

# **Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf**



## **Parent-Student Handbook**

**2023 – 2024**

# Welcome!

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf is the fulfillment of a dream of Ms. Julie Rutenberg. She wanted to bring the Montessori method of teaching and learning to Deaf children in the Tampa Bay Area. As a former student of a Montessori program, Ms. Rutenberg saw the strong connection between the sensorial presentations used for instruction in a Montessori classroom, and the need for an interactive delivery of information in a classroom for Deaf children.

Ms. Rutenberg opened Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf in August, 2003. Results thus far have been impressive. Enrollment has grown steadily and children are getting the chance to grow and learn within a Montessori-based curriculum.

Blossom provides a unique setting in which the academic success of each student is the main focus. This can be accomplished because class size is small and communication is direct. In the classroom, each child is encouraged to use their preferred mode of communication. Teachers work one-on-one with students in order to meet individual needs.

As a Blossom family, you will become part of this amazing academic environment. Our families are precious to us and we appreciate everything you contribute to this wonderful learning experience. The teachers, staff, volunteers, and friends of Blossom welcome you to the most unique educational opportunity for children in the state of Florida.

Blossom's mission is '**Giving Parents a Choice and Children a Chance**' because we believe that together we can change the world...one child at a time.

*"Once I knew only darkness and stillness ... my life was without past or future ... but a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand that clutched at emptiness, and my heart leaped to the rapture of living."*

*Helen Keller*

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*\*\*Parent & Student Signature is Required– please review the handbook, sign page 47 & return signature page to keep on record in your child's student file.*

# Meet the Staff:

## Administrative Staff:

Ms. Julie Rutenberg, Director / Founder  
[jrutenberg@blossomschool.org](mailto:jrutenberg@blossomschool.org)

Ms. Tara Bonano, Business Manager  
[tbonano@blossomschool.org](mailto:tbonano@blossomschool.org)

Ms. Colette Derks, Associate Director  
[cderks@blossomschool.org](mailto:cderks@blossomschool.org)

## Instructional Staff:

Ms. Mariah Potter, Teacher 3-6 Classroom  
[mpotter@blossomschool.org](mailto:mpotter@blossomschool.org)

Mrs. Elaine Hampton, Classroom Assistant 3-6 Classroom  
[ehampton@blossomschool.org](mailto:ehampton@blossomschool.org)

Mrs. Amanda Livesay, Teacher 6-9 Classroom  
[alivesay@blossomschool.org](mailto:alivesay@blossomschool.org)

Mrs. Jamie De Jesus, Teacher 9-12 Classroom  
[jdejesus@blossomschool.org](mailto:jdejesus@blossomschool.org)

Please feel free to contact our staff Monday-Friday between the hours of 7:30am-5:30pm via email (see individual email addresses above), telephone (727) 539-7879, or video phone (727) 223-6238. Please give staff 24-hours to reply to emails. If you need to talk with a staff member about your child or an important issue, please contact them in advance to schedule a meeting at a date and time that is convenient for all.

# **Hours of Operation:**

**Blossom's hours of operation are 7:30am to 5:30pm Monday through Friday.**

**The Before Care Program opens at 7:30a.m. Monday through Friday.**

The Before Care program is licensed, and therefore only available to students who are enrolled in the program. Students may not arrive earlier than 7:30am. – no exceptions. Blossom will be offering Drop-In Care for \$25 per day/per child with advance notice and approval, and subject to enrollment numbers. Before Care ends at 8:30am.

**The academic day starts promptly at 8:30am and concludes at 3:15pm Monday through Friday.**

Students may arrive between 8:20 - 8:30am to make sure they are in their classroom before the academic day begins. Students may not arrive earlier than 8:20am if they are not enrolled in Before Care – no exceptions due to licensing regulations. Students will be marked tardy if they arrive at 8:31am or later. Please be sure your child arrives at school each day on time.

Students will be dismissed from the academic day at 3:15pm. Students who are not enrolled in the After Care Program will be immediately dismissed to their parent/guardian at 3:15p.m. A Blossom Staff member will escort your child to your vehicle in the front parking lot.

**The After Care Program begins at 3:15pm and is available until 5:30p.m. Monday through Friday.**

The After Care program is licensed, and therefore only available to students who are enrolled in the program. Blossom will be offering Drop-In Care for \$25 per day/per child with advance notice and approval, and subject to enrollment numbers. After Care closes at 5:30pm sharp. Students may not stay in After Care past 5:30pm as our building is officially closed after that time.

**Extracurricular programs (clubs) are scheduled throughout the year. These activities will take place after the academic day has concluded.**

Blossom students will have the opportunity to be involved in extracurricular programs. Sign-up sheets will be posted prior to the after school activity. Students who are enrolled in after care will automatically be enrolled and the fee will be waived. Students who are not enrolled in after care, but wish to be involved in the activity can sign up and pay the specified fee. Fees will be determined based on the activity.

## **Student Drop off & Pick Up:**

**Blossom's front door will remain closed and locked at all times. Students, parents/guardians and visitors will need to ring the doorbell to be assisted.**

Parents will be able to walk their child to the front doors and a staff member will escort the students to their classrooms. This makes for a smoother transition and less distraction, not only for your child, but the other students already in the classroom beginning their morning work.

**All students attending Blossom's Before Care Program should be walked to the door by a parent/guardian. Before Care will be held in the "Big Room" from 7:30-8:10am. Students in Before Care will begin transitioning into their assigned classroom at 8:10a.m. to prepare for the day and begin their morning work until 8:30am.**

Younger students in the 3-6 Class, as well as students who are enrolled in the ELC School Readiness Program must be signed in to Before Care upon arrival. Sign in/out procedures for these groups are stated in the upcoming text.

If a student will be arriving late for any reason, a call to the school must be made and include the arrival time so admin staff can inform the teacher. A tardy note must be provided by a parent, doctor or dentist when a child arrives late.

**Students who are enrolled in the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) School Readiness (SR) Program are required to be signed in and out each day, upon arrival and departure.** If your child is enrolled in this program, there will be an individual tab with your child's name on it located in the back of the Daily Attendance Log which is located on the rolling desk that. A separate ELC SR individual Attendance Sheet will be provided in this section. The additional attendance sheet is required by ELC SR. Failure to sign this attendance sheet can result in loss of funding from ELC SR. If someone other than yourself is dropping off or picking up your child, please be sure they are aware of the sign in/out procedure.

**All Students will be dismissed from the Academic Day at 3:15pm. Students who are not enrolled in the After Care Program will be released to their parent/guardian. Parents should arrive at the school no later than 3:15pm and stay in their vehicle until their child comes out. Parents can then help their child(ren) into the vehicle safely.** Parking is limited so please use only one parking space to park your vehicle. Parents/guardians, family members and visitors will not be permitted to enter the building during this time. Blossom staff will escort your child directly to your vehicle in the front parking lot. Staff will monitor your child at all times. If you are required to sign your child out from school each day, a staff member will bring the Daily Attendance Log to your vehicle for signature. For the safety of the students, please use caution when driving in and out of the parking lot (i.e. no speeding, look carefully before you back up your vehicle).

**Students will not be released to anyone who does not have prior documented clearance on file with the school.** Parents/Guardians must list two emergency contacts on your child's "Enrollment Form". Emergency contacts are individuals who are responsible for your child IF

we are unable to reach a parent/guardian in the case of an emergency, and are also approved to pick up your child. You may also list additional family & friends to your child's "Approved Pick Up List" at any time. If you need to send someone to pick up your child who is NOT on your child's current Enrollment Form or Approved Pick Up List, a parent/guardian is required to notify staff in writing (i.e. signed note, email or fax) about this one time authorization AND we ask that you call the school to verify this information. We will need the full name of the individual picking up your child, and we will check and make a copy of their Driver's License or State Photo I.D. upon arrival. If an individual arrives to pick up your child that does not have documented clearance –or- your one time written authorization, we will NOT release your child to this individual. No exceptions will be made.

**Students enrolled in After Care will begin this program immediately following 3:15p.m. dismissal. Students may be picked up by a parent/guardian or approved family member or friend any time between 3:15pm and 5:30pm. There will be no entry into the building during After Care hours; please ring the doorbell and a staff member will walk your child(ren) to the door.**

Younger students in the 3-6 Class, as well as students who are enrolled in the ELC School Readiness Program must be signed out of After Care upon pick up. Sign in/out procedures for these groups are stated in the previous text.

**Blossom's tentative daily After Care schedule is as follows:**

**3:15-3:45pm:** Outside Time (students' assigned playground - i.e. Preschool / School Age)

**3:45-4:00pm:** Snack Time (Preschool & School Age students in Big Room)

*\*Parents/Guardians are required to provide their child with an afternoon snack & drink each day.*

**4:00-4:30pm:** Craft/Activity Time (3-6 class students in their classroom)

Homework Time (school age students in the Big Room)

*\*Students will take home any homework that is not completed in After Care to be finished at home. Parents should check with their child to make sure homework is complete, as well as check their Communication Folder and Student Planner daily.*

**4:30-5:00pm:** Craft/Activity Time (Preschool & School Age students in Big Room)

**5:00-5:20pm:** Free Choice (Preschool & School Age students in Big Room)

**5:20-5:30pm:** Clean Up / Gather Belongings for Home (all students in Big Room)

**5:30pm:** After Care Ends / Building Closes / All Doors Locked

After Care staff will be unable to talk during this time as this will lead to distraction when their focus should be on the students at all times.

**After care services end promptly at 5:30pm. If an extenuating circumstance or emergency prevents a parent/guardian from picking up their child prior to 5:30pm they MUST call the school to notify After Care staff to make arrangements.**

- School Telephone: (727) 539-7879 (7:30am-5:30pm)
- School VP: (727) 223-6238 (7:45am-4:15pm)

**We ask that parents/guardians are cautious of arrival/dismissal times depending on the program(s) your child may or may not be enrolled in.** If a child is dropped off early or picked up late, the child will need to sit with a staff member in the front office and a fee will be charged as follows:

An Early Drop Off Fee of \$5.00 per child for every five minutes (\$1.00 per minute) prior to the designated drop off time given for any child NOT enrolled in Before Care. A check or cash will be accepted as payment at the time the child is picked up. The staff member on duty will calculate the total charge due.

A Late Fee of \$5.00 per child for every five minutes (\$1.00 per minute) past the hour of 5:30pm will start accruing at 5:31pm for any After Care student who is picked up late. A check or cash will be accepted as payment at the time the child is picked up. The staff member on duty will calculate the total charge due.

Blossom will be offering Drop-In Care for \$25 per day/per child with advance notice and pre-approval by an Administrative Staff member only, and will be subject to enrollment numbers. Before Care opens at 7:30am sharp. After Care closes at 5:30pm sharp. Students may not arrive prior to 7:30am as our building is not open -or- stay in After Care past 5:30pm as our building is officially closed after that time. Blossom is not licensed to be open before or after our hours of operation, nor do we have staff working during those times.

## **Attendance Policy**

Blossom is a unique learning environment. Due to our hands-on approach to education, attendance is MANDATORY. Poor attendance at school will be detrimental to your child's success both academically, socially and emotionally.

Additional health concerns need to be discussed with the Director prior to enrollment. A doctor's note MUST be provided in regards to your child's health conditions, and should include limitations (if any). We ask that this doctor's note be provided annually during the beginning of each school year and include any updates that the school should be aware of.

Blossom has 4 grading periods per year; each grading period is 45 days long. No one child is allowed to have more than twenty (20) unexcused absences for the entire school year, and no more than twenty-five (25) combined unexcused and excused absences for the entire school year. Any student exceeding the amount of allowed absences for the school year will need to attend a determination meeting with the Director & your child's teacher.

A Blossom student in grades K-6<sup>th</sup> grade is in danger of not being promoted to the next level if they are absent for more than twenty (20) unexcused days.

