

Volume



STUDENT HANDBOOK

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The Olive Tree Montessori Academy

# Student Handbook

THE OLIVE TREE MONTESSORI ACADEMY

# **2014 – 2015 Student Handbook**

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## Introduction

The Olive Tree Montessori Academy is a community of students, parents, staff and neighbors. The primary purpose of this community is to provide a secure, warm and enriched academic environment for our students. While we are struggling with daily problems, it is sometimes difficult to keep our reason for being clearly in focus. During moments of doubts and indecision, may we recall the following poem by Tom Damphier:

### *Promises to a Stranger*

*Stranger,*

*Before our eyes meet, before my hands feel the strength of yours, before  
the world has a name to know you by,*

*to you, I make these promises:*

*I promise you me.*

*I promise to look, to listen, and to learn who you are,*

*I help you to look, to listen, and to learn who you are,*

*I promise to grow with you.*

*I promise to respect you as I hope you will respect me.*

*I promise not to allow my limitations to become yours.*

*I promise to remember I owe it to you, the child, to share and to show  
you that you owe me nothing at all;*

*you are not mine, I have simply been given an opportunity to watch  
miracles happen.*

*And most of all, Stranger, I promise never to forget these promises.*

*This is your time, your life, and your world.*

*Cherish them.*

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elcome to a new school year for 2014–2015!

The Director, Administrators, Teachers, and staff members want this year to be an especially good one for each student; one filled with many interesting learning experiences. For this to happen, we all have to work together: students, parents, and teachers. This Student Handbook (“the Handbook”) is designed to help us accomplish these goals.

This Handbook contains information that both parents and students need for reference during the school year. We have attempted to make the language in the Handbook as straightforward as possible. Please be aware that the term “parent” refers to parents, legal guardians, and other individuals who have been granted legal responsibility for students.

This Handbook is divided into six chapters. The first chapter includes general information regarding school policy and procedures. The second chapter provides important health and safety information. The third chapter provides information about academics and grading. The fourth chapter is the Student Code of Conduct. Both students and parents need to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct, which is required by state law and intended to promote school safety and an atmosphere for learning. Please note that the Student Code of Conduct is also posted on the school website. The fifth chapter is especially for parents, with information regarding parental rights. Finally, the sixth chapter contains important notices regarding student information, computer resources, and the school grievance policy.

This Handbook is designed to be in harmony with Board Policy. Please be aware that this Handbook is updated yearly, while policy adoption and revision may occur throughout the year. Changes in policy that affect Handbook provisions will be made available to students and parents through newsletters, the school website, and other communications. In case of conflict between Board Policy and any provision of this Handbook, the provision that was most recently adopted by the Board of Directors will be followed.

Please review the entire Handbook and keep it as a reference during the school year. If you have any questions about the material in this Handbook, please contact the Principal. Understanding this information will assist you and your child on the path to success.

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# General Policies and Procedures

## Goals and Objectives

The primary objective of the The Olive Tree Montessori Academy (“TOTMA” or “the School”) is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment which will assist students to develop within themselves the foundation, habits, attitudes, skills, and concepts which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

The specific goals for all students who attend TOTMA are:

1. To develop a positive attitude toward learning.
2. To encourage a strong sense of self as well as a growing sense of community.
3. To develop increasing concentration.
4. To foster continual curiosity and wonder.
5. To develop habits of initiative, independence and persistence.
6. To foster inner discipline and support a strong sense of order.
7. To develop sensory-motor skills which sharpen the ability to distinguish and assess.
8. To develop social skills within the framework of community.
9. To acquire the basic skills necessary for a productive life.
10. To help develop each child’s innate, ultimate potential through self-mastery.

In order to achieve these goals, TOTMA pledges the following:

1. Choose high-quality curriculum in accordance with standards adopted by the Texas Education Agency.
2. Provide effective and differentiated instruction in a supportive and peaceful learning environment that enables children to achieve individual success.
3. Fairly and consistently enforce School rules and the Student Code of Conduct.
4. Create a partnership between parents and the School through activities, school events, volunteer hours, and parent conferencing.
5. Provide intentional, meaningful, and purposeful professional development for teachers.
6. Recruit and hire Highly Qualified and certified administrators, specialists, teachers, and teacher assistants according to NCLB.
7. Provide parents with frequent reports on their children’s progress.
8. Provide small group tutoring for struggling learners so that each child can reach his or her full potential.
9. Use various data to enforce instructional strategies.
10. Foster school-wide practices that instruct, guide, and support the whole child.



## **Admissions and Enrollment**

Admission and enrollment of students shall be open to persons who reside within the geographic boundaries of TOTMA's charter and who are eligible for admission based on lawful criteria identified in the charter and in law. The total number of students enrolled in the School shall not exceed the number of students approved in the charter. Applications for admission shall be due by a reasonable deadline to be set each year by the administration.

Students in secondary boundaries and outside the School's primary designated geographic area may not be admitted to fill a vacancy until all eligible applicants within the primary geographic boundary who have submitted a timely application have been offered that vacancy and enrolled. If TOTMA has served all eligible applicants from its primary geographic area, it may admit students from secondary geographic areas on the same nondiscriminatory basis as the students from the primary designated geographic area.

### **Non-Discrimination**

TOTMA does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, or disability in providing educational services, activities, and programs in accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

When making admissions decisions, TOTMA does not discriminate against students on the basis of sex; national origin; ethnicity; religion; disability; academic, artistic, or athletic ability; or the district the child would otherwise attend under state law.

### **Exception to Admission**

As provided in the TOTMA charter, the School may exclude students from admission who have a documented history of a criminal offense, juvenile court adjudication, or discipline problems.

### **Lottery**

If the number of eligible applicants does not exceed the number of vacancies, then all qualified applicants who have timely applied will be offered admission. If there are more eligible applicants than available spaces in a class, then a lottery will be conducted at a time set by the administration each year. A name – or number assigned to a name – will be drawn for each vacancy that exists, and each applicant whose name or number is drawn will be offered admission. Notification will be made by telephone, e-mail or U.S. Postal Service. Failure of an applicant to respond within 48 hours of the date the telephone call or e-mail, or within three business days of a post-marked letter, will result in the forfeiture the applicant's position in the application process. Parents notified by mail should call the School immediately upon receipt of the notice in order to preserve their child's position in the lottery.

The remaining names will then be drawn and placed on a waiting list in the order in which they are drawn. If a vacancy arises before the commencement of the school year, the individual on the waiting list with the lowest number assignment will be offered admission and then removed from the waiting list. If an application is received after the application period has passed, the applicant's name will be added to the waiting list behind the names of the applicants who timely applied.

### **Exceptions**

Federal guidelines permit TOTMA to exempt from the lottery students already admitted, siblings of students already admitted, children of the charter's founders, and children of employees in a work-site charter school.

### **Student Information**

Any student admitted to the School must provide records, such as report cards from the previous school attended, to verify his or her academic standing. Verification of residency and current immunization records are also required. Every student enrolling in the School for the first time must present documentation of immunizations as required by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

No later than 30 days after enrolling in the School, the parent and school district in which the student was previously enrolled shall furnish records which verify the identity of the student. These records may include the student's birth certificate or a copy of the student's school records from the most recently attended school.

TOTMA will forward a student's records on request to a school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll without the necessity of the parent's consent.

### **Residency Information**

Texas Education Code § 25.001 authorizes Texas schools to obtain evidence that a person is eligible to attend public schools at the time of enrollment. To be eligible for continued enrollment at TOTMA, each student's parent or guardian must show proof of residency at the time of enrollment. Residency may be verified through observation, documentation, and other means including, but not limited to:

1. A recently paid rent receipt.
2. A current lease agreement.
3. The most recent tax receipt indicating home ownership.
4. A current utility bill indicating the address and name of the residence occupiers.
5. Mailing addresses of the residence occupiers.
6. Visual inspection of the residence.
7. Interviews with persons with relevant information.
8. Building permits issued to a parent on or before September 1st of the school year in which admission is sought (permits will serve as evidence of residency for the school year in which admission is sought only).

Falsification of residence on an enrollment form is a criminal offense.

## **School Hours**

Pre-Kindergarten through Fifth Grade: 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

## **Arrival & Departure**

All classes begin at 8:00 a.m. Children arriving late to school must enter through the main entrance in order to visit the administrative office and request a tardy slip, which is required for late entry in the classroom.

TOTMA has limited parking for student deposit and retrieval areas. For efficiency and safety, parents are asked to drop off and pick up at assigned areas. Parents picking up students are requested to remain in their cars and permit TOTMA staff to escort their student to their car.

## **Late Pick Up**

Parents are responsible for picking up their children on time. Pick up time is 3:30 p.m. TOTMA staff is required to alert **Child Protective Services** in instances where it appears that children may have been abandoned at school by parents.

## **Separation Transition**

It is the philosophy of the School that families establish a morning routine of saying good-bye. It is important to come to school on time each day so that students are a part of the morning settling-in process. In our experience, students are uncomfortable entering the class after morning dynamics are in full swing. Parents are encouraged to reassure their student, even accompanying the student to the front door of the classroom if they wish, then leave, trusting the teacher to comfort and direct their child as needed.

The family to school separation process begins as early as the breakfast table or during the drive to school. A calm and relaxed atmosphere helps both parent and young child to begin the day positively. If you have any questions or concerns about separating from your child, do not hesitate to talk with the classroom teacher.

## **School Calendar**

TOTMA operates according to an annual Board-adopted school calendar. Holidays may be used as school make-up days for days lost due to bad weather. The latest changes to the calendar will be available on the school website.

### AUGUST

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# The Olive Tree Montessori Academy

## 2014-2015 School Calendar

First Day of School - August 25, 2014

Last Day of School - June 5, 2015

### Holidays

Labor Day Monday September 1, 2014  
 Thanksgiving Monday November 24 - Friday November 28  
 Winter Break Monday December 22 - Friday January 2  
 Martin Luther King Monday January 19, 2015  
 Spring Break Monday March 9 - Friday March 13  
 Memorial Day Monday May 25, 2015

### Staff Development Days - No School

August 13 - 15, 2014  
 August 18 - 22, 2014  
 June 8-11, 2015

### Staff Development Waiver

Monday October 13, 2014 Monday November 10, 2014  
 Friday, February 6, 2015

### Teacher Preparation Days

August 11 - 12, 2014 January 16, 2015  
 June 12, 2015

### Noon Dismissal

Friday, November 21, 2014 Friday, December 19, 2014  
 Friday, March 6, 2015 Friday, June 5, 2015

### Six Week Grading Periods

1st Six Weeks Grading Period = August 25 - October 3, 2014  
 2nd Six Weeks Grading Period = October 6 - November 14, 2014  
 3rd Six Weeks Grading Period = November 17, 2014 - January 15, 2015  
 4th Six Weeks Grading Period = January 20 - February 27, 2015  
 5th Six Weeks Grading Period = March 2 - April 17, 2015  
 6th Six Weeks Grading Period = April 20 - June 5, 2015

### Legend

H Holidays - No School ♥  
 Teacher Prep Days  
 [ Six Weeks Begins ] Six Weeks Ends  
 ☞ Staff Development Days & Waiver Days - No Students  
 \* Bad Weather Day 11 N New Teacher Orientation

### FEBRUARY

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### MARCH

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### JUNE

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## **Attendance**

Regular school attendance is essential for the student to make the most of his or her education – to benefit from teacher-supervised activities, to build each day’s learning on that of the previous day, and to develop self-discipline. There is a direct relationship between attendance and academic progress. Therefore, TOTMA urges students to be in school every day, ALL DAY, and on time.

Two state laws, one dealing with compulsory attendance, the other with attendance for course credit, are of particular interest to students and parents. These laws are discussed below.

### **Compulsory Attendance**

The state compulsory attendance law requires that a student between the ages of six and eighteen must attend school and school-required tutorial sessions unless the student is otherwise legally exempted or excused. School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent from school without permission – including absence from any class or required special programs – will be considered truant and subject to disciplinary action.

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 18th birthday is required to attend school each day. If a student eighteen or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, TOTMA may revoke the student’s enrollment. The student’s presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing.

**Notice to Parents:** Under Texas Education Code § 25.095(a), you are hereby notified that if a student is absent from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in any one school year or is absent for three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period, the parent is subject to prosecution under Texas Education Code § 25.093 and the student is subject to prosecution under Texas Education Code § 25.094 or to referral to a juvenile court in a county with a population of less than 100,000 for conduct that violates that section.

### **Attendance for Credit**

To receive credit in a class, a student must attend at least 90% of the days the class is offered. These days include both excused and unexcused absences. A student who attends fewer than 90% of the days the class is offered may be referred to the Attendance Review Committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit.

In determining whether there are extenuating circumstances for an absence, the Attendance Review Committee will use the following guidelines:

- All absences will be reviewed, with special consideration given for religious holy days, documented health care appointments for which routine make-up work has been completed, and other special circumstances as defined by the Texas Education Code.
- For a student transferring into TOTMA after school begins, including a migrant student, only those absences after enrollment will be considered.
- In reaching consensus about a student’s absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that its decision is in the best interest of the student.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or parent could exercise control.

- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documentation expressing reasons for the student's absences.
- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- The student, parent, or other representative will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to discuss ways to earn or regain credit.

If credit is lost because of excessive absences, the Attendance Review Committee will decide how the student may regain credit. The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the Board of Directors by filing a written request with the Principal. The appeal notice must be postmarked to the following address within 30 days following the last day of instruction in the semester for which credit was denied:

The Olive Tree Montessori Academy  
 Notice of Appeal: Class Credit  
 Attn: Principal  
 614 Hiatt Ave.  
 Arlington, Texas 76010

The appeal will then be placed on the agenda of the next regularly-scheduled Board meeting. The Assistant Director designee shall inform the student or parent of the date, time, and place of the meeting.

