



# **JEFFERSON MONTESSORI ACADEMY**

## **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

Last Updated: 2025-2026 School Year

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# JEFFERSON MONTESSORI ACADEMY

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## EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK AND HIGHLIGHTED SCHOOL POLICIES/REGULATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Jefferson Montessori Academy Team. We know that you are going to enjoy working here!

Jefferson Montessori Academy (JMA), Eddy County's first charter school, was established in August 2002, as a State-Accredited public institution. Our school is publicly funded and chartered through the Carlsbad Municipal School District. JMA provides free educational choice to families of K-12 grade students interested in a Montessori method of learning with hands-on, real world, project-based learning. JMA works cooperatively with community organizations, the Carlsbad Municipal School District, and local post-secondary institutions to prepare students for college and career.

This handbook outlines some of the policies and procedures implemented at JMA. However, it is only a guidebook and is in no way inclusive of any policy. Policies can be found on our website or in the office.

If we can be of any assistance to you in interpreting information contained in this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact the Administration Office.

***Any employee who fails to follow the guidelines outlined in this Employee Handbook or other policies of JMA may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination or discharge.***

Each employee is to sign an acknowledgement statement indicating receipt of the handbook and is responsible for awareness and implementation of the handbook's contents.

Thank you for choosing JMA as your professional place of employment, and we are excited to welcome you to a new school year!

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL YEAR

1. Be prompt and prepared. Begin class on time and prepare/plan to provide rigorous instruction for the entire time that is allotted.
2. Make sure you know all of your students' needs and accommodations per the IEP or other individual education plans.
3. Criticism can be constructive and destructive. Be careful with your comments towards students. Be impartial, firm, and consistent. Give each student a chance to gain recognition in a good way. Reinforce positive behavior.
4. Display students' work at every opportunity in classrooms and hallways in a neat and organized manner.
5. Have a positive outlook on the school year and student successes.
6. Treat all students as individuals. Be firm but consistent with all students. Ensure you are always equitable.
7. Secure the attention of every student before you attempt to give instructions or teach the lesson.
8. Staff should **practice management by walking around**. This allows you to be more observant of your class and student behavior.
9. Never leave your students unattended. Active supervision is required at ALL times.
10. Correct inappropriate behavior with positive corrective methods for behavior supports and interventions.
11. Reprimand in private. No one appreciates being "scolded" in front of their peers.
12. Sending a student to office should always be a last resort or after implementing progressive discipline per the JMA Discipline Matrix.
13. Tell students what your expectations are and ensure each understands your directions and expectations.
14. Listen to the students. They will respect you for recognizing their right to be heard.
15. Avoid threats as punishment, especially if you cannot or will not follow through.
16. Do not hesitate to contact parents concerning problems with your students. Attempt to establish an open line of communication with parents. It is only in such an atmosphere that they will share personal information that may impact a student's scholastic achievement.

*"The secret of good teaching is to regard the child's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination."*

— DR. MARIA MONTESSORI

## JEFFERSON MONTESSORI ACADEMY MISSION

The mission of Jefferson Montessori Academy (JMA) is to serve the children of Carlsbad and Eddy County, NM, by enabling each child to reach his or her highest potential using the Montessori Method of instruction and other educational programs and procedures that promote critical thinking, encourage creativity, promote respect for others, and ultimately strengthen the freedoms guaranteed to citizens by the Constitution of the United States of America.

## THE MONTESSORI METHOD

Montessori schools began over one hundred years ago with Maria Montessori who advocated a deep respect for children as unique individuals. She believed that each child works from a limitless desire to learn and a deep concern for social and emotional development. Montessori classrooms bring children together in multi-age groups, rather than classes comprised of just one grade level. Normally, they span three age levels.

Montessori classes are not taught by the teachers alone. Students are guided towards management of their own learning and environment. This guidance helps develop exceptional leadership skills and independence. The Montessori approach to education is consciously designed to recognize and address different learning styles and to help students learn to study most effectively. Students' progress as they master new skills, moving ahead at a pace that best suits the individual. Montessori students learn through hands-on experience, investigation and research. They become actively engaged in their studies, developing a quest for knowledge.

To learn more about the Montessori Method please visit: <http://www.montessori.org>

*“Education of even a very small child does not aim at preparing them for school, but for life.”*

Dr. Maria  
Montessori



## **NON-DISCRIMINATION: IT'S THE LAW**

Jefferson Montessori Academy does not discriminate in its hiring or employment practices on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation, or any other factor protected by law. This notice is provided as required by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Questions, complaints, or requests for additional information regarding the ADA and Section 504 may be forwarded to the designated ADA and Section 504 Compliance Coordinator listed below.

### **Section 504 and ADA and Title IX**

Dr. Katie Appling  
Jefferson Montessori Academy  
500 West Church Street  
Carlsbad, NM 88220  
(575) 234-1703  
[kappling@jmacarlsbad.com](mailto:kappling@jmacarlsbad.com)

This notice is available from the Section 504 and ADA Compliance Coordinator in large print, on audiotape, and in Braille.



# **I. EMPLOYMENT WITH JEFFERSON MONTESSORI ACADEMY**

## **A. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

Jefferson Montessori Academy (JMA) is an equal opportunity employer. Employment decisions are based on merit and business needs, and not on race, color, citizenship status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation, or any other factor protected by law.

It is the policy of JMA to comply with all the relevant and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). JMA will not discriminate against any qualified employee or job applicant with respect to any terms, privileges, or conditions of employment because of a person's physical or mental disability. JMA will also make reasonable accommodation wherever necessary for all qualified employees or applicants with disabilities, provided that the individual can safely perform the essential duties of their position with or without reasonable accommodation, and provided that any accommodations made do not impose an undue hardship on JMA.