A Blossom student that is absent for twenty-five (25) excused/unexcused or more days WILL NOT be promoted to the next level.

### **ABSENCES**

If your child will be absent, it is your responsibility to inform the school on the day of the absence within one hour from the start of school and by no later than 9:30am by either calling the school directly or emailing Ms. Bonano ([tbonano@blossomschool.org](mailto:tbonano@blossomschool.org)), Ms. Derks ([cderks@blossomschool.org](mailto:cderks@blossomschool.org)) AND your child's teacher to ensure someone in the front office receives your message. If you will be absent due to vacation or planned time away, please



give specific dates to both your child's teacher and the front office so that it may be documented properly. Any additional days, you are required to call in before 9:30am to report the absence. If a parent/guardian has not called to report an absence by 9:30am, Blossom staff are required to call to verify the whereabouts of the student.

A student who is not present during a Specials class (P.E., Art) at least one half of the class period shall be counted as absent from that class. To be counted present for the school day, a student must be in attendance for at least one half of the Great Work time during the school day.

### **Excused absence –**

Students must be in school unless the absence has been permitted or excused for one of the reasons listed below. A written absence note must be provided by a parent or guardian in order to excuse the absence once the student returns to school:

- A student is ill or injured. If your child is sick or injured three (3) or more consecutive days, a doctor's note MUST be provided.
- The student has a scheduled medical or dental appointment, procedure or surgery. A doctor's note MUST be provided.
- There is a major illness in the student's immediate family (this means parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, or others living in the home).
- There is a death in the immediate family.
- The student attends religious instruction or there is a religious holiday in the student's own faith.
- The student is required by summons, subpoena or court order to appear in court. A copy of the subpoena or court order must be given to the Director.
- Special event. Examples of special events include important public functions, conferences, state/national competitions, as well as exceptional cases of family need or an educational enrichment activity (i.e. take your child to work day).
- Students having, or suspected of having a communicable disease or infestation which can be transmitted are to be excluded from school and are not allowed to return to school until they no longer present a health hazard. \*\*Examples of communicable diseases and infestations include, but are not limited to, fleas, head lice, ringworm, impetigo and scabies. Students are allowed a maximum of five (5) excused days for each infestation of head lice. A doctor's note must be provided to return to school.

Students on a field trip and students who must attend in-school suspension are not considered absent.

### **Unexcused absence –**

Any absence which does not meet the criteria of an excused absence is an unexcused absence. The following are examples of unexcused absences.

- Out-of-school suspensions
- Family time, vacation or special occasion
- Students without a completed Health Examination/School Entry form and/or Certificate of Immunization indicating compliance with the current required schedule of immunizations will not be allowed to attend classes until this document is provided or a waiver is obtained. Absences due to non-compliance with immunization requirements shall be considered unexcused. However, students transferring into Pinellas County,

including foster care students, or homeless students, a temporary 30-day waiver of both health examination documents and certificates of immunization will be granted.

Please note - we do recognize the need for family time, vacations and special occasions. We embrace special time spent between a parent and child. We can work with you to ensure the least amount of optimal learning time is lost during a planned absence.

### **Excuse Forms-**

A student who has been absent must bring a completed Excuse Form or written excuse note signed by a parent/guardian on their first day back at school. Each student will be given several blank Excuse Forms at the beginning of the year. Additional forms are available on the rolling desk in the front lobby.

### **TARDINESS**

The start up exercises of a Montessori school day sets the pace for the rest of the day. Every effort should be made to ensure your child arrives at school on time. If a student is tardy for any reason, it is your responsibility to inform the school immediately by either calling the school directly or emailing Ms. Bonano ([tbonano@blossomschool.org](mailto:tbonano@blossomschool.org)) AND Ms. Derks ([cderks@blossomschool.org](mailto:cderks@blossomschool.org)) and include the arrival time so a staff member can be ready to go through the entry procedures before letting the student into the school. A tardy note must be provided by a parent, doctor or dentist when a child arrives late.

### **Excused Tardy**

A tardy is excused only if the student is late for one of the reasons listed under excused absences (i.e. illness, medical or dental appointment, etc). A written excuse note from a parent or doctor MUST be provided in order to excuse a tardy.

### **Unexcused Tardy**

A tardy is not excused unless it is caused by reasons listed under excused absences (i.e. illness, medical or dental appointment, etc). Examples of unexcused tardies include:

- Oversleeping
- Shopping trips
- Pleasure trips
- Car problems (ex: flat tire, no gas, car won't start on a daily basis)
- Traffic
- Returned for forgotten item (i.e. forgotten homework, project, lunch)

Chronic tardiness is unacceptable and unfair to your child and other students because instruction is interrupted every time a late student arrives. Every three (3) unexcused tardies are considered one (1) unexcused absence. Additionally, individual consequences for tardy students may apply (i.e. detention).

If the Director or your child's teacher feels attendance or tardiness is becoming a factor in your child's education a conference will be made. Extreme unexcused absences can lead to dismissal from Blossom.

## **EARLY SIGN OUT**

Once a student arrives at Blossom, they may not leave without permission from an administrator. Students who must leave school during school hours must have their parent request this release by phone or in person to the office in order to obtain pre-approval. A staff member will wait with the student until a parent/guardian arrives and will walk the child out to the vehicle. Please stay in your vehicle - this is for the safety and health of everyone.

### **Excused Early Sign Out**

The same criteria used to determine excused absence and an excused tardy will be used to determine whether an early sign out is excused.

### **Unexcused Early Sign Out**

The same criteria used to determine an unexcused absence and an unexcused tardy will be used to determine whether an early sign out is unexcused.

Numerous incidents of early release are unacceptable and unfair to your child and other students whose instruction is interrupted each time a student leaves early. Every three (3) unexcused early sign outs will count as one (1) unexcused absence.

## **MAKE-UP WORK**

Make-up work does not consist of just the regular homework normally given during the regular school week. The work provided by the teacher is work that the student missed during the school day. Make-up work counts for credit / grade and is allowed for both excused and unexcused absences; however, specific rules apply.

### **Make Up work during a non-planned excused absence-**

Blossom recognizes that illnesses or family emergencies happen. Make-up work for credit / grade is allowed for all excused absences. It is the student's responsibility to get the missed work. Make-up work may be picked up AFTER 3:30pm from your child's teacher after you have called to inform the school of your child's absence. Make-up work will not be prepared by 3:30pm if you do not call the school in advance.

If the student was absent just one day, then the make-up work will be given to a child on a Friday and will count 100% if turned in its entirety the following Monday. Each day after that 25% will be taken off the assignments.

If the student was absent more than one day, then the number of days allowed to make up the work shall be the same as the number of days the student was absent, and will count 100% if the work is turned in its entirety on the due date provided by the teacher. Each day after that 25% will be taken off the assignments.

Please note there is some work that can not be made up.

### **Make-up Work during a planned unexcused absence / tardy-**

Blossom recognizes that each family has special occasions or trips that do come up. Make-up work for a credit and grade is allowed. It is the student's responsibility to get the missed work.

We request that parents or guardians give teachers at least 48 hours notice prior to the planned unexcused absence to allow time for the teacher to prepare make-up assignments. Make-up assignments must be turned in on the first day that the student returns and will be graded at 100%. Each day after that 25% will be taken off the assignments.

If a teacher is not notified 48 hours prior to the unexcused absence then make-up work will be provided upon the student's return to school. The number of days allowed to make up the work shall be the same number of days the student was absent. Make-up assignments must be turned in on the first day that the student returns in order to receive a grade at 100%. Each day after that, 25% of the grade will be taken off the assignments.

If the student has exceeded 25 or more unexcused / excused absences with over 50% of them being unexcused absences, the student will have the same number of days allowed for make-up work; however the assignments will only be counted for 50% of the original grade.

Please note work made up after an unexcused absence may be dropped a letter grade and that there is some work that can not be made up.

### **Make-up Work during a suspension**

Make-up for credit and grade is allowed. It is the student's responsibility to get the missed work. Work is due on the day of return from the suspension – no exception.

Please note work made up after an unexcused absence may be dropped a letter grade and that there is some work that can not be made up.

**We appreciate parental support and cooperation to ensure your child receives the best educational experience possible. The success rate of students who attend school regularly and without interruption is markedly higher than those for whom attendance is unstable.** The teaching staff and administrative team of Blossom will do everything possible to assist parents with the safe arrival of their children to Blossom on a regular basis. Parents are encouraged to inform the teaching staff and administrative team if extenuating circumstances will prevent a child from attending Blossom on a regular basis.

## **Visitors Policy -**

Blossom's front door will remain closed and locked at all times. All visitors, family & friends must ring the doorbell and a staff member will assist them. Additionally, staff must require visitors to provide proof of identity such as a state issued photo ID or driver's license, sign into the "Visitors Log" on the front credenza and the staff member will then issue a "Visitors Name Tag". The visitor must wear their issued name tag during their entire visit at Blossom and must be escorted by a staff member at all times. Parents/guardians who do enter the building just for dropping off or picking up their child do not need to sign the Visitors Log or wear a Visitors Name Tag; however, if a parent/guardian is visiting the school for a meeting, special event, volunteering or any other reason, then a parent must sign into the Visitors Log and receive a Visitors Name Tag to be worn.

## Visiting Blossom -

Parents will need to make arrangements with the front office if they plan to enter the school for any reason. Parents will not be allowed to enter any classrooms or community areas where students are present.

Additional special family events will be held throughout the school year. Blossom staff will inform parents of special events and school activities in advance. All family events will be posted on monthly calendars.

## **Student Illness & Medication**

### **General Illness Policy (\*\*Please read thoroughly)**

**Your child needs to stay home from school IF** he/she has a fever of 99.8 degrees or higher, has a contagious disease (please inform the school immediately), displays any of the following symptoms: severe coughing, diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat, a rash of unknown origin, heavy or discolored mucus discharge from the nose, or unexplained eye redness and/or drainage. Children should be symptom-free for 24-48 hours before returning to school and a doctor's note will be required prior to the student's return to confirm they are not contagious. **These suggestions should aid you in the determination of whether your child should or should not be sent to school.** We rely on your good judgment. **When in doubt, keep your child home.**

**Please keep your child home if he/she shows ANY signs of illness. Any child that arrives at school sick, will be unable to enter the school and will be immediately sent home with their parent/guardian.**

It is essential that everyone cooperate in this manner to keep the spread of illness to a minimum. An ill child not only unnecessarily exposes his/her classmates to illness but also is more susceptible to additional illness. We realize that parents sometimes have very pressing schedules that make it difficult to keep children home from school, but alternate arrangements should be planned for since unexpected illnesses are an inevitable part of growing up. The school is not permitted to keep sick children in our care.

If a student becomes ill or shows signs of not feeling well while they are at school, a Blossom staff member will take the child's temperature, identify by communicating with the child any specific symptoms such as upset stomach, headache, sore throat, cough, etc. The parent will be contacted if the child presents any symptoms of illness. Parents will be contacted and are *required* to pick up or arrange for an approved person **to pick up their child from school within 30 minutes of being contacted.** The student will not be permitted to return to class until they are free from symptoms for a 24 hour period - meaning one full school day at minimum or 24 full hours after the last symptom of vomiting, diarrhea, fever, cough, sore throat (etc.) ends completely. *Example: If your child is sent home from school with a fever on Monday at 12:30pm, they must stay home from school for a full day on Tuesday to rest. IF their fever does not break until 9:30pm Tuesday night, then your child must stay home for another full school day on Wednesday. If your child has no fever all day Wednesday, then your child may be permitted back to school on Thursday. This ensures your child is symptom free for a full 24-hour period and is not contagious to other students.*

If a communicable illness / disease has been identified such as strep throat, chicken pox, flu, rash etc., a doctor's note will be required in order for the child to return to school. Please remember that illnesses spread quickly through the school and we do not want to put the students or staff at risk of being infected. However, to ensure that others remain healthy, Blossom has a strict **48 hour symptom free** policy before a student who has been diagnosed with a communicable illness may return to school, no matter if the doctor has written a '*can return to school in 24 hours*' note.

