheduled.**

Procedures for absences:

Absence	Action Taken
3 Excused <u>or</u> Unexcused Absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy Letter #1/First Notice of Non-Compliance sent home via email • Attendance Action Plan and Attendance Policy sent home via email
5 Excused <u>or</u> Unexcused Absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy Letter #2/Second Notice of Non-Compliance sent home via email - Attendance Team requests parent conference • Placement of Attendance Probation sent home via email

7 Excused_or Unexcused Absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truancy Letter #3/Referral to SART sent home via email • Hold SART meeting for review and further action
10+ Excused_or Unexcused Absences	<p>(Without valid excuse, and parent/guardian cannot be reached) Student is in violation of Attendance Policy and SART Contract and may be subject to Involuntary Removal Process.</p> <p>Home Visit, Vista Police Department Welfare Check, CPS Report, potential referral to district attorney for ongoing truancy issues. Disenrollment review may begin.</p> <p>Doctor's note required for further illness-related absences; administrator meeting to review attendance.</p>

- If a student is **absent ten (10) or more consecutive school days without valid excuse and the student's parent/guardian cannot be reached** at the number or address provided in the registration packet and does not otherwise respond to the Charter School's communication attempts, as set forth above, the student will be in violation of this Policy and the SART contract (if any) and may be subject to disenrollment in compliance with the Involuntary Removal Process described below. If the student is disenrolled after the Involuntary Removal Process has been followed, notification will be sent within thirty (30) days to the student's last known school district of residence.
- Any documentation received by the Charter School regarding a student's enrollment and attendance at another public or private school (i.e., CALPADS report) shall be deemed evidence of a **voluntary** disenrollment and shall not trigger the Involuntary Removal Process below.

For all communications set forth in this process, the Charter School will use the contact information provided by the parent/guardian in the registration packet. It is the parent's or guardian's responsibility to update the Charter School with any new contact information.

Families are also reminded that the Montessori curriculum embraces a wide variety of integral subject matter and teachers spend a significant amount of time to ensure that all portions of the school day are equally important to the student's growth and mastery of learning. When a student leaves early, the student is missing out on integral learning experiences which adversely impact the student's success and her/his ability to be a contributing member of the learning community.

Accordingly, if a student develops patterns of early departure, parents/guardians will be scheduled to meet with the teacher, Principal, BMA Executive Director or Designee and/or attendance improvement team to develop an attendance improvement plan.

Again, our goal is to have your child in school for each full day of instruction.

Students Classified as Truant

Section 48200 of the Education Code of the State of California, states that it is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to see that their children attend school regularly and on-time. Section 48200 is the law, a part of the contract between home and school, and a component of BMA's promotion policy. Parents/Guardians violating 48200 may be subject to prosecution by the District Attorney.

Formal Written Notice

When a student's percentage of attendance falls below 90% at any point after the sixty (60) days of school, the parent/guardian may receive a Formal Written Notice alerting them to their student's attendance record and follow-up requirements.

Options for Students Unable to Attend School

Students who are unable to attend school for an extended period of time due to serious injury or illness may be eligible to receive individualized academic assignments during the period of absence when approved in advance by both Principal and Executive Director through independent study or Home/Hospital if the reason for the absence is not related to the student's disability if they have an individualized education program (IEP). Please note that attendance credit is not issued unless the student is on independent study or Home/Hospital and the sole focus of such assignments is to support the student to stay current on his/her academic studies. The Principal may request verification of students' condition by a physician. Students with mental health conditions must present verification from a physician *and* a treatment plan from their therapist. In such cases of medically related extended absence, the Principal and the Executive Director will meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine which program is most suitable to support the student (5 days or more of foreseeable absence).

Children who are absent due to shorter term illness should rest and recuperate so that they may return to school as soon as they are able. When reasonable, parents are encouraged to work with teachers to enroll in short term independent study to support the student's completion of missed work pursuant to BMA's independent study policy.

While families are asked to arrange for vacations and non-medical absences during school intersessions, holidays, and other non-school periods, if you know your child must be absent, please contact the teacher or Principal in advance to place your child in a short- term Independent Study.

Process for Students Who Are Not in Attendance at the Beginning of the School Year

When a student is not in attendance on the first day of the school year, the Charter School base its active attendance roster on students present. The Charter School will attempt to reach the student's parent/guardian to determine whether the student has an excused absence. If the student has a basis for an excused absence, the student's parent/guardian must notify the Charter School of the absence and provide documentation consistent with this policy. That student will then remain on the Charter School's active attendance roster. Students who are not in attendance on the first day of the school

year due to an unexcused absence will not be on the active attendance roster as it will be assumed that the student has chosen another school option.

Involuntary Removal Process

No student shall be involuntarily removed by the Charter School for any reason unless the parent or guardian of the student has been provided written notice of the Charter School's intent to remove the student ("Involuntary Removal Notice"). The Involuntary Removal Notice must be provided to the parent or guardian no less than five (5) schooldays before the effective date of the proposed disenrollment date.

The written notice shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student's educational rights holder. The Involuntary Removal Notice shall include:

1. The charges against the student
2. An explanation of the student's basic rights including the right to request a hearing before the effective date of the action
3. The CDE Enrollment Complaint Notice and Form

The hearing shall be consistent with the Charter School's expulsion procedures. If the student's parent, guardian, or educational rights holder requests a hearing, the student shall remain enrolled and shall not be removed until the Charter School issues a final decision. As used herein, "involuntarily removed" includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not include suspensions or expulsions pursuant to the Charter School's suspension and expulsion policy.

Upon a parent's or guardian's request for a hearing, the Charter School will provide notice of hearing consistent with its expulsion hearing process, through which the student has a fair opportunity to present testimony, evidence, and witnesses and confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses, and at which the student has the right to bring legal counsel or an advocate. The notice of hearing shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student's educational rights holder and shall include a copy of the Charter School's expulsion hearing process.

If the parent/guardian is nonresponsive to the Involuntary Removal Notice, the student will be disenrolled as of the effective date set forth in the Involuntary Removal Notice. If parent/guardian requests a hearing and does not attend on the date scheduled for the hearing, the student will be disenrolled effective the date of the hearing.

If as a result of the hearing the student is disenrolled, notice will be sent to the student's last known school district of residence within thirty (30) calendar days.

A hearing decision not to disenroll the student does not prevent the Charter School from making a similar recommendation in the future should student truancy continue or reoccur.

Referral to Appropriate Agencies or County District Attorney

It is the Charter School's intent to identify and remove all barriers to the student's success, and the Charter School will explore every possible option to address student attendance issues with the family. For any unexcused absence, the Charter School may refer the family to appropriate school-based and/or social service agencies.

If a student's attendance does not improve after a SART contract has been developed according to the procedures above, or if the parents/guardians fail to attend a required SART meeting, the Charter School shall notify the County District Attorney's office, which then may refer the matter for prosecution through the court system. Students twelve (12) years of age and older may be referred to the juvenile court for adjudication.

Non-Discrimination

These policies will be enforced fairly, uniformly, and consistently without regard to the characteristics listed in Education Code section 220 (actual or perceived disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Penal Code section 422.55, including immigration status, pregnancy, or association with an individual who has any of the aforementioned characteristics).

Reports

The Executive Director, or designee, shall gather and report to the Board the number of absences both excused and unexcused as well as students who are truant, and the steps taken to remedy the problem.

Attendance Questions or Assistance

We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at any time to discuss any concerns or questions you may have about your child's attendance.

It is the goal of BMA to team with families to support each child's academic success. Daily attendance is a key component to this success and sends a message to your child that their education is a priority and is valued.

Student Health and Safety

Immunization Records and Health Exams

As a public school and pursuant to the California Health and Safety Code and the California Code of Regulations, children must provide proof of having received required immunizations (shots)

before they can attend school unless they meet the requirements for an exemption. Bella Mente Academies requires all students to be current with immunizations as required by law.

BMA is required by law to have a copy of student immunization records for reporting purposes. During enrollment and prior to the first day of school, a copy of the student's immunization record is to be presented to the BMA office staff. The Charter School will also collect this information when your child receives any vaccinations, please provide proof so that the Charter School's records are kept current.

This record will be kept in the child's confidential student cumulative record file. Below are the immunizations:

Child's Grade	List of shots required to attend school
<p>TK/K-12 Admission</p>	<p>Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (DTaP) - Five (5) doses Polio - Four (4) doses Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) - Two (2) doses Hepatitis B (Hep B) - Three (3) doses Varicella (chickenpox) – Two (2) doses</p> <p>NOTE: Four doses of DTaP are allowed if one was given on or after the fourth birthday. Three doses of DTaP meet the requirement if at least one dose of Tdap, DTaP, or DTP vaccine was given on or after the seventh birthday (also meets the 7th-12th grade Tdap requirement.) One or two doses of Td vaccine given on or after the seventh birthday count towards the requirement for DTaP. Three doses of Polio are allowed if one was given on or after fourth birthday. MMR doses must be given on or after first birthday. Two doses of measles, two doses of mumps, and one dose of rubella vaccine meet the requirement, separately or combined. Combination vaccines (e.g., MMRV) meet the requirements for individual component vaccines.</p>
<p>Entering 7th Grade</p>	<p>Tetanus, reduced Diphtheria, and acellular Pertussis (Tdap) - One (1) dose Varicella (chickenpox) - Two (2) doses</p> <p>NOTE: In order to begin 7th grade, students who had a valid personal belief exemption on file with a public or private elementary or secondary school in California before January 1, 2016 must meet the requirements listed for grades K-12 as well as requirements for 7th grade advancement (i.e., polio, MMR, varicella and primary series for diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis). At least one dose of pertussis-containing vaccine is required on or after the 7th birthday.</p>

Please see the complete Immunization Policy for information regarding exemption. The policy is located in the Front Office.

Oral Health Assessment

Students enrolled in kindergarten in a public school or while enrolled in first grade if the student was not previously enrolled in kindergarten in a public school are required to have an oral health assessment completed by a dental professional. Please contact the main office if you have questions about this requirement.

Physical Examinations and Right to Refuse

All students must complete a health screening examination on or before the 90th day after the student's entrance into first grade or such students must have obtained a waiver pursuant to Health and Safety Code Sections 124040 and 124085. This examination can be obtained from your family physician or possibly through the services provided by your County Health Department. Information and forms are distributed to students enrolled in kindergarten. If your child's medical status changes, please provide the teacher with a physician's written verification of the medical issue, especially if it impacts in any way your child's ability to perform schoolwork.

A parent/guardian having control or charge of any child enrolled in the Charter School may file annually with the Executive Director a written and signed statement stating that the parent/guardian will not consent to a physical examination of the child. Thereupon the child shall be exempt from any physical examination, but whenever there is a good reason to believe that the child is suffering from a recognized contagious or infectious disease, the child shall be sent home and shall not be permitted to return until the school authorities are satisfied that any contagious or infectious disease does not exist.

A physician's statement of health may be found here: [Report of Health Examination for School Entry](#) is also required prior to the child's **initial enrollment in a public school**. This physician's report form is also included in the annual enrollment packet and only needs to be filed once.

Families who need assistance with the cost of these enrollment requirements may inquire with their county health department for dates of immunization and exam clinics in their area. Information on county health programs is included in your enrollment folder.