Equal Employment Opportunity notices are posted near employee gathering places as required by law. These notices summarize the rights of employees to equal opportunity in employment and list the names and addresses of the various government agencies that may be contacted in the event that any person believes he or she has been discriminated against.

## **B. EMPLOYMENT AND TERMINATION POLICY**

JMA maintains the right to terminate an employee for good cause at any time it is in the best interest of the students and the public for reasons such as gross misconduct, poor performance, poor attendance/tardiness, or economic necessity. JMA will follow state regulations and JMA Employment Policies when terminating an employee becomes necessary, following due process as specified by statute.

A JMA employee is considered to have voluntarily terminated employment if he or she has done any of the following:

- ◆ Written a letter of resignation or given a verbal notice of resignation to the Head Administrator;
- ◆ Failed to return from approved leave of absence on the date specified by JMA; or
- ◆ Failed to report to work or call in to their supervisor unless an excused absence

justification is provided within 24 hours and approved by the Head Administrator.

### **C. VACANCIES, APPLICATIONS, PROMOTIONS AND TRANSFERS**

Vacancies are advertised both in-house and to as wide an audience as possible outside of JMA.

Promotions and transfers are made without regard to race, color, citizenship status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation, or any other factor protected by law. JMA reserves the right to also look outside JMA for the most qualified potential employees as well.

Requests for applications are made to the Business Office. New hires must complete a school application form.

Vacancies are filled according to non-discriminatory practices as required by law. Qualifications and needs of JMA are the primary qualifying requirements.

### **D. EVALUATION PROCEDURE**

The annual evaluation process will be aligned with New Mexico's Three-Tiered Licensure requirements.

### **E. BUSINESS HOURS AND ATTENDANCE**

Normal working hours are from **7:45 am to 3:45 pm for teachers** and **7:30-3:30 for educational assistants**. Before and after school duty will be assigned as needed and may affect arrival or departure time.

Employees are expected to comply with all JMA working hour requirements for their particular position or be subject to disciplinary action. Employees may refer to JMA's Leave Policy to see how to exercise their rights under this policy. Unauthorized or excessive absences or tardiness may lead to disciplinary action, including possible dismissal. Always contact the Head Administrator and office manager prior to a known need to be absent or immediately when the need becomes known.

### **F. REPORTING ACCIDENTS WHILE ON DUTY**

All employees have a responsibility to maintain safe conditions in their work areas as part of the normal work routine. If an employee is aware of a direct threat to the health and safety of students, staff, or the public, he/she has a duty to report such problem to the building supervisor. If you are injured while on duty, you are protected under the Worker's Compensation Act. Any injury you sustain on school property, no matter how slight, must be reported to your Head Administrator or supervisor who will record it.

You are not eligible for compensation if the accident is not reported.

## **G. STANDARDS OF EMPLOYEE CONDUCT**

All employees are expected to work to the best of their abilities to provide for the needs of the students of JMA. Employees are expected to meet the professional standards of their jobs, to seek support if they feel it is needed, and to show respect and consideration for all other employees, students, administrators, and the public. Within this framework, employees need to be aware that discussing student behaviors and information should be kept within the work environment and discussed only with those who need to know. These same considerations are to be followed regarding staff. The complete Code of Ethics approved by the State Department of Education and other employee conduct regulations can be found in Policy G-0750/GBEB and Administrative Regulation G-0761/GBEB-R.

Professionalism and Respect: Employees should be mindful of how their online presence reflects on JMA. Respectful online behavior is expected at all times. Aligning with JMA values and professional standards is also expected.

## **H. UNAUTHORIZED OR PROHIBITED EMPLOYEE CONDUCT**

Conduct that is not acceptable during work hours includes, but is not limited to:

- ◆ Theft or unauthorized possession of JMA supplies or equipment.
- ◆ Using physical force or threatening physical force against another employee, student, or member of the community except in self-defense; fighting or provoking a fight; threatening, intimidating or coercing fellow employees, students, or members of the public on or off school premises at any time.
- ◆ **Using obscene or abusive language, malicious sarcasm, or participating in malicious gossip and/or rumors, or engaging in any other behavior which creates discord or interferes with your own or another employee's work.**
- ◆ Using or being under the influence of non-prescription drugs, alcohol or tobacco on JMA property.
- ◆ Failing to report a criminal act by another employee within 24 hours.
- ◆ Speeding or careless driving of vehicles while conducting work for JMA.

- ◆ Possessing firearms or other dangerous weapons or explosives on school property.
- ◆ Gambling or conducting a lottery on JMA property.
- ◆ Falsifying or altering company documents, records, or timecards.
- ◆ Knowingly lying or withholding information (including falsifying job application form, reasons for absence, leave, etc.).
- ◆ Acts of harassment toward another employee, student, or member of the public of a sexual, racial, religious, or other offensive nature.
- ◆ Immoral conduct or indecency on JMA property or while representing JMA.
- ◆ Failing to adhere to safety rules and regulations such as failure to wear required safety equipment or being negligent to the point of endangering the life or safety of another person.
- ◆ Sleeping or loitering during work hours or leaving or stopping work early without approval of supervisor.
- ◆ Excessive absence or tardiness, or failure to report absence or late arrival.
- ◆ Insubordination or refusing to obey instructions properly issued by your supervisor.
- ◆ Disclosing confidential JMA information without authorization.
- ◆ Excessive use of school telephones or computers for personal communication.
- ◆ Knowingly and willfully breaking of a JMA policy or procedure, or state or federal law while on the job or which, in any way, diminishes the integrity, efficiency, or discipline of JMA.
- ◆ Creating or contributing to unsanitary or unsafe conditions.

