Student/Parent Handbook

2015 - 2016 School Year
The Gerson School Believes...

In an holistic approach to learning in a diverse environment.

All children can learn to:
- finish what they start
- overcome obstacles
- demonstrate tenacity
- develop empathy

Students can develop character by learning accountability to:
- self
- peers
- staff
- community

In a comprehensive academically rigorous curriculum implemented through:
- smaller classes
- therapeutic environment
- individualized attention
- differentiated instruction

At The Gerson School students learn how to be:
- Genuine
- Engaged
- Respectful
- Safe
- Original
- Noble
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
The Gerson School follows a philosophy that believes students need more positive than negative feedback and reinforcement. The model the School uses is called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. This model is recommended by the Ohio Department of Education. We believe that students should be noticed when they are making the right decisions MORE than when they are making the wrong ones. The Gerson School incorporates positive rewards such as public acknowledgement, tokens of success and other reinforcements that encourage the student to do more good. When a student displays the actions that reflect the elements of Genuine, Engaged, Respectful, Safe, Original and Noble behavior, it will be acknowledged and validated. Conversely, when a student makes bad choices, consequences will be appropriate to each individual choice made in order to provide a learning experience rather than a punishment.

Nondiscrimination Policy
The Gerson School admits students who need the special support and services of the School regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender expression or religion.

Cooperation with Outside Agencies
Many students attending The Gerson School are in the process of working with therapists, counselors, case managers or mental health professionals. The School makes every effort to support this work. Copies of progress reports can be obtained by service providers, and adjustments to schedules can be made when emergency appointments have to take place during the school day. It is in the best interest of our students that we ask for permission from parents and guardians to contact and communicate with these professionals.

Medication
Many students may need to take prescribed medications. An Administration of Medication Request Form must be filed with the School. This form must be completed before medication can be administered during the school day. The administration of prescription drugs requires a physician's and parent/guardian's permission. The administration of non-prescription drugs requires only the parent/guardian's permission. A safe supervised storage area is provided for medications. The staff must store medication for students. Medications cannot remain with the student or in their lockers or school bags during the school day.

It is important to alert the School's Director or Assistant Principal when there has been a change in a student's medication. We need to know when to expect a change in behavior and to look for symptoms. Staff can better appreciate the changes in the student and assist him/her in managing these changes when we are aware. Staff can also inform the family or physician when reactions to the medication's effectiveness are identified.

Calendar
The School calendar is posted on the School's website and included in this packet. Vacations and some holidays may differ from those of a student's home school. All students are expected to be in attendance according to The Gerson School calendar.
Emergency School Closings
Emergencies due to severe weather, energy problems or other calamities may cause the unscheduled closing of the School. In these situations, The Gerson School will notify students and families via Applewood Centers’ website, local television and/or radio and telephone. *Please be aware that we will be listed as The Gerson School and NOT as part of Cleveland Municipal School District.* As a general rule, however, is if the Cleveland Metropolitan School District is closed, The Gerson School will be closed.

Transportation
Public schools who refer students for special education services at The Gerson School may arrange for the transportation of these students. Families are directed to the transportation departments of their local public schools to inquire about their policies.

Dress Code
The best learning takes place in an environment in which everyone feels cared for and appreciated as individuals. The Gerson School’s Dress Code supports these beliefs by creating a neutral place where students will not be offended, distracted, threatened or demeaned while they have the opportunity to express their own individuality.

Clothing and accessories that constitute a safety hazard, make inappropriate or insulting statements, advocate illegal or immoral activity, or distract from the educational process are not permitted. Students must wear shoes in the School at all times. Clothing designed to be undergarments and/or those that graphically or symbolically promote sex, drugs, alcohol, violence or depreciation of human dignity and/or that imply or signify membership in any unauthorized organization, club or group is prohibited. Pants that sag below the waistline, shirts that expose the midriff, sheer clothing (unless worn over acceptable clothing), and shorts that are too short (in the School’s Staff opinion) are not permitted.

The judgment of the School concerning clothing which violates this dress code is final. Students who are in violation of any part of the dress code will be required to change the offending clothing immediately (going home if necessary), and return to their regularly scheduled class as soon as possible.