Lice is considered a communicable illness. Blossom will do periodic Lice checks throughout the school year, as this can be easily shared and quickly spread. If your child is found to have Lice (nits, live bugs or both) at school, you will have 30 minutes to pick up your child. If you have found that your child has Lice while at home, please keep them home and call the school to inform the staff so we may take appropriate precautions at school. Your child must be COMPLETELY LICE FREE to return to school. When your child enters school they will be checked to ensure there has been no missed nits or live bugs. If any nits or live bugs have been found, your child will be sent home immediately and must be symptom free for 48 hours before returning again. We understand that sometimes this process may take multiple times to fully eradicate the Lice. Please make appropriate plans to pick up your child's homework through your child's teacher. Remember, homework may not be picked up until 3:30p.m.

Blossom knows that many children suffer from allergies and that the common cold is spread easily and may linger for many weeks. We also understand how important it is for children to be in school, but if a staff member notices that a child has had an ongoing or chronic illness such as allergies, cough, and/or runny nose and notice it is progressively becoming worse, we will request a doctor's note for your child to remain at school. Sometimes illnesses can start off as something simple such as a runny nose or cough, but can quickly become something more severe. When children are not feeling well it is hard for them to focus and work in the classroom, missing out on learning time.

Blossom understands that sometimes school and responsibilities can become overwhelming for students and that a child may show signs or symptoms of having an 'emotional breakdown'. Some signs are uncontrollable crying, refusing to speak or make eye contact, hyperventilating, yelling/screaming and anxious tendencies. If the student is unable to calm or control their symptoms a parent will be called to pick up their child from school. We feel it is in the best interest for the student to go home; we do not want to put any more stress upon the student and know that home is the best place for calming and regrouping. We understand that when these situations arise it is very hard for the student to continue on with the day and remain on task; our top priority is the health and wellbeing of all our students. This will not be considered a suspension for the student; it will just be marked as an early pickup.

If your child is absent please call the school or email your child's teacher to notify us that your child will be out. A written note is *required* from a parent or guardian upon their return to school. If your child is absent *more than 3 consecutive days* a written note is *required* from your child's doctor.

Please remember when receiving medications such as antibiotics for your child, to request when possible, medications that can be given in the morning and evening or once a day when the child is not in school. Blossom does not administer medications of any kind, unless it is a medical necessity due to a serious health condition. Parents are welcome to visit Blossom to administer any necessary medications at the appropriate time.

### **Administering Medication**

It is against Blossom's policy to administer any kind (prescription or OTC) of medication, ointments, lotions including sunblock and mosquito repellent of any kind. If this presents a problem to the family, please contact the Director to discuss your personal situation and possible available options.

Medications will only be administered for students who have serious health conditions which require the child to take a dose of medication during the school day or in case of a medical emergency. A parent or guardian must properly train staff to administer medication properly.

In order for staff to administer medication, the following three items are required:

1. A doctor's note will be required. The note **MUST** include the child's full name, date of birth, name of medication, amount of dosage (1 tablet, 1 teaspoon, 2 puffs), administered when (specific time(s) of day, as needed), administered from (start date & end date), authorized by (doctor's name and signature), and date the note was written. *A doctor's note that was written during the prior school year will NOT be accepted as the note must be written for the current school year.*
2. A parent/guardian will need to fill out a "Medication Record & Parent Authorization" form at the school. The form will require you to fill in the child's full name, name of medication, amount of dosage (1 tablet, 1 teaspoon, 2 puffs), administered when (specific time(s) of day, as needed), administered from (start date & end date), authorized by (parent/legal guardian's signature), and current date.
3. All medicine **MUST** be received in the original Rx container and box (if applicable). Medications should be turned in to the Director and will be kept in a locked storage cabinet at all times.

**IMPORTANT: Medication/Rx instructions MUST be listed *exactly* the same on the doctor's note, parent authorization and the original Rx container and box (if applicable). If Rx instructions do NOT match all items requested; or one or more of these items are not provided, staff may NOT under any circumstances administer medication until all items are received with proper instructions and training provided by the parent.**

Please note: Students may NOT at any time self-administer medication on campus; including but not limited to pain medication, cough medicine, cough drops, antibiotics, asthma inhalers, etc. All medications must be kept with the Director in a locked storage cabinet and the procedure above must be followed.

### **Medical Emergency Procedures**

In cases of extreme medical emergency and the calling of 911 and an ambulance or paramedics is warranted:

- Discretion will be used and a staff member will call “911” immediately, if necessary, while another staff member contacts the parent.
- A staff member will make every effort to contact a parent or guardian first. *If* a parent can not be reached, staff will then contact the parent authorized emergency contact listed on the child’s “Emergency Medical Release” form.
- A staff member will make arrangements for a qualified or certified interpreter to meet the child at the hospital.
- If no parent or guardian has been able to be contacted, a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital in the ambulance.
- The child will be taken by ambulance to the parent authorized hospital listed on their “Emergency Medical Release” form.

**The closest hospitals to Blossom are as follows:**

Largo Medical Center  
 201 14<sup>th</sup> Street Southwest  
 Largo, Florida 33770  
 (727) 588-5200  
*Estimated 16-19 minutes / 6.6 miles*

Morton Plant Hospital  
 300 Pinellas Street  
 Clearwater, Florida 33756  
 (727) 462-7000  
*Estimated 20-22 minutes / 9.3 miles*

Mease Countryside Hospital  
 3231 McMullen Booth Road  
 Safety Harbor, Florida 34695  
 (727) 725-6111  
*Estimated 21-23 minutes / 12.1 miles*

John Hopkins All Children’s Hospital  
 501 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
 St. Petersburg, Florida 33701  
 (727) 898-7451  
*Estimated 18-24 minutes / 13.7 miles*

**Dress Code**

**Uniforms are required Monday through Thursday. Blossom uniforms consist of a polo shirt (purple, light blue, navy blue, yellow, gray, white, or black) with the Blossom insignia. Students may wear khaki/tan, navy or black shorts, or slacks along with their Blossom uniform shirt. When the weather becomes cold, students may wear jackets, sweaters or sweatshirts over their Blossom uniform. Students **MUST** wear closed toe shoes or sneakers each day (i.e. **NO** open toe shoes, flip flops, sandals, crocs, etc.) Hair should be clean, tidy and brushed.**

**Uniform shirts with the Blossom insignia may be ordered from:**

**AB Designs, Co.**  
 12533 Ulmerton Road  
 Largo, FL 33774  
 (727) 488-5644

**Hours of Operation**

Monday-Friday 9:00am-3:00pm  
 Saturday 9:00am-5:00pm

**Pricing**

Polo - Youth - \$14.99  
 Polo - Adult - \$14.99



**On Friday, students are allowed to wear clothing of their personal choice.**

**Please note the following guidelines on mandatory uniform days (Monday-Thursday), approved dress down days (Fridays, School Spirit Days, Special Occasions), as well as School Age Physical Education (P.E.) days:**

**Shirts must overlap pants.** Students will do a great deal of work sitting on the floor, as well as physical movement inside and outside the classroom. Students must wear shirts that cover their body when sitting on the floor. No tank tops, muscle tees, spaghetti strap, strapless – shoulders / armpits should be completely covered. No midribs or belly shirts. Clothing that advertises products dealing with / having references to profanity, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sex, violence, or representing weapons or gangs will not be permitted.

**Shorts and pants** should be an appropriate modest length for working, exercising, and playing (length should be no shorter than 2-1/2” above the knee). Hip hugging pants must be covered by an appropriate length shirt. No skin should show when a student stands or sits down. Pants should be loose fitting enough so that students can participate in all activities. Leggings may not be worn as bottoms only.

**Shoes should be comfortable and appropriate** for outside events. Closed toe shoes or sneakers are required. Montessori classrooms are active and energetic. Footwear should be adaptable to outside as well as inside activity. No flip flops, sandals, dress shoes, crocs or open toe shoes may be worn to school.

**Hats/head covering may not be worn inside the building.** Hats or head coverings are not allowed in the classroom or inside the school, unless it is for medical purposes, they must be removed before entering the building. Hats may be worn outside while on the playground, if deemed appropriate.

**Physical Education (P.E.)** – School Age students are required to dress out for P.E. Students should come to school already in their P.E. clothes, with their appropriate uniform attire to change into after. P.E. clothes should be a loose fitting t-shirt (following Blossom’s dress code), loose fitting shorts (i.e. basketball shorts no shorter than 2-1/2” above the knee) or workout pants, socks and sneakers. Designated P.E. days are assigned to School Age students at the beginning of each school year.

## **Policies and Procedures:**

### **Acceptance**

Blossom accepts children that are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, hearing siblings of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing child and CODA’s (child of Deaf adult).

Our application policy is as follows:

1. Parents or family member schedule a tour of the school with the Director.
2. A shadow date for the child is set up to spend a half-day or full-day (depending on the child’s age) at the school and in the classroom within their age group or level.
3. After the shadow day, the Director then discusses the child at length with the teacher to make sure the following items are met:

- o The child is a proper fit for that particular classroom.
  - o The teacher and child are comfortable with each other.
  - o The teacher can meet the needs of the individual child.
  - o The teacher feels the child will be successful in our environment.
4. The parent is given a Student Application to fill out in its entirety. The child's IEP, 504 Plan, Service Plan, Therapy or Medical Reports may be requested at that time (if applicable).
  5. The child's Student Application and requested documents are reviewed thoroughly with several members of the Blossom staff to ensure Blossom is a right fit for the child and that we can successfully meet his or her needs and provide a superior educational experience.
  6. An acceptance, waitlist or denial letter is written by the Director. All children who are accepted to our program are put on a 45 day probationary period. A meeting will be held with the Director at the end of the 45 days to discuss the student's future at Blossom.
  7. If an acceptance letter is issued by the Director, the parent may then pay a non-refundable New Student Registration Fee to secure their child's spot for the school year.
  8. Once both the New Student Application and Registration Fee is received, the Associate Director will schedule a meeting with the parent to allow proper time to fill out the required enrollment paperwork, turn in school year fees, arrange a tuition payment plan (if applicable) and turn in all required documents for the school year.

Please note: If a student is accepted to Blossom at any time other than the first day of the school year, the Director will advise the best possible start date for this child into Blossom's program.

### **Special Needs**

Blossom is not a school that specializes in Special Needs or has the additional resources or education staff for some students' needs. A child with Special Needs is carefully considered. Blossom may not be the right fit for every child or be able to meet the needs of every child. Due to staff qualifications, a child with special needs must be able to function on his/her own medically and mobility wise in and out of the classroom. All children must be fully potty trained and independent in the bathroom. If a child's special needs will detrimentally change the dynamics of a classroom, then Blossom may not be the right fit for that child.

Blossom does accept children with significant health impairments; however, Blossom does not have a school nurse or trained medical personnel on site. There may be some children who have severe health impairments that we may not be equipped to serve. Blossom will carefully take each child's health impairments into consideration to figure out if we are properly able to care for the child while under our supervision. It is under each parent's discretion to place their child in an environment without a school nurse or trained medical personnel.

Blossom's first priority is to ensure that all the students, staff and families who enter our building are in a safe and welcoming environment. Blossom does not have the additional staff or resources needed for some students with severe disabilities and/or behavioral needs. We

understand that while we want to help all children grow to be successful adults, we may not be able to offer the appropriate environment for everyone. Blossom will work with families to make sure this is a proper fit for your child(ren) and in the case that it is not; we will help to find an alternative that best fits your child(ren)'s needs. Blossom does not accept children with severe Behavioral or Emotional needs as our staff is not trained or equipped to accommodate the needs of that child.