Cancer Prevention Act

Students in the state are advised to adhere to current immunization guidelines, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Physicians, regarding full human papillomavirus (HPV) immunization before admission or advancement to the eighth grade level of any private or public elementary or secondary school.

Because the vaccine is more effective when given at younger ages, two doses of HPV vaccine are recommended for all kids between the ages of 9 to 12 years, and the second dose should be given before the start of 8th grade. Kids who wait until later to get their first dose of HPV vaccine may need three doses.

HPV vaccination can prevent over 90 percent of cancers caused by HPV. HPV vaccines are very safe, and scientific research shows that the benefits of HPV vaccination far outweigh the potential risks.

Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention and Automated External Defibrillators

The Charter School is invested in the health of its athletes, especially their heart health. Sudden cardiac arrest (“SCA”) is when the heart stops beating, suddenly and unexpectedly. Those wishing to participate in athletics at the Charter School must review the information sheet on sudden cardiac arrest via the following link: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/pe/documents/pescaform.pdf>

Concussion/Head Injuries

A concussion is a brain injury that can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. Even though most concussions are mild, all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly. Because the Charter School has elected to offer an athletic program, we must immediately remove from a school-sponsored athletic activity for the remainder of the day an athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury during that activity. The athlete may not return to that activity until the athlete is evaluated by, and receives written clearance from, a licensed health care provider. If the licensed health care provider determines the athlete has a concussion or head injury, the athlete shall also complete a graduated return-to-play protocol of no less than 7 days in duration under the supervision of a licensed health care provider. On a yearly basis, a concussion and head injury information sheet must be signed and returned by the athlete and the athlete’s parent or guardian before the athlete initiates practice or competition. This requirement does not apply to an athlete engaging in an athletic activity during the regular school day or as part of a physical education course.

Diabetes

The Charter School will provide an information sheet regarding type 1 diabetes to the parent or guardian of a student when the student is first enrolled in elementary school, pursuant to Education Code Section 49452.6. The information sheet shall include, but shall not be limited to, all of the following:

1. A description of type 1 diabetes.
2. A description of the risk factors and warning signs associated with type 1 diabetes.
3. A recommendation that parents or guardians of students displaying warning signs associated with type 1 diabetes should immediately consult with the student’s primary care provider to determine if immediate screening for type 1 diabetes is appropriate.
4. A description of the screening process for type 1 diabetes and the implications of test results.
5. A recommendation that, following a type 1 diagnosis, parents or guardians should consult with the pupil’s primary care provider to develop an appropriate treatment plan, which may non include consultation with and examination by a specialty care provider, including, but not limited to, a properly qualified endocrinologist.

A copy of the information sheet regarding type 1 diabetes is available at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/type1diabetes.asp>. Please contact the office if you need a copy of this information sheet or if you have any questions about this information sheet.

Dangers of Synthetic Drugs

The illicit use and abuse of synthetic drugs represents an emerging and ongoing public health threat in California. The fentanyl crisis specifically, has impacted communities across the state, leading to a sharp increase in fentanyl poisonings and deaths in recent years.

This notice aims to address the crisis with a preventative approach ensuring students and families are educated on the deadly consequences of recreational drug use.

A synthetic drug is a drug with properties and effects similar to a known hallucinogen or narcotic but having a slightly altered chemical structure, especially such a drug created in order to evade existing restrictions against illegal substances.

Synthetic drugs include but are not limited to synthetic cannabinoids (“synthetic marijuana,” “Spice,” “K2”), methamphetamines, bath salts, and fentanyl.

The California Department of Public Health (“CDPH”) has expounded on the extreme danger of drugs laced with fentanyl. Illicit fentanyl can be added to other drugs to make them cheaper, more powerful, and more addictive. Illicit fentanyl has been found in many drugs, including heroin, methamphetamine, counterfeit pills, and cocaine. Fentanyl mixed with any drug increases the likelihood of a fatal overdose. Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to tell if drugs have been laced with fentanyl without additional testing, because fentanyl cannot be seen, smelled, or tasted when used as a lacing agent.

Additional information regarding fentanyl from the CDPH’s Substance and Addiction Prevention Branch [can be found here](#).

Opioid Information Sheet (for schools that offer athletics)

The Charter School annually provides each athlete with an Opioid Factsheet for Patients published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The athlete and, if the athlete is 17 years of age or younger, the athlete’s parent or guardian shall sign a document acknowledging receipt of the Opioid Factsheet for Patients and return that document to the Charter School before the athlete initiates practice or competition. The fact sheet is available at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/AHA-Patient-Opioid-Factsheet-a.pdf>

Human Trafficking Prevention

California has the highest number of incidents of human trafficking in the U.S., and all students may be vulnerable. The Charter School believes it is a priority to inform our students about (1) the prevalence, nature of and strategies to reduce the risk of human trafficking, techniques to set healthy boundaries, and how to safely seek assistance, and (2) how social media and mobile device applications are used for human trafficking.

In accordance with the California Healthy Youth Act, the Charter School will provide age-appropriate instruction on the prevention of human trafficking, including sexual abuse, assault, and harassment. You have the right to excuse your child from all or part of the instruction on the prevention of human trafficking. An opt-out form is available at the Front Office for your convenience. Your consent for this instruction is NOT required. If we do not receive a written request to excuse your child, your child will be included in the instruction.

Information and materials for parents/guardians about the curriculum and resources on prevention of human trafficking and abuse, including sexual abuse, assault, and harassment are available on Charter School's website for your review.

Mental Health Services

The Charter School recognizes that when unidentified and unaddressed, mental health challenges can lead to poor academic performance, increased likelihood of suspension and expulsion, chronic absenteeism, student attrition, homelessness, incarceration, and/or violence. Access to mental health services at the Charter School and in our community is not only critical to improving the physical and emotional safety of students, but it also helps address barriers to learning and provides support so that all students can learn problem-solving skills and achieve in school and, ultimately, in life. The following resources are available to your child:

Available on Campus:

- **School-based counseling services** – your child is encouraged to directly contact a Charter School counselor by coming into the counseling office during school hours and making an appointment to speak with a counselor. The counseling office can also be reached at 760621-8948. Our Charter School counselors support students by providing individual sessions, group or parent consultations whenever a student is having a difficult time due to academic stress, transition to changes in their environment, or social concerns, including isolation. Counseling services, whether provided by our Charter School or by an outside provider listed herein, are voluntary.
- **Special education services** – if you believe your child may have a disability, you are encouraged to directly contact the Director of Special Education at 760-621-8948 to request an evaluation.
- **Prescription medication while on campus** – if your child requires prescription medication during school hours and you would like assistance from School staff in providing this medication to your child, please contact the Health Technician at 760-621-8948.

Pregnant and Parenting Students

The Charter School recognizes that pregnant and parenting students are entitled to accommodations that provide them with the opportunity to succeed academically while protecting their health and the health of their children. A pregnant or parenting student is entitled to eight(8) weeks of parental leave, or more if deemed medically necessary by the student's physician, which the student may take before the birth of the student's infant if there is a medical necessity and after

childbirth during the school year in which the birth takes place, inclusive of any mandatory summer instruction, in order to protect the health of the student who gives or expects to give birth and the infant, and to allow the pregnant or parenting student to care for and bond with the infant. The Charter School will ensure that absences from the student's regular school program are excused until the student is able to return to the regular school program.

Upon return to school after taking parental leave, a pregnant or parenting student will be able to make up work missed during the pregnant or parenting student's leave, including, but not limited to, makeup work plans and reenrollment in courses.

Complaints of noncompliance with laws relating to pregnant or parenting students may be filed under the Uniform Complaint Procedures ("UCP") of the Charter School. The complaint may be filed in writing with the compliance officer:

Erin Feeley, Executive Director
1737 W. Vista Way
Vista, CA 760-621-8948
efeeley@bellamentecharter.org

A copy of the UCP is available upon request at the Front Office and at www.bellamentecharter.org. For further information on any part of the complaint procedures, including filing a complaint or requesting a copy of the complaint procedures, please contact the Executive Director.

Safe Storage of Firearms

The purpose of this notice is to inform and to remind parents and legal guardians of all students at the Charter School of their responsibilities for keeping firearms out of the hands of children as required by California law. There have been many news reports of children bringing firearms to school. In many instances, the child obtained the firearm(s) from his or her home. **These incidents can be easily prevented by storing firearms in a safe and secure manner, including keeping them locked up when not in use and storing them separately from ammunition.**

To help everyone understand their legal responsibilities, this notice spells out California law regarding the storage of firearms. Please take some time to review this notice and evaluate your own personal practices to assure that you and your family are in compliance with California law:

- With very limited exceptions, California makes a person criminally liable for keeping any firearm, loaded or unloaded, within any premises that are under their custody and control where that person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to the firearm without the permission of the child's parent or legal guardian, and the child obtains access to the firearm and thereby (1) causes death or injury to the child or any other person; (2) carries the firearm off the premises or to a public place, including to any preschool or school grades kindergarten through twelfth grade, or to any school-sponsored event, activity, or performance; or (3) unlawfully brandishes the firearm to others.
 - The criminal penalty may be significantly greater if someone dies or suffers great bodily injury as a result of the child gaining access to the firearm.
- With very limited exceptions, California also makes it a crime for a person to negligently store or leave any firearm, loaded or unloaded, on their premises in a location where the

person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to it without the permission of the child's parent or legal guardian, unless reasonable action is taken to secure the firearm against access by the child, even where a minor **never** actually accesses the firearm.

- In addition to potential fines and terms of imprisonment, as of January 1, 2020, a gun owner found criminally liable under these California laws faces prohibitions from possessing, controlling, owning, receiving, or purchasing a firearm for 10 years.
- Finally, a parent or guardian may also be civilly liable for damages resulting from the discharge of a firearm by that person's child or ward.

The county or city may have additional restrictions regarding the safe storage of firearms. Thank you for helping to keep our children and schools safe. Remember that the easiest and safest way to comply with the law is to keep firearms in a locked container or secured with a locking device that renders the firearm inoperable.

School Bus and Passenger Safety

All students who are transported in a school bus or school student activity bus shall receive instruction in school bus emergency procedures and passenger safety. A copy of the complete Policy is available upon request at the Front Office.

School Safety Plan and Asbestos Management Plan

The Charter School has established a Comprehensive School Safety Plan. The Plan is available upon request at the Front Office.

The Charter School has also established an Asbestos Management Plan. The Plan is available upon request at the Front Office. The following asbestos-related activities are planned or in progress at the Charter School: No such activities are planned or in progress for the current school year.

The following is a summary of general health guidelines that the school is required to abide by:

It is the policy of Bella Mente Academies to allow students to attend school when they have minor allergies. Please see the Administration of Medication notice below should your child require medications for their allergies.

Any contagious illnesses and/or a fever of 100.4°F or higher require the student to be absent from school. The child must remain fever-free, without the use of fever reducing medications, for twenty-four (24) hours prior to returning to school. *Contagious illnesses require that the student has been on an approved course of treatment for at least twenty-four hours prior to returning to school.* Please be conscious of these policies and take the other children and staff into consideration in this regard. **Please contact the office as soon as possible if your child is diagnosed with any communicable diseases.** These include: chicken pox, strep infections, influenza, bacterial conjunctivitis. **Please call the school if your child will be absent.** If it appears your child may have a lengthy illness, please notify the school office as soon as possible, and obtain a doctor's note to be kept with the attendance records. Please see the Attendance Policy in this Handbook or request a copy from the Front Office.