Grading Periods
The Gerson School uses four nine-week grading periods per school year – two for each semester. In this way, students, parents and Advisors can track progress at short intervals and students can quickly remedy areas of poor progress before too much time is lost. Progress reports are mailed home within two weeks of the end of a grading period. These detailed reports contain grades and the comments of teachers for each subject. If a Progress Report is not received at home within 10 days of the end of a grading period, a copy should be requested from the office of the School.

Block Schedule
The Gerson School has a block schedule format that allows for team teaching and cross curricular exposure for all subjects. The block schedule will include Math and Science teams and Language Arts and Social Studies teams. This
allows for classes to be longer, more focused and integrative. It is The Gerson School’s belief that this model with provide more opportunity for deeper learning as recommended by the Common Core standards.

**Advisors**
A licensed intervention specialist is assigned to each student as his/her Advisor. All students meet daily with their Advisors. Advisors monitor their advisee’s progress, help them to develop positive ways to handle problems and assist them with career planning. Students are encouraged to discuss any personal concerns that interfere with their school progress with their Advisors. Advisors are the primary mentors, resource persons and guides for their advisees. Advisors will assist students in planning class schedules and career preparation.

**Lockers**
Students may be assigned a locker. Students must supply their own lock for their locker and must take responsibility to keep their locker locked. In order to maintain the security of belongings, the student should not give the combination or key to any other student. Please do not keep food or other perishable items in lockers – the School provides a refrigerator for students to keep their lunches in. Students are encouraged to leave valuable items at home.

**Lost and Found**
Students who find lost articles are to give the item to the School secretary or the Assistant Principal. Students looking for lost items should check with the School secretary or the Assistant Principal. Items left at School after the conclusion of the school year will be discarded. The School is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

**Visitors**
Upon entering the School, all visitors must sign in at the front desk and receive a visitor’s badge. They must sign out when they leave indicating their departure time.

**Semester Grades**
Semester grades are the average of the grades from each grading period and the grade for the final exam/project. Semester grades are the grades entered on a student’s Transcript. Abilities and needs are considered for individual students in assessing achievement.

**Final Examinations/Projects**
Final examinations or projects are scheduled during the last week of each semester. All subject matter covered during the semester may be assessed or tested unless noted otherwise by the teacher. Review days are scheduled before the finals to guide the students in their preparations. The final examination/project grade is worth one-tenth of the semester grade. The Gerson School believes that final exams/projects prepare students for certain important life experiences, such as job interviews, entrance exams, promotion reviews, etc. Accordingly, students must complete a final exam/project in each subject in order to earn any credit in the course for the semester. Students who do not complete a final exam/project will have grading period credit erased and zero credit with an “F” grade entered on their Transcripts. Students who are in their last senior semester will be excused from a class final when they earn “A” grades for the three prior grading periods in any subject!
Grading Scale
The Gerson School uses the following grading scale:

- Grade “A” = 90% and above
- Grade “B” = 80 – 89%
- Grade “C” = 70 – 79%
- Grade “D” = 60 – 69%
- Grade “F” = 59% and below

Quality Points
The following point scale is used in calculating Grade Point Averages:

- A+ = 4.33
- A  = 4.00
- A- = 3.67
- B+ = 3.33
- B  = 3.00
- B- = 2.67
- C+ = 2.33
- C  = 2.00
- C- = 1.67
- D+ = 1.33
- D  = 1.00
- D- = 0.67
- F  = 0.00

Earning Credit
Class periods will vary between block-scheduling of core subjects and traditional 50-minute classes for electives. One “credit” or “unit” means a minimum of 120 hours of course instruction. One half “credit” or “unit” means a minimum of 60 hours of course instruction.

Off-Campus Credits
Since The Gerson School is small, students may take courses off campus with the prior permission of their Advisors and the Director. This option is available to students who are learning and working well in their scheduled classes; who are positive members of the School community; and whose interests and skills indicate that they will successfully complete the off-campus tasks. Only courses taken at an accredited institution will be approved for credit. A transcript or an official report of progress must be received at The Gerson School before credit will be awarded.
**Absences**

Since regular attendance in all scheduled classes is essential to learning, The Gerson School expects all students to attend school promptly every day. The School also recognizes that students may suffer from occasional minor illness during the school year. **The School office must be informed by 8:00 a.m. when a student is going to be absent.** When no information about an absence is received, the School will attempt to contact the parent/guardian to learn the cause of the absence.