### **Required Documents**

Upon enrollment and re-enrollment, the following documents are *required* on file for your child (PRIOR to the first day of enrollment/school -or- current document expiration date):

- o Birth Certificate (must bring in original and a copy will be made)
- o Florida Certification of Immunization Form DH 680 (original) or Religious Exemption Form DH 681 or Medical Exemption Form DH 680
- o Florida School Entry Health Exam Form DH 3040 (original)

Please note: all children must have an original and up to date Florida School Entry Health Exam Form DH 3040 along with a Florida Certificate of Immunization Form DH 680 or Religious Exemption Form DH 681 or Medical Exemption Form DH 680 completed and signed by your child's doctor on file with Blossom. These forms do expire and updated forms will be due no later than the day prior to the date of expiration. All forms can be obtained and filled out at the County Health Department or from your child's doctor. *\*\*Due to Religious or Medical Exemptions, some students at Blossom are not immunized.*

Students who do not have these forms on file at Blossom prior to the start of the school year will not be able to attend until these forms are turned in. This is a State mandated law.

Parents will also be required to fill out annual enrollment paperwork which will be provided to you at your child's Back-to-School / New Student Paperwork Meeting.

*Please note: Health Physical and Immunization forms/Religious Exemptions are due each August at your child's Back to School meeting and by no later than the first day of enrollment (or before the expiration date of the current form on file). If a Health Physical or Immunization form is not received prior to the date of enrollment, it is REQUIRED that the parent must provide an actual appointment card/letter from the child's doctor's office as proof the appointment is scheduled within a 30-day extension period. If an appointment card can not be provided, the child's enrollment may not begin until the appointment card -or- Health Physical and/or Immunization form is received. No exceptions - this is a Pinellas County Licensing Requirement for our school.*

### **Release from School**

No child will be released to anyone other than the legal parent(s)/guardian(s) unless written permission has been given to the front office and the individual is on the students "Approved Pick Up List", "Child's Enrollment Form" or "Emergency Medical Release Form". Written permission can be in the form of an email, handwritten note or fax. All individuals on the students "Approved Pick Up List" must show a valid driver's license or identification card when picking up the student. Staff will make a copy of the license to keep in the students file for verification. Due to safety, calling to give an individual permission will not be accepted. If there is not written permission, we will not release the student, except to their legal parent/guardian.

## **Language Communication**

Each child attending Blossom will have a preferred mode of communication. The staff of Blossom will respect *each* child according to their ability and preference. Knowledge of American Sign Language (ASL) is not a requirement for becoming a student at Blossom, but American Sign Language (ASL) will be used, taught, discussed, and encouraged when appropriate. All students must accept and embrace the Deaf community – students will be required to use ASL to the best of their ability at all times.

## **Parent/Administration Communication**

The best way to communicate with a staff member from our Administrative Team is via phone, VP or email; however, we do ask that you give staff 24-hours to respond. If you would like to meet with a staff member from our Administration Team, please contact them directly to schedule a meeting with advance notice at a time that is convenient for all.

## **Parent/Teacher Communication**

At the beginning of the school year, each student will be given an Agenda/Communication Book (student planner) and a Communication Folder. These items will provide daily communication between parent and teacher. You may also communicate with your child's teacher via email; however, we do ask that you give your child's teacher 24-hours to respond as they are not always available to check their email throughout the academic day. Parent/Teacher meetings may be scheduled with advance notice during the teacher's planning time. Please contact your child's teacher directly via email or Communication Book to set up a meeting. The Director will contact parents towards the end of September to schedule your child's 2023-2024 Growth & Development Meeting with your child's teacher.

## **Communication Folder**

Your child will receive a Communication Folder which they will be responsible to take home and bring back to school each day. All important information, memos, permission slips, report cards, event invitations, etc. will be sent home in your child's Communication Folder. There are two pockets in this folder and they are labeled - one side is for information that you will need to "read & keep home", and the other side is for information you must "sign and return to school". Please be sure to check your child's Communication Folder daily and return items the next day or by the assigned due date.

## **Agenda/Communication Book (Student Planner)**

Your child will also have an Agenda/Communication Book (student planner) which they will be responsible to take home and bring back to school each day. This book is a way to provide daily communication between parent and teacher. It also is a way for you as a parent to know your child's homework and check to make sure it is completed. Please take a moment to read messages from your child's teacher and respond as needed. You may use this book to send messages to your child's teacher if you have questions, concerns or notification of upcoming doctor/dentist appointments and teachers will respond as needed. Parents and teachers may also communicate through email; however, we do ask that you give your child's teacher 24-hours to respond. We do ask that parents and teachers communicate directly with each other as often as needed. Please be sure to check your child's Communication Book (student planner) daily and be sure your child returns to school with it the next day.

## **Confidentiality**

Our administrative staff, instructional staff and therapy contractors are bound to a strict confidentiality agreement. Staff & contractors may not discuss student progress or activities with parents/guardians, unless it is about your child and the staff member is your child's teacher, therapist or the Director. If information is needed about your child, parents/guardians must contact your child's teacher, therapist or the Director.

Our volunteers are also bound to a strict confidentiality agreement. Activities performed by community and parent volunteers will be varied as determined by the classroom situation, teacher and/or administrator. Volunteers may not discuss student progress or activities with other parents/guardians. Volunteers are instructed not to engage in conversation with parents or guardians regarding the performance or behavior of students attending Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf. All discussions about student performance or behavior should be held directly with the teaching staff or administrative team. If information is needed about your child, parents/guardians must contact your child's teacher or the Director.

Parents/guardians may need to meet with a staff member or contractor in an office or classroom to discuss confidential matters regarding their child. During this time we ask that parents and students please be courteous and allow them their space and privacy. If a parent/guardian or student happens to overhear or see a spoken or signed conversation regarding another student or family, please be respectful and keep that information confidential and private.

## **Student Birthday Parties**

Blossom follows the Montessori approach to the celebration of birthdays and does not host in-class or after school birthday parties.

Montessori Birthday Celebrations are a very beautiful and special event that centers around the student and their achievements throughout their life. Teachers will send home a paper that will need to be filled out by the parent(s) and returned to school the day before the child's birthday. Pictures of the child throughout the years may be sent in as well; the more description, the better. All the students of Blossom will gather together in the morning of the celebration and listen to the wonderful achievements the birthday child has had. They will also give words of friendship and kindness. Food, goody bags or other treats will not be allowed. This ensures the child will be celebrated for who they are and not what they bring.

## **Field Trips**

Blossom encourages children to go out into the community. Teachers are able to plan field trips that coincide with their themed unit of study. All students should follow the proper dress code consisting of a clean uniform shirt, appropriate shorts/pants and close toed shoes. Students should arrive on time to ensure they are present and prepared for the upcoming trip.

Students in the Pre-K program must be left with the appropriate child safety seat for the field trip or they will not attend. Children age 3 must be provided with a proper, federally approved child restraint device (car seat). Student's 4 – 5 years of age must be provided with a proper, federally approved restraint device (car seat). Students **may not use booster seats** in a school bus, as they are only effective if they are used with a shoulder harness and the buses only supply lap belts. All restraint devices must be able to be buckled in securely to the bus seats. If a child is left at school without the proper seat, a staff member will call the

parent/guardian to have them bring one. If the parent/guardian cannot bring a car seat for the student, they will stay at the school and will not be allowed to join the field trip.

### **Inclement Weather**

On occasion, Florida experiences inclement weather. If the possibility exists for this to happen, parents/guardians are asked to heed local weather warnings and follow the advice given by weather experts. At no time should a parent/guardian risk their own safety, or that of their child, in order to attend Blossom. In these situations, parents/guardians should call/text first to see if Blossom's regular hours of operation are still in effect. Making up of days missed due to mandatory school closings will be announced via correspondence or email, if necessary, during Family Events. If inclement weather strikes while school is in session, please contact the school *immediately* for information and pick up time/procedures. Please note we follow Pinellas County School's alert system for closings, delays or early dismissal due to inclement weather, and we will advise you of such via email as soon as it is reported to the Director. We will also make every effort to post school closings on Bay News 9, Blossom's FaceBook page [www.facebook.com/watchthemblossom](http://www.facebook.com/watchthemblossom) and Blossom's website [www.blossomschool.org](http://www.blossomschool.org).

### **Reporting Abuse**

Section 39.201(1)(a), Florida Statutes requires any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the Abuse Hotline. According to section 39.205(1) Florida Statutes, any person who knowingly and willfully does not report known or suspected abuse is guilty of a first degree misdemeanor and is subject to criminal prosecution. Please note all of Blossom Staff, Contractors and Volunteers are Mandated Reporters by law.

**\*\*\* Abuse Hotline: 1-800-96-ABUSE \*\*\***

### **Use of School Resources**

Students may not interfere with the operation of the computer network by installing personal software, shareware, or freeware. Any student who knowingly visits or downloads websites that are deemed by the teaching staff and administrative team to be improper, pornographic, or detrimental to the high standards of Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf will be held accountable. Punishment for such an offense could lead to dismissal.

### **Use of Student Lockers / Cubbies**

Blossom students will receive an assigned locker or cubby at the beginning of each school year. Lockers / cubbies may be shared with a sibling, but may not be shared with another student. Lockers / cubbies will remain unlocked at all times, so personal items other than book bag, lunch box, jacket, P.E. clothes, books should remain at home. Items such as cell phones, iPods, iPads, tablets, laptops, jewelry, toys, stuffed animals, etc. should not be brought to school. Students are responsible for keeping their assigned locker / cubby clean and tidy at all times. Student lockers, cubbies, desks and book bags may be subject to a random search & inspection at any time.

## **Promotion**

Blossom encourages every child to put forth their best effort daily. The Montessori curriculum is set up in 3 year increments:

- o 3-6 Class is PreK3, PreK4, PreK5 & Kindergarten 5 (turns 5 in Jan - July of PreK4 year)
- o 6-9 Class is Kindergarten (turned 5 in Aug- Dec. PreK4 year) & Grades 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> (lower & on level 3<sup>rd</sup> graders)
- o 9-12 Class is Grades 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> (higher level 3<sup>rd</sup> graders)

The teacher prepares a three (3) year plan for each child. Each child has his/her own curriculum. The teacher breaks down the curriculum into a one year plan. That one year plan is called a “Growth & Development Plan”. Successful completion of their Growth and Development plan means the student is promoted.

## **Retention**

Blossom tries to set up all of its students for success. There are rare situations where a child is performing below his or her capability level and they will need to be retained. The number one reason for retention is absences. A child that is often absent (excused or unexcused) is at risk for being retained.

All students must strive to meet Blossom’s attendance policy; please refer to Blossom’s Attendance Policy within this document for details. If a child exceeds the number of absences allowed within the school calendar year, the parents will be required to attend a determination meeting. At the determination meeting the child’s placement for next year will be determined.

## **Transfer**

Blossom does accept children that transfer mid year from another school. All new students who transfer to Blossom mid year will need to have their school records turned into the Administration Office prior to their start date. Blossom will need half a grading period to create the child’s Growth & Development Plan. All new students are placed on a 45 day probation period. Parents of students that receive state or county funding or scholarships should bear in mind scholarship important deadlines.

Blossom students who wish to transfer to another school mid year must give six (6) weeks written notice and all tuition & fees must be paid at that time to close out your child’s account. Once your child’s account is closed your child’s new school may request student records from the Administration Office; however, staff will need a minimum 72 hours to prepare those documents. Parents of students that receive state or county funding or scholarships should bear in mind important scholarship deadlines.

