

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

MONTESSORI PROGRAM MONITORING AND EXITING GUIDELINES

6192

Procedure No.

October 30, 2023

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To identify steps for enrollment of students in the Montessori program, and for monitoring and exiting students enrolled in the Montessori program who are experiencing difficulty in school.

- II. **POLICY:** The Prince George's County Board of Education (Board) firmly believes that the academic achievement of all students is paramount. Student academic achievement is supported by providing equitable access to a high quality education and resources to guarantee that every child graduating from Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) is college and career ready. (Board Policy 0118)

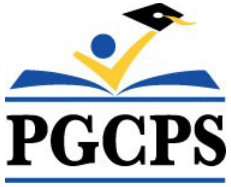
- III. **BACKGROUND:** The Board is dedicated to supporting programs of choice that offer a unique or specialized curriculum or instructional approach. These programs are designed to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Entry into a Montessori program is generally managed through a computerized, random selection process called a lottery.

- IV. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - A. *Entry level* – The age at which the program instruction begins is three (3) and four (4) by September 1. For the Montessori Specialty Program, students aged three (3) and four (4) are accepted on a probationary status for the first eight (8) weeks, beginning with the day a student becomes an active participant in the class.

 - B. *Montessori Specialty Program* – A program that provides options following the model created by Maria Montessori. It is designed to address the needs and interests of students and parents/guardians beginning at the entry age of three (3) or four (4) years old by September 1 of the enrollment year.

 - C. *Out of boundary* – A school that resides outside of PGCPS's defined boundaries for a residential address.

 - D. *Reciprocity* – Entrance is offered through the lottery process on a space- available basis when a student first enters PGCPS from attending a school outside Prince George's County. The student must have attended at least four (4) consecutive quarters and/or at least two (2) consecutive semesters at a public, charter or private school Montessori program that is affiliated and/or a FULL member with American Montessori Society (AMS) or American Montessori Internationale (AMI).



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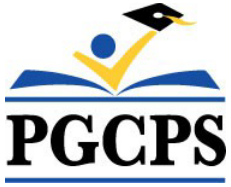
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- E. *Specialty Program* – A program that provides options in addition to the broad spectrum of programs in each comprehensive school. Designed to address the needs and interests of students and parents/guardians, *Specialty Programs* allow for exploration and development of interests and needs, while following state and PGCPS mandates. The Montessori program is one kind of Specialty Program.
- F. *Student Intervention Team (SIT)* – *SIT* is a school-based, problem-solving team comprised of faculty members (usually general educators) who meet to help teachers identify and implement appropriate interventions for students who need support so that they are ready and able to learn, as well as students who are in need of academic acceleration. Most often, the *SIT* will discuss a student who is having academic or behavioral difficulties. Challenges with attendance/tardiness or emotional/health issues may also be addressed.
- G. *Student Support Team (SST)* – *SST* is a multidisciplinary team with expertise in teaching and learning, problem solving, and interventions. It is used when strategies and/or interventions for a student have proven unsuccessful. Additionally, the collaborative problem-solving processes followed by a *SST* promote shared ownership for student, school, and system success, and help to reduce the disproportionate identification of certain student groups for special education services.
- H. *Transfer* – Permission to attend an out of boundary school.

V. PROCEDURES:

- A. All Montessori programs adhere to general PGCPS administrative procedures pertaining to promotion, retention, and acceleration of students found in Administrative Procedure **5123.2**, with the exception of Early Entrance (see Administrative Procedure **5111.1**). See Administrative Procedure **6148** for additional guidance.
- B. **Selection and Enrollment**
1. **Age of Entry** – Entry into the Montessori program for children ages three (3) and four (4) is managed by the lottery. There is no early entrance for students. For Montessori programs, students aged three (3) and four (4) are accepted on a probationary status for the first eight (8) weeks, beginning with the day a student becomes an active participant in the class.
 2. **Sibling Preference**