The Director may excuse the following absences:

- Hospitalization for two or more days;
- Documented contagious illness;
- Death in immediate family;
- Religious holiday; and
- Unusual events beyond the control of the student.

It is a State policy that the student's home school must be notified after 10 unexcused absences.

**Classrooms**

The Gerson School works with each student as an individual within the limits of a small-organized learning community. Respect for individual differences is valued. In this spirit, students will find that teachers organize their classes and their subjects differently in terms of how grades are achieved, how assignments are to be completed, which activities are acceptable in class, etc. The IEP for each student is taken into consideration when accommodating for individual differences. Students need to prepare for these differences and to learn the expectations of each teacher within the first days of school.

No student is permitted to interrupt the learning process in any classroom. Students, whose activities prevent or distract others from learning, will be warned one time to appropriately join the class. Students, who are not enrolled in a particular class may not enter or interrupt that class unless instructed to do so by a member of the Staff.

**Electronic Devices**

**Cell phones, personal tablets and gaming devices are not permitted to be used in class** (unless specific permission is given by the teacher) because they interfere with the teacher’s ability to communicate with students. In every classroom, the reasonable and safe judgment of the teacher is final.

Misuse of cell phones, tablets, iPods or any other electronic devices, as determined by the Staff, will result in the device being confiscated and the student being prohibited to bring the device to school for a period of 30 days. Misuse includes such things as: calling, texting or unauthorized use of the internet during class time; texts to other students that cause disruption at any time; inappropriate posting on social media such as comments that are shaming, sexual in nature or gossip mongering. The student must surrender the device to the teacher immediately. The student’s parent/guardian will be asked to come to the school to pick up the device. The Electronic Device policy is new to The Gerson School in 2014-15. As such, parents and students are asked to sign and return to the School a separate acknowledgement.
**Personal Display of Affection**

Students are expected to act appropriate and respectful at School, on transportation to and from school and at any School function. To accomplish that, kissing, prolonged touching/hugging, sitting on laps or sitting entwined with each other is strictly prohibited. A brief hug or touch on a shoulder, with permission by the other student, is allowed.

**Use of Social Media**

The Gerson School students are expected to treat others with respect both in person and in other forms of communication. Any derogatory, demeaning, bullying or otherwise negative comments about other students or Staff at The Gerson School via social media will be considered a violation of School policy and subject to reprimand.

**Assignments/Homework**

Students should expect assignments that are to be completed outside of class. Turning in assignments late may result in a lower grade. Usually no assignments are accepted after the class test on the assigned material. Students should learn the particular assignment procedures from each of their teachers. When the student misses consecutive assignments, the problem is referred to the student’s Advisor for correction.

**Required Credits at The Gerson School**

In order to earn a diploma, The Gerson School requires that a student earn the minimum number of credits specified by the Ohio Department of Education. Presently, the number required for graduation is 20 credits. A listing of specific requirements is detailed below. Students who plan to receive a diploma from their home school or plan on attending college may need additional credits. See Appendix B.

**State Testing**

The Gerson School administers the required State testing to students. Exceptions from passing these tests are permitted only in accordance with written IEP provisions. The Gerson School offers assistance to all students who fail one or more of the Graduation Tests while they are enrolled. All procedures established by the Ohio Board of Education are followed in the security and administration of the tests.

**College Testing**

The Gerson School encourages all students to take standardized college entrance tests. The college applicant has one less worry when entrance testing is already completed. Due to The Gerson School’s small size, students take the SAT or ACT at their choice from a list of approved high school testing centers in the area, unless due to a student’s educational disability a special individualized testing experience is warranted. Advisors will assist students with decisions about college choices, testing and applications.

**Transcripts**

The release of transcripts requires the written consent of the student or guardian. Records of all students who attend The Gerson School are maintained at the School. Students may have their transcripts and/or other educational information sent by requesting in writing what information is to be released and to whom it is to be sent.
School Computers
The Gerson School offers computers for the common use and assistance of students in their educational progress. They are to be used only with the permission of Staff and for school-related research. They may not be used for personal business. The Gerson School provides iPads for students during class in order to take advantage of educational applications. These iPads are for school use only and must be turned in at the end of the class in which they are used.