## **Absence from School**

### **Absence in General**

When a student must be absent from school, parents are asked to call the school office between 8:00 am and 9:00 am each day the student will be absent. Upon returning to school, the student must bring a note, signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. A note signed by the student, even with the parent's permission, will not be accepted. **Notes must be received within three days of the absence, or the absence will be unexcused.**

### **Types of Absences**

TOTMA recognizes two kinds of absences: excused and unexcused. Students and parents should be aware of the School's policy regarding homework, quizzes, and tests following an absence.

#### Excused Absences

Students may be excused for temporary absence resulting from any cause acceptable to the student's teacher, the Principal, or the Director. Students must provide a written excuse for an absence to be excused. The excuse shall be submitted to the office and will be filed as part of the student's record.

An absence will be considered excused if the absence is for one or more of the following reasons:

- *Personal Illness.* The student's parent must call the School each morning the student is ill. Upon returning to school, the student must bring an explanatory note from his or her parent. Illnesses that extend beyond three days will require a doctor's note.

- *Family Emergency or Illness.* The student's parent must call the office to explain the situation and provide an estimated time of absence. Upon returning to school, the student must bring an explanatory note from his or her parent.
- *Professional Appointments.* A student attends a scheduled medical, dental, or psychological appointment; an appointment for special education assessment procedures or special education related services; or required screenings, diagnosis, and treatment for Medicaid-eligible students. If possible, the student must commence classes or return to school on the same day of the appointment.
- *Observing Religious Holy Days.* A student who is observing a religious holy day(s) is allowed up to one day of excused travel for traveling to the site where the student will observe the holy day(s) and up to one day of excused travel for traveling from that site.
- *Required Court Appearances.* A student who is attending a required court appearance is allowed up to one day of excused travel for traveling to the required court appearance and up to one day of excused travel for returning from that site.
- *Appearance at Governmental Office.* A student who appears at a governmental office to complete paperwork required in connection with the student's application for United States citizenship is allowed up to one day of excused travel for traveling to the governmental office and one day of excused travel for returning from that site.
- *Naturalization Oath Ceremony.* A student who takes part in a United States naturalization oath ceremony is allowed up to one day of excused travel for traveling to the site of the ceremony and up to one day of excused travel for returning from that site.

### Unexcused Absences

Any absences not listed above will be considered an unexcused absence. Examples of unexcused absences include, but are not limited to, class cuts, oversleeping, vacation, etc.

**Notice to Parents:** Students enrolled in the Pre-Kinder three and four-year-old programs are allowed four excused absences. Those students with five excused absences may be withdrawn from the program. Children who are absent without an excuse will be withdrawn from the program.

### **Make-Up Work**

#### Make-up Work for Excused Absences

For any class missed the teacher may assign the student make-up work based on the instructional objectives for the subject or course and the student's needs in mastering the essential knowledge and skills or in meeting subject or course requirements. Students are responsible for obtaining and completing make-up work in a satisfactory manner within the time specified by the teacher. Students will be allotted one day for every day absent to complete make-up assignments. A student who does not complete make-up assignments within the time allotted will receive a grade of "F" or 0% for the assignment.

If a student misses a test due to an excused absence, a make-up test will be scheduled by the teacher. Students are responsible for taking the test at that time.

#### Make-up Work for Unexcused Absences

Students may not make up work following an unexcused absence. An unexcused absence may result in an "F" or grade of 0% for each assignment missed.

## **Tardiness**

A student will be considered tardy if he or she arrives at school after 8:00 a.m. **Three tardies in one week will count as one unexcused absence.**

## **Change of Address or Telephone Number**

When the address or telephone number of a student has been changed, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school office immediately. Proof of residency at the new address may be required.

## **Distribution of Non-School Materials**

Students must obtain express prior approval of the Principal before distributing, posting, selling, or circulating written materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, petitions, films, tapes, posters, or other visual or auditory materials on campus.

Non-school literature shall not be distributed by students on TOTMA property if:

1. The materials are obscene, vulgar, or otherwise inappropriate for the age and maturity of the audience.
2. The materials endorse actions endangering the health or safety of students.
3. The materials promote illegal use of drugs, alcohol, or other controlled substances.
4. The distribution of such materials would violate the intellectual property rights, privacy rights, or other rights of another person.
5. The materials contain defamatory statements about public figures or others.
6. The materials advocate imminent lawless or disruptive action and are likely to incite or produce such action.
7. The materials are hate literature or similar publications that scurrilously attack ethnic, religious, or racial groups or contain content aimed at creating hostility and violence; and the materials would materially and substantially interfere with school activities or the rights of others.
8. There is reasonable cause to believe that distribution of the non-school literature would result in material and substantial interference with school activities or the rights of others.



## **Dress Code**

Pursuant to the School's charter, students are required to wear uniforms Monday through Friday. The School's uniform policy and dress code is established to teach grooming and hygiene, to create a safe and orderly environment, instill discipline, and eliminate competition and distractions caused by varied dress styles. Students are expected to display modesty and neatness, and take pride in wearing clean, neat and attractive uniforms. TOTMA relies on the support of parents to help maintain this dress code. Students are expected to arrive in a proper school uniform every day.

**Notice to Parents:** If a student arrives at school out of uniform or is groomed inappropriately, the student's parents will be notified to pick up their student immediately or bring a change of clothes to the School. The student will be kept out of class until appropriately dressed, and all class time missed will count as an unexcused absence. TOTMA reserves the right to determine and restrict unbecoming styles.

Parents must provide their students with the required uniform, except for in the case of educationally disadvantaged students as provided in the Texas Education Code.

### **Official Uniform for Students**

Students are required to wear uniforms Monday through Friday. Required attire is as follows:

## **TOTMA DRESS CODE: 2014/2015**

### **Textbooks**

State-approved textbooks and additional curriculum materials are provided free of charge for each subject or class. Textbooks must be used by the student as directed by the teacher, and treated with care. A student who is issued damaged materials should report the damage to the teacher.

Textbooks shall be returned to TOTMA in such a condition that they are fully accessible to future students. Students shall exercise reasonable care at all times with respect to the textbooks and supplemental materials so that they may be used by future students.

Electronic textbooks shall be returned free of any viruses or any other malicious software, and free of any plug-ins or software not specifically approved by TOTMA. All components or applications that are a part of the electronic textbook when issued must be returned.

Students will be expected to pay for lost or severely damaged textbooks. A student whose textbook record is not clear will not be issued any textbooks until the records are cleared. The student will, however, be provided textbooks for use at school during the school day. TOTMA may reduce or waive the payment requirement if the student is from a low-income family. Release of student records, including official transcripts, will be delayed pending payment for lost or severely damaged textbooks or supplemental materials.

### **Lost and Stolen Items**

All articles found on campus must be taken to the school office. Articles and items that are not school property will be held in the main office for two weeks. After this period, the School will consider the items

“abandoned” and may donate the items to charitable causes. TOTMA is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

## **Meals**

TOTMA participates in the National Breakfast and School Lunch Program. Guidelines set by the Texas Department of Agriculture (“TDA”) and United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) is followed to meet the nutritional needs of all students.

## **Menus**

Menus may be obtained at the school office and they are also posted on the school website.

## **Payment for Meals**

Students are encouraged to purchase meals from TOTMA in advance. Payments may be made to the student’s account on a weekly or monthly basis. See the school office for acceptable methods of payment.

## **State-Mandated Nutrition Guidelines**

TDA places strict limits on any food or drink provided or sold to students other than through the School’s Food and Nutrition Services. Elementary school students may not have access to candy or any other food of minimal nutritional value during the school day. More detailed information may be obtained at the school office or online at [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org).

## **Free and Reduced-Cost Meals**

TOTMA sends applications for free or reduced-cost meals to each student’s home at the beginning of each school year. Applications must be complete, listing all members of the household and family income. Should the family income status change, assistance may be requested at any time during the school year. Only one application for each household is required. Completed applications should be returned to the school office.

## **Suggestions for Nutritious Snacks**

As stated above, state guidelines limit the type of food or drink available to elementary students. The School suggests the following items as healthy snack choices for students:

- Beverages – non-fat or low fat fruit juices or fruit smoothies, sparkling or plain water
- Low-Fat Grain Foods – individual servings of mini-bagel bread sticks; Animal Crackers; graham crackers; soft pretzels; English muffins; mini-rice cakes; low-fat sports bars; Fig Newtons; vanilla wafers; baked tortilla chips with salsa; low-fat fruit or grain muffins; dry cereal
- Fresh Fruits and Vegetables – in season fresh fruits and vegetables, with low-fat dip or salad dressing
- Additional Treats – 100% fruit snacks; fruit bars; frozen low-fat yogurt; frozen fruit bars; low-fat pudding; fat-free popcorn; low-fat sandwich cookies; 95% fat-free beef-jerky; peanut butter and crackers; low-fat string cheese; fruit, nut, or grain trail mixes.
- Entrée Suggestions – salads made with pasta, meat, and/or vegetables; baked potato with vegetable or chili topping; pasta with marinara sauce; pizza bagels (or English muffins); grilled or baked vegetable or cheese quesadillas; tortilla wraps filled with meat and/or vegetables; bean burritos
- Additional Items – chips (1 oz.); cookies (2 oz.); bakery items (3 oz.); punch; lemonade

- Non-Food Reward Ideas – pencils; stickers; stars; certificates; movie coupons; rulers; coupons for extra computer time; free time; reading time; etc.

## **Birthdays and Gifts**

Parents or grandparents of a student may **NOT** bring food items to school. Birthday parties must be held at home or away from school.

If a family plans a home party for a child, the School requests that no invitations be handed out at school. Likewise, if a child is attending a party after school, please do not send gifts to school with the student. The School has found that these situations can be upsetting for those who are not invited. It is appropriate to mail invitations and plan weekend parties.

## **Messages for Students**

It is not possible to receive and deliver telephone messages and/or supplies to students without interrupting classes and interfering with the learning environment that the school staff works so hard to maintain. In the case of an emergency, please contact the school office at 817-460-5000 for assistance.

## **Pledges of Allegiance and Minute of Silence [OPTIONAL]**

Each school day, students will recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. A parent may request, in writing, that his or her child be excused from participation in the daily recitation of these pledges.

One minute of silence will follow recitation of the pledges. Each student may choose to reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity during that minute so long as the silent activity does not interfere with or distract others.

## **Reciting a Portion of the Declaration of Independence**

State law requires that students in social studies classes in grades 3–12 recognize “Celebrate Freedom Week.” Students may be asked to recite a portion of the Declaration of Independence at that time or at other times during the year. A student will be exempted from this requirement if a parent provides a written statement requesting that the student be excused.

## **Respect for School Property**

Certain areas of the School will be accessible to students before and after school for specific purposes. Students are required to remain in the area where their activity is scheduled to take place. Unless the school staff member overseeing the activity gives permission, a student will not be permitted to go to another area of the School. Unless involved in an activity under the supervision of school staff, students must leave campus once school is dismissed.

## **School-Sponsored Trips**

Many school-sponsored trips are made each year. The following rules govern trips sponsored by the School:

- Students missing school when on a school-sponsored trip are not counted absent, but are required to make up any work missed. Arrangements should be made with each teacher for make-up work before the trip is made.

- Students must observe all safety rules.
- Students making school-sponsored trips are under the supervision of a sponsor and are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct and school dress code.

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips may be required to ride a school vehicle (*i.e.*, a vehicle driven for school-related business or owned, leased, or rented by the School). The Principal may make an exception if a parent personally requests that the student be permitted to ride with the parent or if the parent presents – prior to the day of the scheduled trip – a written request that the student be permitted to ride with an adult designated by the parent.

Riding in a school vehicle is a privilege. School drivers have the authority to maintain discipline and require seating charts. When riding in a school vehicle, students are held to behavioral standards established in this Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct. Students must:

- Follow the driver’s instructions at all times.
- Enter and leave the vehicle in an orderly manner.
- Keep feet, books, and other items out of the aisle.
- Not deface the vehicle or its equipment.
- Not put head, hands, arms, legs, or any object out of any window.
- Wait for the driver’s signal to leave or cross in front of the vehicle.

Only designated students are allowed to ride in school vehicles. Students may neither ride the vehicle to a different location nor have friends ride the vehicle to participate in school activities.

If a special needs student is receiving bus transportation as a result of an Individual Education Plan (“IEP”), the student’s Admission, Review, and Dismissal (“ARD”) Committee will have discretion in determining appropriate disciplinary consequences.

## **School Visitors**

Visitors for educational purposes are welcome at TOTMA. Visitors must sign in with the front office and present a valid photo ID upon arrival. The ID will be exchanged for a pass. We ask that visitors stop by the office to exchange the pass for their ID. Parents must also check in at the front office. Guests should not be brought to the School without prior approval.

Visits to individual classrooms during instructional time are permitted only with approval of the Principal and teacher. Such visits are not permitted if their duration or frequency interferes with the delivery of instruction or disrupts the normal school environment. **TOTMA requests that all cellular phones be turned off when parents are in the School.** We need your full attention with the children and their instructors.

Parents may not enter the building between 2:00 pm and 3:30 pm. Parents picking up students between 2:00 pm and 3:30 pm are required to complete early dismissal paperwork available from the school office. In such event, TOTMA staff will retrieve the student. Parents are also not allowed to enter the building in the mornings the first 30 days on school except if the student is tardy. All drop offs are made at the assigned area.

The Principal may take the following actions when there is a visitor at the School:

1. Require the visitor to display his or her driver’s license or another form of identification containing the person’s photograph issued by a governmental entity.

2. Establish an electronic database for the purpose of storing information concerning visitors to school campuses. Information stored in the electronic database may be used only for the purpose of school security, and may not be sold or otherwise disseminated to a third party for any purpose.
3. Verify whether a visitor to a school campus is a sex offender registered with the computerized central database maintained by the Department of Public Safety or any other database accessible by the School.

This policy applies to parents, Board members, volunteers, social service workers, invited speakers, maintenance and repair persons not employed by the School, vendors, representatives of the news media, former students, and any other visitors.

Any visitor identified as a sex offender shall be escorted by TOTMA personnel at all times during a school visit and shall have access only to common areas of the campus.