- ◆ Any other gross misconduct not specifically listed here.

Please note that the above list of unacceptable activities does not include all types of conduct that can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## **I. ABUSE OF EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITY**

Jefferson Montessori Academy Council of Trustees recognized that while there are federal and state laws to protect a student from harassment and bullying by their peers, students should also be protected from educational abuses of power or teacher bullying. JMA does not tolerate bullying of students by JMA staff. Please see the policy Abuse of Educational Authority for further information.

## **J. AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AND SECTION 504**

Policy I-2400/IHBA and Administrative Regulations IHBA-RA/IHBA-RB and I-2431/IHBA-E outline JMA's responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504.

Complaint Procedure: Administrative Regulation 8.02d outlines the grievance procedure if a person feels they have not been treated fairly under these Federal Acts.

## **K. SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOR/HARASSMENT**

JMA intends to provide a work environment that is pleasant, professional, and free from intimidation, hostility, or inappropriate behavior which might interfere with work performance. Harassment of any sort – verbal, physical, visual – based upon race, color, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry, disability, medical condition, veteran status, or any other protected status defined by law, will not be tolerated. Please refer to Policy A-0300/ACA and Administrative Regulation ACA-R.

## **L. TOBACCO, DRUG, AND ALCOHOL ABUSE**

School Board Policies G-0950/GBEC and G-1100/GBED and the corresponding Administrative Regulations outline the Drug Free Campus/Workplace Policy and the Tobacco Free Workplace Policy in effect for JMA employees. Each employee is required to read and acknowledge by signature that they are in receipt of these policies and have been given the opportunity to ask questions to ensure their understanding of the policies and resulting consequences if they are found to be using tobacco, drugs, or alcohol, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol on school property.

## **M. REFERENCE INFORMATION**

School Policy GBJC outlines JMA's and employees' responsibility for releasing reference information to other entities. Employees must acknowledge by signature that they

release JMA from liability in order to provide any information other than dates of employment. Additionally, the policy requires that employees of JMA not give any references for other employees without approval of the Head Administrator.

## **N. PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS**

Post-offer physical examinations are required of custodial and maintenance applicants being considered for hire. This examination is provided by JMA at no cost to the applicant. Additionally, any employee involved in a serious workplace accident or exhibiting unusual behavior will be taken to the emergency room or approved physician's office for evaluation of the employee's health condition.

## **O. PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCESS**

Administrators or supervisors may use a number of tools to motivate, correct, and/or discipline employees, including, but not limited to, warnings, suspensions, and termination, as determined to be appropriate in each individual circumstance. Progressive discipline is one such tool. There may be some situations where the seriousness of the offense justifies the omission of one or more of the steps of the process. Likewise, there may be times when JMA may decide to repeat a disciplinary step. If you are suspected of violating JMA's policies, regulations, or work rules, you may be placed on administrative leave with pay pending an investigation of the situation.

## **P. WAGE AND SALARY**

Each job classification has a salary schedule approved by the New Mexico Public Education Department annually.

JMA applies the same principles of equity to all employees regardless of organizational level, race, color, citizenship status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran status, political affiliation, or any other factor protected by law.

## **Q. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

JMA encourages all employees with personal problems affecting their abilities to function effectively to contact the Head Administrator. The Head Administrator will provide information on services available in or near Carlsbad, NM, for professional counseling as appropriate. Confidentiality will be maintained. Most insurance policies will cover some or all of the costs for counseling services.

Community resources available: Contact HR for this information as it changes regularly

## **R. COMPUTER AND E-MAIL USAGE, MAIL, FACULTY BULLETIN BOARD AND COPY MACHINES**

JMA provides internet and e-mail access to staff, primarily for educational and administrative purposes. Employees have access to internet for personal use, as long as they comply with the Computer Network and Internet Usage Policy for Employees. In general, employees are expected to use JMA computers and computer networks in a responsible, polite, and professional manner. JMA reserves the right to review, audit, intercept, access, and disclose all matters on JMA computers, internet access, and e-mail systems, as business conditions and/or security considerations warrant, with or without employee notice.

E-mail is an easy way to communicate with the entire staff without disrupting school or calling a meeting. All teachers are expected to check their e-mail at the beginning of the workday, during their planning periods, and the end of the workday.

Mailboxes should also be checked at least once a day. Please check it when you arrive in the morning and before you leave in the afternoon. Essential information for the following day may be placed in those boxes. Please do this yourself, rather than sending or asking a student to do this. No student should be in the teacher's lounge.

Copies should be made before school, during your planning period, or after school. Teachers and Teaching Assistants should not make copies during instructional time except in special/emergency situations. **Office staff are not responsible for making your copies.** However, if there is a DSS Student available, they may be able to assist. Confidential student records should not be copied unless permission provided. Ask before you copy.

## **II. CLASSROOM AND STUDENT PROCEDURES**

### **A. CURRICULUM**

Teachers are required to incorporate the JMA accepted curriculum, including Montessori curriculum as applicable, into their daily teaching schedules. The scope and sequence of such curriculum is necessary for the success of students as they move through the required or elective courses each year. This requirement is in no way meant to prevent teachers from modifying instruction to meet the needs of their students or to enrich the basic curriculum. Teaching Assistants may support teachers with lesson preparation and implementation. However, the role of the Assistant is to support with individual/small group learning for all students. Teachers will use Common Planning times on early release days to discuss, prepare, and plan curriculum implementation and best instructional practices. JMA will follow state procedures for curriculum adoption cycle and selection.