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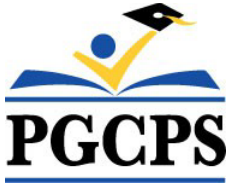
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- a. For students who gained entry to a Specialty Program through the lottery, PGCPS provides special consideration (see paragraph V.B.2.c. immediately below) for the entry of a sibling into the same program at the entry level only. Entry level is defined as Prekindergarten ages three (3) and four (4) for the Montessori program.
 - b. A sibling is a brother or sister by blood, marriage, or adoption living in the same household. Friends, cousins or two separate families living under the same roof **do not qualify as siblings**. The older sibling must continue attending the same Specialty Program for the upcoming school year for which a sibling placement is requested. A current Specialty Program student who is in the terminal grade of a program cannot bring in a sibling.
 - c. Sibling applicants must officially enter the lottery and complete a sibling application, which can only be obtained by contacting the specialty school of the already enrolled sibling student upon the opening of the lottery. PGCPS's consideration is made on a **space available basis after lottery placement**. (See Administrative Procedure **6148**.)
 - d. The sibling application must be completed during the lottery window. A sibling is able to attend our PGCPS Montessori Program by completing a lottery application at 3 or 4 years old only.
3. Reciprocity – For Parents Who Seek
- a. For parents who seek entry for grades kindergarten and higher, they must submit a lottery application. Documentation must be submitted indicating they meet the requirements for academic validation.
 - b. A parent must submit a request in writing to the Department of Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries. Placement via reciprocity is made on a space-available basis only and does not offer guaranteed placement.
 - c. The written request must include the following:
 - 1) current written program description from the school that the student previously attended;
 - 2) most recent report card and/or transcript for the student;



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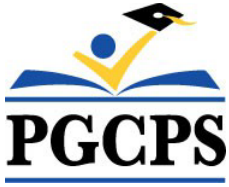
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- 3) contact information and website for the school previously attended; and
 - 4) documentation validating the recent establishment of a Prince George's County residence.
- d. The Department of Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries will send a request to the Division of Academics to determine if the student meets eligibility requirements per Section C. Academic Validation.
 - e. If the Division of Academics determines that programs are not comparable, no offer of reciprocity will be extended.
4. Early Entrance procedures do not apply to Specialty Programs, including Montessori (see Administrative Procedure **5111.1**). There is no early entry to Specialty Programs.
 5. Lottery applications will be available and may be submitted electronically online through the PGCPS website at <https://www.pgcps.org/lottery>.
 - a. Parent(s)/Guardians(s) are encouraged to check with the Department of Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries for application deadlines for each school year. Each application is date stamped and an email confirmation is provided.
 - b. Exceptions to the deadline will not be permitted.
 - c. A separate lottery application must be submitted for each child in a family that desires entrance to the Montessori program.
 - d. Program placements are based upon the principal residence of the parent/guardian, which is stated on the lottery application at the time of submission. Each program location serves a defined geographic area. If a student resides in the geographic area for the Montessori school, that boundary is where the student may be invited to enroll should he/she become eligible because of the lottery process.
 6. Once a seat offered has been made and accepted by the parent/guardian the following **proof of income** is required from **all** parents/guardians in the household per Maryland State Department of Education guidelines.
 - 1) If currently employed, two (bi-weekly) current pay stubs or four (weekly) current pay stubs.



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- 2) Additional documents that may be accepted:
 - a) Current Tax Transcripts (Self Employed Only)
 - b) Child Support Letter
 - c) Unemployment Stubs/Letter
 - d) Notarized letter with amount from person assisting parent
 - e) Notarized salary letter on company letterhead
 - f) Temporary Cash Assistance/Cash Assistance/Supplementary Security Income

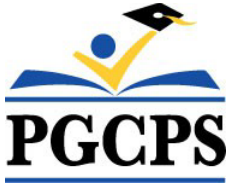
7. In keeping with the Board's non-discrimination policies, students with disabilities will be afforded the same access to Montessori admission through the lottery. The IEP team at the Montessori program shall meet within 30 calendar days of admission to review the student's IEP and discuss its implementation.

C. Academic Validation

Students must have attended at least four (4) consecutive quarters and/or at least two (2) consecutive semesters at a public, charter, or private school and be currently enrolled. No lapse in Montessori instruction will be accepted. The program must at least have a **professional affiliation** or be a **FULL member** in good standing with AMS or AMI. MSDE licensing does not constitute approval of the school's Montessori program.

D. Procedures for Attendance

1. Attendance
 - a. All students admitted to the Montessori program and currently enrolled at the end of the year will automatically continue in the school provided they meet the enrollment criteria, unless they are officially withdrawn or transferred to another school. If a student is absent for **ten (10) consecutive days** due to an unlawful absence, they will be automatically withdrawn and may not be re-enrolled in the Montessori program.
 - b. If a family has to travel due to an unexpected emergency, a notification must be submitted prior to the departure to Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries. Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries will work with the school Principal to determine if the student will be able to re-enter the program.