**Notice to Parents:** *During the first 30 days of school, TOTMA does not permit parents into the classroom. This allows students to acclimate to a new environment. This 30-day period is mandatory for parents enrolling their children during the school year. Experience and research has proved that longer contact with children in the building prolongs separation anxiety.*

### **Disruptive Activity**

In order to protect student safety and sustain an educational program free from disruption, state law permits the School to take action against any person who:

- Interferes with the movement of people in an exit, an entrance, or a hallway of a school building without authorization from the Principal;
- Interferes with an authorized activity by seizing control of all or part of a building;
- Uses force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent participation in an authorized assembly;
- Uses force, violence, or threats to cause disruption during an assembly;
- Interferes with the movement of people at an exit or an entrance to school property;
- Uses force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent people from entering or leaving school property without authorization from the Principal;
- Disrupts the conduct of classes or other school activities while on school property or on public property that is within 500 feet of school property; or
- Interferes with the transportation of students in school vehicles.

“Disruption” includes making loud noises; enticing, attempting to entice, preventing, or attempting to prevent a student from attending a required class or school activity; entering a classroom without the consent of either the Principal or the teacher; and, through acts of misconduct or the use of loud or profane language, disrupting class activities.

### **Withdrawals**

A student under 18 may be withdrawn from school only by a parent. If possible, TOTMA requests notice from the parent at least three days in advance so that records and documents may be prepared. Less than three days’ notice may result in forms being mailed. A withdrawal form may be obtained from the school office.

TOTMA may initiate withdrawal of a student under the age of 18 for non-attendance under the following conditions:

1. The student has been absent for ten consecutive school days; and
2. Repeated efforts by the attendance officer and/or Principal to locate the student have been unsuccessful.

## **Objects in Pockets**

Young students are naturally attracted to small objects. Items such as small cubes, puzzle pieces, farm animals, and other objects used for language lessons often show up at home. TOTMA asks parents to make sure that these items are returned to the School, as Montessori materials may be imported and are often difficult to replace. Be careful not to attach any blame to the removal of school items, but gently remind the child where the item belongs and that he or she can use the item in class.

## **Bad Weather Closings**

In the event of hazardous weather, TOTMA will announce delays or closing on the school website and local channels. Please listen to the radio or watch your local news for closing announcements.

## **Holidays**

Three school-wide holidays are scheduled for this year: The list of holidays will be decided by TOTMA administrators. Dates will be announced.

## **Thanksgiving**

This is a time when we all share in the creation of a traditional feast. Each class works on a particular aspect of the feast, and then all come together to share and celebrate. The value of thankfulness is brought to the students' consciousness by helping them become aware of the needs of other people in the world and how we can help others by sharing from our own bountiful lives.

## **School Choice Day**

This is a holiday that teachers decide to celebrate for the year.

## **End of Year Celebrations**

This holiday celebrates student accomplishments during the year. They are: Field Day & TOTMA READS, Awards Ceremony and Graduation Ceremony

## Health and Safety Information

Student safety on campus and at school-related events is a high priority of the School. Student cooperation is essential to ensure safety at school. Students should:

- Avoid conduct that is likely to put the student or other students at risk.
- Follow the behavioral standards in this Handbook, including the Student Code of Conduct, as well as any additional rules for behavior and safety set by the Principal, teachers, or school staff.
- Remain alert to and promptly report safety hazards, such as intruders on campus and threats made by any person toward a student or school staff.
- Know emergency evacuation routes and signals.
- Immediately follow the instructions of school staff who are overseeing student welfare.

### Asbestos Management Plan

TOTMA's facilities have been inspected for asbestos by a licensed Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act ("AHERA") inspector. An Asbestos Management Plan has been created for the School in accordance with federal regulations. Parents may view the Asbestos Management Plan by contacting the school office.

### Communicable Diseases

To protect other students from contagious illnesses, students infected with certain diseases are not allowed to come to school while contagious. Parents of a student with a communicable or contagious disease should phone the Principal so that other students who might have been exposed to the disease can be alerted. Among the more common of these diseases are the following:

Amebiasis	Influenza
Campylobacteriosis	Measles (rubeola)
Chickenpox	Meningitis, bacterial
Common cold	Meningitis, viral
Conjunctivitis, bacterial and/or viral	Mumps
Fever	Pertussis (whooping cough)
Fifth disease (erythema infectiosum)	Ringworm
Gastroenteritis	Rubella (German measles)
Giardiasis	Salmonellosis
Head lice (pediculosis)	Scabies
Hepatitis A	Shigellosis
Infections (wounds, skin, and soft tissue)	Streptococcal sore throat and scarlet fever
Infectious mononucleosis	Tuberculosis, pulmonary

Any student excluded from school attendance for reason of communicable disease may be readmitted by one or more of the following methods, as determined by the local health authority:

1. Certificate of the attending physician, advanced practice nurse, or physician assistant attesting that the child does not currently have signs or symptoms of a communicable disease or to the disease's non-infectiousness in a school setting;
2. Submitting a permit for readmission issued by a local health authority; or
3. Meeting readmission criteria as established by the commissioner of health.

The Principal shall report to the local health authority those students attending school who are suspected of having a reportable disease or condition, as defined by state law and the Texas Department of State Health Services.

## **Bacterial Meningitis**

State law requires TOTMA to provide the following information:

### What is Meningitis?

Meningitis is an inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by viruses, parasites, fungi, and bacteria. Viral meningitis is most common and the least serious. Bacterial meningitis is the most common form of serious bacterial infection with the potential for serious, long-term complications. It is an uncommon disease, but requires urgent treatment with antibiotics to prevent permanent damage or death.

### What are the Symptoms?

Someone with meningitis will become very ill. The illness may develop over one or two days, but it can also rapidly progress in a matter of hours. Not everyone with meningitis will have the same symptoms. Students and adults with meningitis may have a severe headache, high temperature, vomiting, sensitivity to bright lights, neck stiffness or joint pains, and drowsiness or confusion. In both student and adults, there may be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots. These can occur anywhere on the body. The diagnosis of bacterial meningitis is based on a combination of symptoms and laboratory results.

### How Serious Is Bacterial Meningitis?

If it is diagnosed early and treated promptly, the majority of people make a complete recovery. In some cases it can be fatal or a person may be left with a permanent disability.

### How Is Bacterial Meningitis Spread?

Fortunately, none of the bacteria that cause meningitis are as contagious as diseases like the common cold or the flu, and they are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been. The germs live naturally in the back of our noses and throats, but they do not live for long outside the body. They are spread when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing; sharing drinking containers, utensils, or cigarettes). The germ does not cause meningitis in most people. Instead, most people become carriers of the germ for days, weeks, or even months. The bacteria rarely overcome the body's immune system and cause meningitis or another serious illness.

### How Can Bacterial Meningitis Be Prevented?

Do not share food, drinks, utensils, toothbrushes, or cigarettes. Limit the number of persons you kiss. While there are vaccines for some other strains of bacterial meningitis, they are used only in special



circumstances. These include a disease outbreak in a community or for people traveling to a country where there is a high risk of getting the disease. Also, a vaccine is recommended by some groups for college students, particularly freshmen living in dorms or residence halls. The vaccine is safe and effective (85–90%). It can cause mild side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days. Immunity develops within seven to ten days after the vaccine is given and lasts for up to five years.

#### What Should You Do If You Think You Or A Friend Might Have Bacterial Meningitis?

You should seek prompt medical attention.

#### Where Can You Get More Information?

Your family doctor and the staff at your local or regional health department office are excellent sources for information on all communicable diseases. You may also call your local health department or Regional Texas Department of Health office to ask about meningococcal vaccine. Additional information may also be found at web sites for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov>; and the Texas Department of State Health Services, <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us>.

### **Immunizations**

The State of Texas requires that every child in the state be immunized against preventable diseases caused by infectious agents, in accordance with an established immunization schedule. To determine the specific number of doses that are required for your student, please read the “2011–12 Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for Students.” This document and more information about school vaccine requirements is available at the Texas Department of State Health Services (“DHS”) Immunization Branch website: [www.ImmunizeTexas.com](http://www.ImmunizeTexas.com) (click on the “School & Childcare” link).

Proof of immunization may be shown through personal records from a licensed physician or public health clinic with a signature or rubber-stamp validation.

#### **Provisional Enrollment**

A student may be enrolled provisionally for no more than 30 days if he or she transfers from one Texas school to another, and is awaiting the transfer of immunization records.

A student may be enrolled provisionally if the student has an immunization record that indicates the student has received at least one dose of each specified age-appropriate vaccine required by law. To remain enrolled, the student must complete the required subsequent doses in each vaccine series on schedule and as rapidly as is medically feasible and provide acceptable evidence of vaccination to the School. The School shall review the immunization status of a provisionally enrolled student every 30 days to ensure continued compliance in completing the required doses of vaccination. If, at the end of the 30-day period, a student has not received a subsequent dose of vaccine, the student is not in compliance and the School shall exclude him or her from school attendance until the required dose is administered.

A student who is homeless, as defined by the McKinney Act (42 U.S.C. § 11302), shall be admitted temporarily for 30 days if acceptable evidence of vaccination is not available. The School shall promptly refer the student to appropriate public health programs to obtain the required vaccinations.

#### **Exclusions from Immunization Requirements**

Exclusions from immunization compliance are allowable on an individual basis for medical reasons, reasons of conscience, and active duty with the armed forces of the United States.

If a student should not be immunized for medical reasons, the student must present a statement signed by the child's physician (M.D. or D.O.), duly registered and licensed to practice medicine in the United States who has examined the child, in which it is stated that, in the physician's opinion, the vaccine required is medically contraindicated or poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the child or any member of the child's household. Unless it is written in the statement that a lifelong condition exists, the exemption statement is valid for only one year from the date signed by the physician.

To claim an exclusion for reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, a signed DSHS affidavit must be presented by the student's parent, stating that the student's parent declines vaccinations for reasons of conscience, including because of the person's religious beliefs. The affidavit will be valid for a two-year period. Information for obtaining an affidavit for exclusion from immunization requirements is available at [www.ImmunizeTexas.com](http://www.ImmunizeTexas.com) (click on the "School/Childcare Requirements" link). The official DSHS affidavit form must be notarized and submitted to the school office within 90 days from the date it is notarized. TOTMA will accept only official DSHS affidavit forms developed and issued by DSHS; no other forms or reproductions will be allowed. The student who has not received the required immunizations for reasons of conscience, including religious beliefs, may be excluded from school in times of emergency or epidemic declared by the commissioner of public health.

To claim an armed forces exclusion, the student must prove that he or she is serving on active duty with the armed forces of the United States.

### **Immunization Records Reporting**

The School's record of your student's immunization history, while private in most instances, may be inspected by the Texas Education Agency, local health departments and DSHS, and transferred to other schools associated with the transfer of your student to those schools.

### **Emergency Medical Treatment**

If a student has a medical emergency at school or a school-related activity and the parent cannot be reached, school employees will seek emergency medical treatment unless the parent has previously provided a written statement denying this authorization. Therefore, parents are asked each year to complete an emergency care consent form, which includes information about their student's allergies to medications, etc. Parents should keep emergency care information up-to-date (name of doctor, emergency phone numbers, allergies, etc.). Please contact the Principal or secretary to update any information.

### **Illness during the School Day**

Should a child become ill at school, a staff member will take the student to a private resting area away from other students or to the school nurse. Parents will be notified to make arrangements to pick the child up from school as soon as possible.

### **Student Medications**

All medication should be administered outside of school hours, if possible. If necessary, medication can be administered at school under the following conditions:

- TOTMA will NOT dispense over the counter medication (*i.e.*, acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen, etc.) to students.
- Medication brought to school must be submitted to the front office, along with an authorization form signed by the student's physician and parent.
- Prescription medications administered during school hours must be prescribed by a physician or advanced nurse practitioner ("ANP") and filled by a pharmacist licensed in the State of Texas.
- Prescription medications must be submitted in a labeled container showing the student's name, name of the medication, reason the medication is being given, proper dosage amounts, the time the medication must be taken, and the method used to administer the medication. Medications sent in plastic baggies or unlabeled containers will NOT be administered.
- Only the amount of medication needed should be delivered to the School, *i.e.*, enough medication to last one day, one week, etc. In cases of prolonged need, send in the amount for a clearly specified period, *i.e.*, one week or one month. Extra medication will not be sent home with the student.
- If the School provides liability insurance for a licensed physician or registered nurse who provides volunteer services to the School, the Board may allow the physician or nurse to administer to any student nonprescription medication or medication currently prescribed for the student by the student's personal physician.

Changes to daily medications require written instruction from the physician or ANP and written permission from the parent. Parents are responsible for advising the school office that a medication has been discontinued.

### **Asthma and Anaphylaxis Medication**

Asthma and anaphylaxis are life-threatening conditions, and students with those conditions are entitled to possess and self-administer prescription medication while on school property or at school-related events.

Student possession and self-administration of asthma or anaphylaxis medication at school requires the student to demonstrate his or her ability to self-administer the medication to the student's physician or other licensed health care provider and the school nurse, if available. Requirements also include written authorization from the student's parent and physician or other licensed health care provider on file in the school office indicating the student is capable of independently administering his or her own asthma or emergency anaphylaxis medication. Medication in a student's possession must be in an original container with a prescription label. Please note that most pharmacies will place a label on the inhaler device upon request.

### **Dyslexia and Related Disorders**

From time to time, students may be screened and treated for dyslexia and other related disorders in accordance with programs, rules and standards approved by the State of Texas. Parents will be notified should the School determine a need to identify or assist a student diagnosed with dyslexia or related disorder.

### **Vision and Hearing Screening**

All children enrolled in Texas schools must be screened for possible vision and hearing problems, in accordance with regulations issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Students shall be screened for vision and hearing problems annually at any time during the year prior to May 31.

Screening records for individual students may be inspected by the Texas Department of State Health Services or a local health department, and may be transferred to another school without parental consent.

### **Exemption**

A student is exempt from screening requirements if screening conflicts with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination of which the individual is an adherent or a member. To qualify for the exemption, the individual or, if the individual is a minor, the minor's parent, managing conservator, or guardian, must submit to the Principal on or before the day of admission an affidavit stating the objections to screening.