## B. GRADE BOOKS

All teachers are required to keep up-to-date student grading and progress records that demonstrate and verify the competencies a student has achieved during reporting periods. Teachers should inform parents of student progress by providing instructional feedback, returning graded assignments in a timely manner, and sending weekly progress reports/updates. The Grading Scale is to follow JMA grading standards policy. **Grades should not be a surprise!** Teachers should keep students and parents apprised of the student's progress status throughout the grading period using the weekly contact sheets, conferences, or other methods described in the JMA charter.

Grade Books must be maintained in a current status and turned in to the JMA Head Administrator at the end of each year where they will be kept according to State standards. Plans should be readily available (i.e., file on wall of classroom entrance, on or near top of teacher's desk) always for observation. All teachers will have a "substitute file" to ensure teaching and learning continues if the teacher is absent.

The official source of grades and attendance for JMA is the teacher's records. For this reason, it is *critical* that teachers keep accurate records. **All JMA students must have a minimum of two grades per week, per subject, entered into the grade book.**

## C. GRADING POLICY

Students should experience frequent and ongoing assessment and feedback as part of the learning process throughout each quarter. Students should receive ongoing feedback regarding progression and mastery of standards and course objectives. Teachers are required to record at least two grades per week for each class they teach. Grades should ONLY be given for assignments/assessments in which the teacher has provided ample instruction, guided practice and independent practice with corrective feedback and support.

Quizzes, tests, examinations, essays, homework, or classwork are evaluated and/or graded, returned, and reviewed **promptly** with the student. Teachers are expected to post grades in the Student Information System (SIS) no more than **seven (7) school days** after the due date with the understanding that major projects/papers may require additional time to ensure quality feedback. **No grade under 50 percent will be given for assignments that have been completed and turned in during special circumstances and instances that may impede face to face learning.**

For major assessments, at least one new opportunity to demonstrate proficiency shall be provided to any student who scores below a passing grade and completes corrective action determined by collaborative teams. Teacher teams may extend the opportunity to all students in the class. Teachers will determine all the guidelines for reassessment and communicate them to both students and parents. This may take the form of a retake, completion of test corrections, revision of work, or other similar opportunity.



If the opportunity to reassess is only available to students who score below a passing grade, then the eligible student's highest score, up to 80 percent, should be entered into the gradebook. If the opportunity is open to all students, then the students' highest score should be entered into the gradebook.

Late work will be accepted for absences or other special circumstances to document learning/mastery. Each teacher must set reasonable guidelines for accepting late work to encourage work completion by their students. Teachers may choose to apply a reasonable penalty when work is turned in after the due date based on the current grading regulation I-6711 in the policy manual.

If a student has been given multiple opportunities to complete work and has not done so, a zero may be entered in the gradebook. Parent notification must be made when a zero is assigned.

Any work that is plagiarized will result in a grade of zero. Upon the first instance of plagiarism, the parent/guardian will be notified, and it will be expected that the assignment be redone; however, the highest value to be earned after plagiarism is a 70%. If there are subsequent offenses of plagiarism, there will be a meeting with the parent/guardian again and the assignment will receive a zero.

#### **D. STUDENT ATTENDANCE BOOKS**

Student attendance will be entered daily and for each class period in the SIS. Elementary teachers are required to take attendance as soon as school starts and after lunch when appropriate. All other teachers must take attendance at the beginning of each period. Students who arrive to school after the morning tardy time, must report to the office to receive a tardy pass before going to the classroom. Students may not be admitted to class without a tardy pass.

#### **E. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS (EA)**

Educational assistants are instructional aides under the direction of the teacher (if/when funding is available). EAs are expected to work with students more than grading papers or completing paperwork. The EA is provided to ensure that specialized small group and individual learning is taking place. EAs are not the personal assistant to the teacher, but rather they are provided to support student learning through instructional support. The Head Administrator will set the schedule for the EA, and that is the schedule that will be followed.

#### **F. MORNING AND AFTERNOON PROCEDURES AND DUTY**

All staff have mandatory duty assignments. Morning, lunch, afternoon, and recess duty will be assigned on a rotating duty schedule. Elementary **staff** should meet their students

at the designated morning drop-off location and escort them to the classroom. For afternoon dismissal, staff will walk students out to the after school pick-up area and remain with students until they are released to authorized individuals. Elementary students should not be released without a teacher escort. Secondary staff will be assigned morning drop-off duty on a rotating schedule. **Secondary staff who are not assigned to be outside during morning drop-off, should be outside classrooms, monitoring hallways while students enter the building. For afternoon dismissal, staff who are assigned outside duty, should escort students from the building to the designated area and remain until all students have been picked up. Staff not on outside duty, should be monitoring hallways until they are clear of all students.** Duty/supervision during this time is critical to ensure the safety of our students Elementary and Secondary teams may develop their own duty schedules when appropriate.

#### **G. DETENTION DUTY**

Detention will be on Monday's from 1:25pm until 3:00 pm in the cafeteria. Detention duty will be assigned on a rotating calendar schedule. Saturday detention will be from 8:00 am until 11:00 am. The Head Administrator will serve this detention duty.

#### **H. FACULTY MEETINGS**

Staff are required to attend faculty meetings and professional development. Days and topics depend on the approved calendar and budget. Staff who are absent on the day of meeting/PD, are required to get any information missed in the meeting from a colleague.

#### **I. PTA**

Parent/Teacher organizations are very important to the overall climate of the school. Your participation in the PTA is strongly encouraged. JMA PTA is a separate entity/organization with their own bylaws and leadership committee. If you have questions regarding participating, contact the PTA leadership and review bylaws.

