

# Parent Handbook

## 2024-2025



**St. Coletta School**  
1901 Independence Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20003

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## **KEY DATES 2024-2025**



### **AUGUST 2024**

Wednesday, August 14: New Hire Orientation Begins  
Monday, August 19: Returning Staff Orientation  
Friday, August 23: Open House  
Monday, August 26: First Day of School

### **SEPTEMBER 2024**

Monday, September 2: Labor Day (School Closed)

### **OCTOBER 2024**

Friday, October 11: Staff Development Day (No School for Students)  
Monday, October 14: Indigenous Peoples Day (School Closed)

### **NOVEMBER 2024**

Tuesday, November 5: Election Day (School Closed)  
Monday, November 11: Veteran's Day (School Closed)  
Wednesday, November 20: Parent Teacher Conference Event (12 to 5:30pm)  
Wednesday, November 27 – Friday, November 29: Thanksgiving Break (School Closed)

### **DECEMBER 2024**

Monday, December 23 – Wednesday, January 1: Winter Break (School Closed)

### **JANUARY 2025**

Thursday, January 2: Students/Staff Return from Winter Break  
Monday, January 20: Martin Luther King Jr. Day (School Closed)

### **FEBRUARY 2025**

Friday, February 14: Staff Development Day (No School for Students)  
Monday, February 17: Presidents Day (School Closed)

## **MARCH 2025**

Thursday, March 13: Staff Development Day (No School for Students)

Friday, March 14: Staff Development Day (No School for Students)

## **APRIL 2025**

Monday April 14 – Friday, April 18: Spring Break (School Closed)

## **MAY 2025**

Wednesday, May 14: Staff Development Day (No School for Students)

Wednesday, May 21: Parent Teacher Conference Event (12 to 5:30pm)

Friday, May 23: Half-Day Dismissal for Students

Monday, May 26: Memorial Day (School Closed)

## **JUNE 2025**

Monday, June 16: ESY Period Begins

Thursday, June 19: Juneteenth (School Closed)

## **JULY 2025**

Friday, July 4: Independence Day observed (School Closed)

Thursday, July 24: Last Day for Students (1/2 Day Dismissal for Students)

Friday, July 25: Staff Clean-Up Day

## St. Coletta of Greater Washington Contacts

Main: (202) 350-8680

Fax: (202)350-8699

President, St. Coletta Board of Trustees  
Chief Executive Officer  
President, St. Coletta Special Education PCS  
Board of Trustees  
Charter Board Parent Representatives

Chris Bettencourt (ext. 1001)  
Michael Rodrigues (ext. 1001)  
Josh Lewis (ext. 1001)

Josh Lewis, Carla Ware-Easterling (ext. 1001)

Chief Financial Officer  
Chief Operating Officer  
Chief Development Director

Michael Olivarri (ext. 1001)  
Kaiheem Mason (ext. 1001)  
Rebecca Hill (ext. 1001)

Principal (ext. 1051)

Amy Warden

School Operations Manager  
Lead Administrative House Assistant  
H1 Administrative House Assistant  
H2 Administrative House Assistant  
H3 Administrative House Assistant  
H4 Administrative House Assistant  
H5 Administrative House Assistant

Jamar Surratt (ext. 1041)  
April Adams Fowler (ext. 1015)  
Tiera Shorts (x1012)  
Meloney Johnson (ext. 1017)  
Julian Dixon (ext. 1020)  
Sharmarte Banks (ext. 1075)  
Tashana Rose (ext. 1079)

Behavior Department

Susan Kloha  
Mary Virginia Sauter (ext. 1070)

Director of Therapeutic Services (ext. 1038)

Loni Licuanan

Vocational Coordinator (ext. 1074)

Paul Howe

Director of IEP and Assessment (ext. 1039)  
Special Education Coordinators

Robert Blessing (ext. 1057)  
Krista Dews (ext. 1017)  
Devin McGrath (ext. 1070)  
Lee Dukes (ext. 1052)

Director of Admissions (ext. 1002)

Attendance Coordinator  
Manager of Transportation  
Front Desk Manager  
Records/Admissions Assistant  
Lead Nurse  
Lead Social Worker

Catherine Decker\*  
*\*Title IX Coordinator*  
Judyvette Acevedo (ext. 1005)  
Shandell Matthews (ext. 1024)  
Gwen Green (ext. 1000)  
LaShan Turay (ext.1126)  
Jehan Jones (ext. 1022- Nursing Dept)  
Laura Ottenritter\*\* (ext. 1069)  
*\*\*Homeless Liaison*

## **IMPORTANT CURRENT PHONE NUMBERS**

### **TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

D.C. Transportation: . . . . .	202-576-5000
Alexandria City Transportation . . . . .	703-461-4169
Montgomery County Transportation. . . . .	301-840-8130
Prince George's County Transportation. . . . .	301-952-6572/6579
Fairfax County Transportation . . . . .	703-446-2031

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### **ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Here are some questions that have been raised by parents over the years. We think you will find the answers helpful. Of course, your own questions are always welcome as we work together to serve your child.