### **Physical Fitness Assessment**

According to requirements under state law, TOTMA will annually assess the physical fitness of students, except those for whom assessment is inappropriate as a result of disability or other condition identified in law.

### **Harassment Prohibited**

**Sexual Harassment:** In compliance with the requirements of Title IX, TOTMA does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs or activities. TOTMA does not tolerate sexual harassment of a student by employees or other students. Romantic relationships between students and school employees are prohibited, even if consensual.

Sexual harassment includes all unwanted and uninvited sexual attention, as well as the creation of an intimidating, hostile or offensive school or work environment. Harassment can include, but is not limited to:

- Sexually suggestive looks or gestures;
- Sexual jokes, pictures or teasing;
- Pressure for dates or sex;
- Sexually demeaning comments;
- Deliberate touching, cornering or punching;
- Attempts to kiss or fondle; or
- Threats, demands or suggestions that favors will be granted in exchange for sex or tolerance of sexual advances.

Students who believe they are the subjects of sexual harassment by other students, teachers or other TOTMA employees should report the incident immediately to one of the following: a teacher, a counselor, the Principal, or the Title IX Coordinator. School employees who receive complaints of sexual harassment are to report the matter as soon as practicable to the Title IX Coordinator or other school administrators or staff with the authority to undertake investigations of sexual harassment complaints. Students are not required to report the harassment to the alleged harasser. Complaints against the Title IX Coordinator may be made directly to the School Director or the Board of Directors. Parents of students will be notified of such complaints.

TOTMA's current Title IX Coordinator is:

**Name: Jeri Green**

**Office Address: 501 Oakland Blvd, Fort Worth, TX 76103**

### **Office Telephone Number: 817-496-3003**

After receiving a complaint of sexual harassment, TOTMA may, but need not require the student to prepare a written report. Oral complaints will be reduced to written form. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Title IX Coordinator or other authorized school official shall promptly authorize and undertake an investigation. When appropriate, TOTMA may take interim action to avoid additional opportunities for harassment. The investigation may consist of personal interviews with the person making the report, the person against whom the report is filed, and any others with knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the allegations. The investigation may include analysis of documents or other materials related to the allegations.

The investigator will prepare a written report of the investigation. The report shall be filed with the Title IX Coordinator or other school official overseeing the investigation. If the results of the investigation establish that prohibited harassment occurred, TOTMA shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the harassment and prevent its recurrence. TOTMA may take disciplinary action based on the results of an investigation, even if TOTMA concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of harassment prohibited by law or policy.

Appeals from the administrative decision resulting from the investigation are made first to the Assistant Director unless it is the decision of the Assistant Director that is being appealed, in which case the appeal is made to the Board of Directors. All appeals shall be in writing, filed within ten days of notice of the decision being appealed, and shall contain the date and details of the incident, the identity of the alleged perpetrator and any witnesses, the reasons for appealing the prior decision, and the relief requested.

**Harassment on the Basis of Race, Color, Religion, National Origin, or Disability:** Students must not engage in harassing behavior directed toward another student.

Students are expected to treat other students and school staff with courtesy and respect, to avoid any behaviors known to be offensive, and to stop these behaviors when asked or told to stop.

The School encourages parental and student support in its efforts to address and prevent harassment in any form in schools. Students and/or parents are encouraged to discuss their questions or concerns about the expectations in this area with a teacher or with the Principal.

A student who believes he or she has been harassed by another student or by school staff is encouraged to report in writing the incident to the Principal. The allegations will be investigated and addressed. A substantiated complaint against a student will result in appropriate disciplinary action, according to the nature of the offense and the Code.

The student or a parent may appeal the decision of the Principal in accordance with the School grievance procedure. See "Parent and Student Complaints and Concerns," page 52.

### **Child Abuse Reporting and Investigations**

TOTMA provides child abuse anti-victimization programs and cooperates with official child abuse investigators as required by law. The School provides training to its teachers and students in preventing and addressing incidents of sexual abuse of children, including knowledge of likely warning signs indicating

that a child may be a victim of sexual abuse. Assistance, interventions and counseling options are also available.

TOTMA may not interfere with an investigation of a report of child abuse or neglect conducted by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. The School shall permit the investigator to conduct the required interview with the student at any reasonable time at school. TOTMA may not require the investigator to permit school staff to be present at an interview conducted at school.

Investigations at school may be conducted by authorized law enforcement or state agencies without prior notification or consent of the student's parent, if necessary.

## **Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse of Students**

### **What is Sexual Abuse of a Child?**

The Texas Family Code defines "sexual abuse" as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as, in certain circumstances, failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child.

### **Reporting Obligation**

Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility, under state law, for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services ("DFPS"). Reports may be made by contacting one of the following:

- Texas Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400 or, in non-emergency situations only, <http://www.txabusehotline.org>.
- Fort Worth Police Dept. Eastside Division – 5650 E. Lancaster Ave. Fort Worth TX 76112 817-392-4800
- Call 911 for emergency situations.

TOTMA has established the following Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse of Children (the Plan). The Plan may be accessed at: [www.TOTMA.org](http://www.TOTMA.org) and copies of the plan are also available at the main office.

### **Methods for Increasing Awareness Regarding Sexual Abuse of Children**

**For Teachers:** TOTMA annually trains teachers in all content areas addressed in the Plan. Training will include contents of the adopted board policy and Compliance Training through Region 10. (Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting) and is provided by campus staff, administrative staff, or outside agencies as determined by the campus administration.

**For Students:** School counseling staff will address issues to increase awareness regarding sexual abuse of children and anti-victimization programs with age appropriate conversation and materials no less than once per school year. Sexual abuse awareness will be discussed in classroom group settings.

**For Parents:** Parents must be aware of warning signs indicating that their child may have been or is being sexually abused. A child who has experienced sexual abuse should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult. Be aware as a parent or other trusted adult that evidence of sexual abuse may be more indirect than disclosures or signs of physical abuse. It is important to remain calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing in coming to you.

The fact that the abuser is a parent or other family member does not remove your obligation to protect the child. Parents who permit their child to remain in a situation where he or she may be injured or abused may also be subject to prosecution for child abuse. And, if you are frightened for your own safety or that of your child, you should call 911 or 1-800-252-5400.

Also remember that parents are legally responsible for the care of their children and must provide their children with safe and adequate food, clothing, shelter, protection, medical care and supervision, or arrange for someone else to provide these things. Failure to do so may be considered neglect.

The Principal or campus counselor will provide information regarding counseling options available in your area for you and your child if your child is a victim of sexual abuse. DFPS also provides early abuse intervention through counseling programs. The Tarrant County location may be contacted at 817-563-3800. Services available in your county can be accessed at the following web address:  
[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/prevention\\_and\\_early\\_intervention/programs\\_available\\_in\\_your\\_county/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/prevention_and_early_intervention/programs_available_in_your_county/default.asp).

These websites are also helpful:

- Texas Education Agency – Prevention of Child Abuse Overview:  
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2820>
- Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs:  
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/programs/types/sexualabuse.cfm>
- Promoting Healthy Families in Your Neighborhood:  
[http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/res\\_packet\\_2008/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/res_packet_2008/)
- Signs of Child Abuse:  
[http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child\\_abuse.html](http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child_abuse.html)
- DFPS – How to Stop Child Abuse; Texas Statutes  
[http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child\\_abuse.html](http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/commonproblems/child_abuse.html)
- DFPS – How to Report Child Abuse or Neglect  
[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact\\_us/report\\_abuse.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact_us/report_abuse.asp)
- Texas Attorney General – What Can We Do About Child Abuse?  
[https://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG\\_Publications/txts/child\\_abuse.shtml](https://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG_Publications/txts/child_abuse.shtml)
- Prevent Child Abuse.org – Texas Chapter  
<http://www.preventchildabuse.org/chapters/statecontact.cfm?stateabbrev=tx>
- Texas Council on Family Violence – Abuse Prevention Links  
<http://www.tcfv.org/>

## **Likely Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse**

Psychological and behavioral signs of possible sexual abuse may include:

- Nightmares, sleep problems, extreme fears without an obvious explanation.
- Sudden or unexplained personality changes; becoming withdrawn, angry, moody, clingy, “checking out” or showing significant changes in eating habits.
- Depression or irritability.
- An older child behaving like a young child, for example, bedwetting or thumb-sucking.
- Developing fear of certain places or resisting being alone with an adult or young person for unknown reasons.
- Resistance to routine bathing, toileting, or removing clothes, even in appropriate situations.
- Play, writing, drawings, or dreams of sexual or frightening images.
- Refusal to talk about a secret he or she has with an adult or older child.
- Leaving clues that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues.
- Using new or adult words for body parts.
- Engaging in adult-like sexual activities with toys, objects or other children.
- Developing special relationships with older friends that may include unexplained money, gifts, or privileges.
- Intentionally harming himself or herself, for example, drug/alcohol use, cutting, burring, running away, and sexual promiscuity.
- Thinking of self or body as repulsive, dirty, or bad.
- Becoming increasingly secretive about Internet or telephone use.

Physical symptoms of possible sexual abuse include:

- Stomach aches or illness, often with no identifiable reason.
- Difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Stained or bloody underwear.
- Genital or rectal pain, itching, swelling, redness, or discharge.
- Bruises or other injuries in the genital or rectal area.
- Unexplained soreness, pain or bruises around mouth, sexually-transmitted disease, or pregnancy.

Any one sign does not necessarily mean that a child has been sexually abused, but the presence of several signs is the time you should begin asking questions and seeking help. Signs often first emerge at other times of stress, such as during a divorce, death of a family member or pet, problems at school or with friends, or other traumatic or anxiety-inducing events.

## **Actions That A Child Who Is A Victim of Sexual Abuse Should Take**

During student awareness sessions concerning sexual abuse issues, students will be encouraged to tell a trusted adult in a private and confidential conversation if they have been a victim of sexual abuse or have been in situations which make them feel uncomfortable in any way. School employees are trained to take appropriate actions to help the child obtain assistance and to follow proper reporting procedures. Older students will also be provided with local crisis hotline numbers to obtain assistance. (continued on next pg.)



### Available Counseling Options

County	Program	Service Provider	Service Provider Phone
TARRANT	<a href="#">Community Youth Development</a>	TARRANT COUNTY	817-740-4370
TARRANT	<a href="#">Family Strengthening</a>	ARROW CHILD AND FAMILY MINISTRIES	281-210-1500
TARRANT	<a href="#">Services to At-Risk Youth</a>	ACH CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES (All Church Home for Children)	817-335-4673
TARRANT	<a href="#">Statewide Youth Services Network (SYSN)</a>	BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF NORTH TEXAS	972-573-2335
TARRANT	<a href="#">Statewide Youth Services Network (SYSN)</a>	TEXAS ALLIANCE OF BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS	512-858-7688
TARRANT	<a href="#">Tertiary Prevention Services</a>	CATHOLIC CHARITIES DIOCESE OF FT WORTH	817-413-3907
TARRANT	<a href="#">Texas Families: Together and Safe</a>	CATHOLIC CHARITIES DIOCESE OF FT WORTH	817-413-3907

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/prevention\\_and\\_early\\_intervention/programs\\_available\\_in\\_your\\_county/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/prevention_and_early_intervention/programs_available_in_your_county/default.asp)].

## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

The School is committed to creating a safe and caring place for all students. All members of the TOTMA family will treat each other with respect; bullying of any form will not be tolerated.

Bullying is defined as written, verbal, or physical conduct that, in the judgment of the Principal, is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for the student and is harmful to a student or a student's property, or when a student with more social and/or physical power deliberately dominates and harasses another who has less power. A student found to have engaged in, encouraged, aided, assisted in, or had knowledge of and failed to report a hazing or bullying incident will be subject to discipline.

### **FORMS OF BULLYING INCLUDE:**

#### Physical:

- Physical bullying involves harmful actions against another person's body.
- Examples: kicking, pushing, biting, pinching, tripping, pulling hair, any form of violence or intimidation.
- Physical bullying also involves damaging or stealing another person's property.

#### Verbal

- Verbal bullying involves speaking to a person or about a person in an unkind or hurtful way.
- Examples: sarcasm, teasing, put-downs, name-calling, phone calls, text messaging and spreading rumors or hurtful gossip.

#### Emotional

- Emotional bullying involves behaviors that upset, exclude, or embarrass a person.
- Examples: nasty notes, saying mean things using technology (e.g., cyber bullying using emails, instant messaging, chat rooms, text messaging) intentional exclusion from games or activities, tormenting, threatening, humiliation or social embarrassment.

#### Sexual

- Sexual bullying singles out a person because of gender and demonstrates unwarranted or unwelcome sexual behavior.
- Examples: sexual comments, abusive comments, unwanted physical contact.

#### Racial

- Racial bullying involves rejection or isolation of a person because of ethnicity.
- Examples: gestures, racial slurs or taunts, name-calling, making fun of customs/skin color/accent/food choices.

### **Who is involved in bullying?**

Bully - one or more students who intentionally intimidate or harm another student.

- *A bully has power or social support. The harm caused by the bully can be physically or emotionally or both.*

Victim - the student who is being bullied.

- *The victim has less power or social support and often blames him-self or her-self for the abuse.*

Bystander - one or more students who stand on the sidelines and witness acts of bullying and might actively provide encouragement and support the bully.

- *Bystanders might not intervene or seek help because they fear for their safety; they think they will lose friends; they might become a bully's target; or they could be labeled a tattletale. It is important that parents talk to their children about the choices available to their child in that situation.*

### **TOTMA staff will do the following things to prevent bullying and help children feel safe at school:**

- Closely supervise students in all areas of the School and playground
- Watch for signs of bullying and stop it when it happens
- Refer Students to Peer Mediation or School Counseling (Counseling or Horticulture Therapy)
- Respond quickly and sensitively immediately contacting the parents of both parties
- Take bullying reports from family very seriously by scheduling a documented conference
- Investigate all reported bullying incidents, documenting the reports and taking appropriate steps to solve the concern.
- Assign consequences for bullying based on the School discipline code
- Provide immediate consequences for retaliation against students who report bullying. Contact parents and administration immediately.