#### **J. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Announcements and the flag pledges will be made each morning (unless schedules conflict). Announcements from staff members need to be submitted the afternoon before the morning it is to be announced to the Head Administrator.

#### **K. HALL PASSES**

Each student coming to the main office must bring a hall pass. Students should not be out of class at any time without an official hall pass. All students are required to use the official hall pass signed by their teacher and indicating the time they are leaving and where they are going. Students outside of their classroom without a pass are considered truant and will be handled according to the Discipline Matrix. Bathroom passes that can be sanitized may be used. When Teachers/Assistants take groups to the restroom, a restroom check should be completed immediately after to address any issues that may

have occurred during the group break. Teachers should maintain a record/sign-out sheet for student restroom breaks.

## **L. CLASSROOM RESPONSIBILITIES**

Teachers are responsible for the physical appearance of their classrooms and for the materials and equipment assigned to them. Please be sure to keep your classrooms neat in appearance and presentable to all. Each classroom should be free of clutter, organized and inviting to students, parents, and community stakeholders. It is not the job of custodial staff to clean classrooms other than emptying trash, sweeping/mopping and weekly vacuuming. Classrooms should be picked up by instructional staff and students throughout and at the end of every day so that the custodial staff have time to sweep, mop, vacuum, etc. Chairs should be stacked on desks by students daily so that they may easily access areas that need to be cleaned. Teach students responsibility and a sense of community pride by making sure they keep their areas clean. Special classroom maintenance and/or cleaning projects should be requested through a work order and submitted to the Head Custodian.

## **M. UNIFORM CHECK**

Being in dress code is part of the expectation for students at JMA. Uniform checks will be done by staff first thing in the morning. When students are out of uniform, please have them call a parent from the classroom, to request a change of clothes. Students are not to go to their next class out of uniform. If a uniform has not been provided by the beginning of the next class, the student is to report to the office for a temporary uniform loan until a personal change of clothes is provided.

## **N. STAFF DRESS CODE (See p. 42 of appendix for Policy G-0770)**

It is the intent of the school that employees groom and dress themselves in an appropriate manner that will not distract or interfere with the school environment. Staff should dress in a manner that will set positive examples for our students.

Clothes should be clean, neat, and not torn.

For women, dresses, skirts, pants, pantsuits, split skirts, shirts, and blouses are suitable. All clothing should be modest and are not to be excessively short, tight or revealing. Any shirt, blouse, or dress that covers the back and midriff and does not have a plunging neckline is acceptable. Stirrup pants or leggings are permitted if appropriately fitted and a top garment covers the upper thigh area. Footwear (shoes, boots, and sandals) should complement professional attire and should be appropriate for working in the classroom or outside.

Suitable attire for men includes pants, shirts, shoes/boots, and socks. Shirts are to be tucked and buttoned. All clothing should be modest and not be excessively tight or revealing.

Suitable attire is expected to be worn for the performance of the job description, i.e., physical education, maintenance and cafeteria employees.

Tank tops, shorts, cut-offs, fatigues, spandex, spaghetti straps, halter-tops, low-cut and sheer/see-through garments, and **short skirts** are considered **inappropriate dress**.

An employee's under-garments should not be visible at any time.

## **O. COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

All teachers are required to establish an open line of communication with students and parents/guardians. It is important to document conversations with parents. Please be sure to contact parents not only instances of negative issues but to inform them of their child's success and celebrations. A record of all parent communication must be kept. Before a child is referred for discipline for minor infractions, the expectation is that the parents have been contacted and are aware of the problem. Instructional staff should make all efforts to mediate behavioral concerns within the classroom setting (and document progressive discipline) prior to sending students to the office for a referral. If a referral form is warranted, the form should clearly demonstrate/explain steps taken prior to the issue of a referral.

Parents do not have the right to cuss at, harass, or threaten JMA staff. Please see the policy titled School Employees & Public Civility for more information.

## **III. BUSINESS OFFICE PROCEDURES, PAYROLL PROCEDURES**

### **A. HANDLING AND RECIEPT OF MONEY**

If a school employee participates in a booster club, PTA, or school sponsored activity, it should not be in a role that requires handling money. School employees should not hold office in a booster club or PTA.

All funds, receipting and depositing to the bank must be done within twenty-four (24) hours as per section 22-8-6, NMSA 1978, if totaling more than \$50.00. If under \$50.00, money may be held until \$50.00 is collected, but no longer than three working days. PTA/Booster Club monies shall be handled by booster club officers and not by JMA staff.

### **B. PAYDAYS**

Paydays are biweekly (every other Friday). Paychecks will be deposited directly into your bank account through direct deposit. Paystubs will be distributed on or before

payday. Contact the Business Office for details and authorization forms. If a payday falls on a federal holiday or a non-school day, paychecks will be deposited the day prior.

As required by law, JMA must withhold federal and state taxes, FICA, Medicare, Educational Retirement, retiree health insurance, and Worker's Compensation employee fees from all pay checks. Questions related to payroll should be directed to the Human Resources office.

### **C. PAYMENT OF OVERTIME**

JMA complies with the Fair Labor Standards Act. Overtime worked in relation to the employee's specific job, if required, in excess of 40 hours per week, shall be paid at one and one-half (1-1/2) times the hourly rate for qualifying employees. No employee is allowed to work overtime without the approval of the administrator.