In the best interest of your child and of all the other BMA students and staff, if health issues or symptoms of communicable illness or infection are observed in your child at school, you will be notified immediately and will be asked to pick up your child. In this instance, the student may not return to school until a medical practitioner has treated such symptoms or until the student has been symptom free for at least twenty-four hours. If it appears your child may have a lengthy illness, please notify the school administration as soon as possible.

No Lice Policy

Parents/guardians are encouraged to routinely screen students at home. Students found to have live lice may remain in school and parents will be called to pick up the student at the end of the school day and will be given a copy of the brochure “[A Parent’s Guide to Head Lice](#)”. (Visit the [CDPH website](#) for additional languages). At home, all members of the family must be checked for head lice and treated accordingly.

Before being admitted back to class, you must bring your child into the school office for a recheck. The child will be examined and admitted to class the following day unless the child is still infested with live lice.

To maintain the confidentiality and privacy of students, school-wide and/or classroom screening/notification will not occur.

This is just a brief summary of student health policies. BMA has developed a comprehensive policy to address student health issues. If desired, please ask for detailed information at the school office.

Medications Administered at School

Any child taking prescription or over-the-counter medications **must** have an approval form signed by their physician detailing the name of the medication, method, amount, and time schedules by which the medication is to be taken, and a written statement from the parent/guardian indicating the desire that the school assist the student with administering the medication before bringing the medication to school. All medications must be delivered to the office, by the parent/guardian, in the original container with the child’s name and directions clearly labeled along with the required Authorization For Medication Administration Form.

All medications must be collected from the office, by the parent/guardian, by the end of the school year unless the student is enrolled for the summer intersession. Medication approval forms are available in the office.

California Safety Laws

For safety reasons, if your child is under the age of 8, she/he is required by California State law to be transported in an **approved child safety restraint seat**. Please take the time to ensure the safety of each child in your car, as well as your own, by buckling up.

Various agencies offer car seat safety clinics to check for the proper installation of child safety seats in your vehicle. Often, approved safety seats are available at these events, at a reduced cost or even free of charge. In contrast, the Highway Patrol fines individuals for each unbelted individual in the car. If you have financial difficulty complying with these requirements, contact

your local Highway Patrol office. There are funds available to assist families in meeting this requirement.

For those students who may ride their bicycles to and from school, helmets are required. Please discuss this with your child along with other pertinent safety topics. Be safe, not sorry!!

School Meals and Student Wellness – Nutritional Health

A daily balanced diet is essential to every child's physical, mental, emotional, and physiological needs. If a child comes to school hungry or improperly nourished, the child will have difficulty concentrating on her/his schoolwork. Pursuant to California law, the Charter School shall make available a nutritionally adequate breakfast and a nutritionally adequate lunch free of charge and with adequate time to eat, during each school day to any student who requests a meal without consideration of the student's eligibility for a federally funded free or reduced-price meal, with a maximum of one (1) free breakfast meal and one (1) free lunch meal during each school day. This shall apply to all pupils in kindergarten through grade eight (8).

Applications for school meals are included in the first day packets to all families and can also be obtained on the Charter School website and in the main office. All families are encouraged to complete the application form. Completed application forms can be returned to the main office. Income eligibility guidelines for federally funded free and reduced-price meals are available at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/rs/>

Based on a parent/guardian's annual earnings, a parent/guardian may be eligible to receive the Earned Income Tax Credit from the Federal Government (Federal EITC). The Federal EITC is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families. The Federal EITC has no effect on certain welfare benefits. In most cases, Federal EITC payments will not be used to determine eligibility for Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, low-income housing, or most Temporary Assistance For Needy Families payments. Even if you a parent/guardian does not owe federal taxes, they must file a federal tax return to receive the Federal EITC. Be sure to fill out the Federal EITC form in the Federal Income Tax Return Booklet. For information regarding your eligibility to receive the Federal EITC, including information on how to obtain the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Notice 797 or any other necessary forms and instructions, contact the IRS by calling 1-800-829-3676 or through its website at www.irs.gov.

A parent/guardian may also be eligible to receive the California Earned Income Tax Credit (California EITC) starting with the calendar year 2015 tax year. The California EITC is a refundable state income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families. The California EITC is treated in the same manner as the Federal EITC and generally will not be used to determine eligibility for welfare benefits under California law. To claim the California EITC, even if you do not owe California taxes, you must file a California income tax return and complete and attach the California EITC Form (FTB 3514). For information on the availability of the credit eligibility requirements and how to obtain the necessary California forms and get help filing, contact the Franchise Tax Board at 1-800-852-5711 or through its website at www.ftb.ca.gov.

Charter School shall allow students, teachers, and staff to bring and carry water bottles. Water bottles may be excluded from libraries, computer labs, science labs, and other places where it is

deemed dangerous to have drinking water. Charter School may develop additional policies regarding the types of water bottles that may be carried.

Charter School adheres to all applicable requirements regarding placement and maintenance of water bottle refilling stations on campus.

Charter School shall encourage water consumption through promotional and educational activities and signage that focus on the benefits of drinking water and highlight any water bottle filling stations that are located on campus.

In accordance with the above, BMA promotes a healthy environment by allowing students and staff to bring and carry water bottles throughout the school, with the exception of specified locations. We ensure that everyone is aware of their rights regarding this policy through our handbooks, as well as our school website.

In support of this initiative, we have water fountains available in every hallway for easy access to clean, refreshing water. Additionally, we provide a state-of-the-art water filtration station with a water bottle filler in the Multipurpose Room (MPR) to further encourage our school community to stay hydrated.

A copy of the complete Policy, which includes the Charter School's meal charge policy, is available upon request at the main office. The Charter School also maintains a School Wellness Policy pursuant to state and federal requirements.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, Charter School is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or fax:
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
email:
Program.Intake@usda.gov

Charter School is an equal opportunity provider.

For families who choose not to participate in BMA’s meal program, please follow these guidelines:

Please make every effort to provide your child with healthy and nutritionally balanced meals for the best possible day!

Breakfast is essential. Be sure that your child begins each morning with a healthy and nutritionally balanced meal to provide the brain energy that he/she will need for the activities of the day. If your child is unable to eat breakfast at home, you are welcome to pack a HEALTHY breakfast for her/him to eat at school prior to the start of class time. A good suggestion might be cereal and fruit in a Tupperware sealed bowl, or fruit juice in a sealed cup and toast, etc. Some of the major food companies are now making “milk and cereal bars” which are relatively low in sugar and surprisingly high in protein. Read labels, be creative, and your child will eat with more interest!

If you choose to provide your child meals, please plan to send a bag or lunch box with your child each day, and make sure to label all containers to be taken home with your child’s name.

When preparing your child’s lunch and snacks, please make every effort to send items that the child can eat easily, can open and/or close relatively easily and independently. Lunch must be something that can be eaten without heating. Students and families are not permitted to order food for delivery to the campus.

Please avoid sending junk food and highly processed food items. These food choices are usually loaded with refined sugar or fat and offer little or no nutritional value. During school, students need “brain food.” Stick to items that are as close as possible to their natural state: fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, seeds, nuts, dairy products and proteins. Limit juices and juice drinks. Even 100% juice, consumed in excess, provides too much sugar for a young child’s dietary health and results in an afternoon “low” as the child’s blood sugar attempts to balance back out. Instead, opt for a bottle of water or milk that can be kept fresh with a cold pack or in a thermos.

We believe that monitoring the intake of these types of highly processed, non-nutritive foods will provide the child with a better ability to concentrate. If you think that these types of foods are appropriate, please save them for the home environment.

If a student forgets their lunch, BMA has additional meals to provide for students or breakfast/lunch may be dropped off in the office.

Health Food Guidelines for Families who Choose to Send Food to School

Good nutrition is key in helping children grow and learn. BMA revised the Local School Wellness Policy in 2017 and the Board of Directors passed the revision to ensure the policy is practiced schoolwide.

ALLOWABLE FOODS ON CAMPUS

- **Fruit-** such as apples, pears, plums **Vegetables-** such as carrots, celery, jicama
- **Dairy Food-** such as Real cheese, 1% milk, soy milk or non high-fat dairy foods
- **Proteins-** such as nuts, seeds, eggs, legumes, low-fat cheese
- Whole grain food- grains such as wheat, corn, rice, barley, oats, quinoa, and rye. Should be eaten in their “**whole form**”. Products should list whole grain food first, be at least 51% or have a whole grain stamp.

NON-ALLOWABLE FOODS ON CAMPUS

- **Sodas, Sports Drinks, Caffeinated Beverages**
- **Fried Chips**
- **Sugary Desserts, Popsicles, Candy**

Registration and Enrollment for Bella Mente Montessori Academy

As a public charter school, BMA is a school of choice, and eligibility for enrollment is based on California residency, not on district-of-residence boundaries.

As a public school, BMA follows state requirements for Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten and First Grade admission. ***Transitional Kindergarten children must be 4 years old of age before September 2nd the year they enter school.***

In California, TK/Kindergarten is not compulsory (mandatory), though it does help prepare children for elementary school. BMA does not administer TK/Kindergarten readiness assessments prior to enrollment. All assessments are conducted by the teacher, at the time the student begins, to establish the creation of the student’s individual learning plan. (See Academic Overview) If you have questions about your child(ren)’s readiness for Kindergarten, please contact the school Principal at 760-621-8948.

BMA seeks a diverse student population from the local area surrounding the school campus. Enrollment is available to anyone who applies subject to the BMA’s capacity. As a California

public school, admission to applicants is determined by a random public lottery at the end of the open enrollment period.

New Enrollment will be carried out using the following guidelines:

1. Parents interested in enrollment may be invited to tour the BMA campus and participate in an orientation that details the purpose, goals, and objectives of our school. The orientation will include an explanation of Montessori philosophy and methodology and how parents/guardians can best support their child(ren) in the learning process. This tour and orientation provides families with an opportunity to decide if our school appears to be an appropriate match for their child(ren). Attendance at a tour or orientation is voluntary, and is not a condition of enrollment or lottery participation. Tours and orientations are offered for informational purposes only and are intended to help families learn about the Montessori approach at Bella Mente Academies. Participation in these opportunities is not used to determine student eligibility, suitability, or placement.
2. Families who wish to continue into the final stages of the enrollment process are required to read and complete the enrollment packet prior to enrollment. Bella Mente Academies is committed to providing an inclusive, open-enrollment public Montessori education. We recognize that families thoughtfully consider a variety of educational options when selecting a school. Informational opportunities such as tours, orientations, and classroom observations are offered to support families in understanding our program and making informed educational choices for their child(ren).

Re-enrollment for current BMA families is completed in late winter prior to the open- enrollment lottery. Siblings of currently enrolled students will be given priority in the lottery.

A Housing Questionnaire is included in the registration packet for new families and in the reenrollment packet for returning families. Failure to complete the re-enrollment packet before the deadline may result in students not being able to return for the next school year.

Classroom Placement Policies and Procedures

It is the goal of BMA to place each student in the most appropriate learning environment to fit his/her needs academically, socially, and emotionally. In addition, care is taken to balance classes by grade/age and gender. Information and recommendations from teaching staff is utilized to balance these needs within the classrooms. Although we would like to facilitate parent/guardian request for a specific classroom or teacher, the complexity of this process prohibits us from taking these requests.