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- c. Refer to Administrative Procedure 5113, Student Attendance, Absence and Truancy regarding attendance procedures
- d. Whenever it is determined that a student's attendance requires intervention, written notification of that determination will be provided by school administration to the parents/guardians.
- e. School administrators, coordinators, and teachers may request a review of a student's attendance in PGCPS SchoolMAX under the following circumstance:

A student incurs *eight (8) unlawful absences from a class* in a quarter, *fifteen (15) unlawful absences in a semester or twenty (20) or more unlawful absences from school in a year.*

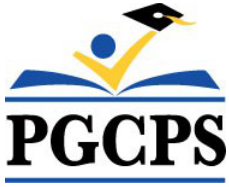
- f. Attendance interventions initiated by administrators, coordinators and/or school counselors will include a parent conference(s) and strategic intervention(s) provided by the SIT.

2. Attendance Withdrawal

- a. Students who have received attendance interventions and were unsuccessful with improving attendance will be referred to the Principal and program coordinator for a final decision.
- b. If a withdrawal is the recommendation of the SIT team, documentation must accompany the written request for removal from the program and forwarded to the Chief of School Support and Leadership/ designee for review and approval.
- c. The principal will send a copy of the final withdrawal letter to the Department of Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries. A copy will be placed in the student's program file inside the cumulative folder.

3. Transfers

- a. Transfers within a program of choice between program locations are not permitted.
- b. Out of boundary placements will be made available, if applicable, as early as July 1 of every year.



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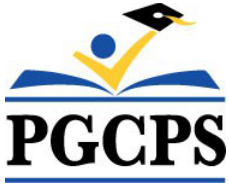
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- c. Out of boundary placements will be permitted only in the case that the requested program location has unfilled seats at the grade level after considering placements for all eligible, in-boundary lottery applicants. Information regarding availability will be made online via the PGCPS website.
 - d. If a transfer/out of boundary placement is approved, transportation is the responsibility of the parents/guardians. The student must arrive on time and be picked up on time from school and student activities for after-hour events.
 - e. Parents who accept placements for an out of boundary location give up their right to return to the boundary program location at a later date unless they apply to the lottery for a boundary placement.
 - f. Failure to meet time and attendance expectations may lead to removal from the program.
4. Academic Expectations
- a. Montessori schools provide an interdisciplinary, discovery-based approach to learning presented sequentially over the years a child spends in the program. Parents must sign an agreement to adhere to the expectations of the program once accepted and each year enrolled in the program (see Attachment A). Children are placed in multi-aged classrooms (Primary Level – ages 3-5; Lower Elementary School – Grades 1-3; and Upper Elementary School – Grades 4-5).
 - b. Three (3) to five (5) year olds are guided in developing coordination, concentration, a sense of order, and independence. Six (6) to nine (9), and nine (9) to 12 year olds learn through interdisciplinary and hands-on learning activities. Middle school students are offered experiences designed to help them delve into interconnections of ideas and events.
 - c. Primary Level (ages three (3), four (4), and five (5) years old) students do not receive report cards. Their academic progress is provided by the teacher using classroom observations and the information gathered is shared in confidential parent/teacher conferences, twice a year.
 - 1) PR = Proficient – the child can demonstrate indicators independently 90 – 100%



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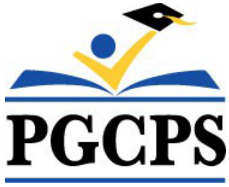
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- 2) IP = In Process – the child can reliably demonstrate indicators 80 – 89%
 - 3) EM = Emerging – the child demonstrates indicator with assistance 70 – 79%
 - 4) ND = Needs Development – the child does not demonstrate indicators 50 – 69%
- d. Grading Scale for Lower Level (Grades 1-3) and Upper Level (Grades 4-5) is:
- 1) ABL = Above Grade Level – the child can demonstrate indicators independently
 - 2) OGL = On Grade Level – the child can demonstrate indicators; may sometimes need guidance
 - 3) BGL = Below Grade Level – the child has difficulty demonstrating indicators with assistance
 - 4) EM = Emerging – the child is just beginning to learn the new indicator of study
 - 5) IP = In Process – the child is reliably demonstrating indicator
 - 6) ND = Needs Development – the child does not have a grasp on indicators taught with or without assistance
 - 7) PR = Proficient – the child can demonstrate indicators independently; from time to time may need assistance
- e. Montessori middle school students in Grades 6-8 use the same grading scale as listed in Administrative Procedure **5121.2**. Those students who fail to attain a “C”: average, 70% or **2.0** or better in one or more of the core academic courses, in any marking period, will be given academic support.
5. Academic Support
- a. Whenever it is determined that a student is in need of academic support, the teacher of record will provide written notification of the need to the administrators and parent/guardian.
 - b. Academic support, initiated at the end of any marking period in which the student experiences academic difficulty, as identified by the teacher, will include a parent/guardian conference and strategic intervention provided by the SIT.
 - c. The SIT will determine the academic support provided. If there is further need for academic support, the student will be referred to the school’s SST for additional assistance (see Administrative Procedure **5124**).