### **D. TRAVEL REQUESTS AND REIMBURSEMENT**

A travel request must be initiated for any out-of-town trip whether or not reimbursement is made from JMA funds. The travel request must be completed and submitted to the Head Administrator for approval at least two weeks before the planned departure date. Out-of-state travel must be approved by the Council of Trustees prior to the trip. Travel advancements must be requested through the Business Office at least two work weeks in advance of the trip. An advance will only be paid at 80% of anticipated expenses.

Employees must have the signature of the Head Administrator for prior approval of a trip and must complete the remainder of the travel request once they return from the trip. They then return the form to the Business Office before payment can be made. An agenda for the out of town training and any other supporting documents should be included with the travel request form.

Proper signatures must be on gasoline tickets and all other required forms. When school vehicles are available and used, all gasoline ticket purchases must be signed and have the vehicle's license number on the ticket. Check with the Business Office when in doubt about the proper procedure.

Reimbursement requests for any in-district travel allowed by JMA must be turned in to the appropriate department for approval by the last day of each month and should be filled out with all requested information.

### **E. PURCHASING PROCEDURE**

All purchasing, except for petty cash purchases, must be done by purchase order. An internal Purchase Requisition must be completed by the staff member requesting to make a purchase and signed by the Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) and/or Administrator. The purchase order must be obtained through the business office before the purchase is made.

Under no circumstances will JMA pay for an order if a purchase order has not been obtained. When orders are delivered, they should be opened IMMEDIATELY to verify the packing slip for order accuracy and condition of items and return the signed packing slip to the CPO or designee within 24 hours of delivery.

#### **F. GARNISHMENTS**

Every effort should be made to manage financial affairs to avoid JMA being obligated to execute wage garnishments against you. However, if JMA is court ordered to take deductions from your paycheck, you will be notified accordingly.

### **IV. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

#### **A. INSURANCE**

JMA carries a master policy for group health and accident insurance, to which employees may subscribe if they so desire. Loss of time (disability) and life insurance protection policies are also provided. Copies of individual plan details may be obtained from the Insurance Representative in the Business Office.

You become eligible for coverage on the first day of the month following your date of hire, provided you have completed and submitted the necessary paperwork

JMA will pay premium costs **at state minimums** based on the following schedule for health and disability insurances. This is subject to change based on state and federal requirements.

Salary up to \$15,000	- 75% of premium
\$15,000-\$20,000	- 70% of premium
\$20,000-\$25,000	- 65% of premium
\$25,000 -	- 60% of premium

JMA pays 100% of the premium cost for a basic life insurance policy for employees. Additional voluntary life insurance is available, with premiums paid 100% by the employee.

New employees have 31 days from the date of employment in which to enroll for insurance under an open enrollment plan. Thereafter, the insurance carrier has the option of denying enrollment until the next open enrollment period. The 31 day limit applies to any changes in status such as marriage, divorce, death, birth of a child, or change of spouse's job status when insurance was provided through a spouse's former employer. . Staff choosing not to participate, are required to sign a waiver of benefits.

An employee must work at least 20 hours a week to be eligible for health, life, and long-term disability insurances. Basic life insurance coverage is available for any employee who works fifteen (15) hours per week.

Coverage ends on the last day of the month in which an enrolled employee and/or dependent ceases to work or ceases payment of insurance premiums.

## **B. CAFETERIA PLAN AND TAX-SHELTERED ANNUITIES**

JMA may offer participation in a self-administered cafeteria plan. Please visit with the Business Office staff for information.

## **C. EDUCATIONAL RETIREMENT ACCOUNT (ERA):**

Participation in ERA is mandatory by state law and provides eligible employees with a monthly pension benefit upon retirement. **The contributions from the employer and the employee will be at the rate mandated by the state.** Members may withdraw their contributions only when they terminate covered employment in New Mexico. Interest paid to members when they withdraw their contributions is 75% of the percentage amount earned by the fund during the five years preceding the year of withdrawal.

Employees are required by statute to contribute a small percentage of their salary established annually by the Retiree Health Board to a prefunded group health insurance fund for current and future retirees. These contributions, along with employer and current retiree contributions, will be combined to provide benefits to you when you retire. Please refer to the ERB website for more information. <https://www.nmerb.org/>

## **D. WORKER'S COMPENSATION**

All employees are covered by Workers' Compensation against injury at work. An Accident/Incident form must be completed immediately by the person injured and by any witnesses to the accident/incident (POLICY and form E-0500) Employees must notify the Business Office if they are going to see a doctor for any job-related injury. Employees must report job related injuries **immediately** in order to qualify for prompt benefits. Payments are not made for the first seven days of lost time due to an on-the-job accident or illness. Workers reporting to work after being absent due to a work related injury must report to their supervisor with a doctor's release before beginning work.

## **E. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

All employees are covered by unemployment insurance which provides benefits in the event the employee's job is terminated through no fault of the employee. JMA pays the full cost of the program. Eligibility is determined by the NM State Department of Labor.

## **F. SOCIAL SECURITY**

Employees participate in Social Security. The cost is borne equally by the employee and JMA. Contribution levels are established by law and are subject to change.

## **G. ERRORS AND OMISSIONS INSURANCE**

JMA provides this coverage for employees for defense should an employee be sued for liability arising from proper performance of their employment responsibilities.

## **V. YOUR PERSONNEL FILE**

Employees may make an appointment to review their personnel file if they wish and may request copies of all documents they have signed. Original job applications are kept in your personnel file for informational purposes. Personnel Files are to remain in a locked, fireproof cabinet, and they may not be removed from the Human Resources Office.