Student Acceleration/Retention

Montessori instruction accommodates the varying interests and academic development of individual students. Students will progress each year by completing the Montessori and State Standard curriculum necessary to support their success at the next grade level.

When considering acceleration (accelerating a student an additional grade level), the child's social and emotional growth is to be taken into consideration. Parents/guardians, teachers, and the Principal will determine if this is the best course of action for the student by using criteria such as intellectual maturity, academic achievement, including standardized testing, physical, social, psychological, and emotional considerations.

Retention (remaining at the same grade level for a second year) is an action that may be taken to assist a student to be more successful in their learning. Risk for retention should be identified as early in a child’s school career as possible. As soon as identified, the teachers and Principal should begin interventions to assist the student in areas of concern. Parents/guardians must be notified and included in this discussion as early in the school year as possible.

Students are to be identified for retention or acceleration on the basis of:

- Academic achievement and standardized testing
- Physical, social, psychological, and emotional considerations
- Special needs
- Information provided by teacher(s), parents, or guardians

The demonstration of individual student learning is to be measured by, but not limited to, the following:

1. Student grades in Reading/Language Arts and Math (more than one grade level above / below)
2. Assessments in Reading/Language Arts and Math (more than one grade level above / below)
3. State testing scores in Language Arts and Math (assessing below or far below standards in all subject levels / assessing at or above standards in all subject areas)
4. Writing Assessment
5. The review of student data as determined by the Student Study Team (SST)

English Learners

English Learners, determined through the ELPAC testing process (California’s English language proficiency assessment), could be considered “at risk” based on the challenges they face in acquiring mastery of subject areas in English. English Learners should be provided with supplemental instruction as a key intervention to ensure that they will eventually attain grade-level proficiency. Decisions regarding the acceleration or retention of English Learners require special consideration. For English Learners, retention cannot be based on the student’s lack of English fluency as related to meeting English standards. Following the supplemental instruction for the English Learner, if it is determined through the SST process that the student would benefit from retention, the above determinations and process will be followed.

Students who have Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plans

Students with physical and/or mental disabilities which interfere with the major life activity of learning are provided protections under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Their educational opportunities will be affected by the development of accommodation plans intended to mitigate the effects of the disability on educational performance.

Students whose physical, mental, or learning disabilities are provided protection under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have their educational needs supported through Special Education (specially designed instruction) and related services and supports (services which enable them to benefit from their Special Education program).

Modifications of curriculum and the grading rubric are to be utilized for students on an IEP (Individualized Education Program). Accommodations put in place for students who have a Section 504 Plan or are in Special Education are not used when considering retention of the student.

Retention may be considered for students on a Section 504 Plan or IEP if the academic, social, and emotional needs of the student would benefit from the repetition of a grade. The IEP or 504 team will make the recommendation for retention or acceleration

Appeals Process

When the recommendation for retention or acceleration is not agreed upon by the parents/guardians, they have the right to appeal to the BMA Governing Board. Parents/guardians must submit their appeal to the Principal and Executive Director. The Principal will provide the Executive Director and/or Governing Board documentation regarding the recommended acceleration or retention to include, but not limited to, testing and assessment results, report cards, and SST meeting notes.

If the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) disagree with the decision, they have the right to appeal to the BMA Board through the following steps:

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) choosing to appeal a decision to accelerate a student shall submit a completed Acceleration or Retention Appeal Request Form to the Executive Director specifying the reasons why the decision should be overturned. The submission of the Retention/Acceleration Appeal Request Form must occur no later than ten (10) school days following the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) receipt of the determination of acceleration.

The Board shall review the appeal as well as the student's academic performance records on which the SST relied. The Executive Director shall be provided an opportunity to state orally and/or in writing the criteria on which the SST or Executive Director's decision was based. The Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will also be given an opportunity to state orally and/or in writing their reason for appeal. The Appeal will be held in a closed session of the Board to maintain student confidentiality. The Board will prepare a written decision which summarizes findings and conclusions.

The Board shall notify the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and Executive Director of its decision in writing within seven (7) school days of the Appeal via certified mail at the address provided by Parent(s)/Guardian(s) to the Charter School unless otherwise agreed in writing.

The Board's decision is final.

Field Trip Procedures

Field trips are an essential component of the Montessori curriculum. Students are given the opportunity to utilize knowledge gained in the classroom and apply it through experiences in the greater community. Field trips are age appropriate and are linked to the curriculum as much as possible. It is not unusual for an elementary or middle school class to attend a field trip approximately once every six weeks.

Field Trip Participation

Student behavior may be a factor in deciding if a child is to participate in a field trip. Parents/guardians will be contacted in advance to discuss any issues and to discuss alternative comparable educational activity(ies).

Parents/guardians who do not wish for their child to attend a particular trip should discuss their reasons with the teacher, as the purpose of the field trip is to expand on the students' academic experience. Any child not participating in a field trip must attend school that day. The teacher will arrange for your child to do their work in another classroom.

All students are to have equal access to the field trips as a part of the curriculum.

Permission Forms

Approximately one (1) month prior to a field trip, parents/guardians will receive a permission form which states the destination, total suggested donation to the school, and other pertinent information.

Due dates for permission slips are to be strictly enforced, and a child will not be permitted to attend the outing without a signed form. Parents/guardians unable to volunteer to drive their own child on the field trip are required to leave an appropriate car seat if their child is eight (8) years of age or younger.

The educational experience of the field trip is always to be emphasized over a commercial one. However, in some instances, bringing spending money may be appropriate and will be stated as such on the permission/ information sheet.

Parent/Guardian Participation on Field Trips

Parent/guardian participation plays a key role in the success of field trips. Voluntary fundraising is encouraged to help offset the cost of some trips, and parents/guardians are asked to volunteer to drive students and assist with chaperoning. All adults attending field trips must fulfill screenings to ensure the safety of the children.

Please note that any adult without these clearances on file with the campus office may not attend the field trip.

- Cleared Live Scan fingerprint report from the Department of Justice for BMA (to be completed only once)
- Cleared TB test result (required every four years), unless the TB Risk Assessment form is submitted annually.
- Attendance at the Parent Education session: “7 Habits of Highly Effective Volunteers”

In addition, the following is also required for parents/guardians driving students:

- Proof of Insurance: due at the beginning of each school year or at time of renewal for all drivers, including parents/guardians driving their own child. When driving other children, a \$100,000/\$300,000 liability per person/occurrence is required. (Note: many insurance

companies will charge a minimal fee for increasing the liability amount for one day). A parent/guardian driving only their child must show proof of insurance meeting the California legal liability limits.

- Copy of valid Driver's License: due at the beginning of each school year for all drivers and upon renewal
- Copy of Vehicle Registration: due at the beginning of each school year for all drivers, and upon renewal.
- DMV 10 Year Driver's History Report: due at the beginning of each school year for all drivers, including those who will only be driving their child. Reports indicating past violations will be sent to BMA Central Administration for review and for a decision on parent/guardian driver eligibility. (Note: On-line DMV and insurance company reports are not certified and cover only 5 years; therefore these do not meet BMA requirements.) Each driver's DMV record is available to during normal working hours. Reports may be obtained by:
 - Visiting the DMV office (make an Appointment for faster service)
 - Completing a Request for Driver Record Information form INF 1125
 - Showing identification
 - Paying the fee

Drivers will be given a Field Trip Packet with student information, directions and other pertinent information for the trip, and a list of all field trip policies and procedures. **We ask that drivers read this packet carefully to avoid any misunderstandings.** Note: Student information is confidential and should only be accessed in the event of an emergency.

Teachers are responsible for oversight of the entire group and for facilitating the excursion. Adults participating in the field trip are asked to assist wherever needed and are expected to chaperone the group of students they have driven, as well as be aware of safety concerns for all students. Drivers must drive directly to and from the field trip destination. Stops for food, gasoline (except in the instance of a long-distance trip), and other activities outside of the trip itinerary are not permitted. Personal errands are not permitted at any time.

BMA policy states that only movies rated "G" may be shown without parental permission. Parents with DVD players in their vehicles are therefore asked to follow this policy when driving on a field trip.

Parents are asked to avoid discussing students with others. Discipline issues should be brought to the teachers' attention for appropriate follow-through. Other concerns regarding the field trip should be brought to the teacher or campus Principal.

Chaperone Responsibilities & Expectations

These enriching field trips would not be possible without the support of BMS parent/guardian chaperones. It is a responsibility that should be taken very seriously, as chaperones are responsible for the safety of other children.

Being safe on a field trip means:

- Chaperones are expected to have supervision over their designated group at all times. In the event a parent/guardian needs to take a break, to use the restroom for example, another cleared chaperone should be asked to watch their group during that time.

- Chaperones are asked to be aware of all BMA students on the trip. The safety of the children is everyone's responsibility. On overnight trips, chaperones are expected to have supervision of their group during all waking hours. Chaperones should be available to assist with a student or students in the event of an issue or emergency during the night and be capable of alerting the classroom teacher if necessary.
- No alcohol is to be consumed for the duration of the field trip. If a chaperone is taking prescription or non-prescription medication that would alter a person's state of being, the chaperone is required to inform the teacher prior to the trip. In some instances, this may prohibit a parent/guardian from chaperoning on the trip.

Being Respectful on a field trip means:

- Follow the lead of the teacher and model appropriate behavior at all times.
- Treat all students with grace and courtesy.
- Confidentiality must be observed at all times.
- Adults are to dress appropriately for the trip: proper footwear, properly fitting clothes that are neither too tight nor too loose and that cover the body adequately.

Siblings

As stated previously, field trips are an important part of the educational experience. Field trips are grade level and curriculum specific, and children anxiously await their opportunity to attend these special events. Siblings may not be included in their sibling's field trip experience.

Information Technology / Electronic Resources

Current technology is modifying the way in which information is accessed, communicated, and transferred. These changes may also alter instruction and student learning. BMA offers students access to technologies that may include electronic mail (through Internet access), Internet connections, and equipment, such as computers and multimedia hardware, in the technology work area of the classrooms.

With the access to computers comes the availability of materials that may not be considered appropriate in the classroom. On a global network it is nearly impossible to control all materials available. Ultimately, the school staff, parents, and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that students should follow when using these technology resources. BMA supports and respects each family's right to decide whether or not to allow their student access to any part of these technologies.

The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) addresses concerns about access in schools and libraries to the Internet and other information. For any school or library that receives discounts for Internet access or for internal connections, CIPA imposes certain requirements, but does not require the tracking of Internet use by minors or adults. Although BMA does not receive such funds, we are taking every effort to follow CIPA's guidelines to restrict:

- (a) the access by minors to inappropriate matter on the Internet and World Wide Web; the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications;
- (b) the unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unlawful activities by minors online;

- (c) the unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors; and
- (d) minors' access to materials inappropriate or harmful to them.

Technology Use - Rules and Responsibilities

The school discipline and behavior guidelines, as well as this document, govern access to and use of media technology. Students will be held accountable for any misuse or abuse of any school materials or resources.