### **TOTMA students will do the following things to prevent bullying:**

- TOTMA Students are expected to stand up for INTEGRITY at all times.
- Treat each other respectfully
- Refuse to bully others
- Refuse to let others be bullied
- Refuse to watch, laugh, or join in when someone is being bullied
- Try to include everyone in play, especially those who are often left out
- Report bullying to an adult
- Follow the Student Code of Conduct (Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Resourceful)

## **Law Enforcement Agencies**

The following procedures shall be followed when law enforcement officers and other lawful authorities want to question or interview a student at the School:

- The School shall verify and record the identity of the official and request an explanation of the need to question or interview the student at school.
- The School shall make reasonable efforts to notify the student's parent.
- Unless prohibited by law or when the student has been arrested or taken into police custody, a school staff member shall be present during the questioning or interview.

When the investigation involves allegations of child abuse, special rules apply. See "Child Abuse Reporting and Investigations," page 26.

The School shall permit a student to be taken into official custody:

- Pursuant to an order of the juvenile court;
- Pursuant to the laws of arrest;
- By a law enforcement officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has engaged in conduct that violates a penal law, delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision, or conduct that violates a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court;
- By a probation officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has violated a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court;
- Pursuant to a properly issued directive to apprehend; or
- By an authorized representative of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, a law enforcement officer, or a juvenile probation officer, without a court order, under the conditions set out in Texas Family Code section 262.104 relating to the student's physical health or safety.

## **Interrogations and Searches**

Students shall not keep or maintain any article or material prohibited by School policy or law while on School property or while attending school-related activities. In the interest of promoting student safety and attempting to ensure that TOTMA is a safe and drug-free environment, school officials may from time to time conduct searches. Such searches are conducted without a warrant and as permitted by law.

Administrators, teachers and other professional personnel may question a student regarding the student's own conduct or the conduct of other students. In the context of school discipline, students have no claim to the right not to incriminate themselves.

Students shall be free from unreasonable searches and seizures by school officials. School officials may search a student's outer clothing, pockets, or property by establishing reasonable cause or securing the student's voluntary consent. Express or implied coercion – such as threatening to contact parents or police – invalidates apparent consent.

A search is reasonable if (1) the school official has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will uncover evidence of a rule violation or a criminal violation and (2) the scope of the search is reasonably related to the circumstances justifying the search (*i.e.*, the measures adopted are reasonably related to the

objectives of the search and are not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction).

### **Desk and Locker Searches**

Students should have no expectation of privacy in the contents of their lockers, desks or other School property. Lockers and desks assigned to students remain at all times under the control and jurisdiction of TOTMA. TOTMA will make periodic inspections of lockers and desks at any time, with or without notice or student consent. School officials will remove any item that violates School policy or that may potentially be dangerous.

Students have full responsibility for the security of their lockers and desks, and shall be held responsible for any prohibited items found during a search. The student's parent shall be notified if any prohibited articles or materials are found in a student's locker or desk, or on the student's person, as a result of a search conducted in accordance with this policy.

### **Physical Restraint**

School employees, volunteers or independent contractors are authorized to use restraint in the event of an emergency and subject to the following limitations:

- Restraint shall be limited to the use of such reasonable force as is necessary to address the emergency.
- Restraint shall be discontinued at the point at which the emergency no longer exists.
- Restraint shall be implemented in such a way as to protect the health and safety of the student and others.
- Restraint shall not deprive the student of basic human necessities.

At no time, however, may a student be placed in seclusion.

A student with a disability may not be confined in a locked, box, locked closet, or other specially designated locked space as either a discipline management practice or a behavior management technique.

## Academics and Grading

### Promotion Requirements

A student may be promoted on the basis of academic achievement and/or demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter of the course or grade level. To earn credit in a course, a student must receive a grade of at least 70 and successfully complete all assigned coursework. In addition, students in certain grade levels will be required to pass state-mandated assessment tests, with limited exceptions.

### Progress Reports and Report Cards

Students will be issued progress reports or report cards approximately once every three weeks. Progress reports are designed to provide parents with information on how their child is performing in each subject. These reports also provide an opportunity for parents to schedule appointments with teachers to discuss any issues.

Report cards are distributed every six weeks and are part of each student's permanent record. Report cards will be distributed during the first week after the six-week reporting period has ended.

Grading scales are as follows:

- A = 90% – 100%
- B = 80% – 89%
- C = 70% – 79%
- F = 69% and below

### Homework

Homework is an essential part of each student's successful education. Homework assignments help to develop many valuable skills, including good study habits, time management, responsibility, and perseverance. Teachers will assign homework that fosters individual learning and growth and that is appropriate for the subject area. Homework is part of all students' regular evaluations.

Parents must encourage their children to complete homework assignments. Each student is responsible for completing and turning in homework on time, according to the following schedule:

Grade Level	Homework Sent Home	Due Back to Teacher	Consequences for Not Turning In Homework		
			1st Day	2nd Day	3rd Day
Pre-K	Monday	Thursday		Note Home	Phone call
Kindergarten thru 1 <sup>st</sup> grade	Monday	Thursday		Note Home	Phone call and 15 minutes after school to complete the assignment
2 <sup>nd</sup> thru 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Monday – Thursday	Following Day	Time off a fun activity to complete the assignment	10 pts. off grade	Detention to complete the assignment

**Make up for homework: one day per excused absence only.**

## Testing and State Assessments

Each student should receive a minimum of two tests per month covering classroom work, in addition to routine testing and other measures of achievement. The STAAR program at grades 3–8 will assess the same subjects and grades that were formally assessed on TAKS in accordance with the schedules provided by the Texas Education Agency.

Students who do not pass any portion of the STAAR test will be required to attend summer school. Those students who ignore this policy will repeat the grade level where they originally failed the STAAR test.

### Alternative Assessment

Students with disabilities who are receiving special education services and who are exempt from the STAAR test in one or more subject areas will participate in either the STAAR Modified, or the STAAR Alternate in the applicable subject(s).

### Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System

The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (“TELPAS”) is a system of statewide assessments administered to all Limited English Proficient (“LEP”) students in grades Kindergarten through twelve. The TELPAS measures English ability based on the stages of language development of second language learners. These results will further the understanding of the education needs of LEP students by providing a state-level measure of both their current academic English levels and their annual progress in English.

## Special Needs Students

TOTMA has the responsibility of identifying, locating, and evaluating individuals with disabilities who are 5–21 years of age and who fall within the School’s jurisdiction. No qualified student with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subject to discrimination under any school service, program, or activity.

Special education services are specifically designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. Each student who receives special education services has an Individual Education Plan (“IEP”) which is developed by the student’s Admission, Review, and Dismissal (“ARD”) Committee. The ARD Committee considers the student’s disability and determines appropriate accommodations, supplementary aids, and/or services that are necessary for the student to participate in the general curriculum.

All special education services are provided in the least restrictive environment which may be special education settings, general education settings, or a combination of both. All students receiving special education services are educated to the maximum extent appropriate with their non-disabled peers as well as participating in all school activities on the same basis as students who are not disabled.

The *Notice of Procedural Safeguards – Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities*, can be obtained from the Special Education Director or at the Texas Education Agency Special Education Website: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/>.

### **Options and Requirements for Providing Assistance to Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need or May Need Special Education Services**

If a child is experiencing learning difficulties, a parent may contact the Principal to learn about the School’s overall general education referral or screening system for support services. This system may link students to a variety of support options, including potential referral for a special education evaluation. Students having difficulty in a regular classroom must be considered for, and provided service from, all tutorial, compensatory, and other support services prior to a referral for special education services.

A parent is entitled to request an evaluation for special education services. Within a reasonable amount of time, the School must decide if the evaluation is needed. If the School determines the evaluation is needed, the parent will be notified and asked to provide written consent for the evaluation. The School must complete the evaluation and the report within 60 calendar days of the date it receives the written consent. The School must meet with the parent to explain the findings of the evaluation and must give a copy of the report to the parent.

If the School determines that an evaluation for special education services is not appropriate, the School will provide the parent with a written notice that explains why the child will not be evaluated. This written notice will include a statement that informs parents of their rights if they disagree with the School. Additionally, the parent will be provided a copy of the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards – Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities*.

The *Notice of Procedural Safeguards – Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities* may also be obtained from the school office or at the Texas Education Agency Special Education website: [www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed).

All special education services are provided in the least restrictive environment, which may be special education settings, general education settings, or a combination of both. All students receiving special education services are educated to the maximum extent possible with their non-disabled peers as well as participating in all school activities on the same basis as students who are not disabled.



## **Tutoring**

Students are encouraged and may be required to see teachers for tutoring schedules. Tutoring services are also available for students receiving special education services. Any contact with teachers concerning the tutoring or student's progress must be made by the parent. The official tutoring day at TOTMA is Tuesdays, other days as referred by the teacher.

Private tutoring is the responsibility of the parent. TOTMA teachers are not permitted to privately tutor their students for pay.

## Student Code of Conduct

*“Let us always remember that inner discipline is something already present. Our task is to show the way to discipline. Discipline is born when the child concentrates his attention on some object that attracts him . . . . When students are placed in surroundings, which permit them to evolve an orderly activity, they come to have this new aspect . . . that we call an order of inner discipline. Discipline in outward acts is the expression of an inner discipline that has crystallized around order.”*

Maria Montessori

A major goal of the Montessori experience is to encourage self-discipline. From their first day in the classroom, students are encouraged to make choices based upon their interests and knowledge of available activities, and are also given the security of clear guidelines for acceptable behavior – guidelines that are positively and consistently reinforced.

As a child’s knowledge increases, so does his or her opportunity for choice. Therefore, a child’s freedom of activity continues to expand, tempered by the willingness to be responsible for his or her own actions. It is extremely important that adults reserve judgment concerning a child’s actions, observing carefully to determine the impetus or motivation for the behavior. Only then can they hope to offer activity or intervention, which will be consistent with the individual interest or need. In most situations, redirection or an introduction to a new activity will allow the child to focus attention and thereby restore “disciplined” behavior.

The positive functioning of each classroom rests upon respect for each individual and respect for the environment. This translates into several basic rules, which secure the life of the School:

- No adult or child may physically or verbally abuse another person
- Each person is responsible for caring for the environment and should not damage, misuse, or neglect it
- An individual does not disturb the work of another
- Individual rights must also be balanced with the needs of the community

Classroom procedures and rules are kept to a minimum and always relate to these basic ground rules. They are clearly demonstrated and discussed frequently, recognizing that students need time to practice and internalize procedures.

To internalize control, students must experience the natural or logical consequences of their behavior within the practical limitations of a given situation. A natural consequence follows immediately upon a chosen action; for example, a child who runs across the room and steps on another child’s work on a rug. The logical consequence of that scenario is:

- Both students will be encouraged to move to the “Peace Table” and discuss the problem.
- If the problem is not resolved, the teacher will then intervene.

When parents, teachers, and students work together toward a common goal, it helps students have a positive experience at TOTMA. Although discipline is not a formal subject, it is one of the most important lessons learned. Discipline underlies the entire educational process and is the key to good citizenship and proper consideration of others. Our students deserve the most positive educational climate possible for their academic growth.

To assist TOTMA in its approach to student discipline, the School has implemented this Student Code of Conduct (“the Code”). Our Code contains expectations that are important for maintaining a trusting, safe, and positive environment where all students can learn. All students and parents are responsible for learning the School’s behavioral expectations. Positive techniques will be used in the classroom and throughout the School to encourage appropriate behavior. In addition, each teacher has a classroom management system plan to address discipline in the classroom.

**Notice to Parents:** Students who participate in student activities are expected to follow the Code and are subject to the forms of discipline contained herein.

## **“Quiet Coyote” Symbol**



TOTMA's school-wide symbol of behavioral expectation is referred to as the **“Quiet Coyote.”** This symbol is posted throughout our classrooms and building, and is critical during times of crisis. The School expects students to do the following when the “Quiet Coyote” symbol is made:

- Be quiet/voices off
- Stop what you are doing and place all eyes on the teacher or adult
- Hands behind your back
- Listen for instructions

## **Discipline**

Discipline is a process that uses teaching, modeling, and other appropriate strategies to maintain the behaviors necessary to ensure a *safe, orderly, and productive* learning environment by changing unacceptable behavior to acceptable behavior.

***Discipline is part of the daily routine, not a disruption of the daily routine. Discipline will be enforced. Teaching and learning of the intended curriculum for all students is the School's highest priority; therefore, the behavior of one student . . .***

- Will not be allowed to interfere with the learning opportunities of another student.
- Will not be allowed to interfere with the teachers' responsibility to teach all students.
- Will not excuse the misbehaving student from successfully completing learning objectives.

## **Purpose of School-Wide Discipline Plan**

- Enforce safety and integrity
- Teach students to exercise self-control
- Reinforce responsibility for actions, choices and responses
- Encourage and celebrate students when they make good choices
- Empower students to develop Integrity, Respect, Compassion, Accountability, Effort, and Teamwork.
- Provide consistent and equitable standards of celebrations and consequences
- Sustain the right to a quality, safe, and non-disruptive school environment for all students
- Build relationships with parents to help the School enforce knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate behavior
- Respect the WILL of students to Peer Mediate and solve concerns/problems.
- Respect and empower students to set the exemplary expectations at TOTMA

## **Adult-Student Interactions**

Each member of the TOTMA community must fulfill certain responsibilities if a positive learning environment is to be achieved. All adults at TOTMA will:

- Model positive and appropriate behavior expected of all students.
- Speak to students in a respectful manner and treat students with dignity.
- Provide a clear set of expectations and consequences at the beginning of the school year.
- Model appropriate work ethic, behavior, language, and grammar.
- Teach students how to become responsible citizens on and off campus.
- Follow the process of the School discipline policy.
- Focus on building an environment that is safe and challenging for each student.
- Respect each child's ability and efforts to learn.