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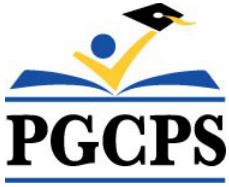
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- 1) Students who have received academic support in Grades K-8 will be referred to the school's SIT/SST for review. If withdrawal is the recommendation of the school team, documentation must accompany the written request for removal from the program and be forwarded to the Chief of School Support and Leadership/designee, Associate Superintendent, and Instructional Director for review.
- 2) Withdrawal supporting documentation must include:
 - a) the student's withdrawal letter;
 - b) the student's action plan, including a description of intervention efforts that were unsuccessful; and
 - c) any other documentation pertaining to the student's withdrawal (*e.g.*, report card, behavioral plan, attendance record, etc.).
- d. At any time, parent/guardian, teacher, counselor, and/or administrator/coordinator may request a review of the student's grades/progress.

E. Removal

1. Academic Withdrawal

- a. Students who have received academic interventions for a minimum of 2-6 weeks and were unsuccessful in consistently improving academic achievement will be referred to the SST for further strategies and/or interventions. The program coordinator/SST chair or Principal's designee will provide written notification to the parent that the student has been referred to the SST.
- b. Once the student is referred to the SST, the plan developed should be re-evaluated every 6-8 weeks.
- c. If, after the 6-8 week period, the student does not make academic progress, the SST should determine if referral to the Section 504 team or Special Education team is necessary.
- d. If the student is ineligible for a 504 plan or special education services, the Principal shall consult with the program coordinator to make a decision regarding the student's status in the program.
- e. Once a recommendation for withdrawal is approved by the Chief of School Support



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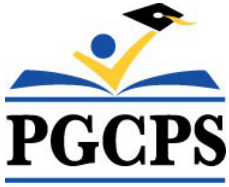
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and Leadership, the Principal will notify the parent/guardian in writing via email and certified mail of the decision to return the student to their regular attendance area school at the end of the grading quarter of the present school year.

- f. A student will return to their boundary school between the first and third quarters. Should the quarter be the fourth grading period, the student will begin the next school year in regular attendance at their boundary school. The student's withdrawal papers are to be sent to the student's boundary school.
- g. The Principal will send a copy of the withdrawal letter to the Department of Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries. The student will be removed from the program file.

2. Voluntary Withdrawal

- a. If a student is voluntarily withdrawn, the parent/guardian will sign the *Montessori Program Voluntary Withdrawal* form (see Attachment B).
- b. Any student voluntarily withdrawn from the program forfeits re-enrollment in the program. However, re-entry to the Montessori program within **ten (10) calendar days** may be permitted on application to the Department of Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries, who will consult with the school to see if space is still available. Notification of a decision will come from the Department of Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries. Only in extraordinary circumstances will re-entry be permitted more than **ten (10) calendar days** after a voluntary withdrawal.
- c. Parents/Guardians will receive a letter from the Principal to complete a withdrawal process that includes a brief exit interview with the Montessori Program Coordinator and a **30-minute** withdrawal appointment with the registrar. A sample letter is attached (see Attachment C).
- d. If a transfer is recommended, the Principal will send a copy of the withdrawal letter to the Department of Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries. The student will be removed from the program file.
- e. The school counselor/registrar will advise the parent on withdrawal and registration processes (see Administrative Procedure 5111 Registration and Withdrawal of Students).



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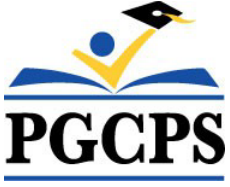
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3. Behavioral Difficulties

- a. A student is considered to be experiencing behavioral difficulty when exhibiting disciplinary conduct that significantly disrupts the educational environment, indicating their unwillingness to continue participation in the Montessori program; or causing actual or potential harm to other students, staff or themselves.
- b. Behavioral support initiated by administrators, coordinators, and or school counselors will include a parent conference, strategic intervention provided by the SIT/SST, and a written action plan.
- c. Whenever it is determined that a student is in need of behavioral intervention, written notification of that determination will be provided to the parents/guardians.
- d. At any time, parents/guardians, teachers, counselors, or administrators/coordinators may request a behavioral review of a student's conduct.
- e. Due to the unique settings in which Montessori students are taught, certain behaviors may be grounds for a student forfeiting their placement in the program. The SIT/SST and school Principal will weigh the unique factors of each case and the range of interventions, management strategies and responses needed in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.
- f. The SIT/SST will reconvene as appropriate to discuss the students' progress.