School Psychological and Social Work Services
The Gerson School offers the services of a part-time psychologist and a full-time social worker. Both professionals lead small groups of students in discussion about common issues and counsel individual students. An appointment book for students to reserve individual time is available in the School office. The School’s psychologist and social worker are available throughout the day for any unexpected crisis a student may have. These professionals also develop and provide groups that assist the students in managing any social and/or psychological stresses they may have. For example, topics may include anger management, social skills and gender specific boys' and girls' groups. Additionally, the psychologist administers educational evaluations at the request of Staff and with parental permission. Finally, the psychologist and the social worker consult with Staff to continue improvement of the School's services.

Parents are encouraged to give permission at the beginning of the school year to allow their child to have a psychosocial evaluation and be individually seen by the social worker. If the student has an outside therapist, the social worker can coordinate information with this professional by the parent authorizing a release of information for their child.

Field Trips
Field trips require written permission of the parents or guardians before students may venture on these trips. Students are expected to participate in all trips related to specific classes. Trips of a general educational nature are open to all who are progressing satisfactorily, both educationally and personally. If students want to be on the preferred list for general trips, they can assure their place by working hard at learning, completing all assignments promptly, and using a cooperative and positive attitude toward the School and their peers.

Emergency Preparedness/Homeland Security
The Gerson School has undertaken a comprehensive revision of its Critical Events Plan, with the assistance of the local fire and police departments. Procedures are in place for evacuation, safety alert (lockdown) shelter-in-place and early dismissal. The exact protocol used would depend on the nature of the threat or event, and would be determined in consultation with safety officials. In the unlikely event of an emergency, the School will need help to keep phone lines open for communication with emergency personnel. Therefore, we recommend that parents/guardians tune in to local radio or television news for information and updates.

If the federal government declares a red alert, the state and federal governments reserve the right to close all public and government facilities, including schools. The Gerson School would remain open during a red alert unless directed to do otherwise by state or federal emergency management officials.
If the School is required to close during the school day, students will be dismissed with the usual end of the day procedures. The Gerson School will make its best effort to contact your transportation department and arrange pick up. Students may choose to remain at the building for parental pickup.

**Code of Conduct**

**Purpose**
The Gerson School believes that students learn best in an environment where they feel valued as individuals; where positive relationships with Staff and peers exist; where they are physically and emotionally safe; and where they are guided to do their best, free from the disruptive actions of others. The Code of Conduct implements this philosophy. It places importance on actions that build a safe, personable and respectful atmosphere in the School. As a corollary, the Code of Conduct forbids all actions that interfere with the learning, safety and maturation of each student.

**Major Infractions**
The following activities are considered major infractions of the Code of Conduct Program of The Gerson School. These activities are not permitted in the School, on the surrounding property, or during transportation to/from the School:

1. Going off campus without permission.
2. Physical aggression toward other students or Staff.
3. Bullying other students by physical or emotional threats and/or intimidation, including social media and/or public humiliation.
4. Any act that endangers the physical safety of students or Staff including fire-setting, possession or use of a weapon, sexual aggression or distribution of an illegal substance.

**Consequences**

**General Procedures**
When a major infraction as listed above occurs, the following general procedures are implemented:

1. The student is accompanied to the office of the Director or designee;
2. The student is informed of the infraction and given the opportunity to present his/her side of the situation, except in emergency situations when the safety and/or the educational program are jeopardized. In emergency situations, the student is immediately sent home and the opportunity to present his/her side is provided at a later date;
3. Parents/guardians of minor students and students themselves are informed of the findings. Parents/guardians are invited to discuss the incident at the school;
4. **It is the responsibility of the parent to pick up the student in this situation;**
5. An Incident Report is generated and a copy is given to the parent;
6. Repercussions for the incident will depend on the violation. Every effort is made to connect the punishment with the incident so the student can learn how to correct or avoid any such behavior in the future.