The technologies provided are for students to conduct research, enrich educational experiences, and communicate with others in relation to school work. Access to technological services is given to students who agree to act in a considerate and responsible manner. Parent/guardian permission is required. Access is a privilege, not a right. Therefore, based upon the acceptable use guidelines outlined in this document, the system administrator and or staff will deem what is inappropriate use, and their decision is final. The administration or staff may deny, revoke, or suspend specific privileges or deem other consequences necessary.

Individual users are responsible for their use of the technologies available to them. The use of these tools must be in support of education and research and must be consistent with academic expectations of BMA. Transmission of any material in violation of federal or state laws or regulations including copyrighted, threatening, or obscene material is prohibited.

BMA maintains a public website. Intranet web pages may be established and maintained by staff with secondary responsibilities given to students who have the skills necessary. All content will be approved by BMA staff before posting.

The user is expected to abide by the following rules of etiquette:

- Be polite. Do not write or send abusive messages. Use appropriate language. Do not swear, use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language.
- Be respectful with regard to others' work; the user will not view, alter or otherwise modify someone else's data. This includes documents opened or contained within work folders.
- Altering the operating system, as well as general visual appearances to a technology is prohibited. Such changes may include but are not limited to screensavers, background, sounds, passwords, display setting, network setting, etc.
- Transmission of obscene materials is prohibited. Sending or receiving offensive messages or pictures from any source will result in immediate suspension of privileges with an administrative review.
- Do not reveal personal information about yourself or other students.
- Electronic mail is not guaranteed to be private. Users should only access personal mail when appropriate permission from staff is obtained and no other users need the technology for school use.
- Do not use the network in a way that would disrupt the use of the other network users.
- Malicious attempts of vandalism to harm or destroy data or equipment will not be tolerated.
- Use of personal data or equipment will not be allowed without prior approval. Additionally, proof of current and regular updates on Anti-virus protection, as well as regular disk scans, is required prior to use once approval is obtained.

- Downloading or uploading of any kind requires prior approval. Such loading may include items from the internet, flash drives, external hard drives, etc.
- Games are strictly prohibited.

Violation of any of the above mentioned rules and responsibilities will result in a loss of access and may result in other disciplinary or legal actions.

Personal Items at School

BMA assumes no responsibility for lost or stolen items.

Toys and Sharing

Participating in sharing at group time enables children to feel important and special. It also facilitates verbal expression. Good suggestions for sharing may be seashells, rocks, library or special books, pictures or treasures from a trip. Please consult with your child's teacher regarding sharing policies for a particular class. Read the weekly updates and monthly newsletters to discover sharing suggestions relating to the units of study for the month. We do ask that toys be kept at home, or leave them in the car, as they often create distractions and possible power struggles between other students when they are brought to school.

Extra Changes of Clothes

Students are encouraged to bring appropriate changes of clothes to store in their cubbies for emergency use; most especially with TK/Kindergarteners. Teachers will communicate with parents/guardians as the clothes are used and need to be restocked. Please remember to label all items with the student's name and send them to school in a plastic bag or other disposable/reusable carrier.

Other Personal Items at School

Toys, trading cards, electronic games and other personal items unrelated to the student's daily schoolwork should be left at home. These items tend to create disruptions at school and will be held by the teacher and returned to the parents/guardians at the end of the school day.

Trading cards, such as Pokémon and Yugioh are not permitted. They will be confiscated and returned to a parent/guardian at the end of the school day if brought to school.

Students are discouraged from bringing cell phones and other items of value to school. Cell phones, iPods, gaming systems and the like, are to remain off and out-of-sight during school hours and may only be used once the student has left the school grounds. Cell phones may be used only in the following circumstances:

- In the case of an emergency, or in response to a perceived threat of danger.
- When a teacher or administrator of the Charter School grants permission to a student to possess or use a private device, subject to any reasonable limitation imposed by that teacher or administrator.

- When a licensed physician and surgeon determines that the possession or use of a private device is necessary for the health or well-being of the student.
- When the possession or use of a private device is required in a student’s individualized education program (“IEP”).

BMA has Chromebooks for student use. Personal laptops are not allowed. In the event parents/guardians feel the necessity of their child to have such items, the Principal should be contacted to discuss their child’s personal circumstances. Once approved, these items are to remain in the student’s backpack until the end of the school day. ***If the student uses such items during school hours without teacher or administrator permission, it will be confiscated and returned to the parent/guardian only at the end of the school day.***

Student Freedom of Speech/Expression

BMA believes that free inquiry and exchange of ideas are essential parts of a democratic education. We respect students' rights to express ideas and opinions, take stands on issues, and support causes, even when such speech is controversial or unpopular.

Students shall have the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press including, but not limited to the: (1) use of bulletin boards; (2) distribution of printed materials or petitions; (3) wearing of buttons, badges, and other insignia; and (4) right of expression in official school publications. “Official school publications” refers to material produced by pupils in the journalism, newspaper, yearbook, or writing classes and distributed to the student body either free or for a fee. The Principal or designee will supervise the material produced by pupils to ensure it meets professional standards of English and journalism.

Students’ freedom of expression shall be limited as allowed by Education Code Section 48907, and other applicable state and federal laws. Students are prohibited from making any expressions or distributing or posting any materials that are obscene, libelous, or slanderous. Students also are prohibited from making any expressions that so incites students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts at school-sponsored activities or events, the violation of school rules, or substantial disruption of the school’s orderly operation. The use of “fighting words” or epithets is prohibited in those instances where the speech is abusive and insulting, rather than a communication of ideas, and the speech is used in an aggressive or abusive manner in a situation that presents an actual danger that it will cause a breach of the peace

Off-campus student expression, including but not limited to student expression on non-school sponsored internet web sites, personal social media or email accounts, or via text messages sent on a personal device outside of school hours, is generally constitutionally protected but shall be subject to discipline when there is a sufficient nexus between the speech and the school when such expression poses a threat to the safety of other students, staff, or school property, or substantially disrupts the educational program.

Please see the Student Freedom of Speech and Expression Policy located on the school’s website at www.bellamentecharter.org.

Work Permits

Beginning August 1, 2024, any minor seeking the signature of a Charter School verifying authority on a Statement of Intent to Employ a Minor and Request for a Work Permit-Certificate of Age will be issued, before or at the time of receiving the signature of the verifying authority, a document clearly explaining basic labor rights extended to workers. An infographic explaining these rights is available at: <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Know-Your-RightsFINAL.pdf>

Student Records, Including Records Challenges and Directory Information

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

1. The right to inspect and review the student’s education records within 5 business days after the day the Charter School receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the Charter School Executive Director or designee a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The Charter School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student’s education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student’s privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the Charter School to amend a record should write the Charter School’s Executive Director or designee, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it should be changed. If the Charter School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the Charter School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing. If the Charter School decides to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the Executive Director must order the correction or the removal and destruction of the information and inform the parent or eligible student of the amendment in writing.

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

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to Charter School officials with legitimate educational interests. A Charter School official is a person employed by the Charter School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff

member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the Charter School's Board of Directors. A Charter School official also may include a volunteer, consultant, vendor, or contractor outside of the Charter School who performs an institutional service or function for which the Charter School would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, therapist, or contracted provider of digital educational platforms and/or services; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another Charter School official in performing their tasks. A Charter School official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill their professional responsibility.

Upon request, the Charter School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled, if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.

Note that Charter School will not release information to third parties for immigration enforcement purposes, except as required by law or court order.

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

Student Privacy Policy Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington,
DC 20202

5. The right to request that the Charter School not release student names, addresses and telephone listings to military recruiters or institutions of higher education without prior written parental consent.

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from a student's education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in §99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to Charter School officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, §99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the Charter School to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures.

1. Charter School will disclose education records, without prior written consent of the parent or eligible student, to the following parties:
 - a. School officials who have a legitimate educational interest as defined by 34 Code of Federal Regulations ("C.F.R.") Part 99;
 - b. Other schools to which a student seeks or intends to enroll so long as the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer. When a student transfers schools, BMA will mail the original or a copy of a student's cumulative file to the receiving district or private school within ten (10) school days following the date the request is received from

the public school or private school where the student intends to enroll. BMA will make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or eligible student of the request for records at their last known address, unless the disclosure is initiated by the parent or eligible student. Additionally, BMA will give the parent or eligible student, upon request, a copy of the record that was disclosed and give the parent or eligible student, upon request, an opportunity for hearing pursuant to Section (IV)(3) above;

2. Certain government officials listed in 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1) in order to carry out lawful functions;
3. Appropriate parties in connection with a student's application for, or receipt of, financial aid if it is necessary to determine eligibility, amount of aid, conditions for aid or enforcing the terms and conditions of the aid;
4. Organizations conducting certain studies for BMA in accordance with 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(F);
5. Accrediting organizations in order to carry out their accrediting functions;
6. Parents of a dependent student as defined in section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;
7. Individuals or entities, in compliance with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. Subject to the exceptions found in 34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(9)(i), reasonable effort must be made to notify the parent or eligible student of the order or subpoena in advance of compliance, so that the parent or eligible student may seek a protective order;
8. Persons who need to know in cases of health and safety emergencies;
9. State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law;
10. A foster family agency with jurisdiction over a currently enrolled or former student, a short-term residential treatment program staff responsible for the education or case management of a student, and/or a caregiver (regardless of whether the caregiver has been appointed as the student's educational rights holder) who has direct responsibility for the care of the student, including a certified or licensed foster parent, an approved relative or nonrelated extended family member, or a resource family, may access the current or most recent records of grades, transcripts, attendance, discipline, and online communication on platforms established by BMA for student and parents, and any individualized education program ("IEP") or Section 504 plan that may have been developed or maintained by BMA; and/or
11. A victim of an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence or a non-forcible sex offense. The disclosure may only include final results of the disciplinary proceedings conducted by BMA with respect to that alleged crime or offense. BMA may disclose the final results of the disciplinary proceeding, regardless of whether BMA concluded a violation was committed.

"Directory Information" is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released. The Charter School may disclose the personally identifiable information that it has designated as directory information without a parent's or eligible student's prior written consent. The Charter School has designated the following information as directory information:

1. Student's name
2. Student's address
3. Parent's/guardian's address
4. Telephone listing

5. Student's electronic mail address
6. Parent's/guardian's electronic mail address
7. Photograph/video
8. Date and place of birth
9. Dates of attendance
10. Grade level
11. Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
12. Weight and height of members of athletic teams
13. Degrees, honors, and awards received
14. The most recent educational agency or institution attended
15. Student ID number, user ID, or other unique personal identifier used to communicate in electronic systems that cannot be used to access education records without a PIN, password, etc. (A student's social security number, in whole or in part, cannot be used for this purpose.)

If you do not want the Charter School to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the Charter School in writing at the time of enrollment or re-enrollment.

Please notify the Executive Director at: efeeley@bellamentecharter.org. A copy of the complete Policy is available upon request at the Front Office.

Please note that data collected and reported by Charter School to the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System ("CALPADS"⁴) pursuant to state law, will be shared with the California College Guidance Initiative ("CCGI"⁵) and will:

- 1) Be used to provide pupils and families with direct access to online tools and resources.
- 2) Enable a pupil to transmit information shared with the CCGI to both of the following:
 - a. Postsecondary educational institutions for purposes of admissions and academic placement.
 - b. The Student Aid Commission for purposes of determining eligibility for, and increasing uptake of, student financial aid.