### **A. EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION (I-9), IMMIGRATION LAW COMPLIANCE**

JMA is required under the Immigration and Reform and Control Act of 1986 to verify that all persons hired are eligible to work in the United States. Therefore, you must complete and sign an Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9. In addition, a document establishing employment eligibility (original Social Security card or birth certificate) and a document that establishes your identity (a state-issued driver's license or other I.D. card with photograph) must be presented.

### **B. W-4 FORM**

An Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate, W-4, must be filed with the Business Office before your first paycheck can be prepared.

### **H. SOCIAL SECURITY CARD**

All employees are required to provide a copy of their government issued Social Security card to the Business Office. Paychecks will be processed using the name exactly as it appears on your Social Security card.

If you cannot locate your original card, or if you need to change the name on your card, contact your local social security office or visit <https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/>.

### **I. BIRTH CERTIFICATE**

Employees are asked to provide a copy of their birth certificate to the Business Office, if possible. These are kept on file and used when filing for retirement benefits.

### **J. PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR LICENSE(S) AND TRAINING CERTIFICATES**

All employees who teach, supervise an instructional program, counsel, provide special instructional services, coach, or administer in JMA are required to hold a valid certificate



for the appropriate service function. New Mexico Statutes and State Board of Education Rules require that all applicants for initial educator licensure be fingerprinted as part of the license application process in order to establish positive identification for a state and federal criminal background check.

If you do not already have a license you should apply through the Professional Licensure Unit, State Department of Education, Education Building, Santa Fe, NM 87501-2786. Phone: (505) 827-6587. Applications are available on-line at [ped.state.nm.us](http://ped.state.nm.us) (licensure). A complete, official transcript of your college work, including degree designation, must be sent with the license form and fingerprint cards. All applicants for initial license, and all applicants whose prior license has expired or has been suspended/revoked, are required to pass the New Mexico Teacher Assessment Examination. Information about the NMTA is available in the Business Office.

Please be aware that it is the employee's responsibility to secure the license necessary for their position. There is a fee for licensure and associated fingerprint background check. Money orders or certified bank checks for background checks that will be sent to the Department of Education for licensure purposes are to be made out to the "New Mexico Department of Education."

#### **K. BACKGROUND CHECKS**

New employees applying for licensing will complete the background check as part of the license application process. New employees who are already licensed or who do not require licensing must complete a background check through JMA. Please go to <https://www.cogentid.com/index.htm> to complete this process.

#### **L. VERIFICATION OF EXPERIENCE**

Employees are responsible for ensuring that verification of their prior related experience is on file in the Business Office in order to receive full credit on the salary schedule. The Business Office will advise you if additional information is required.

#### **M. OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS**

Employees are required to have official transcripts on file with the Business Office. Transcripts for additional semester hours earned must be on file by October 1 of each year in order to receive credit on the salary schedule during that school year. New professional employees without official transcripts on file by the October 1 deadline become unemployable by JMA.

## **N. CONTRACTS**

Upon receipt of your contract, please read it carefully and if its contents correspond to the agreements which were made with you, please sign and date both copies, retain the original for your files and return the copy to the Business Office. If there are any questions, please feel free to ask them. Sometimes college credits you earned since receiving your degree are left off the original contract until you have had an opportunity to provide the transcripts showing all college work.

Remember that a Level II license or master's degree is required before a sixth contract is offered for all professional employees hired after 1989-90.

## **O. CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE CERTIFICATE**

All employees of JMA are required by state statute to participate in on-line training through GCN on a variety of topics including, but not limited to: Child Abuse identification and reporting, Substance Abuse prevention, FERPA annually. A certificate of completion must be on file with the Business Office. Information on accessing these courses will be provided to employees at the start of each school year.

## **P. JOB DESCRIPTION**

Each newly hired employee will be asked to sign a job description. A signed copy will be kept in your personnel file, and a copy will be available to you for your records.

# **VI. MEDICAL FILE**

## **A. MEDICAL RECORDS AND INFORMATION**

Medical records, if any, will be kept in a separate confidential file. This information is maintained in the strictest confidence.

JMA reserves the right to require an employee's participation in a health or mental examination to determine the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of his or her position with or without accommodations.

JMA requests that you complete an Employee Contact Form which is kept separate from your personnel file.

JMA abides by the federal requirement of the Bloodborne Pathogen Act. A copy of this policy is printed in the back of this Handbook.

Any employee who has a pre-existing medical condition at the time of employment and/or subsequent to employment must present a medical release from their physician.

All medical information submitted to the Business Office is maintained in a separate medical file and this information is not made available to anyone outside of the Business Office.

Staff may be required to provide evidence of certain vaccinations based on current health orders or emergencies.

## **VII. ABSENCES AND LEAVES**

### **A. REPORTING ABSENCES**

Requests for personal leave, professional leave and Family Medical Leave must be submitted to the Business Manager, who will present the request to the Head Administrator for prior approval. In case of illness, you should notify the front office personnel, business manager **and** the Head Administrator as soon as inability to report to work is determined. The same procedure should be followed for bereavement and family illness.

### **B. HOLIDAYS AND VACATIONS**

JMA follows all holidays determined by the Calendar Committee and approved by the Council and NMPED each year. Individual employee groups may have varying holiday schedules. See current school year calendar.

Vacation days also follow the school calendar. The Custodial/Maintenance Department's vacation days and holidays are determined by length of service and the school calendar. Employees are not allowed to work during holidays to replace regular workdays without prior written approval of their supervisor.

### **Q. SICK LEAVE / PERSONAL LEAVE**

Sick leave for nine-month staff is 10 days each year. Twelve-month staff receive 13 days of sick leave each year. Sick leave is prorated if employed less than a full contract year. These days are cumulative on an unlimited basis. Upon the first year of employment, staff are given 15 sick leave days.