In order for students to take advantage of all available learning opportunities and to be productive members of the campus community, each student is expected to:

- Demonstrate courtesy – even when others do not.
- Follow directions immediately and without question.
- Behave in a responsible manner and always exercise self-discipline.

- Attend all classes, regularly and on time.
- Prepare for class each day and bring appropriate materials and assignments to class.
- Meet the TOTMA standards of grooming and student dress. All students not dressed according to the TOTMA Dress Code (“Dress Code,” page 16) will be sent home immediately, or parents can bring a change of clothes. If a student consistently disobeys the TOTMA Dress Code, he or she will serve in-house suspension.
- Obey all campus and classroom rules.
- Respect the rights and privileges of other students, parents, teachers, and staff.
- Respect the property of others.
- Cooperate with or assist school staff in maintaining safety, order, and discipline.
- Avoid violations of the Code.
- Respect all teachers and staff members at all times. Back-talk, rolling of the eyes, cursing, discriminatory language, and disruptive behavior **will not be tolerated**.

## **General Rules and Regulations**

- Students will comply with the regulations of TOTMA and respect the authority of all adults on campus.
- Students will respect all physical properties of the School, including the proper care of buildings, furniture, books and equipment.
- Students will address all school personnel in a respectful manner.
- Students will not engage in activities which endanger their health or the safety of others.
- Hats will only be worn outdoors during selective days.
- Students will not bring non-educational items to school (i.e. toys, mp3 players, jewelry, cards, etc.) All items brought to school are the responsibility of the student. The School is not responsible for lost, broken or stolen items. Non-compliant items will be taken away and returned only to the parents.
- **For safety reasons, students will not be allowed in the building or on campus before 7:25 a.m. and are to remain in the gym or dining hall until 7:45 a.m.**
- Hallways and restrooms are quiet zones. Students will not be allowed to loiter in the hallways or restrooms at any time and will walk quietly in the hallways at all times.
- Students will help keep the campus clean at all times.

### Dining Hall Rules:

Students are expected to behave appropriately and use good manners when eating in the dining hall.

- Students will enter and leave the cafeteria in an orderly manner
- Students will whisper quietly with friends
- School teams will clean their area before being dismissed from the dining hall
- Food and drinks will only be consumed during the lunch period and only in the designated spots in the dining hall or outdoor picnic area
- Students will raise their hands if they need help.

### School Playground Rules:

All students will:

- Treat all adults with respect by following directions the first time they are given.
- Use all equipment in an appropriate and safe manner.
- Seek out a Peer Mediator to help solve disagreements.

- Stop playing when the teacher signals and line up quickly with the class.
- Not be allowed to return to the classroom unless accompanied by an adult or with a buddy.
- Use four square balls on the pavement. All other balls must be played with in the grass area.
- Will not play behind the trees, between the buildings, and out of view.
- Will keep hands, feet and objects to themselves. ( Respect personal space)

The following conduct is prohibited:

Students **will not**:

- Climb fences
- Throw any objects other than balls
- Kick balls against fences, buildings, or windows
- Play ball near the buildings or windows
- Play in between the buildings
- Fight, including play fighting
- Engage in name calling, demeaning language or pranks
- Play in drinking fountains and restrooms
- Write or draw on school property
- Jump from the top platforms of playground structures
- Climb on the outside of the slides or go down the slides in an unsafe manner

## **Behavior Model and Consequences/Referral Process**

1. Doing Great
  - a. The student is meeting expected behaviors and should continue these behaviors.
2. Warning
  - a. The student is given the opportunity to comply with the rule.
3. Stop and Think (in the classroom)
  - a. The student is asked to “Stop and Think” within the designated area of the classroom to reflect upon the infraction. Students will document their behavior and be given an opportunity to self-correct the inappropriate behavior. Parents are expected to sign the behavior documentation form. Students will return the signed form to school the next day, or be subject to in-house detention.
4. Stop and Go
  - a. The student will be referred to Peer Mediation. If the student refuses to attend the mediation meeting to solve the concern, the School will make a decision. If a solution is not reached during mediation, the School will make a final decision.
5. Stop and Consider
  - a. First Offense – Parents will be notified of the School’s decision to send the student to in-house school counseling to resolve the concern. A parent conference is required after a counseling session. If the parent does not attend the conference, the student will be subject to in-house suspension until the parent conferences with the School.
  - b. Second Offense – Parents will be notified of the School’s decision to send the student to in-house suspension. A parent conference is required after an in-house suspension. If the

parent does not attend the conference, the student will be subject to in-house suspension until the parent conferences with the School.

- c. Third Offense – The student will be suspended for a number of days decided by TOTMA. The parent and the student will conference with the School before returning to class. If the parent does not attend the conference, the student will be subject to in-house suspension until the parent and student conference with the School.

**Notice to Parents:** Depending on the severity of student misconduct, a disciplinary decision may be made without following each of the steps outlined above.

## Classroom Discipline

Phase	1st Offense	2nd Offense	3rd Offense
One	Warning	Classroom Consequence and Parent Contact	Suspension and conference with parents and guardians
Two	Sign the book	Referred for Peer Mediation and Parent Contact	
Three	Parent Contact	In-House Counseling Support, implementation of a behavior plan and school conference with parents or guardians	
Four	Classroom Consequence	In-House Suspension and conference with parents or guardians	

\* ISS designs discipline plan.

## Jurisdiction

TOTMA may discipline a student:

- For any violation of the Code committed while the student is
  - on school property;
  - within 300 feet of school property;
  - attending any school-related activity, so long as the student is under the direction of a school employee;
  - on the school property of another Texas school district;
- Attending another district’s school-sponsored or school-related activity;
- When a felony is committed, as provided by Texas Education Code sections 37.006 and 37.0081.

**Notice to Parents:** In addition to disciplinary consequences, misdemeanor and felony offenses committed on campus will be reported for handling by an appropriate law enforcement agency.



## **Code of Conduct Violations**

The following offenses are subject to suspension of three days or more and/or expulsion, depending on the circumstances of the student's conduct:

**Abuse:** Actions or threats of actions which constitute verbal or physical abuse of any employee or volunteer of the School by a student or any other individual will not be tolerated. Appropriate measures necessary to correct these situations shall be taken by the School, including expulsion.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty includes cheating or copying the work of another student, plagiarism, and unauthorized communication between students during an examination. The determination that a student has engaged in academic dishonesty shall be based on the judgment of the classroom teacher or other supervising professional employee, taking into consideration written materials, observation, or information from students. Students found to have engaged in academic dishonesty shall be subject to grade penalties on assignments or tests and disciplinary penalties in accordance with the Code.

**Alcoholic Beverages:** Any student found to have sold, given, delivered, been in possession of, or been under the influence of any alcoholic beverage while in school or while a participant in or spectator of a school-sponsored event, shall be subject to disciplinary penalties in accordance with the Code. An "alcoholic beverage" means any beverage containing alcohol, including wine or beer. A student is considered "in possession" if he or she has contact with the alcohol regardless of the amount of time it is in the student's possession. If a student becomes in possession of alcohol, he or she needs to immediately inform an adult on campus. The smell of alcohol detectable on one's breath is sufficient evidence to indicate being "under the influence."

**Bomb Threats:** Any threat of this type will not be tolerated. A student making a bomb threat will be subject to expulsion and dealt with to the full extent of the law.

**Bullying:** Texas law prohibits students from engaging in, encouraging, aiding, or assisting in bullying. A student found to have engaged in, encouraged, aided, assisted in, or had knowledge of and failed to report a bullying incident will be subject to discipline. See "Anti-Bullying Policy," page 29.

**Conduct While Riding in School Vehicles:** The Principal shall take steps to maintain acceptable student conduct while riding a school vehicle. Students who fail to follow the behavioral standards described in this Handbook may be denied the privilege of school transportation. See "School-Sponsored Trips, page 16. Parental involvement will be sought before a student is excluded from riding a school vehicle, except in situations involving a flagrant violation. Flagrant violations include fighting, gross insubordination, and other acts that may cause a safety hazard. It should be understood by all that the driver has the responsibility for maintaining order in his or her school vehicle. It is the duty of the Principal – not the driver – to exclude a student from riding a school vehicle. However, the driver is not prohibited from exercising reasonable judgment in order to protect other passengers from bodily harm.

**Death Threats:** Threats to an individual of this nature, whether written or oral, will not be tolerated or ignored and may result expulsion.

**Electronic Devices:** Students are not permitted to possess electronic devices (e.g., electronic games, iPod and mp3 players, pagers, radios, cameras, etc.) at school, unless prior permission has been obtained from the Principal. Without such permission, teachers will collect the items and turn them in to the Principal's office. The Principal will determine whether to return items to students at the end of the day or to contact parents to pick up the items.

For safety purposes, the School permits students to possess cell phones; however, cell phones must remain turned off during the instructional day, including during all testing.

Sending, sharing, viewing, or possessing pictures, text messages, e-mails, or other material of a sexual nature in electronic or any other form on a cell phone or other electronic device is prohibited and dealt with to the full extent of the law.

**Electronic Equipment in the Classroom:** Students may only use audio visual or electronic equipment in the classroom with permission of the teacher. These items include but are not limited to audio or video taping equipment. The School is not responsible for the damage, loss, or theft of these items.

**Exposure:** Inappropriate exposure of body parts, even without any sexual intent, is a serious offense and will be subject to disciplinary action.

**Gambling:** Students are forbidden to gamble in a school building or on school property.

**Gang-Free Zones/Gang Activity:** Any student found to have engaged in organized criminal activity, gang-related, and other criminal acts will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Student behavior considered to be "gang related" will not be tolerated at school or at any school activity regardless of the location of the activity. This includes, but is not limited to: articles of clothing, hand signs, graffiti, and any other behaviors considered by the administration to interfere with the educational program of the School.

**Harmful Drugs:** The use of harmful drugs poses a serious threat to the physical, psychological, and emotional health of individuals, their families, and their communities. In recognition of this fact, any student found to have had a controlled substance, depressant, or stimulant substances, narcotics, marijuana, or dangerous drugs in his or her possession, or found to have been under the influence thereof while in school or while a participant in or spectator at a school-sponsored event, shall be subject to disciplinary penalties in accordance with the Code. A student is considered "in possession" if he or she has contact with the substances listed above regardless of the amount of time it is in the student's possession. If a student becomes in possession of one of these substances, he or she needs to immediately inform an adult on campus. Those students involved in selling or distributing a controlled substance, inhalant, or dangerous drug while in school or while a participant in or spectator at a school-sponsored event will be subject to disciplinary penalties in accordance with the Code. Other sanctions may include completion of a drug rehabilitation program or referral for prosecution.

The substances covered and prohibited include all those substances considered to be marijuana, dangerous drugs, narcotics, depressant, or stimulant substances, controlled substances and simulated controlled substances listed in the state and federal codes covering the possession, sale, and use of such controlled substances, drugs, and narcotics. The policy also covers and prohibits all forms and species of the plant substance known as marijuana as well as any abusable chemical substance used for inhalation such as glue, aerosol paint, thinners, etc.

A student may not keep in his or her possession any medication, even medication for which he or she has a prescription. Failure to comply may result in Level II discipline. The only exception to this policy is doctor-prescribed asthma medication. See "Student Medications," page 23.

**Inappropriate Sexual Conduct:** Inappropriate sexual conduct encompasses any inappropriate, indecent, or offensive act that implies or involves contact of a sexual nature.

**Insensitivity to Others:** Inappropriate verbal or physical behavior that is motivated due to race, ethnicity, culture, gender, or disabilities will not be tolerated.

**Telecommunications or Other Electronic Devices:** Students are prohibited from using a telecommunications device, including a cellular telephone or other electronic devices (unless otherwise issued by the School for the purpose of instruction), within a school building before or during school hours or on a school campus during school hours and devices are to remain off during the school day. Devices that are on and/or cause a disruption during the school day will be confiscated. The School will not be responsible for damage, loss, or theft of these items. Once a device has been taken up, the following procedure will be used to return the device:

- First Confiscation: The device can be picked up by the student or parent no earlier than the end of the school day. An administrative fee of \$5 will be charged before the device can be returned.
- Second Confiscation: The device can be picked up by the student or parent no earlier than the following school day. An administrative fee of \$10 will be charged before the device can be returned.
- Third Confiscation: The device can be picked up by the student or parent no earlier than the following Monday. An administrative fee of \$15 will be charged before the device can be returned.
- Fourth Confiscation: The device will be kept for 30 days. An administrative fee of \$15 will be charged before the device can be returned.
- Fifth Confiscation: The device will be kept until the end of the school year. An administrative fee of \$15 will be charged before the device can be returned.

Any student refusing to give the device to school staff shall be subject to disciplinary penalties in accordance with the Code.

The Principal shall have the discretion to determine the appropriate use of phones for students participating in extracurricular activities while on school property or while attending school sponsored or school-related activities on or off school property.

**Tobacco:** Matches, lighters, etc. are not permitted at school or at school-related functions. A student is considered "in possession" if he or she has contact with tobacco or tobacco products, regardless of the amount of time it is in the student's possession. If a student becomes in possession of tobacco or a tobacco product, he or she needs to immediately inform an adult on campus.

Smoking and using smokeless tobacco are not permitted in school buildings, vehicles, or on school property, 300 feet from school property, or at school-related or school-sanctioned events off school property.

**Weapons:** A student shall not possess, exhibit, use or threaten to exhibit or use any firearm, explosive weapons, knife, or materials that could be used as a weapon to inflict physical harm or damage to persons or property on school property or at any school-related function, whether on or off school property. A student is considered “in possession” if he or she has contact with a weapon regardless of the amount of time it is in the student’s possession. If a student becomes in possession of a weapon, he or she needs to immediately inform an adult on campus. Weapons include, but are not limited to:

- Firearm: any device designed, made, or adapted to expel a projectile through a barrel by using the energy generated by an explosion or burning substance or any device readily convertible to that use;
- Knife: blade or a hand instrument designed to cut or stab another by being thrown, a dagger, a bowie knife, a sword or a spear;
- Club: an instrument that is specifically designed, made, or adapted for the purpose of inflicting serious bodily injury or death by striking a person with the instrument;
- Explosive weapon;
- Firearm silencer;
- Knuckles (i.e. brass knuckles);
- Chemical dispensing device (such as mace or pepper spray);
- Zip gun;
- Any object used in a way that threatens to inflict bodily injury on another person;
- Firearm ammunition;
- Fireworks of any kind, smoke or stink bombs, or any other pyrotechnic device;
- Chains;
- Razors (including box cutters);
- Pellet gun;
- BB gun;
- Stun gun;
- Air gun; and
- Toys that imitate weapons (“look a-likes”).