Please visit the CCGI website at CaliforniaColleges.edu to access resources that help students and their families learn about college admissions requirements.

**BELLA MENTE ACADEMIES TECHNOLOGY USE AGREEMENT ACCEPTABLE
COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE POLICY – STUDENT**

NETWORK AND ONLINE RESOURCES

1. The use of the BMA computer network is not intended for private or commercial business use, financial gain, political, or religious purposes. Any such use is prohibited.
2. Use of the network for illegal activity is prohibited.
3. Use of the network that results in the violation of copyright laws is prohibited.

⁴ CALPADS is a database maintained by the CDE which consists of pupil data from elementary and secondary schools relating to, among other things, demographic, program participation, enrollment, and statewide assessments data.

⁵ CCGI is an authorized provider of an institutional service to all California local educational agencies and part of the state's efforts to make college-going a more streamlined experience for students. The CCGI currently receives enrollment data for all public-school students enrolled in grades six through twelve from the California Department of Education ("CDE").

4. Use of the network for purposes other than those set by faculty is prohibited including online games, chat (instant messaging), or browsing the Internet for any purpose other than school related.
5. Use of the network to access obscene, pornographic, hateful, or otherwise inappropriate material is prohibited.
6. Sending material likely to be offensive or objectionable is prohibited.
7. Using programs that harass network users or infiltrate a computing system and/or damage the software components is prohibited. (Including, but not limited to any type of hacking software)
8. BMA reserves the right to review any material stored on any system provided by the school and to edit or remove any material. Students should not have any expectation of privacy in their activities while using BMA equipment or systems.
9. Personal devices including laptops, tablets, or mobile devices may not be connected to the network unless a student has received prior written approval from a teacher or school administration. Use of school resources (such as the Internet) through a personal device must be in compliance with all school policies.

AGREEMENT

Student

1. Inappropriate Use. Charter School technology, hardware, software and bandwidth are shared and limited resources and all users have an obligation to use those resources responsibly. Students are provided access to the Charter School technology primarily for educational purposes. Students shall not use Charter School technology or equipment for personal activities or for activities that violate Charter School policy or local law. These include but are not limited to:
 2. Playing games or online gaming.
 3. Downloading software, music, movies or other content in violation of licensing requirements, copyright or other intellectual property rights.
 4. Installing software on Charter School equipment without the permission of a teacher or other authorized Charter School staff person.
 5. Downloading, viewing or sharing inappropriate content, including pornographic, defamatory or otherwise offensive material.
 6. Conducting any activity that is in violation of Charter School policy, the student code of conduct or local, state or federal law.
 7. Engaging in any activity that is harmful to other student(s), including the use of technology to harass, intimidate, bully or otherwise disrupt the educational process.

8. Conducting for-profit business.
9. Using hacking tools on the network or intentionally introducing malicious code or viruses into the Charter School's network.
10. Using any software or proxy service to obscure either the student's IP address or the sites that the student visits.
11. Disabling, bypassing, or attempting to disable or bypass any system monitoring, filtering or other security measures.
12. Accessing or attempting to access material or systems on the network that the student is not authorized to access.
13. Supervision - I will not use the BMA Computer Network or any associated system without the permission and supervision of school staff.
14. Language - I will use appropriate language when using email, newsgroups, chat, journals, blogs or instant messaging or any other forms of communication. I will not use profanity or any language that is offensive to anyone. I will always be mindful that I am a representative of our school.
15. Network Etiquette - I will not send, or encourage others to send, discourteous or abusive email messages. I will not send messages, especially widely distributed messages, the receipt of which I have reason to believe would be unwelcome to recipients. I will use all forms of communication on the network and off the network in a manner that is not offensive to any person or group.
16. Vandalism and Inappropriate Use - I will not use the system to practice vandalism. Vandalism includes any malicious attempt to harm or destroy the property, including data, of any user or system on the network or the Internet. Uploading or downloading very large files from the Internet is not appropriate.
17. Privacy - I will not reveal passwords, home address, or personal phone numbers. I will not use the system to electronically publish or distribute pictures of myself or others or materials created by others without appropriate permission.

Trespassing - I will not attempt to access the system or any data on the system without authorization. This includes, but is not limited to, accessing the network using an account other than my own, including email accounts. I will not log in to a computer with anyone else's name and password. I will not leave a computer without logging off. I will not attempt to guess someone else's password.

No Expectation of Privacy. Student acknowledges that computer equipment, Internet access networks, email accounts, and any other technology resources are owned by Charter School and provided to students for educational purposes. The Charter School may require staff to monitor and supervise all access to computer equipment, Internet access networks, and email accounts. To facilitate monitoring of activities, computer screens may be positioned so that they are visible to the staff member supervising the students. The Charter School reserves the right to access stored computer records and communications, files, and other data stored on Charter School equipment or sent over Charter School networks. Such communications, files, and data are not private and may be accessed during routine system maintenance; during inspection of Charter School equipment at the end of the school year/term or agreed upon use period; and review of individual files or monitoring of individual activity when there is a reasonable suspicion that the student is engaging in an inappropriate use.

1. **Disruptive Activity.** Students should not intentionally interfere with the performance of the Charter School’s network or intentionally damage any Charter School technology resources.
2. **Unauthorized Networks.** Students may not create unauthorized wireless networks to access the Charter School’s network. This includes establishing wireless access points, wireless routers and open networks on personal devices.
3. **Consequences of Inappropriate Use.** Students who violate this Agreement will be subject to discipline, which may include loss of access to Charter School technology resources and/or other appropriate disciplinary or legal action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and applicable laws.
4. **Technology Systems/Equipment Care.** Students are not permitted to have food or drink near computers/other technology and must keep equipment and assigned areas free of vandalism.

After reading the Student Use of Technology Policy and the Acceptable Use Agreement, please complete this form to indicate that you agree with the terms and conditions provided. The signature of both the student and parent/guardian are mandatory before access may be granted to the technologies available.

Parent/Guardian

I give permission to BMA to issue an email and network user account and certify that my child and I have read and understand the information contained in this agreement and agree to abide by all rules set forth in this agreement.

I hereby fully indemnify, release and hold harmless BMA and any of its personnel from any and all claims and damages of any nature arising from my child’s use of, or inability to use, the BMA network. I will instruct my child regarding the rules of use contained in this document and understand and agree that the agreements contained herein are incorporated into BMA Board policies. I understand that it is impossible for BMA to completely restrict access to all controversial materials and I will not hold the school responsible for materials accessed on the internet.

I accept full responsibility if and when my child’s use of technology is not in a school setting and understand that my child is subject to the same rules and agreements while not at school. I understand that BMA encourages parents and guardians to supervise and monitor any online activity. I am aware of my child’s account information and passwords for Google Docs.

I further understand that I will be responsible for the cost of repair or replacement if my student loses or damages the BMA-provided devices beyond normal wear and tear.

Parent/Guardian Name and Signature:

_____ Date: _____

Student Name and Signature:

_____ Date: _____

Appendices Employee-Student Relations Policy

While the use of appropriate touching is part of daily life and is important for student development, teachers and other staff members must ensure that they do not exceed appropriate boundaries. If a student specifically requests that he or she not be touched, then that request should be honored to the extent possible.

Boundaries Defined

For the purposes of this policy, the term “boundaries” is defined as acceptable professional behavior by staff members while interacting with a student. Trespassing beyond the boundaries of a student/staff relationship is deemed an abuse of power and a betrayal of public trust.

Unacceptable and Acceptable Behavior

Some activities may seem innocent from an employee’s perspective, but may be perceived as an inappropriate interaction from a student or parental point of view. The purpose of the following lists of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors is not to restrain innocent, positive relationships between employees and students but to prevent relationships that could lead to, or may be perceived as inappropriate or sexual misconduct or “grooming.” Grooming is defined as an act or series of acts by a sexual predator to gain physical and/or emotional control by gaining trust (of staff and/or family and a minor) and desensitizing the minor to various forms of touching and other intimate interaction.

Employees must understand their own responsibilities for ensuring that they do not cross the boundaries as written in this policy. If a student specifically requests that he or she not be touched, then that request must be honored. Violations could subject the teacher or staff member to discipline up to and including termination. Disagreeing with the wording or intent of these established boundaries will be considered irrelevant for any required disciplinary purposes.

Thus, it is critical that all employees study this policy thoroughly and apply its spirit and intent in their daily activities.

(a) Unacceptable Behavior

This list (and any subsequent lists) is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather, illustrative of the types of behavior we intend to address by this policy:

- Giving gifts to an individual student that are of a personal and intimate nature (including photographs); or items such as money, food, outings, electronics, etc. without the written pre-approval of the Principal or School Leader. It is recommended that any such gifts be approved by Human Resources along with the rationale they are for;
- Kissing of ANY kind;

- Massage (Note: Prohibited in athletics unless provided by massage therapist or other certified professional in an open public location. Coaches may not perform massage or rub-down. Permitted in special education only as instructed under an IEP or 504 plan);
 - Full frontal or rear hugs and lengthy embraces;
 - Sitting students on one's lap (grades 3 and above);
 - Touching buttocks, thighs, chest or genital area;
 - Wrestling with students or other staff member except in the context of a formal wrestling program;
 - Tickling or piggyback rides;
 - Any form of sexual contact;
 - Any type of unnecessary physical contact with a student in a private situation;
 - Intentionally being alone with a student away from School;
 - Furnishing alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs to a student or failing to report knowledge of such conduct;
 - "Dating" or "going out with" a student;
 - Remarks about physical attributes or physiological development of anyone. This includes comments such as "Looking fine!" or "Check out that [body part]."
 - Taking photographs or videos of students for personal use or posting online;
 - Leaving campus alone with a student for lunch;
 - Undressing in front of a student;
 - Making, or participating in, sexually inappropriate comments;
 - Sexual jokes or jokes/comments with sexual overtones or double entendres;
 - Sharing a bed, mat, or sleeping bag with a student;
 - Seeking emotional involvement (which can include intimate attachment) with a student beyond the normative care and concern required of a school employee;
 - Listening to or telling stories that are sexually oriented;
 - Discussing your personal troubles or intimate issues with a student;
 - Becoming involved with a student such that a reasonable person may suspect inappropriate behavior;
 - Giving students a ride to/from School or School activities without the express, advance written permission of the Executive Director and the student's parent or legal guardian;
 - Being alone in a room with a student at the School with the door closed and/or windows blocked from view;
 - Allowing students at your home and/or in rooms or areas within your home without signed parental permission for a preplanned and pre-communicated educational activity which must include the presence of another educator, parent, or designated School volunteer;
 - Excessive attention toward a particular student;
 - Mirroring the immature behavior of minors;
 - Sending e-mails, text messages, instant messages, social media messages, or letters to students or making phone calls or sending notes if the content is not about School activities. Communication via private social media accounts is prohibited;
 - Being "friends" with a student on any personal or non-School social media website;
 - Communicating with students or parents/guardians in violation of the School's Social Media Policy; Engaging in inappropriate and/or unprofessional communications with students on School social media;
 - Using profanity with or to a student;
 - Involving students in non-educational or non-school related issues, including, but not limited to, the employee's employment issues; and

- Inflicting, or causing to inflict, corporal punishment upon a student. “Corporal punishment” means willful infliction of, or willfully causing the infliction of, physical pain on a pupil.