4. Behavioral Withdrawal

- a. If substantial improvement has not been made on a student's behavior plan, the Principal shall consult with the program coordinator to make a decision regarding the student's status in the program and notify the parent, Instructional Director, and Pupil Accounting and School Boundaries of the decision, as needed.
- b. Withdrawal supporting documentation must include:
 - 1) the student's withdrawal letter;
 - 2) the student's action plan, including a description of intervention efforts that



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were unsuccessful; and

3) any other documentation pertaining to the student's withdrawal (e.g., report card, behavioral plan, attendance record, etc.).

c. If a behavioral withdrawal is the recommendation of the Principal and program coordinator, documentation to include progress monitoring notes, and all other documentation must accompany the written request for removal from the program and be forwarded to the Chief of School Support and Leadership/ designee for review and a decision.

d. If withdrawal is recommended and approved by the Chief of School Support and Leadership, the principal will send a copy of the withdrawal letter to the Department of Pupil Accounting.

e. The student will be removed from the program file.

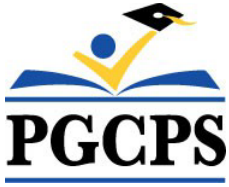
f. The school counselor/registrar will advise the parent/guardian on withdrawal and registration processes (see Administrative Procedure **5111** Registration and Withdrawal of Students).

g. A student may be subject to immediate removal from the specialty program for documented behavioral violations that include, but are not limited to: arson, assault, bullying, sexual harassment, theft, threat, use/distribution of controlled substances and use/possession of weapons or instruments used as such.

5. Appeals

a. The Chief of School Support and Leadership/designee shall make determinations regarding removal from the program under this administrative procedure. The Office of Appeals serves as the Superintendent's designee.

b. A parent/guardian who wishes to appeal a withdrawal decision must submit a written appeal to the Office of Appeals within **ten (10)** calendar days of the date of the decision. The student is enrolled at their boundary school pending the decision of the appeal. The parent/guardian must indicate the reason for seeking a review of the decision and may include additional information for consideration.



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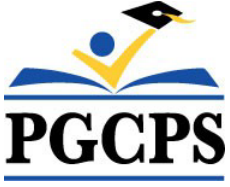
- c. The Office of Appeals will determine if there was a material departure from the policies and procedures by the program coordinator, Principal, Instructional Director, or Chief of School Support and Leadership which adversely impacted the appellant.
- d. An appeal from the decision by the Office of Appeals to the Board must be made in writing and received by the Board Office within 30 calendar days of the date on the decision letter by the Office of Appeals.
- e. If there is additional information in the appeal to the Board, the Office of Appeals will be given an opportunity to respond in writing and shall provide a copy of its response to the appellant before the Board considers the appeal.
- f. The Board's decision shall be final and rendered in writing.

VI. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE: In an effort to ensure that the enrollment and appeals processes are implemented fairly and efficiently, the following monitoring tools and processes will be utilized:

- A. Grades, attendance, and behavior will be monitored by the Program Coordinator semi-annually.
- B. The school team will review the enrollment file and appeals process by September 30 of each school year. A record containing the staff signature to signify completion of this task will be kept on file in the Principal's office for four years and made available for review.

VII. RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES:

- Administrative Procedure 5111 – *Registration and Withdrawal of Students*
- Administrative Procedure 5111.1 – *Admission to Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and First Grade*
- Administrative Procedure 5113 – *Student Attendance, Absence, and Truancy*
- Administrative Procedure 5121.1 – *Grading and Reporting Elementary Schools Early Childhood through Grade Five*
- Administrative Procedure 5121.2 – *Grading and Reporting for Middle Schools Grade Six through Grade Eight*
- Administrative Procedure 5123.2 – *General Procedures Pertaining to Promotion, Retention and Acceleration of Students*



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- Administrative Procedure 5124 – *Student Intervention Team (SIT) and Student Support Team (SST)*
- Administrative Procedure 5166 – *Personal Care and Toileting*
- Administrative Procedure 6148 – *Lottery and Audition Administration and Selection Procedures*
- Administrative Procedure 10101 – *Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook*
- Administrative Procedure 5143 – *Bullying Harassment or Intimidation*

VIII. MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THIS ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE: This administrative procedure originates with the Division of Academics, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and will be updated as needed.

IX. CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDES: This administrative procedure cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 6192, dated August 31, 2020.

X. EFFECTIVE DATE: October 30, 2023

Attachments:

A – Specialty Programs Agreement

B – Voluntary Withdrawal from the Montessori Program Parent Form

C – Sample Parent/Guardian Letter – Voluntary Withdrawal from Montessori Program