**Permanent Expulsion**
The infractions that will result in expulsion from The Gerson School are as follows:

1. Conveying deadly weapons on School property or to a School function
2. Possessing deadly weapons on School property or at a School function
3. Carrying a concealed weapon on School property or at a School function
4. Trafficking in drugs on School property or at a School function
5. Murder or aggravated murder on School property or at a School function
6. Voluntary or involuntary manslaughter on School property or at a School function
7. Assault or aggravated assault on School property or at a School function
8. Rape, gross sexual imposition or felonious sexual penetration on School property or at a School function

**Chemical Abuse Procedures**
The Gerson School acknowledges the significant barriers to learning that the abuse of chemicals and the influence of alcohol create for students. Therefore, when School Staff has reasonable suspicion or direct observation of chemical and/or alcohol abuse by students, the following procedures will be implemented:

**Reasonable Suspicion**
When one or more Staff member has reason to believe a student is in School under the influence of non-prescribed chemicals:

1. All of the student’s teachers will complete Observation Forms and the results will be compiled.
2. When suspicion of chemical abuse is confirmed by the Observation Forms, an appointment will be made with the student and family within 24 hours.
3. During the appointment, the results of Staff observations will be shared and a Chemical Dependency Evaluation will be required. The student will stay out of school until the evaluation is completed and results forwarded to The Gerson School. Arrangements will be made for the student to complete schoolwork at home.
4. When the results of the evaluation are received by the School, the student and parents will meet with the Director to plan the most appropriate educational services for the student.
5. Students receiving services through a special education program may require a manifestation team review as part of these procedures.
Immediate Action
When a student exhibits behaviors that disrupts class and are indicative of chemical and/or alcohol abuse:

1. The student will be accompanied to the Director’s office.
2. Parents will be summoned to the school for an appointment. If parents are not available, the student will be sent home and the appointment will be held within one day.
3. Actions #3, #4, #5 above will be implemented.

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying
Harassment, intimidation and bullying are prohibited in School, on School property, on the way to and from School, by use of any social media, and at School-sponsored events. As defined by State law, harassment, intimidation or bullying means any intentional, written, verbal or physical act that a student has exhibited toward another particular student more than once and the behavior causes mental or physical harm and is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment for the other student.

Anyone who is a victim of bullying or becomes aware of bullying should notify the School office within 24 hours to make a written report. The person making the report may request anonymity.

When harassment or bullying is found to have occurred, the harasser and his/her parents will meet with their Advisor and the Director of the School to discuss the event, to receive a warning and to develop a plan of correction.

If an investigation reveals that sexual harassment has occurred, the harasser may also be held legally liable for his/her actions under state or federal anti-discrimination laws or in a separate legal action.

Any student or Staff member bringing a sexual harassment complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of continuing at School or discriminated against or discharged because of the complaint. Complaints of such retaliation will be promptly investigated.
Appendix A

**Sexual Harassment**

1. This policy applies to all activities of The Gerson School involving students, volunteers and visitors who are in contact with the School.

2. Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones. This includes:
   a. Physical contact, such as unwelcome or aggressive, unsolicited physical contact.
   b. Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations.
   c. Verbal contacts, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, and sexual propositions.
   d. Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another person’s body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters or magazines.
   e. Requests for sexual favors and using sexual behavior to control influence or affect the job, salary, or work environment of another employee.

3. Students and Staff agree to help create an environment that is free from sexual harassment by respecting the wishes of others and by staying outside other’s personal space.
Appendix B

Visit http://www.ode.state.oh.us for more information regarding graduation requirements.

**Graduation Classes beginning in 2014 require:**

- English language arts   4 units
- Health                 ½ unit
- Mathematics            4 units
- Physical education     ½ unit
- Science                3 units
- Social Studies         3 units
- Electives              5 units

**Other requirements**

Economics and financial literacy.

1. Mathematics units must include 1 unit of algebra II or the equivalent of algebra II.
2. The Ohio Core allows school districts to adopt a policy that would exempt students who participate in interscholastic athletics, band or cheerleading for two full seasons from the physical education requirement. Students must take another course of at least 60 contact hours in its place.
3. Science units must include 1 unit of physical sciences, 1 unit of life sciences and 1 unit advanced study in one or more of the following sciences: chemistry, physics, or other physical science; advanced biology or other life science; astronomy, physical geology, or other earth or space science.
4. Social studies units must include ½ unit of American history and ½ unit of American Government.
5. Electives units must include one or any combination of foreign language, fine arts, business, career-technical education, family and consumer sciences, technology, agricultural education or English language arts, mathematics, science or social studies courses not otherwise required.
6. All students must receive instruction in economics and financial literacy during grades 9-12 and must complete at least two semesters of fine arts taken any time in grades 7-12. Students following a career-technical pathway are exempted from the fine arts requirement.