(b) Acceptable Behavior

The following is an illustrative list of acceptable and recommended behavior, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Pats on the shoulder or back;
- Side hugs;
- Handshakes;
- “High-fives” and hand slapping;
- When age appropriate, touching face to check temperature, wipe away a tear, remove hair from face, or other similar types of contact;
- Obtaining parents’ written consent for any after-school activity on or off campus (exclusive of tutorials);
- Placing TK through second grade students on one’s lap for purposes of comforting the child for a short duration only;
- Holding hands while walking with small children or children with significant disabilities;
- Assisting with toileting of small or disabled children in view of another staff member;
- Touch required under an IEP or 504 Plan;
- Reasonable restraint of a violent person to protect self, others, or property;
- Obtaining formal written pre-approval from Principal to take students off School property for activities such as field trips or competitions, including parental written permission and waiver form for any sponsored after-school activity whether on or off campus;
- E-mails, text messages, phone conversations, and other communications, if permitted, to and with students must be professional and pertain to School activities or classes (communication should be initiated via transparent, non-private School-based technology and equipment);
- Keeping the door wide open when alone with a student;
- Keeping reasonable and appropriate space between you and the student;
- Stopping and correcting students if they cross your own personal boundaries (including touching your legs, or buttocks, frontal hugs, kissing or caressing);
- Keeping administration informed when a significant issue develops about a student, such as a change in demeanor or uncharacteristic behavior;
- Keeping after-class discussions with a student professional and brief;
- Immediately asking for advice from senior staff or administrators (such as the Principal) if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to boundaries;
- Involving your supervisor if conflict arises with a student;
- Involving the Principal in discussions about situations related to boundaries that have the potential to become more severe (including, but not limited to, grooming or other red flag behaviors observed in colleagues, written material that is disturbing, or a student’s fixation on an adult);

- Making detailed notes about an incident that, in your best judgment, could evolve into a more serious situation later;
- Recognizing the responsibility to stop unacceptable behavior of students and/or coworkers;
- Asking another employee to be present if you will be alone with any student who may have severe social or emotional challenges;
- Asking another employee to be present, or within close supervisory distance, when you must be alone with a student after regular School hours;
- Prioritizing professional behavior during all moments of student contact;
- Asking yourself if any of your actions which are contrary to these provisions are worth sacrificing your job and career.

Reporting Violations

When any employee becomes aware of another employee (or volunteer, guest or vendor) having crossed the boundaries specified in this policy, or has a reasonable suspicion of misconduct, he or she must promptly report the suspicion to the Principal or Human Resources. Prompt reporting is essential to protect students, the suspected employee, any witnesses, and the School as a whole. Employees must also report to the administration any awareness of, or concern about, student behavior that crosses Boundaries or any situation in which a student appears to be at risk for sexual abuse. All reports will be kept as confidential to the extent Possible.

Title IX

Bella Mente Montessori Academy (“Bella Mente”) does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any of its programs or activities. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits Bella Mente from discriminating in such a manner. This prohibition extends to admission, employment, and all programs and activities of Bella Mente. Bella Mente has designated the following individual as its Title IX Coordinator to receive complaints of sex discrimination, including sexual harassment:

Susan Croniser
 Administrative Assistant – HR
 1737 W. Vista Way, Vista, CA 92083
 Phone: 760-621-8931
 Email: scroniser@bellamentecharter.org

Inquiries about the application of Title IX may be referred to the Bella Mente Title IX Coordinator or to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, or both

BELLA MENTE MONTESSORI ACADEMY
TITLE IX POLICY AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Bella Mente Montessori Academy (“Bella Mente”) is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (“Title IX”) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment, in Bella Mente’s education programs and activities.

This Title IX Policy and Grievance Procedures for Sexual Harassment (“Policy”) details Bella Mente’s commitment to maintain a learning environment that is free from sexual harassment and provides a grievance process for allegations of sexual harassment as defined under Title IX. Any individual can report sexual harassment at Bella Mente to school staff (e.g., administrators, teachers, etc.) and Bella Mente will take appropriate action in accordance with the law and this Policy.

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination in that it constitutes differential treatment on the basis of sex, and, for that reason, is a violation of state and federal laws and a violation of this Policy. Bella Mente considers sexual harassment to be a major offense which can result in discipline of students and termination of employees.

Definition of Sexual Harassment Under California Law

California Education Code section 212.5 defines sexual harassment as any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature made by someone from or in the work or educational setting, under the following conditions:

- Submission to the conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or a condition of an individual’s employment, academic status, or progress.
- Submission to, or rejection of the conduct by the individual is used as the basis of employment or academic decisions affecting the individual.
- The conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact upon the individual’s work or academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or educational environment.
- Submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis for any decisions affecting the individual regarding benefits and services, honors, programs, or activities available at or through the educational institution.

Sexual harassment under California law may include, but is not limited to:

- Unwelcome verbal conduct such as suggestive, derogatory comments, sexual innuendoes, slurs, or unwanted sexual advances, invitations, or comments; pestering for dates; making threats; or spreading rumors about or rating others as to sexual activity or performance.
- Unwelcome visual conduct such as displays of sexually suggestive objects, pictures, posters, written material, cartoons, or drawings; graffiti of a sexual nature; or use of obscene gestures.
- Unwelcome physical conduct such as unwanted touching, pinching, kissing, patting, hugging, blocking of normal movement, assault; or interference with work or study directed at an individual because of the individual’s sex, sexual orientation, or gender.

- Threats and demands or pressure to submit to sexual requests in order to keep a job or academic standing or to avoid other loss, and offers of benefits in return for sexual favors.

Under Education Code section 230, harassment and other discrimination on the basis of sex include, but are not limited to, the following: exclusion of a person or persons from participation in, denial of the benefits of, or subjection to harassment or other discrimination in, any academic, extracurricular, research, occupational training, or other program or activity; and exclusion from participation in, or denial of equivalent opportunity in, athletic programs. The full definition of discrimination and harassment based on sex from Education Code section 230 can be found here: http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=230.

The definition of sexual harassment under California law and the definition of Sexual Harassment under Title IX overlap in some areas. Complaints alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying based on gender, sex, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation are eligible to be investigated pursuant to Bella Mente’s Uniform Complaint Procedures under California law. However, if any complaints alleging sexual harassment constitute Sexual Harassment as defined under federal law in Title IX (see below), the complaints shall be investigated under the Title IX Grievance Procedures for Sexual Harassment. Bella Mente prohibits retaliatory behavior against anyone who files a sexual harassment complaint or any participant in the complaint investigation process.

Sex Equity in Education Act Statement

Students have all the rights set forth in Education Code section 221.8 (as applicable to Bella Mente’s programs). This includes the right to fair and equitable treatment, the right to a school environment without discrimination on the basis of sex, and the right to be provided with an equitable opportunity to participate in all academic extracurricular activities. The description of all rights set forth in Education Code section 221.8 can be found here: http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=221.8.

For more information about Gender Equity/Title IX, please visit the following CDE website: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/di/eo/genequitytitleix.asp>.

Title IX Grievance Procedures for Sexual Harassment

I. Scope and Jurisdiction

This Policy’s Title IX grievance procedures apply only to conduct that falls within the definition of “Sexual Harassment” under Title IX. Bella Mente employees or students may submit formal complaints of Sexual Harassment for investigation under this Policy. Sexual Harassment under Title IX means conduct on the basis of sex that falls within one or more of the following categories:

1. A Bella Mente employee conditioning the provision of a school aid, benefit, or service on an individual’s participation in unwelcome sexual conduct.
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to Bella Mente’s education program or activity.

3. Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking (as those terms are defined in 34 CFR section 106.30(a)(3)).

II. Title IX Personnel

Bella Mente has designated the following individual as its Title IX Coordinator to coordinate the investigation and resolution of Sexual Harassment formal complaints as outlined in this Policy:

Susan Croniser
Administrative Assistant – HR
1737 W. Vista Way, Vista, CA 92083 Phone:
760-621-8931
Email: scroniser@bellamentecharter.org

The Title IX Coordinator may designate other individual(s) to fulfill all or part of their duties. In addition to the Title IX Coordinator, the following Title IX Personnel are involved in the grievance process to address formal complaints:

- Investigator: The individual responsible for gathering all evidence related to the formal complaint. This individual will create an “Investigation Report” which will summarize the relevant evidence.
- Decision-Maker: The individual responsible for evaluating evidence in order to make a determination regarding the formal complaint. The Decision-Maker submits a written determination of findings to the parties. The Decision-Maker cannot be a Title IX Coordinator, the Investigator, or any individual involved in the investigation of the formal complaint.
- Title IX Appeals Officer: If applicable, this individual is responsible for evaluating an appeal of the final determination. The Title IX Appeals Officer cannot be a Title IX Coordinator, Investigator, Decision-Maker, or any individual involved in the investigation of the formal complaint.

All Title IX Personnel (i.e., Title IX Coordinator, Investigator(s), Decision-Maker(s), Appeals Officer(s), and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process) will receive training in accordance with Title IX requirements. The Title IX Coordinator must ensure individuals responsible for investigating a formal complaint are neutral.

III. Reporting Allegations of Sexual Harassment

Any individual (e.g., a student or employee who is alleged to be a victim of Sexual Harassment or a parent/guardian of a student who is alleged to be a victim of Sexual Harassment), may report Sexual Harassment directly to the Bella Mente Title IX Coordinator, or to any other available Bella Mente employee who shall immediately inform the Title IX Coordinator. Reports of Sexual Harassment can be made in-person, by mail, by telephone, by electronic mail, or by any other means that result in a Title IX Coordinator receiving the person’s verbal or written report.

IV. Bella Mente’s Initial Response to a Report of Sexual Harassment

Upon receipt of any report of Sexual Harassment, the Title IX Coordinator or designee will take the following steps. These steps are offered regardless of whether the complainant submits a formal written complaint:

1. Contact Complainant and Determine Need for Supportive Measures: The Title IX Coordinator will contact the complainant and respondent to discuss the availability of supportive measures to stop the harassment, protect students, and ensure access to the educational program. If a formal complaint was not filed, the Title IX Coordinator shall explain to the complainant the right to file a formal complaint and the process for filing a formal complaint. A formal complaint is one that contains the complainant's physical or digital signature, and it may be filed at any time with the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, or by email. A complainant may use the attached Title IX form to submit a formal complaint to the Title IX Coordinator.

Supportive measures are non-disciplinary and non-punitive and shall be available at any point during the Title IX investigation. Supportive measures may include, but are not limited to: wellness check-ins, counseling services, extension of deadlines or courserelated adjustments, modifications of work or class schedules, changes in work locations, or leaves of absences. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for implementing the supportive measures.

2. Determine Need for Emergency Removal: The Title IX Coordinator will review the facts to determine whether the respondent (either student or staff) may need to be removed from the educational program or activity to prevent any further sexual harassment and/or maintain the safety of students and staff.

Bella Mente may determine that removal from the educational program or activity is justified due to an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations. Bella Mente will conduct an individualized safety and risk analysis before the removal. Bella Mente shall provide the respondent with notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal.

If the respondent is a student, Bella Mente is subject to applicable laws and school policies regarding involuntary removals, suspensions, and expulsions.