# **Discipline/Suspension/Expulsion Policy**

## **Discipline**

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf takes a positive reinforcement approach towards discipline. The students of Blossom are here for social and emotional growth, as much as academic growth. We understand that children are not born with these skills and must be taught through lessons, experiences and role-models how to control their thoughts, feelings, impulses and behaviors. We are here to help teach these life skills to all students. When given opportunities and support to develop on a social / emotional level, it creates a firm foundation for skills they will use to be productive and successful for a lifetime.

At Blossom, we have specially designed our school to provide children with a safe and respectful environment at all times. We give students the opportunity to discuss their feelings freely without judgment or harsh criticism. This allows students to grow in all aspects; socially, emotionally, academically and cognitively in the classroom. Blossom is able to work with students who may need a quiet place to collect their thoughts and emotions without punishment.

Blossom Teachers and Staff are here to assist children with whatever they may need, giving kind and encouraging words. Teachers are able to work with children to help them find calm and appropriate resolutions to problems and openly discuss best choices. Teachers are able to help students find words to fit with their emotions to better solve a situation in a respectful manner. Our goal is to promote healthy social interactions with both the student's peers and adults.

Blossom also strives to make our environment open and encouraging for our families of students. We will work together with parents, as a team, to ensure that your child is in the safest environment. Blossom Staff and Teachers are here to support all students with their social and emotional needs and understand that having the support from parents is crucial to this endeavor.

Making Blossom a safe school not only means that a child's emotions/feelings are accepted and safe, but that they are also physically safe from harm. If a student is unable to control their thoughts, words or actions and the situation becomes a danger to other students, teachers or to themselves, Blossom staff will take the appropriate actions listed within this Discipline/Suspension/Expulsion Policy. \*No child will be subjected to discipline which is severe, humiliating or frightening, or associated with food, rest or toileting. Blossom does not believe in or condone corporal punishment.

## **Suspension**

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf expects proper "Blossom" behavior from students at all times. The use of the following will result in immediate suspension:

- inappropriate language - spoken or signed (i.e. yelling, screaming, cussing, disrespectful words such as 'shut up', etc.)
- inappropriate behavior
- explosive responses
- hitting (of others, self or of property)



- throwing property
- pushing
- pulling
- pinching
- biting
- scratching
- rough play on campus
- any action that may be a potential danger to one's self or others
- failing to follow safety regulations (i.e. refusing to come in from outside, running from the classroom without permission, etc.)
- refusing to cooperate with staff (i.e. being asked to remove one's self from a situation and refusing to move, etc.)

All above actions will result in immediate suspension. No exceptions will be made.

A **first offense** will result in one day of in-school suspension.

A **second offense** will result in one day of out-of-school suspension.

A **third offense** will result in three days out-of-school suspension.

**Any offense thereafter** will result in a determination meeting with the Director and parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine the best possible behavior action plan for the child or if dismissal from Blossom may be necessary. This is done in order to protect the safety and integrity of all of the students attending Blossom. All suspensions will be the decision of the administrative team.

### **Expulsion / Dismissal**

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf places high standards on all of its students. Items and behaviors that will result in an immediate dismissal are:

- bringing to campus or the use of:
  - tobacco
  - alcohol
  - drugs
  - weapons
- profanity (spoken or signed)
- abusive language (spoken or signed)
- physical/written threats
- any action that is a danger to one's self or others
- bullying / harassment
- cyber bullying
- sexual harassment
- any other actions/behavior deemed extremely inappropriate on campus

The above actions will result in immediate dismissal from Blossom. No exceptions will be made. This is done in order to protect the safety and integrity of all of the students attending Blossom. All dismissals will be the decision of the administrative team.

Blossom's first priority is to ensure that all the students, staff and families who enter our building are in a safe and welcoming environment. Blossom does not have the additional staff or resources needed for some students with severe disabilities and/or behavioral needs. We understand that while we want to help all children grow to be successful adults, we may not be able to offer the appropriate environment for everyone. Blossom will work with families to make sure this is a proper fit for your child(ren) and in the case that it is not; we will help to find an alternative that best fits your child(ren)'s needs.

### **Drugs, Alcohol & Smoking**

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf is a DRUG FREE - ALCOHOL FREE - SMOKE FREE environment!! Blossom has a zero tolerance for drugs, alcohol, and tobacco products. If a child is found on campus with drugs, alcohol, or tobacco in their possession, that child will be immediately expelled.

### **Weapons**

Blossom has a zero tolerance for firearms or weapons of any kind. Should a child make a verbal or written threat of using a weapon or be found on campus with any type of weapon, knife, razor, firearm, etc., that child will be expelled immediately. Toy weapons are also strictly prohibited.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Blossom has a zero tolerance for sexual harassment of any kind. Blossom is committed to providing a school environment that ensures the equality, dignity, and respect of every student. In keeping with this commitment, Blossom strictly prohibits discriminatory practices, including sexual harassment, and will not deny or limit the ability of any student to participate in, or benefit from, any Blossom school program on the basis of sex. Sexual harassment, whether verbal, physical or environmental, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated, whether it occurs on school grounds or at outside school-sponsored activities. This policy applies to all Blossom Schools' employees and students. All Blossom employees have a duty to ensure that no student is subjected to sexual harassment and to help maintain a school environment free of such harassment. If a child is found guilty of sexual harassment, that child will be immediately expelled.

## **Bullying / Harassment Policy**

*\*\*Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf adheres to the strict Bullying / Harassment Policy based on the Florida Statutes. We consider bullying and harassment a very serious matter and it will not be tolerated.*

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf is here to provide a safe learning environment for all of our students, families and staff. If a child is found guilty of any of the infractions mentioned in the Florida Statutes in the pages that follow, disciplinary actions will be taken as listed in the steps below. The severity of the infraction will play a major role in the way Blossom's staff will handle the situation. Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf's sole priority is to educate in a safe environment.

Below are the steps Blossom will take to ensure safety:

1. If a child is found guilty or involved in bullying or harassment as mentioned in situations listed in the Florida Statutes; he or she will be removed from the situation and brought to the child's teacher. The teacher will determine the severity of the situation. If this happens in the presence of the child's teacher, the child will be brought to the Director. If this situation is deemed serious, the child will have a behavior report written up, parents will be immediately contacted, and the child will be sent home for the rest of the school day.
2. If this is a second offense, the child will again have a behavior report written up and will be suspended for the rest of the school day and the following school day. A meeting with our Behavioral Therapist will be set up with the child if they are enrolled in therapy. If the child is not enrolled in therapy, then it will be strongly recommended and a request for parental permission will be issued by the school.
3. If this is a third occurrence, the child will be suspended for the rest of that school day and the following three school days. A visit to the child's doctor and/or a psychologist will be required. A note from the child's doctor and/or psychologist will be required to return to school with confirmation that the child is under medical care and is at no risk of harming others.
4. Finally a fourth occurrence will result in expulsion.
5. In a severe case, Blossom reserves the right to automatically expel or call in law enforcement at a moment's notice. Blossom will have zero tolerance for severe cases which pose an immediate threat or harm to others.

\*\*Please note each situation will be considered individually. Blossom understands that each child has their own unique characteristics. Blossom accepts and embraces each child as an individual, but recognizes that our specialized environment is not always the best fit for each child.

## Florida Statutes Policy on Bullying / Harassment

***Bullying/Harassment:*** Statute [1006.147](#) (2008) prohibits bullying or harassment of any student or employee of a private or public K-12 educational institution. during any program or activity conducted by a private or public K-12 educational institution, during any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity, or through the use of data or computer software accessed through a computer, computer system or network of a private or public K-12 educational institution. Specific definitions of bullying and harassment are outlined in the statute. Statute [1006.147](#) (2008) provides immunity from a cause of action to a school employee, school volunteer, student, or parent who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying or harassment to the appropriate school official.

Statute [1006.147](#) (2008) requires school districts to adopt a policy prohibiting bullying and harassment of any student or employee of a private or public K-12 educational institution. The policy must

substantially conform to the model policy of the state Department of Education, and must afford all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law. It requires “a procedure for providing instruction to students, parents, teachers, school administrators, counseling staff, and school volunteers on identifying, preventing, and responding to bullying or harassment.” Additional requirements of the policy are outlined in the statute.

State Board of Education Administrative Rule [6A-19.008](#) (1985) requires schools to have environments that are free of harassment and prohibit any slurs, innuendos, or other verbal or physical conduct reflecting on one's race, ethnic background, gender, or handicapping condition, which creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment, or interferes with student's school performance or participation or other educational opportunities.

**Cyberbullying:** Statute [1006.147](#) (2008) prohibits bullying and harassment prohibits bullying or harassment of any student or employee of a private or public K-12 educational institution through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system or computer network of a private or public K-12 educational institution. The definition of "harassment" in the statute includes any threatening, insulting or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal, or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that does one of the following: (1) places them in reasonable fear of harm or to his or her person or damage to his or her property, (2) substantially interferes with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits, or (3) substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school. The definition of "bullying and harassment" includes perpetuation of actions by an individual or group with intent to demean, dehumanize, embarrass, or cause physical harm to a student or school employee by accessing or knowingly causing or providing access to data or computer software through a computer, computer system, or computer network within the scope of the district school system.

To report a possible incident of bullying/harassment as defined in Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf's Policy against Bullying and Harassment and/or the Florida Statutes Policy on Bullying and Harassment, please contact the Director immediately. The Director will provide you with a Bullying/Harassment Report to fill out and record the incident. Once you complete the report,

Blossom's Director will sign the document confirming it has been received, and a copy will be provided to you for your records. The incident will immediately be investigated by the Director and necessary action will be taken as needed.

You may also anonymously fill out a Bullying/Harassment Report online at [www.blossomschool.org/bullying-harassment-report/](http://www.blossomschool.org/bullying-harassment-report/).

Please note the same consequences that apply if engaging in bullying or harassment also apply to students and adults who wrongfully and intentionally accuse another as a means of bullying or harassment.

If you have any further questions about Blossom's Bullying / Harassment policy, please feel free to contact Blossom's Director, Julie Rutenberg via email [jrutenberg@blossomschool.org](mailto:jrutenberg@blossomschool.org) or phone (727) 539-7879/VP (727) 223-6238.

## **Responsibilities of Parents:**

### **Family Events**

While we enjoy having all our Blossom Families together during our school events, this year's events will be in-school, student only. We will strive to create an atmosphere as close to years before as possible. Details of the events and if/when parents are invited will be sent home throughout the school year. Please check your child's communication folder daily for these flyers. If you have any questions, please call the school office.

\*On certain event days listed below, students will have an individual or class presentation or performance which is mandatory. Students will receive a grade for their presentations at the Science Fair & Culture Fest. Please be sure your child is in attendance for those very important events.

### **2023-2024 Academic year - Family Event Schedule**

- **Thursday, August 24<sup>th</sup>** **5:30pm-7:00pm**  
Back to School Orientation \*Student Presentation
- **Thursday, October 5<sup>th</sup>** **5:30pm-7:00pm**  
Science Fair \*Student Presentations (Graded)
- **Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>** **1:30pm-3:00pm**  
Halloween Extravaganza Costumes Encouraged for ALL  
(Student only event - in school) \*No After Care / Dismissal for all at 3:15pm
- **Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup>** **11:30am-1:00pm**  
Thanksgiving Feast  
(Parent volunteers needed for food. Sign up sheet will be posted.)
- **Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>** **6:30pm-8:00pm**  
Holiday Celebration Party
- **Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>** **9:00am-10:30am**  
Walk-A-Thon Sneakers Required  
(Parent volunteers needed for set-up, run event & clean up. Sign up sheet will be posted.)
- **Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup>** **5:00pm-6:30pm**  
Culture Fest \*Student Presentations (Graded)
- **Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>** **10:00am - 12:00pm (dress clothes)**  
Stepping Up Ceremony  
Location: TBD

## **Family Commitment** and what it means at Blossom...

At Blossom, our goal is to teach children about life and learning through a positive supportive environment. A large part of the success of this school is the relationship we forge with the families of Blossom. In our busy lives we often need to stop and take stock of all that we have and to appreciate the value of 'everyday' life.