Sick leave may be used for personal illness or illness or death of immediate family members. Immediate family members include the following:

- ◆ spouse
- ◆ daughter/step-daughter/daughter-in-law
- ◆ son/step-son/son-in-law

- ◆ father/step-father/father-in-law
- ◆ mother/step-mother/mother-in-law
- ◆ brother/step-brother/brother-in-law
- ◆ sister/step-sister/sister-in-law
- ◆ grandparents or grandchildren
- ◆ foster child or foster parent
- ◆ relative living in the immediate household of the employee and who is dependent upon the employee for their care

Sick leave in excess of three consecutive days will require a doctor's statement indicating that the illness justifies the leave (five consecutive days for custodial/maintenance employees).

Two Personal Leave days per year are granted to school year staff upon request. Three personal leave days are granted to full year staff upon request. The leave cannot be transferred to successive years. This leave is for business or emergencies that cannot be handled before or after school hours. This time is to be scheduled through your supervisor. Approval will be granted for non-emergencies if the absence does not provide an undue hardship on students and other staff of the school.

All leave forms for personal time must be completed prior to the absence. When the absence is due to illness, the leave form must be completed immediately upon returning to work. The office staff is not responsible for completing the leave forms and is not allowed to track down employees to remind them that they are due.

## **R. SICK LEAVE BANK**

JMA school employees are not eligible for the Carlsbad Municipal School District Sick Leave Bank. However, JMA has received the approval from the Governing Council to institute a sick leave bank. If you are interested, please contact human resources.

## **S. SUBSTITUTES**

Attendance is important. Students are more successful when staff are present to support them daily. There is not a substitute teacher who can take the place of the teacher. When leaving directions for your substitute, keep in mind that they may not have teaching experience. . Therefore, please ensure that lesson plans are clear, materials are easy to locate, and tasks are manageable for a non-staff member. A substitute resource file should be prepared and must include the following:

- a. Lesson plans

- b. A daily schedule
- c. Attendance information
- d. Seating chart(s)
- e. School and classroom rules
- f. Lunch procedures
- g. Dismissal procedures
- h. Log-in information for online learning
- i. Any other information to ensure a successful day

## **T. LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Under certain circumstances, employees who have completed at least six years of satisfactory service with JMA may be granted a one year leave of absence without pay. Paid employment cannot be accepted during the leave time. If staff find it necessary to request such a leave, consult the JMA Head Administrator.

## **U. FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)**

This act requires JMA to offer up to 12-weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period to eligible employees for one or more of the following reasons:

- ◆ for the birth and care of the newborn child of the employee
- ◆ for placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care
- ◆ to care for an immediate family member (spouse, child, or parent) with a serious health condition
- ◆ to take medical leave when the employee is unable to work because of a serious health condition.

Spouses employed by the same employer are jointly entitled to a combined total of 12 work weeks of family leave for the birth and care of the newborn child, for placement of a child for adoption or foster care, and to care for an immediate family member who has a serious health condition.

JMA may choose to use accrued paid leave (such as sick leave or personal leave days) to cover some or all of the FMLA leave.

JMA is required to maintain group health insurance coverage for an employee on FMLA leave whenever such insurance was provided before the leave was taken and on the same terms as if the employee had continued to work. If applicable, arrangements will need to be made for employees to pay their share of health insurance premiums while on leave. The employer may recover premiums it paid to maintain health coverage for an employee who fails to return to work from FMLA leave.

Upon return from FMLA leave, an employee must be restored to the original job, or to an equivalent job with equivalent pay, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment.

Employees seeking to use FMLA leave are required to provide 30-day advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable and such notice is practical. JMA may also require the employee to provide medical certification supporting the need for leave due to a serious health condition affecting the employee or an immediate family member and periodic reports during FMLA leave regarding the employee's status and intent to return to work.

## **V. MILITARY SERVICE LEAVE**

Employees may request leave of absence for military service. JMA will grant such leave upon written request for the duration of service.

Military Reserves or National Guard Absences may be taken as necessary to fulfill these required obligations.

## **W. CIVIC LEAVE**

Civic leave is granted to employees called for jury duty. If the employee receives compensation for jury service for time spent during working hours, that pay is to be reimbursed to JMA through the Business Office.

An employee will be granted civic leave to attend a school related legal proceeding at which the employee is either a party to a case or is required by a lawfully issued subpoena to attend. The employee will provide written verification of the employee's eligibility for this leave to the employee's immediate supervisor.

An employee who receives a subpoena for a matter that is not school related will be required to use either a personal leave day or leave without pay.

Should any provision in this Employee Handbook be found to be unenforceable and invalid, such finding does not invalidate the entire Employee Handbook.

This handbook is not a contract of employment, expressed or implied. Jefferson Montessori Academy employees are “at-will” unless their employment status is modified by State Law, personal contract, or collective bargaining agreement. At-will employment may be terminated at any time by Jefferson Montessori Academy or by the employee, with or without cause.

This Employee Handbook replaces (supersedes) any and all other or previous Jefferson Montessori Academy Employee Handbooks/Manuals.

**All Jefferson Montessori Academy policies can be accessed by scanning the QR Code below.**



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT**

I understand that I am responsible for being aware of the contents of the 2019-20 JMA Employee Handbook, School Policies and School Regulations. After review, I have had the opportunity to ask questions on any rules and regulations that I do not understand. I agree to abide by these rules and regulations. I will submit an original signature copy of this page to the JMA Head Administrator within two weeks of receipt of this Handbook.

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Employee's Signature

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Date Signed

Employee's Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee's Date of Hire: \_\_\_\_\_