If the respondent is an employee, the employee may be placed on administrative leave during the formal complaint investigation.

V. Initial Review of Formal Complaint

If a formal complaint is filed, the Title IX Coordinator will review the complaint and make an initial determination as to whether it raises allegations that fall within the definition of Sexual Harassment under Title IX as described above. Bella Mente may consolidate multiple formal complaints where the allegations of Sexual Harassment arise out of the same facts or circumstances.

If it does, the Title IX Coordinator will follow this Policy's grievance procedures for formal complaints. If it does not, the Title IX Coordinator will determine whether the complaint should be dismissed (as explained below) and/or investigated pursuant to another applicable Bella Mente policy (e.g., Uniform Complaint Procedures).

At any time after a formal complaint has been filed, but before reaching a determination regarding the allegation, Bella Mente may offer an informal resolution process (such as restorative justice or mediation) to the complainant and respondent. However, the informal resolution process is not available where the complainant alleges that an employee sexually harassed a student. Participation in informal resolution is voluntary.

VI. Mandatory or Permissive Dismissal of Formal Complaint

Under certain circumstances, a complaint must or should be dismissed by the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will endeavor to make this determination no more than **ten (10) school days** from the date they receive the formal complaint.

1. **Mandatory Dismissal**: The Title IX Coordinator must dismiss the formal complaint if they determine any of the following:
 - a. The alleged conduct would not constitute Sexual Harassment as defined under Title IX even if proved;
 - b. The alleged conduct did not occur in Bella Mente’s education program or activity; or
 - c. The alleged conduct did not occur against an individual in the United States.
2. **Permissive Dismissal**: The Title IX Coordinator may dismiss a formal complaint if they determine any of the following:
 - a. The complainant has notified Bella Mente, in writing, that they would like to withdraw the complaint or any allegations in the complaint;
 - b. The respondent is no longer enrolled in, or employed by, Bella Mente; or
 - c. Specific circumstances prevent Bella Mente from gathering evidence to reach a determination with regard to the complaint.

Written Notice of Dismissal: If the Title IX Coordinator dismisses the complaint, they must send written notice of the dismissal simultaneously to both parties (complainant and respondent) as follows:

- The written notice should state the reason(s) for the dismissal and inform the parties of their right to appeal in accordance with the procedures described in the “Appeals” section below.
- If the Title IX Coordinator determines another Bella Mente grievance procedure (e.g., Uniform Complaint Procedures) is the appropriate grievance procedure for the complainant’s allegation(s), the written notice shall inform the parties (complainant and respondent) of Bella Mente’s intent to investigate the complaint through that grievance procedure.

VII. Title IX Grievance Procedures

If the Title IX Coordinator does not dismiss the formal complaint, Bella Mente will initiate the following Title IX Grievance Procedures and issue a Written Decision. Bella Mente will endeavor to complete its investigation and issue a Written Decision within **sixty (60) school days of receipt of the formal complaint**.

1. Send Written Notice of Formal Complaint

The Title IX Coordinator must provide the parties (complainant and respondent) with a Notice of Formal Complaint. The Title IX Coordinator will endeavor to provide this Notice within **ten (10) school days of receipt of the formal complaint**. The notice shall include: (1) a copy of this Policy; (2) a description of the allegations potentially constituting Sexual Harassment with sufficient details known at the time; (3) a statement that the respondent is presumed not responsible for conduct and that a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of the grievance process; (4) a statement informing the parties of the opportunity to have an advisor of their choice throughout the grievance process and the ability to inspect and review evidence; and (5) a statement informing the parties that they must not knowingly make false statements or submit false information.

2. Investigator Conducts Investigation

The Investigator will gather and review evidence related to the allegations. This can include, but is not limited to, interviewing parties or witnesses, as well as reviewing relevant evidence. The Investigator will not require, request, or rely upon any information protected under a legally recognized privilege, unless the person holding such privilege has waived it.

Written notice of all investigative interviews or other meetings must be provided to any individual whose participation is invited or expected to be provided with sufficient time for the individual to prepare to participate. Notice must include the date, time, location, participants, and purpose of the meeting. Attendees of such meetings will have the right to be accompanied by an advisor of their choice.

3. Investigator Provides Parties Equal Opportunity to Review Gathered Evidence

The Investigator will provide both the complainant and respondent with an equal opportunity to review the evidence that is directly related to the allegations raised in the formal complaint. The parties will have a period of at least **ten (10) calendar days** before the Investigative Report is provided to the parties to review the evidence, ask the Investigator additional questions, and provide or suggest additional evidence to be considered by the Investigator.

4. Investigator Prepares and Shares Investigative Report

The Investigator will prepare an Investigative Report summarizing the relevant evidence. The Investigative Report is not Bella Mente's final Written Decision. The Investigator will send the Investigative Report to the parties and their advisors, if any, for their review and written response at least **ten (10) calendar days** before issuance of the Written Decision. Bella Mente will inform the parties in writing that they may submit to the Decision-Maker written, relevant questions that the parties want asked of any party or witness. The Decision-Maker is responsible for providing the responses (if any) to these questions to both parties.

5. Decision-Maker Issues Written Decision

The Decision-Maker will endeavor to issue the Written Decision within **sixty (60) school days from the receipt of the formal complaint**. The Decision-Maker will issue a Written Decision to both parties simultaneously. The Decision-Maker uses the "preponderance of evidence" standard (i.e., it is more likely than not that the respondent committed the alleged conduct). The Written Decision will include all of the following:

- a. Identification of the allegations potentially constituting Sexual Harassment.
 - b. A description of the procedural steps taken by Bella Mente during the investigation process (e.g., notifications to the parties, interviews with the parties and witnesses, site visits, or methods used to gather other evidence).
 - c. Findings of fact supporting the determination.
 - d. Conclusions regarding the application of Bella Mente’s policies to the facts.
 - e. A statement of, and rationale for, the result as to each allegation, including a decision regarding responsibility, any disciplinary sanctions Bella Mente imposes on the respondent, and whether remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to Bella Mente’s educational program will be provided by Bella Mente to the complainant.
 - f. Bella Mente’s procedures and permissible bases for either party to appeal the decision.
6. Remedies

If Bella Mente determines that the respondent engaged in Sexual Harassment, Bella Mente will provide remedies to the complainant, as appropriate. This may include supportive measures. Remedies may also include: transfer from a class; parent/student conference(s); positive behavior support; warnings; detention; and/or formal discipline, such as suspension and expulsion. When an employee is found to have committed Sexual Harassment, Bella Mente will take appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with Bella Mente’s policies and as permitted by law.

VIII. Appeals

Either party may appeal Bella Mente’s Written Decision, or its dismissal of a formal complaint or any allegation in the complaint, within **five (5) calendar days of the decision**. An appeal may be made on any of the following grounds:

1. A procedural irregularity affected the outcome.
2. New evidence that was not reasonably available at the time the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal was made that could affect the outcome of the matter.
3. The Title IX Coordinator, Investigator, or Decision-Maker had a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainant or respondent that affected the outcome of the matter.

Upon receipt of an appeal, Bella Mente will provide a written notification to the other party about the appeal that gives both parties a reasonable, equal opportunity to submit a written statement in support of/challenging the appeal.

The Title IX Appeals Officer (not Decision-Maker, Title IX Coordinator, or Investigator) shall issue a written decision of an appeal, including the rationale for the result, to both parties simultaneously. The Title IX Appeals Officer will endeavor to issue their decision within **thirty (30) calendar days from the receipt of the appeal**.

IX. Record Keeping

Bella Mente will maintain for a period of seven (7) years records pertaining to Title IX Sexual Harassment allegations in accordance with 34 CFR section 106.45(b)(10), as well as all materials used to train Title IX Personnel.

X. Updates

The Superintendent or designee may update, modify, or implement this policy in a manner to comply with applicable law.

Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Form

Instructions: This form can be completed by any individual who has knowledge of a sexual harassment conduct occurring within an education program or activity of Bella Mente Montessori Academy (“Bella Mente”). Please complete the information below. Should you need additional space or would like to provide documentation to support the allegations in the complaint, you can attach those to this complaint form. If you have any questions, please contact Bella Mente’s Title IX Coordinator listed below.

Contact Information and Complainant’s (Victim) Information

Full Name of Person Filing the Complaint: _____

Address:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Complainant’s (Victim) Full Name (if different from above): _____

Respondent’s (Accused) Information

Respondent’s Full Name: _____

Is the accused a Bella Mente student? No Yes

If yes, what is the student’s grade and relation to complainant:

Is the accused a Bella Mente staff member? No Yes

If yes, what is the staff member’s relation to the complainant (e.g., teacher)?

If no, what is the accused’s affiliation to Bella Mente?

Details of Complaint

Date of the Alleged Incident(s): _____

Location of Alleged Incident(s): _____

Please describe the facts underlying your complaint. Provide details such as the names of those involved, the dates of the incident(s), whether witnesses were present and the names of any witnesses, etc. Please provide any details which you feel might be helpful to a complaint investigator.

Did the harassment occur at Bella Mente or during a Bella Mente activity? If so, please describe:

Did this incident interfere with your ability to access or participate in Bella Mente programs or activities? If so, please describe:

List the individuals involved in the relevant incident(s):

List any witnesses to the incident(s):

Acknowledgements

By submitting this form to the Title IX Coordinator, I wish to initiate Bella Mente's formal Title IX Grievance Procedures.

Signature of Complainant: _____ Date: _____

Once you have completed this form, please submit it to the Title IX Coordinator:

Susan Croniser
Administrative Assistant – HR
1737 W. Vista Way, Vista, CA 92083 Phone:
760-621-8931
Email: scroniser@bellamentecharter.org

Title IX Complaint Form

Instructions: This form can be completed to request that Bella Mente Montessori Academy ("School") investigate and make a determination about alleged discrimination under Title IX. Please complete the information below. Should you need additional space or would like to provide documentation to support the allegations in the complaint, you can attach those to this complaint form. If you have any questions, please contact School's Title IX Coordinator listed below.

Contact Information and Complainant's (Victim) Information

Full Name of Person Filing the Complaint: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Complainant's (Victim) Full Name (if different from above): _____

Respondent's (Accused) Information

Respondent's Full Name: _____

Is the accused a School student? No Yes
If yes, what is the student's grade and relation to complainant: _____

Is the accused a School staff member? No Yes
If yes, what is the staff member's relation to the complainant (e.g., teacher)? _____
If no, what is the accused's affiliation to School? _____

Details of Complaint

Date of the Alleged Incident(s): _____ Location of Alleged Incident(s): _____

Please describe the facts underlying your complaint. Provide details such as the names of those involved, the dates of the incident(s), whether witnesses were present and the names of any witnesses, etc. Please provide any details which you feel might be helpful to a complaint investigator.

Did the sex discrimination occur at School or during a School activity? If so, please describe:

Did this incident interfere with your ability to access or participate in School programs or activities? If so, please describe:

List the individuals involved in the relevant incident(s):

List any witnesses to the incident(s):

Acknowledgements

By submitting this form to the School Title IX Coordinator, I wish to initiate School's Title IX Grievance Procedures.

Signature of Complainant

Date

Once you have completed this form, please submit it to the Title IX Coordinator:

Susan Croniser
Administrative Secretary II
1737 W. Vista Way
Vista, CA 92083
Phone: 760-621-8931