## **Offenses and Consequences**

**Notice to Parents:** No TOTMA employee or agent shall cause corporal punishment to be inflicted upon a student to reform unacceptable conduct or as a consequence for unacceptable conduct.

### **Suspension Process (Suspensions Lasting Four–Five Days)**

In addition to the above list of Student Code of Conduct violations, the Principal has the authority to suspend a student for a period of up to three school days for any of the following additional reasons:

- The need to further investigate an incident,
- A recommendation to expel the student, or
- An emergency constituting endangerment to health or safety.

#### **Prerequisites to Suspension**

Prior to suspending a student, the Principal must attempt to hold an informal conference with the student to:

- Notify the student of the accusations against him or her,

- Allow the student to relate his or her version of the incident, and
- Determine whether the student's conduct warrants suspension.

### **Notification to Parents**

If the Principal determines the student's conduct warrants suspension during the school day, the Principal will make reasonable effort to notify the student's parents that the student has been suspended before the student is sent home. The Principal will notify a suspended student's parents of the period of suspension, the grounds for the suspension, and the time and place for an opportunity to confer with the Principal.

### **Credit during Suspension**

A student shall receive credit for work missed during the period of suspension if the student makes up work missed during the period of suspension within the same number of school days the student was absent on suspension.

### **Suspensions over Five Days and Expulsion**

The following offenses are subject to suspensions of five days or more or possible expulsion, depending on the circumstances of the student's conduct:

- All offenses listed under "Code of Conduct Violations," page 42.
- Four or more classroom offenses. See "Classroom Discipline," page 42.
- All mandatory and discretionary expulsion offenses listed in Chapter 37, Texas Education Code.
- Violations of the Student Acceptable Use Policy. See "Student Acceptable Use Policy," page 57.

### **Process for Suspensions Over Five Days and Expulsion**

#### **Notice**

When the Principal determines that a student's conduct warrants suspension for more than five days or expulsion, but prior to taking any such action, the Principal will provide the student's parent with written notice of:

- The reasons for the proposed disciplinary action; and
- The date and location for a hearing before the Principal, within five School days from the date of the decision to take disciplinary action.

The notice shall further state that, at the hearing, the student:

- May be present;
- Shall have an opportunity to present evidence;
- Shall be apprised and informed of the School's evidence;
- May be accompanied by his or her parent(s); and
- May be represented by an attorney.

#### **Hearing before Principal**

The School shall make a good faith effort to inform the student and the student's parent(s) of the time and place for the hearing, and the School shall hold the hearing regardless of whether the student, the student's parent(s) or another adult representing the student attends. The Principal shall audio record the hearing.

Immediately following the hearing, the Principal will notify the student and the student's parent(s) in writing of his or her decision. The decision shall specify:

- The length of the suspension or expulsion, if any;
- When the expulsion is not permanent, the procedures for re-admittance at the end of the expulsion period; and
- The right to appeal the Principal's decision to the Board of Directors or the Board's designee.

The notice shall also state that failure to timely request such a hearing constitutes a waiver of further rights in the matter.

In deciding whether to order expulsion, regardless of whether the action is mandatory or discretionary, the School will take into consideration:

- Self-defense;
- Intent or lack of intent at the time the student engaged in the conduct; and
- The student's disciplinary history.

### **Appeal to Board of Directors**

The student or his or her parents/guardians may appeal the Principal's decision to the Board of Directors by notifying the Principal in writing within seven calendar days of the date of receipt of the Principal's decision. The Board of Directors will review the audio or transcribed record from the hearing before the Principal at the next regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting, or at the discretion of the Board of Directors, at a specially called meeting. The Board of Directors will notify the student and his or her parents/guardians of its decision, in writing, within five calendar days of the hearing. The decision of the Board of Directors is final and may not be appealed.

Discipline consequences will not be deferred pending the outcome of an appeal to the Board of Directors.

### **No Credit Earned**

Except when required by law, students will not earn academic credit during a period of expulsion.

### **Emergency Placement and Expulsion**

If the Principal or designee reasonably believes a student's behavior is so unruly, disruptive, or abusive that it seriously interferes with a teacher's ability to communicate effectively with students in a class, with the ability of a student's classmates to learn, or with the operation of the School or a school-sponsored activity, the Principal or designee may order immediate removal of the student. Immediate suspension may be imposed by a Principal or designee if they reasonably believe such action is necessary to protect persons or property from eminent harm. At the time of such an emergency removal, the student will be given verbal notice of the reason for the action and appropriate hearings will be scheduled within a reasonable time after the emergency removal.

### **Placement of Students with Disabilities**

All disciplinary actions regarding students with disabilities shall be conducted in accordance with the most current federal and state laws.

### **Suspension/Expulsion Requirement**

A student with a disability shall not be excluded from his or her current placement pending appeal to the Board of Directors for more than ten days without ARD Committee action to determine appropriate services in the interim. Pending appeal to a special education hearing officer, a student with a disability shall remain in the present education setting, unless the School and parents agree otherwise.

### **Gun-Free Schools Act**

In accordance with the Gun-Free Schools Act, TOTMA shall expel, from the student's regular program for a period of one year, any student who is determined to have brought a firearm, as defined by federal law, to school. The Principal may modify the term of expulsion for a student or assess another comparable penalty that results in the student's expulsion from the regular school program on a case-by-case basis.

For the purposes of this law, "firearm" means:

1. Any weapon – including a starter gun – which will, or is designed to, or which may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive from the frame or receiver of any such weapon;
2. Any firearm muffler or firearm silencer;
3. Any destructive device. "Destructive device" means any explosive, incendiary or poison gas bomb, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than 1/4 ounce, mine, or device similar to any of the preceding described devices. It also means any type of weapon – other than a shotgun shell or a shotgun that is generally recognized as particularly suitable for sporting purposes – by whatever name known which will, or which may be readily converted to, expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or other propellant, and which has any barrel with a bore of more than 1/2 inch in diameter; and any combination of parts either designed or intended for use in converting any device into a destructive device as described, and from which a destructive device may be readily assembled.

# Parental Rights

## Surveys and Activities

Students will not be required to participate without parental consent in any survey, analysis, or evaluation – funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education – that concerns:

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student’s parent(s);
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student’s family;
- Sexual behavior or attitudes;
- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
- Critical appraisals of individuals with whom the student has a close family relationship;
- Relationships privileged under law, such as relationships with lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents; or
- Income, except when the information is required by law and will be used to determine the student’s eligibility to participate in a special program or to receive financial assistance under such a program.

Parents will be able to inspect the survey or other instrument and any instructional materials used in connection with such a survey, analysis, or evaluation.

## “Opting Out” of Surveys and Activities

Parents have a right to receive notice of and deny permission for their student’s participation in:

- Any survey concerning the private information listed above, regardless of funding;
- School activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information gathered from a student for the purpose of marketing or selling that information;
- Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening required as a condition of attendance administered and scheduled in advance and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student (exceptions are hearing, vision, or other physical exam or screening permitted or required by state law).

## Notification of Teacher Qualification

At the beginning of each school year, TOTMA will provide the parent of each student attending with information regarding the professional qualifications of the student’s classroom teachers. The School will also provide this information upon request from a parent. The notification will include, at a minimum:

- Whether the teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;



- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status for which state requirements have been waved;
- Undergraduate and graduate degree majors, graduate certifications, and the field of study of the certification or degree;
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

## **Parent Participation**

Opportunities for student growth are maximized when the home and the School share common goals and attitudes. Parent communication and involvement, therefore, is critical in order for TOTMA to create an environment that allows the full development of each student's unique potential. To further this process, TOTMA *requests that each family volunteer ten hours during the school year.*

Communication with parents is not a one-way street. The School understands it is a collaborative process. A working partnership with active involvement and frequent communication demonstrates our shared commitment to serve the needs of the child.

## **Parent Education**

The School has several Parent Education Meetings/Workshops for parents during the school year. Orientation is provided for all parents in April and September of every year. There are also meetings to familiarize the parents with the different curriculum areas of the classroom. In addition to these meetings, the School has sessions during the year on issues revolving around parenting issues and invites guest speakers of interest for the parents.

## **Observations and Communication**

Effective communication between parents and teachers is strongly encouraged and should be the principle vehicle for questions that may arise. Written communication to parents is provided to students at dismissal time or sent home in the student's backpack for students in the extended day program.

Parents and grandparents may visit student classrooms by appointments scheduled at least 48 hours in advance from September 27 to June 6. Parents are encouraged to observe in their child's classroom at least twice each year. TOTMA also recommends that parents observe other levels within the School to broaden understanding of the Montessori approach. Observations may be scheduled by calling the School for an appointment.

When a parent arrives for a scheduled observation, the parent must sign in and receive a visitor's badge. Each teacher will have an assigned chair for the visitor and will provide a clipboard for taking notes. Visitors are not allowed to speak to the teacher during instructional time. A teacher conference should be scheduled if a parent needs to speak to the teacher. Cell phones are not allowed to be used in the classroom.

Formal parent conferences are scheduled twice each year. These are occasions for parents and teachers to share information and insights about individual students. The School urges both parents to attend these conferences, as each parent has critical influence upon the child's life and work.

Individual teacher conferences will be held in October following the release of results from a national test administered in September.

In addition to regularly scheduled conferences, parents, as well as teachers, may request a teacher conference at any time during the year. Teachers are interested in any information that provides insight into a child's behavior. Similarly, they want to discuss any questions or concerns that parents have about their child's school experience. To contact teacher, send a note to School or call the office and leave a message. The teacher will contact the parent as soon as possible.

## **Parent and Student Complaints and Concerns**

Student and/or parental complaints shall be submitted in writing on a form provided by the School. Copies of documents that support the complaint shall be attached to the complaint form or presented at the Level One conference. After the Level One conference, no new documents may be submitted unless their existence was unknown to the complainant before the Level One conference. A complaint that is incomplete may be dismissed.

For purposes of this policy, "days" shall mean calendar days and announcement of a decision in the student's or parent's presence shall constitute communication of the decision.

### **Level One**

The student or parent shall request in writing a conference with the Principal within seven days from the time the event(s) causing the complaint were or should have been known. Following a conference, the Principal shall have seven days to respond.

### **Level Two**

If the student or parent are not satisfied with the Level One decision, or if no decision is provided, the student or parent may request in writing a conference with the Assistant Director. The request must be filed within seven days of the Level One decision or the response deadline if no decision is made. The Assistant Director or designee shall hold the conference within seven days of the request.

The student or parent shall submit a signed statement of the complaint, any evidence supporting the complaint, and the date and results of the conference with the Principal. The Assistant Director or designee shall have seven days following the conference to respond.

### **Level Three**

If the student or parent is not satisfied with the Level Two decision, or if no timely decision is provided, the student or parent may submit to the Director or designee in writing a request for a hearing before the charter-holder Board of Directors. The request must be filed within seven days of the Level Two decision or the response deadline if no decision is made. The student or parent shall be informed of the date, time, and place of the hearing.

The Board of Directors shall hear the student or parent complaint, and may set a reasonable time limit for presenting the complaint. Only written documentation and issues previously submitted and presented by the student or parent and the School will be considered. An audiotape recording of the hearing shall be made.

The Board of Directors shall communicate its decision, if any, orally or in writing before or during the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. If no decision is made by the end of the next regularly scheduled Board meeting, the Level Two decision shall be upheld. The Board may not delegate its authority to issue a decision, and any decision by the Board of Directors is final and may not be appealed.

If the complaint involves concerns or charges regarding an employee, it shall be heard by the Board of Directors in closed meeting unless the employee to whom the complaint pertains requests that it be heard in public.

## Important Notices

### **Annual Notice of Parent and Student Rights (Annual FERPA Confidentiality Notice)**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) afford parents and students over eighteen years of age (eligible students) certain rights with respect to the student's educational records. These rights include the following:

#### **The Right to Inspect and Review**

Parents and/or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's educational records within forty-five days of the day the School receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the Principal a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. School officials will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

If circumstances effectively prevent the parent or eligible student from exercising the right to inspect and review the student's educational records, TOTMA shall provide the parent or eligible student with a copy of the records requested or make other arrangements for the parent or eligible student to inspect and review the requested records.

TOTMA shall not destroy any educational records if there is an outstanding request to inspect and review the records under this section. The School may charge a reasonable fee for a copy of an education record that is made for the parent or eligible student, unless the imposition of a fee effectively prevents a parent or eligible student from exercising the right to inspect and review the student's education records. TOTMA will not charge a fee to search for or to retrieve the educational records of a student.

If the educational records of a student contain information on more than one student, the parent or eligible student may inspect and review or be informed of only the specific information about that student.

#### **The Right to Seek Amendment of the Student's Educational Records**

Parents and/or eligible students may ask the School to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy rights of the student. Such a request must be in writing, clearly identify the part of the record the parent or eligible student wants changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. TOTMA will decide whether to amend the record as requested within a reasonable time after the School receives the request. If the School decides not to amend the record as

requested by the parent or eligible student, it will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment.

If, as a result of the hearing, TOTMA decides that the information is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy rights of the student, it shall amend the record accordingly and inform the parent or eligible student of the amendment in writing.

If, as a result of the hearing, TOTMA decides that the information in the educational record is not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy rights of the student, it shall inform the parent or eligible student of the right to place a statement in the record commenting on the contested information in the record or stating why he or she disagrees with the decision of the School, or both. If the School places an amended statement in the educational records of a student, it is obligated to maintain the amended statement with the contested part of the record for as long as the record is maintained and disclose the statement whenever it discloses the portion of the record to which the statement relates.