Part of the everyday life of Blossom is the interdependent relationship we have with the families of our students. We teach our children to get involved with their community on a regular basis and to embrace diversity and change. One avenue we have available to us is that of 'parent as teacher'. It is through the involvement of parents that we are better able to educate children. When the family supports the learning environment, the child fully understands the importance of education.

Blossom invites all families to assist in this learning journey through attending, participating and volunteering for Blossom activities, fundraisers and family events.

### **Family Commitment Hours**

All families will be required to commit to 20 hours of volunteer services every year to Blossom by:

- Attending & Participating in Monthly Family Events
- Volunteering to decorate or set up for Holiday Events
- Attending & Participating in Holiday Events
- Volunteering to organize a Booster Fundraiser
- Collecting Silent Auction Items for Fundraising Events
- Attending and/or Participating in Fundraising Events
- Chaperoning Field Trips & School Events (if requested)

Families receiving private scholarships will be required to commit 30 – 40 hours of volunteer service (depending on the percentage of scholarship support), as well as sign up for weekly American Sign Language (ASL) classes at the Deaf Literacy Center (DLC), your local library or college if their child is deaf or hard of hearing. By giving back to the school families can show their child the importance of involvement within their own community.

**Important please note:** Some scheduled events will be student-only this school year. Please look out for emails throughout the year on ways you may help make these events & celebrations special and successful.

# Parent Checklist

The following records must be on file with Blossom prior to the student beginning school each year. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to turn in any updated forms, reports or documents such as Immunization Record (DH 680), School Entry Health Exam (DH 3040), therapy reports, scholarship award letters/certificates as they are made available to you.

1. Student's Birth Certificate (copy made from original document)
2. Florida Certificate of Immunization Record (original Form DH 680)
3. Florida School Entry Health Exam (original Form DH 3040)
4. Audiogram (if applicable)
5. IEP Plan (if applicable)
6. 504 Plan (if applicable)
7. Previous School Year Student Records & Therapy Reports (required for ALL new students – i.e. report cards, progress reports, assessment reports, attendance records, therapy evaluations, speech reports, OT reports, behavioral reports, etc.)
8. Scholarship Information & Award Letter/Certificates for any student receiving funding from Step Up for Students Income Based (SUFS FTC or FES EO), Step up for Students Unique Abilities (SUFS UA), Early Learning Coalition School Readiness (ELC SR), etc. (if applicable)
9. Judgment/Custodial Order of the Court (if applicable)  
***\*Note: If there are custodial issues that in any way limit the access any parent has to the child, Blossom must keep a copy of the Court Order recognizing such status. No parent will be denied access to their child without an Order from the Court or other official documentation clearly defining such circumstances.***

The following annual registration forms must be completed, signed and on file with Blossom prior to the student beginning of the school year. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to update this information as the year progresses should any changes occur such as person authorized to pick up the child, phone numbers, addresses, allergies, medications, etc. All school year fees are due at the time of registration and are non-refundable.

1. Student Application
2. Student Enrollment Form (green)
3. Emergency Medical Release (yellow) - 3 notarized originals
4. Authorization of Student Release for Therapy Services (if applicable)
5. Child's Health & Development Questionnaire
6. Influenza Pamphlet
7. Distracted Driver Form (August & April)
8. Animal Experience Permission Form
9. Food Policy Acknowledgement Form
10. Food Experience Permission Form
11. Photo / Information Release
12. Field Trip / Transportation Release
13. School Emergency Drill Participation Form
14. Parent / Provider Agreement
15. Before & After Care Enrollment Form
16. ACH Direct Deposit Form (if applicable)
17. Approved Pick Up List
18. Annual Enrollment Fee (\$125 New Student Enrollment / \$100 Re-Enrollment)
19. Annual Materials & School Supplies Fee (\$100)

# Food Policy for Lunch & Snacks:

Blossom is required to follow strict food guidelines in order to be in compliance with the Florida Health Department. In order to remain in compliance, we need full cooperation from parent(s)/guardian(s). Healthy meal guidelines can be found online at MyPlate, MyWins by the USDA. For more information please visit [ChooseMyPlate.gov/MyWins](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov/MyWins). Please review the new, healthier meal plans attached on the following page.

***\*\*This plan replaces the Food Pyramid from previous years.***

- Please be sure to label all of your child's personal belongings (i.e. backpack, lunchbox, Tupperware, water bottle, thermos, etc). If a lunchbox or Tupperware (etc) is not labeled, please be advised that staff will label it.
- Lunch and snacks are not provided by Blossom. It is the parent's daily responsibility to pack a healthy lunch, 2-3 snacks and 2-3 beverages in a labeled, refillable water bottle with lid, insulated lunch box with a cold pack. Please see attached papers for more ideas for a healthy snack and lunch. *Please note: lunch boxes and refillable water bottles will need to be cleaned and sanitized daily by the parent.*
- Be sure to cut up your child's food at home prior to arrival as staff is not allowed to cut or touch the student's food according to licensing regulations. Staff may of course help a student open a packaged product or drink.  
***\*Preschool Parents Please Note:*** For students ages 3-4 or younger, foods/fruits must be pre-cut into small pieces (1/4 size) to avoid choking hazards. Foods labeled choking hazards, such as Popcorn, are NOT allowed for students ages 3-4 or younger.
- Students may NOT use the refrigerator to keep their lunch or drinks cool due to licensing regulations. Please be sure you pack a cool-pack in your child's insulated lunch box to keep food from spoiling.
- Students may NOT use the microwave to heat up their lunch. Please do NOT send your child to school with a meal that needs to be reheated in a microwave as we are unable to do so due to licensing regulations.
- Be sure to pack a napkin, spoon and/or fork for your child's lunch depending on what is needed.
- Please remind your child to bring their lunch box to school each day. If your child happens to forget their lunch at home or in the car, a parent/guardian will be contacted as soon as we are made aware. A parent/guardian will have 30 minutes to make arrangements to bring their child's lunch to school or order a lunch to be delivered by their child's scheduled lunch time. Staff is unable to provide lunch or snacks to students as we do not keep food on premise due to licensing regulations. If staff is unable to reach a parent for some unforeseen reason, Blossom will then need to provide lunch for your child at the cost of the parent which will be due upon pick up. Each student must have a complete & healthy lunch, snack & drink each day – no exceptions.

Pinellas County Licensing requires these rules to be followed at all times. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.



# **Homework:**

Homework will be assigned throughout the year and will have a direct effect on your child's overall grade. Homework assignments typically have one or more purposes:

**Practice** homework is meant to reinforce learning and help the student master specific skills.

**Preparation** homework introduces material that will be presented in future lessons. These assignments aim to help students familiarize themselves with new material before it is covered in class.

**Extension** homework asks students to apply skills they already have to new materials / situations.

**Integration** homework requires the student to apply many different skills to a single task, such as book reports, science projects or creative writing.

Here are some general homework tips for parents:

- ❖ **Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do homework.**  
Avoid having your child do homework with the television on or in places with other distractions, such as people coming and going.
- ❖ **Make sure the materials your child needs, such as paper, pencils and a dictionary, are available.**  
Ask your child if special materials will be needed for some projects and get them in advance. If you have difficulty finding or supplying the necessary materials, please contact your child's teacher immediately to work out a solution.
- ❖ **Help your child with time management.**  
Establish a set time each day for doing homework. Don't let your child leave homework until just before bedtime. Think about using a weekend morning or afternoon for working on big projects, especially if the project involves getting together with classmates.
- ❖ **Be positive about homework.**  
Tell your child how important school is. The attitude you express about homework will be the attitude your child acquires. Arguing with your child about homework is not a productive solution.
- ❖ **When your child does homework, you do homework.**  
Show your child that the skills they are learning are related to things you do as an adult. If your child is reading, you read too. If your child is doing math, balance your checkbook.
- ❖ **When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers.**  
Giving answers means your child will not learn the material. Too much help teaches your child that when the going gets rough, someone will do the work for him or her.
- ❖ **When the teacher asks that you play a role in homework, do it.**  
Cooperate with the teacher. It shows your child that the school and home are a team. Follow the directions given by the teacher.
- ❖ **If homework is meant to be done by your child alone, give them their space.**  
Too much parent involvement can prevent homework from having some positive effects. Homework is a great way for kids to develop independent, lifelong learning skills.

❖ **Stay informed.**

Talk with your child's teacher. Make sure you know the purpose of homework and what your child's class rules are.

❖ **Help your child figure out what is hard homework and what is easy homework.**

Have your child do the hard work first. This will mean they will be most alert when facing the biggest challenges. Easy material will seem to go fast when fatigue begins to set in.

❖ **Watch your child for signs of failure and frustration.**

Let your child take a short break if they are having trouble keeping her mind on an assignment.

❖ **Reward progress in homework.**

If your child has been successful in homework completion and is working hard, celebrate that success with a special event (e.g., pizza, a walk, a trip to the park, play a board game together) to reinforce the positive effort.

When teachers and parents positively reinforce the importance of homework, the child learns at an early age how hard work and perseverance pay off. Indeed, a lesson to be used again in varied ways in the life of a child.

## **School Closures & Early Dismissals:**

Please note: the following school closures & early dismissals for Blossom's 2023-2024 school year are subject to change pending hurricane makeup days:

- **September 4<sup>th</sup>** – School Closed for Labor Day
- **September 22<sup>nd</sup>** - School Closed for Professional Day (no students / staff work day)
- **October 9<sup>th</sup>** - School Closed for Indigenous Peoples Day
- **October 31<sup>st</sup>** – Dismissal for all students at 3:15pm (No After Care)
- **November 17<sup>th</sup>** – Dismissal for all students following Thanksgiving Feast (No After Care)
- **November 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>** – School Closed for Thanksgiving Break
- **December 20<sup>th</sup>** - Dismissal for all students at 1:00pm (No After Care)
- **December 21<sup>st</sup>** - School Closed for Professional Day (no students / staff work day)
- **December 22<sup>nd</sup> – January 5<sup>th</sup>** – School Closed for Winter / Holiday Break
- **January 15<sup>th</sup>** – School Closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- **February 19<sup>th</sup>** – School Closed for Presidents' Day
- **March 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>** – School Closed for Spring Break
- **April 12<sup>th</sup>** - School Closed for Professional Day (no students / staff work day)
- **May 21<sup>st</sup>** - Dismissal for all students at 3:15pm / No After Care for Stepping Up Preparations
- **May 22<sup>nd</sup>** – Early Dismissal for all students after Stepping Up Ceremony (family event)
- **May 23<sup>rd</sup> – August TBA** (date to be announced Spring 2024) – Summer Break

# **Evacuation Preparedness & Emergency Plan**

## **Our plan for supervising children during a fire or emergency evacuation:**

**Each Teacher and their Assistant (Instructional Staff)** will be responsible for their class and its entirety. Each Teacher will grab their classroom's red emergency folder located in their assigned classroom which contains emergency release forms & an individual communication plan for each of their students, a health plan for each student with chronic medical needs, as well as a copy of Blossom's emergency plan and school roster & allergy list for the entire school. Please follow your classroom's designated primary or secondary Evacuation Plan (which is hanging on the wall in each classroom, office and common area) as needed. Be sure to close your classroom door, after checking again that there are no children left in the room, before exiting.

**\*\*Children with Special Needs** that may need additional assistance in exiting the building safely will be assisted by the Teacher. The teacher's assistant will continue to make sure the students of the class exit the building in a safe, quick manner and meet at the appropriate safe place, so the Teacher may focus on assisting the children with Special Needs and their safety.