### **The Right to Consent Prior to Disclosure**

Parents and/or eligible students have the right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's educational records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception which permits disclosure without consent is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A "school official" is a person employed by TOTMA as an administrator, supervisor, instructor or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the TOTMA Board of Directors; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assigning another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, TOTMA discloses education records without consent to officials of another open-enrollment charter school, school district or private school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

### **The Right to File a Complaint**

Parents and/or eligible students have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. These complaints should be addressed as follows:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202-4605

### **Access to Medical Records**

Parents or guardians of students are entitled to access their students' medical records.

### **Notice for Directory Information**

Under FERPA, the School must, with certain exceptions, obtain written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a student's education records. However, TOTMA may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless a parent or eligible student has advised the School, in writing, to the contrary. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the School to include this type of information from a student's education records in certain School publications. Examples include:

- A playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production;
- The annual yearbook;
- Honor roll or other recognition lists;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets showing height and weight of team members.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be released to outside organizations without prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks and/or businesses or members of the public seeking information about a student under the Texas Public Information Act. In addition, two federal laws require the School to provide military recruiters, upon request, with student names, addresses and telephone listings, unless a parent or eligible student has advised the School that they do not want the student's information disclosed without prior written consent.

TOTMA has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's name.
- Address.
- Telephone listing.
- Electronic mail address.
- Photograph.
- Date and place of birth.
- Major field of study.
- Dates of attendance.
- Grade level.
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports.
- Height and weight of members of athletic teams.
- Degrees, honors and awards received.
- The most recent educational agency or institution attended.
- 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, whether in whole or in part, cannot be used for this purpose.**

Any parent or eligible student who does not want TOTMA to disclose directory information from the student's education records without prior written consent must notify the School in writing no later than end of the first week of instruction after the student is enrolled.

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Assistant Director

**FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT**  
**Use of Student Photos and Directory Information Opt Out Form**

You have the right to choose whether your student's information is released or not. Please check a box in the appropriate column below and return this form to your student's school. **Parents, guardians, or eligible students who do not check a box, or who do not return this form, give their implied consent for release of directory information, and consent to student photographs.** If you do not wish to allow disclosure of this information, please return this form directly to TOTMA either in person or by U.S. mail. If you have more than one student enrolled, you must complete a separate form for each student.

ALL STUDENTS

PLEASE MARK EACH APPLICABLE SPACE

A. \_\_\_\_\_ I do NOT consent to the release of directory information about the student named below by TOTMA to outside sources such as an institution of higher education or newspapers and other media, except as authorized by law.

B. \_\_\_\_\_ I do NOT consent to the release of photographs or directory information within the TOTMA system in sources such as yearbooks, rosters for sports information, and programs or articles.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT Student's Full Legal Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Students Date of Birth (month/day/year)

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT Parent/Guardian/Full Legal Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (month/day/year)

## **Student Acceptable Use Policy**

### **Technology Mission Statement**

TOTMA is committed to utilizing the maximum potential of technology to enhance student learning and increase teacher effectiveness by providing students with technology-related experiences. Recognizing the ever-changing influences of technology on all aspects of our lives, the School is dedicated to providing an integrated technological curriculum for all students and staff members. Students will have access to the technology necessary to produce, manage, communicate and retrieve information in an efficient manner for educational use. In the attainment of both present and future goals, TOTMA will provide a continually evolving staff development program oriented toward the integration of technology in areas of curriculum.

### **Instructional Resource**

TOTMA is proud to bring network and Internet access to school employees and students, and believes the Internet offers many diverse and unique resources to both students and staff. The School's goal in providing this service to staff and students is to promote educational excellence in school by facilitating resource sharing, innovative teaching, and communication skills.

TOTMA students and staff have access to numerous research oriented and instructional resources via the Internet. On-line encyclopedias, professional journals, and databases filled with timely information on thousands of topics are just a few of the resources provided. On-campus computers have the technology necessary to support student research and to promote academic achievement.

### **Student Safety**

TOTMA is aware that resources which are inappropriate or not designed for use in the educational setting may be accessed on the Internet. To protect students and staff from such inappropriate material, the School's Internet access is filtered with one of the highest-rated Internet filtering systems available. However, users must recognize that it is impossible for TOTMA to restrict access to all controversial material and individuals must be responsible for their own actions in navigating the network.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure school-level compliance with all procedures and regulations regarding the local area network and Internet usage. All students, parents, teachers, administrators and school employees who obtain their Internet access through TOTMA are expected to use these services appropriately.

### **User Responsibilities**

The use of the Internet is a privilege. Abusive conduct will lead to the privilege being revoked.

TOTMA is providing Internet resources for educational purposes only. Use of Internet resources by students and school staff must be related to an expressed educational and/or administrative goal or objective.

Use of the School Internet and computer network must be in support of educational goals, research, and class assignments and be consistent with the educational objectives of the School.

Users must have a valid, authorized account to access the network, and use only those computer resources that are authorized. Accounts may be used only in accordance with authorized purposes.



Individual accounts may be used only by the owner of the account, except where specifically authorized by school administrators. In the case of class accounts, all use must be under the supervision of the sponsoring teacher or supervisor.

Each individual user is responsible for safeguarding his or her computer account. Users are expected to protect access to accounts by periodically changing passwords and keeping them confidential. Users must respect the privacy of others by not tampering with files, passwords, or accounts.

## **Policy – Terms and Conditions**

### Acceptable Use

Users are to properly use school network resources for educational and/or administrative purposes. Respectful and responsible network etiquette and behavior should be in keeping with the School's mission statement. Students and staff are expressly prohibited from accessing obscene, profane, vulgar, or pornographic sites or materials.

Students are prohibited from sending or posting electronic messages that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation or illegal. This prohibition applies to conduct off school property if it results in a substantial disruption to the educational environment. Any person taking, disseminating, transferring or sharing obscene, sexually oriented, lewd or otherwise illegal images or other content will be disciplined according to the Student Code of Conduct and may, in certain circumstances, be reported to law enforcement.

### Monitored Use

Electronic mail transmissions and other use of the electronic communications system by TOTMA students and employees shall not be considered confidential and may be monitored at any time by designated school staff to ensure appropriate use for educational or administrative purposes. Forgery or attempted forgery of electronic mail messages is prohibited. Only authorized school personnel designated by the Principal or the Technology teacher, Ms. Juarez or Ms. Janice, may read, delete, copy or modify the electronic mail of other system users.

### Vandalism

Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm, disrupt or destroy data of another user of the TOTMA network or any other agencies or networks that are connected to the Internet. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creating of computer viruses. Any of these actions may be viewed as violations of TOTMA policy, administrative regulations and, possibly, as criminal activity under applicable state and federal laws. Users must respect the privacy of other users, and will not intentionally seek information on, obtain copies of, or modify any file, data, or password belonging to another user, or represent themselves as another user unless explicitly authorized. Deliberate attempts to degrade or disrupt system performance and/or degrade, disrupt or bypass system security are violations of School policy and administrative regulations, and may constitute criminal activity under applicable laws.

Any prohibited behavior under this policy will result in the cancellation of technology privileges. The School will, in accordance with School policy, cooperate with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation concerning or relating to misuse of the School's network.

## Network Etiquette

The user is expected to exhibit the following behavior:

- Be polite (i.e., an all-caps message implies shouting);
- Use appropriate language;
- Refrain from any activity that may be considered “cyber bullying,” including but not limited to threats of violence, extortion, obscene or harassing messages, harassment, stalking, child pornography, and sexual exploitation;
- Maintain confidentiality of the user, colleagues, and students;
- Refrain
- Respect copyright laws; and
- Be respectful in all aspects of network use.

## **Consequences**

Students found to have violated School policies and procedures concerning use of School computers or networks shall be subject to disciplinary penalties in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

Additional penalties may include, but are not limited to:

- Loss of computer privileges/Internet access, with length of time to be determined by campus administration.
- Any disciplinary consequence, including suspension, as deemed appropriate by the administration.
- Suspension may be considered for flagrant violations or violations that corrupt the educational value of the computers or the Internet. Additionally, expulsion may be considered in instances where students have used TOTMA Internet access to engage in conduct that constitutes felony criminal mischief, and/or have deliberately attempted to bypass installed security software or copy/modify another student’s work files.

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**Mrs. Joyce Brown**  
*Director/CEO*

**Mrs. Jeri Green**  
*Assistant Director*

**Acceptable Use Agreement Acknowledgement Form**

I have read and agree to abide by the TOTMA Acceptable Use Policy. I further understand that any violation of this policy may constitute a criminal offense. Should I commit any violation, my Internet and computer access privileges may be revoked, School disciplinary action and/or appropriate legal action may be taken.

\_\_\_\_\_  
User Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

(If you are under the age of 18 a parent or guardian must also read and sign this agreement.)

As the parent or guardian of this student, I have read the TOTMA Acceptable Use Agreement. I understand that this access is designed for educational purposes. TOTMA has taken precautions to eliminate controversial material. However, I also recognize it is impossible for the School to restrict access to all controversial materials and I will not hold TOTMA responsible for materials transmitted on the network. Further, I accept full responsibility for supervision if and when my child's use is not in a school setting. I hereby give permission to issue an account for my child and certify that the information contained on this form is correct.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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*Assistant Director*

**Parent Participation Compact**  
**2014–2015**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to honor the following commitments:

- Meet with my child's teacher every six to nine weeks to discuss grades lower than a 70% and conduct grade lower than a "S." The conference sets a foundation to evaluate student progress and set goals.
- Uphold the integrity of the School uniform so that my child will be in good standing with the School dress code.
- Purchase school supplies and pay legally authorized fees that contribute to meaningful materials to aid in my child's learning.
- Attend at least three – five school sponsored events per year. This includes, but is not limited to, PTO meetings, school events, field trips, volunteering, fundraising events, and parent academy nights.
- Provide my child with an environment suitable for learning in which he/she can complete assigned homework and read each evening.
- Sign all homework logs to show that the child's homework has been completed and reviewed by a parent or adult.
- Sign all progress reports, report cards, and communication logs from my child's teacher or the School.
- Empower my child to log on to the computer anywhere and read books from Tumbleweed Books and Texas Treasure.
- I understand that my child(ren) must be on time (day starts at 8:00a.m.) and attend at least 90% of the school year. Our family will avoid planning family activities which conflict with the school calendar to ensure that my child is able to attend school every day. Excessive or unexcused absences will be addressed by a letter and a meeting with the attendance committee.
- Provide the School with regular updated addresses and phone numbers to ensure that a cooperative relationship based on open communication can exist.
- Keep the School administrative assistant informed of any contact information, and emergency contact changes, or legal paperwork.
- Follow all policies and procedures set forth by The Olive Tree Montessori Academy .

I agree to honor the commitments TOTMA has set forth.

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Parent Name (Print)	Signature	Date
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Parent Name (Print)	Signature	Date
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Administrator Name	Signature	Date
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Assistant Director

**Student Compact Upper Grades (Second through Fifth Grades)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, will honor the following commitments set forth by The Olive Tree Montessori Academy :

- Wear the School uniform that is set forth in the TOTMA Dress Code.
- Adhere to the School's Student Code of Conduct with the knowledge that all School rules are in place to protect the integrity of the educational day, and that these rules may be followed daily to allow each student, including myself to learn in a calm and peaceful environment.
- Attend school daily, because every day in every class is meaningful.
- Be on time everyday so that I can actively engage in learning.
- Leave time each evening in my personal calendar to complete my homework. Practicing skills and reviewing content each day at home will allow me to be more prepared for class the following day.
- Be passionate about reading and comprehension by logging on to Tumble Books and Texas Treasures.
- Actively participate in extracurricular activities and other school activities.
- **Give my parent or guardian information that is sent by the School.**
- Finally, I must meet the Promotion Guidelines of The Olive Tree Montessori Academy to be promoted to the next grade.

**Failure to follow TOTMA's rules, regulations, and policies will result in consequences set forth in the Student Code of Conduct.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Director/CEO

**Mrs. Jeri Green**  
Assistant Director

**Student Compact Lower grades (Pre-K through 1st Grade)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, **promise to:**

- Do homework every day with my parents.
- Read at least 30 minutes every day by reading the take home books and logging on to Starfall, Tublewood Books, and Texas Treasures with my parents.
- Complete my class work and homework.
- Be kind and respectful to adults, myself and other students.
- Respect the Montessori Materials and textbooks.
- Obey school rules.
- Wear my school uniform to school every day.

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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*Assistant Director*

**2014–2015 Student Handbook**  
**Acknowledgment Form and**  
**Agreement to Abide by the Student Handbook**

Dear Parent,

Research tells us that a safe, orderly school is essential to student learning. The importance of such an environment has been a long-standing value of this School. A safe and orderly environment promotes a positive school climate and high expectations for both behavior and learning.

This Handbook is published to outline those expectations. The School wants to assure and protect the rights of all students to a safe, orderly, and educationally efficient environment by freeing the School from disruptions that result from inappropriate behavior and appearance. The School solicits your support and cooperation in a partnership to provide the best possible learning environment for your student.

This Handbook, including the Student Code of Conduct, has been developed through the cooperative efforts of our school community. It is extremely important that all students are aware of the expectations that the School has form them and that each parent encourage their student to accept and follow the behavioral standards outlined in this Handbook.

Your signature is requested to acknowledge your receipt of this Handbook and your commitment to abide by the provisions contained herein.

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My signature below acknowledges that I have received the TOTMA Student Handbook; that I have been given notice of the rules, responsibilities, and consequences outlined in the Student Code of Conduct; and that I have been informed that when I or my student is enrolled at TOTMA, all information contained in the TOTMA Student Handbook is applicable to me and all TOTMA staff; and that I have expressed the intent to review this Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct contained within and to abide thereby.

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Student Name

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Grade Level

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Student Signature

---

Parent Signature

---

Date

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Parent E-mail Address