**\*\*Children with Chronic Medical Needs** that may need additional assistance in exiting the building safely will be assisted by the Teacher or private aide/nurse (if applicable). The Teacher's Assistant will continue to make sure the students of the class exit the building in a safe, quick manner and meet at the appropriate safe place, so the Teacher may focus on assisting the children with Chronic Medical Needs and their safety. A copy of individual Health Plans for children with Chronic Medical needs will be attached to emergency release forms located in red Classroom Emergency Folders (or transition binder for 3-6 Class); as well as the main red Emergency Binder in the Business Office. If children with Chronic Medical Needs have medication stored in the school's locked medication drawer located in the Director's office, Ms. Rutenberg will grab the Medication Authorization Binder and medications before evacuating.

## **Relocation Sites:**

### Immediate Relocation (#1)

Clearwater Ice Arena  
13940 Icot Blvd, Clearwater, FL

### Secondary Relocation (#2)

Medicaid Done Right  
13825 Icot Blvd, Clearwater, FL

### Third Relocation (#3) (involving severe situations where the area must be evacuated)

Camelot Preschool  
6751 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL

## **Communication Plan with parents/guardians:**

Each student's parent/guardian has completed a Communication Plan on how best to reach them in case of an emergency or evacuation. Communication Plan's are attached to each student's Emergency Release form in the red emergency folder located in their assigned classroom, the main (red) emergency binder located in the Business office and their student

file is located in the filing cabinet in the Business office as well. The Communication Plan consists of the student's parent/guardian home and/or work telephone numbers, video phone numbers and/or personal cell/text numbers (in the most efficient order parents/guardians wished to be contacted in the case of emergency, along with email addresses (in case staff is able to access a device with email capability), as well as contact information for their back up emergency contacts if a parent/guardian cannot be reached for an unforeseen reason. All Blossom parents/guardians have been provided with Blossom's complete Evacuation Preparedness & Emergency Plan, including our relocation sites & reunification plan.

As soon as Students & Staff are safely evacuated to the proper relocation site, Administrative Staff will immediately begin to contact parents/guardians according to their child's Communication Plan. If Administrative Staff is unavailable for any unforeseen reason, then it will become the responsibility of the Instructional Staff to begin contacting parents/guardians according to each student's Communication Plan. Staff should remain calm and clear while communicating with each student's parent/guardian to ensure they are provided with correct and detailed information on the situation, safety of their child and proper relocation site so that parents/guardians may be reunified with their child within a 30 minute timeframe.

### **Our plan for supervising children at the relocation site & reunification with parents/guardians:**

Administrative Staff will immediately begin to contact parents/guardians (if applicable) upon arriving at the relocation site, and assist with supervising students where needed.

Instructional Staff will be responsible for supervising the children at the relocation site. Each Teacher and their Assistant will be entirely responsible for their group of children.

At the relocation site the children will play quiet games (Tic Tac Toe, Hangman, I Spy, Simon Says, etc) until their parents arrive or we are permitted to go back to our school.

If parents/guardians are required to pick up their child due to an emergency; parents will have a 30 minute time frame to pick up their child(ren) at the relocation site.

### **Transportation for Evacuation Plan**

When an immediate emergency evacuation arises in which staff must relocate students to evacuation sites 2 or 3, staff will transport the students in their personal vehicles. Staff will follow all laws to the best of their ability due to safety precautions.

In the case that a staff member has an emergency issue with their personal vehicle during the evacuation, they will immediately call the Director and she will assign another staff member to meet and pick up the students that are being transported. The staff member who is waiting for assistance should make sure they are out of harm's way and the children are away from traffic or any other circumstances that could be deemed unsafe. The staff and students should wait inside the vehicle until the other staff member or an emergency team has arrived.

Staff would only transport students in an extreme and immediate emergency situation. Staff is NOT authorized to drive students at any other time – no exceptions!

## Transportation Emergency Plan

If the students are riding in a rented transportation with a driver for a field trip; and the bus/vehicle breaks down, staff will immediately call the Director to inform her of the situation. All students and staff should stay in the vehicle unless it is deemed unsafe (i.e. on fire, smoking, etc.). It is the teacher's responsibility to keep the students calm and quiet while backup transportation is en route.

In the case that the vehicle is unsafe (i.e. on fire, smoking, etc.), the teachers and staff will call 911 and have the children exit the vehicle in a quick and quiet manner. The students will be relocated to a safe place away from the roadway and traffic until help arrives. At that time it will be decided if the rental company will provide alternative transportation or if parents will need to be called for pick up.

## Fire (or Bomb Explosion) plan:

Each room has its own emergency exit plan (a primary and a secondary exit). The plan is located on the wall next to the door in each office and classroom.

The Teacher and Assistant are responsible for leading their children safely out of their exit. The Teacher's are to grab their classroom's emergency release folder on the way out the door, and close all the classroom doors before exiting. At all times remain calm and follow the R.A.C.E. to Fire Safety procedure as follows:

### R.A.C.E. to Fire Safety

It is important that our staff is prepared to respond to fires and other emergencies. Please review this basic, but critical, fire response information on a regular basis. Follow the "R.A.C.E." acronym if there is a fire or suspected fire:

- R** = Rescue
- A** = Alarm
- C** = Contain
- E** = Extinguish

### Rescue

- \*Immediately stop what you are doing and remove anyone in immediate danger from the fire to a safe area.
- \*Staff & students along with their assigned teacher are instructed to leave under their own power and report to their primary or secondary evacuation point. Teachers should stay with their assigned class at all times, and be sure to keep an accurate headcount.
- \*Staff & students that require assistance with walking should be assisted by their assigned teacher or staff member.
- \*Get out as safely and quickly as possible. The less time you and others are exposed to poisonous gasses, heat, or flames, the safer everyone will be.
- \*Assist/ensure evacuation per instructions from the Evacuation Plan are posted next to your classroom or office door, and/or the Emergency Plan posted on shared files.

### Alarm

- \*Activate the nearest fire alarm pull stations (if applicable).

- \*Call 911 immediately and/or Ms. Rutenberg, Ms. Bonano or Ms. Derks's office (if applicable) to report the location and current extent of the fire. They are notified to be sure all staff & students are quickly notified so they may evacuate the building if they have not done so already, and/or advise the location to the emergency rescue team upon their arrival.

### **Contain**

- \*Close ALL doors and windows that you can safely reach to contain the fire.
- \*During evacuation, close the door(s) behind you.

### **Extinguish**

- \*Only attempt to extinguish the fire if it is safe for you to do so.
- \*Retrieve the nearest fire extinguisher and follow the "P.A.S.S." procedure:

**P=Pull the pin breaking the plastic sea;**

**A=Aim at the base of the fire;**

**S=Squeeze the handles together;**

**S=Sweep from side to side**

### **Bomb Threat (in Building) Plan:**

Each room has its own emergency exit plan (a primary and a secondary exit). The plan is located on the wall next to the door in each office and classroom.

The Teacher and Assistant are responsible for leading their children safely out of their exit. The Teacher's are to grab their classroom's emergency release folder on the way out the door, and close all the classroom doors before exiting.

It is important that our staff is prepared to respond to a suspected Bomb Threat that is called in or reported at the school. Please review this basic, but critical, response information and be prepared to *rescue, alarm* and *contain*.

### **Rescue**

- \*Immediately stop what you are doing and remove anyone in immediate danger to a safe area away from school grounds.
- \*Staff & students along with their assigned teacher are instructed to leave under their own power and report to their primary or secondary evacuation point. Teachers should stay with their assigned class at all times, and be sure to keep an accurate headcount.
- \*Staff & students that require assistance with walking should be assisted by their assigned teacher or staff member.
- \*Get out as safely and quickly as possible. The less time you and others are exposed to poisonous gasses, heat, or flames, the safer everyone will be.
- \*Assist/ensure evacuation per instructions from the Evacuation Plan are posted next to your classroom or office door, and/or the Emergency Plan posted on shared files.

## Alarm

- \*Call 911 and/or Ms. Rutenberg, Ms. Bonano or Ms. Derks's office (if applicable) to report the suspected Bomb Threat & possible location. They are notified to be sure all staff & students are quickly notified so they may evacuate the building if they have not done so already, and/or advise the location to the emergency rescue team upon their arrival.

## Contain

- \*Close ALL doors and windows that you can safely reach to contain any possible fire caused if a bomb went off.
- \*During evacuation, close the door(s) behind you.

## **Bomb Threat (in Local or Surrounding Area) Plan:**

We would relocate all of the Students and Staff to our designated safe rooms in the Therapy Room and Administrative Office - the only rooms within the interior building that have no exterior windows. Both safe rooms contain safety kits (i.e. first aid, water, food, flashlights, batteries, battery operated emergency radio, coloring activities for the students).

Everyone would assume a duck and cover position until the Bomb Threat warning is over in the immediate local or surrounding area.

- 6-9 Class & 9-12 Class (with all their teachers and assistants), the Speech/OT Therapists (if at school) & Ms. Derks will go into the Therapy Room (located across from the water fountain).
- 3-6 Class (with their teacher and assistant), Ms. Rutenberg & Ms. Bonano will go into the Administrative office (located next to the water fountain).

Administrative Staff will immediately begin to contact parents/guardians (if applicable) to notify them of the situation and assist with supervising students where needed.

Instructional Staff will be responsible for supervising the children in the safe rooms. Each Teacher and their Assistant will be entirely responsible for their group of children.

If applicable - when local authorities advise that the school is safe to have parents/guardians pick up their child(ren); parents will be called and have a 30 minute time frame to pick up their child(ren) at the school.

If applicable - if local authorities advise it is safer to evacuate the school and immediate area; staff will follow normal emergency evacuation protocol to relocation sites 2 or 3 or to another safe relocation site advised by local authorities. Upon arriving at the location site, Administrative staff will contact parents/guardians to pick up their child(ren) within 30 minutes and Teachers & their Assistants will supervise the students until parents arrive.

## **Toxic Fumes / Chemical Release (in building) Plan:**

Each room has its own emergency exit plan (a primary and a secondary exit). The plan is located on the wall next to the door in each office and classroom.

The Teacher and Assistant are responsible for leading their children safely out of their exit. The Teacher's are to grab their classroom's emergency release folder on the way out the door, and close all the classroom doors before exiting.

It is important that our staff is prepared to respond to Toxic Fumes / Chemical Release that may happen in the building that is called in or reported at the school. Please review this basic, but critical, response information and be prepared to *rescue, alarm* and *contain*.

## **Rescue**

- \*Immediately stop what you are doing and remove anyone in immediate danger to a safe area away from school grounds.
- \*Staff & students along with their assigned teacher are instructed to leave under their own power and report to their primary or secondary evacuation point. Teachers should stay with their assigned class at all times, and be sure to keep an accurate headcount.
- \*Staff & students that require assistance with walking should be assisted by their assigned teacher or staff member.
- \*Get out as safely and quickly as possible. The less time you and others are exposed to poisonous gasses, heat, or flames, the safer everyone will be.
- \*Assist/ensure evacuation per instructions from the Evacuation Plan are posted next to your classroom or office door, and/or the Emergency Plan posted on shared files.

## **Alarm**

- \*Call 911 and/or Ms. Rutenberg, Ms. Bonano or Ms. Derks's office (if applicable) to report the suspected Bomb Threat & possible location. They are notified to be sure all staff & students are quickly notified so they may evacuate the building if they have not done so already, and/or advise the location to the emergency rescue team upon their arrival.

## **Contain**

- \*Close ALL doors and windows that you can safely reach to contain any possible fire caused if a bomb went off.
- \*During evacuation, close the door(s) behind you.

*Important: At no time should any Teacher, Assistant or Staff Member bring in any hazardous chemicals or materials into the school that may cause toxic fumes or chemical release for any reason and including Science Experiments. Cleaning chemicals should be stored in the locked closet in the kitchen in their original containers and not mixed at any time. Wall paint and paint thinners must be stored in the outside locked storage closet in their original containers.*

## **Toxic Fumes / Chemical Release (in local or surrounding area) Plan:**

Depending on the situation:

We would relocate all of the Students and Staff to our designated safe rooms in the Therapy Room and Administrative Office - the only rooms within the interior building that have no exterior windows. Both safe rooms contain safety kits (i.e. first aid, water, food, flashlights, batteries, battery operated emergency radio, coloring activities for the students).



Everyone would assume a calm and seated position until the Bomb Threat warning is over in the immediate local or surrounding area.

- 6-9 Class & 9-12 Class (with all their teachers and assistants), the Speech/OT Therapists (if at school) & Ms. Derks will go into the Therapy Room (located across from the water fountain).
- 3-6 Class (with their teacher and assistant), Ms. Rutenberg & Ms. Bonano will go into the Administrative office (located next to the water fountain).

Administrative Staff will immediately begin to contact parents/guardians (if applicable) to notify them of the situation and assist with supervising students where needed.

Instructional Staff will be responsible for supervising the children in the safe rooms. Each Teacher and their Assistant will be entirely responsible for their group of children.

If applicable - when local authorities advise that the school is safe to have parents/guardians pick up their child(ren); parents will be called and have a 30 minute time frame to pick up their child(ren) at the school.

If applicable – if local authorities advise that it is safer to evacuate the school and immediate area; staff will follow normal emergency evacuation protocol to relocation sites 2 or 3 or to another safe relocation site advised by local authorities. Upon arriving at the location site, Administrative staff will contact parents/guardians to pick up their child(ren) within 30 minutes and Teachers & their Assistants will supervise the students until parents arrive.

## **Hurricane or Tropical Storm plan:**

We are a level C evacuation zone. Our school will close, delay opening or dismiss early for students and contract therapists if Pinellas County Schools (PCS) announces a closure, delay or early dismissal. PCS will announce a closure, delay or early dismissal on PCS's website ([www.pcsb.org](http://www.pcsb.org)), Bay News 9 or local news channels. Parents/guardians should closely monitor news channels for any weather updates, school closures, delays or early dismissals; as well as extended closures or delays in the days that follow.

Ms. Rutenberg will send an email blast to parents, contract therapists and staff. When possible we will try to put a recording on our machine that we are closed, post on our FaceBook page and the school's website ([www.blossomschool.org](http://www.blossomschool.org)). We will also try to post on Bay News 9, but please note that we will always follow Pinellas County Schools (PCS) alert system for students. If a family, contract therapist or a staff member has any questions they may email Julie Rutenberg at [jrutenberg@blossomschool.org](mailto:jrutenberg@blossomschool.org).

## **Flood plan:**

In case of a flood in the building, we will move the children to a room or rooms that are not affected within the building. If that is not possible, we will relocate to our secondary relocation Site (#2):

Medicaid Done Right

13825 Icot Blvd, Clearwater, FL

The Teachers will take their classroom's emergency release folders & transition log binders, Ms. Rutenberg will take the Medication Authorization Binder & any medications required for

students with Chronic Medical Needs, Ms. Bonano will take the red emergency binder from her office which contains emergency release forms & communication plans for the entire school, and Ms. Derks will take the attendance binder from the rolling desk in the front lobby.

We will transport the children in Staff. Parents will be called by the Administrative Staff to come and pick up their children.

Each Teacher and their Assistant will be entirely responsible for their group of children. At the relocated site the children will play quiet games (Tic Tac Toe, Hangman, I Spy, Simon Says, etc) until their parents arrive or we are permitted to go back to our school.

## **Tornado Plan:**

We would relocate all of the Students and Staff to our designated safe rooms in the Therapy Room and Administrative Office - the only rooms within the interior building that have no exterior windows. Both safe rooms contain safety kits (i.e. first aid, water, food, flashlights, batteries, battery operated emergency radio, coloring activities for the students).

Everyone would assume a duck and cover position until the Bomb Threat warning is over in the immediate local or surrounding area.

- 6-9 Class & 9-12 Class (with all their teachers and assistants), the Speech/OT Therapists (if at school) & Ms. Derks will go into the Therapy Room (located across from the water fountain).
- 3-6 Class (with their teacher and assistant), Ms. Rutenberg & Ms. Bonano will go into the Administrative office (located next to the water fountain).

## **Lock Down Plan**

If a lock down is issued ALL doors and outside gates will be closed and locked immediately by staff located closest to exits (i.e. exit door in 9-12 Class, exit door in kitchen; exit door in front lobby. Ms. Rutenberg, Ms. Bonano and Ms. Derks sweep the building to make sure all doors are locked & coded entry for the front door is disabled. All the children will be removed from their classrooms. Students will sit in the hallway(s) outside some of the classrooms with their backs towards the interior walls, away from any windows or exits leading outside.

- 3-6 & 6-9 classes with their teacher, assistant, plus Ms. Rutenberg & Ms. Derks, will sit in the hallway outside Ms. Derks and Ms. Rutenberg's office with their backs towards the interior wall (*avoid sitting close or across from any door, exit or window*).
- 9-12 class with their teacher, assistant, the Speech/OT Therapist (if in the building), plus Ms. Bonano will sit in the hallway outside the Administrative office with their backs towards the interior wall (*avoid sitting close or across from any door, exit or window*).

Please note that each teacher and assistant is responsible for keeping their class calm and silent during this time. A lock down could last hours. If needed you may need to keep your students engaged with a silent activity; however, please keep in mind that you will be unable to re-enter your classroom or office until the lockdown is completely over.

## **Intruder/Active Shooter Plan**

If there is an intruder, with or without a weapon, all staff will be alerted of the situation immediately. The Director or staff closest to the phone will call 911 immediately or will assign another staff to call depending on the placement of the intruder. If there are any possible routes for a quick exit from the building the teacher will quickly and quietly lead the students out and to the Ice Arena located next door. If time allows teaching staff to safely grab their emergency release forms, please do so. When an intruder is present, and there is no safe exit, each classroom should immediately shut and lock their doors, using barricades (i.e. desk, bookshelves, etc) if necessary to prevent the intruder from entering the classroom. All children will stay in a crawling position and will be away from all windows, hidden from the line of sight. If the intruder is contained to one area, the Teacher will then make the call to either stay barricaded in the classroom or if there is still immediate danger, to evacuate in a quick, quiet manner. Children should remain low to the ground, silent, and moving quickly and should evacuate using the closest and safest exit. When leaving the premises, students and staff will head to the Ice Arena for safety, call 911 and wait for the authorities.

## **Selected Readings and Websites:**

If you are interested in learning more about the Montessori Method of teaching, American Sign Language, or Florida Law, check out these references!

### **For Information about Maria Montessori:**

[www.Michaelolaf.net](http://www.Michaelolaf.net)

[www.webster.edu/~woolflm/montessori.html](http://www.webster.edu/~woolflm/montessori.html)

[www.our-montessori.com/home.html](http://www.our-montessori.com/home.html)

[www.montessoriconnections.com](http://www.montessoriconnections.com)

### **For information about American Sign Language (ASL):**

[www.commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm](http://www.commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm)

[www.Gallaudet.edu](http://www.Gallaudet.edu)

[www.deaflibrary.org/asl.html](http://www.deaflibrary.org/asl.html)

[www.asluniversity.com](http://www.asluniversity.com)

[www.lifeprint.com](http://www.lifeprint.com)

<http://www.pplc.us/dlc/index.shtml>

### **For information about the Deaf Literacy Center (DLC):**

<http://www.pplc.us/dlc/index.shtml>

### **For information about Child Abuse Laws in the state of Florida:**

[www.myfloridaeducation.com/commhome/pdf/chiabuse.pdf](http://www.myfloridaeducation.com/commhome/pdf/chiabuse.pdf)

# Other Things You Should Know...

\* \* \* \* \*

**Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf is a DRUG FREE – ALCOHOL FREE -- SMOKE FREE school zone / work place!!** All Blossom staff members are subject to pre-employment Drug & Alcohol screening and may be re-screened at any time with or without reason. This is to ensure our school is Drug & Alcohol Free.

Drugs can be illegal, prescription or legal such as alcohol. They are not appropriate for consumption while caring for children. No exceptions! Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf has a ZERO TOLERANCE for drugs and immediately dismisses any staff found to be in violation.

**Smoking of tobacco products is NOT permitted on school grounds or within 100 feet of school grounds at all times.** No person including parent/guardians, staff, board members, volunteers and visitors may be in possession of a lighted cigarette, e-cigarette, vape, juul vape, lighted pipe, lighted cigar, or any other lighted tobacco product, in the school facility, including the outside grounds. NO smoking area has been designated. The purpose of this policy is to comply with the "Florida Clean Indoor Air Act" in protecting the public health, comfort and environment by creating areas in all school facilities that are free from tobacco smoke.

\* \* \* \* \*

Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs and athletic and other school-administered programs.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Blossom's mission includes the commitment to provide the absolute best academic, social and emotional environment for our students. We are working hard to develop our fundraising campaign in order to support the important work we are doing. We are also seeking out talented teaching professionals so that our students will have the best chance for success throughout their lives. This task is not easy nor is it inexpensive. We ask for a strong commitment from our families, as well. We strive to offer partial financial assistance wherever and whenever possible. Please contact our Director for a Partial Scholarship Application should you find the need for additional financial assistance.*

## **BLOSSOM'S MISSION STATEMENT:**

- ❖ To educate deaf and hard of hearing children, their hearing siblings and children of deaf adults (CODA), and prepare them for a lifetime of success in the community.

## **BLOSSOM'S VISION STATEMENT:**

- ❖ To be the premier education and communication center for families with deaf and hard of hearing children in the state of Florida.

## **BLOSSOM'S CORE VALUES & BELIEFS:**

- ❖ We celebrate the uniqueness of every child.
- ❖ We believe that all children possess the ability to learn and succeed.
- ❖ We believe that all children deserve the opportunity to learn to fully participate in their community.
- ❖ We believe partnerships with our students, their families and the community are essential in accomplishing our mission.
- ❖ We value and encourage creativity and innovation.
- ❖ We value self-motivation and independent thinking.
- ❖ We respect and appreciate everyone for his or her individual differences.
- ❖ We value the importance, embrace the culture and welcome the involvement of the Deaf community.
- ❖ We believe everyone is responsible and accountable for his or her own actions.
- ❖ We believe all communication is important and we accept the responsibility to understand and be understood by others. Because of this, we focus on developing our students' skills in both American Sign Language (ASL) and English.

*"No one can be free unless he is independent."  
Maria Montessori*



# Blossom Montessori School for the Deaf



## Parent-Student Handbook Acknowledgement 2023-2024 School Year

My signature below confirms that I have read, understood and agree to comply with, all items of this handbook, and acknowledge the important policies set in place for the following

- Attendance Policy
- Discipline / Suspension / Dismissal / Expulsion Policy
- Illness & Medical Emergency Policy
- Bullying / Harassment Policy
- Evacuation Preparedness & Emergency Plan
- Food Policy

Before signing this acknowledgement, I was given the opportunity to ask the Director of Blossom, Julie Rutenberg, questions about, and discuss all said items and I, on this day, do agree with these conditions. If I have any questions or concerns in the future, I am aware that I may contact the Director at any time via phone (727) 539-7879, VP (727) 223-6238 or email [jrutenberg@blossomschool.org](mailto:jrutenberg@blossomschool.org).

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***Student Signature***

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***Print Name of Student***

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***Parent / Guardian Signature***

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***Print Name of Parent / Guardian***

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***Parent / Guardian Signature***

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***Print Name of Parent / Guardian***

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***Date***