#### ***Tell me about the school my child is now attending.***

St. Coletta of Greater Washington is an independent, non-sectarian, non-profit organization whose mission is to serve children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Individuals may also have diagnoses of autism and other primary or secondary disabilities. At St. Coletta, we believe in the immeasurable value of the human spirit and in the right of each individual to live as full and independent a life as possible. We respect the dignity of all persons entrusted to our care and our goal is to serve them in an atmosphere that encourages their talents, celebrates their successes and builds their self-esteem. At St. Coletta, each person is recognized for personal strengths rather than by needs and is evaluated by their potential rather than by our expectations. Our goal is to give individuals with intellectual disabilities every chance to show the world what they can do.

St. Coletta, an 11-month program including six weeks of Extended School Year, focuses on the individual and what they need to learn in order to be successful in school and in the wider community. We believe that individuals learn best through hands-on, exploratory experiences. Teachers and therapists plan an integrated theme-based approach and develop a series of learning experiences that allow children to explore a subject while working on skills and competencies spelled out in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). St. Coletta is an ungraded, full-time special education program serving students aged 3 to 22. The basic program includes: functional academics (linked to Common Core Standards), skills of daily living, community-based instruction, adaptive physical education, arts education, computer skills and vocational training.

#### ***What is the history of St. Coletta School?***

St. Coletta was founded in 1959, in Arlington, Virginia, by Joe and Hazel Hagarty. Their daughter had Down Syndrome, and they were not satisfied with programs offered by the local public schools and were unwilling to send their daughter to an institution. Before acquiring the new DC site in September, 2006, to open the St. Coletta Special Education Public Charter School, the school occupied space at St. Coletta School on Peyton Street in Alexandria, St. Charles School in the Clarendon Presbyterian Church, and at Marymount University.

#### ***What are the facilities like and what special equipment is available?***

St. Coletta School is located in a beautiful, state-of-the-art facility, which occupies 99,000 square feet at 19th Street and Independence Avenue, SE, in the District. Students have access to a variety of technology including computers, touchscreen monitors, and tablet devices (e.g., iPads). Assistive technology and adaptive devices are available to all students with a need for such devices. There are studios for art, music, physical therapy, and horticulture. A sensory room and hydrotherapy pool are available as per student need. A full-sized gymnasium and outdoor basketball court are available for students, as well as an adapted playground, an amphitheater for outdoor arts and a school garden.

Kitchen facilities are included in Houses 4 and 5. Cameras (video only; no audio) and round-the-clock security are available to ensure the safety of staff and students, and assist in maintaining a secured environment.

***What does a typical classroom look like?***

At St. Coletta, a typical classroom consists of 8-12 students, a lead instructor, and paraeducator staff. The school does not adhere to a specific student to staff ratio because the number of paraeducators supporting students is specified by the IEPs of students within the classroom.

***What is the tuition at St. Coletta? Are there any other fees I'll need to pay?***

All students at St. Coletta are publicly funded. Periodically, the school may request money for special activities; however, no student is ever denied an opportunity to participate in an activity due to lack of funds. St. Coletta does not accept private pay tuition.

***What services does St. Coletta School offer?***

The program of services is developed, and is always evolving, as an extension of the IEP for each student. The program is planned with a vision that St. Coletta graduates are happy, productive individuals living as independently as possible.

**BASIC PROGRAM**

The goal of the basic educational program is to help students achieve their (IEP) goals, increase their independence, utilize their community, express themselves in a variety of ways, promote their health and well-being, and encourage their peer relationships. The basic program can include:

Functional Academics	Daily Living Skills	Behavior Support Services
Community-Based Instruction	Adaptive Physical Education	Computer/Keyboard Skills
Music and Art Classes	Hydrotherapy	Horticulture

**SPEECH/LANGUAGE THERAPY**

Speech/language therapy is provided to the students as indicated on their IEPs. Speech/language therapy focuses on providing each student with a functional system of communication using speech, sign, picture symbols, assistive devices, or a combination of these so that the student can express their feelings, wants, and needs, as well as participate in their educational program.

**OCCUPATIONAL AND PHYSICAL THERAPIES**

Occupational and/or physical therapy is provided to students as indicated on their IEPs. The therapists work with the classroom teachers, the PE teacher and the vocational staff on a regular basis. The goal of physical and/or occupational therapy is to help the student access the educational environment. The physical therapist focuses on improving gross motor skills, balance, and range of motion, and the occupational therapist focuses on improving fine motor, eye-hand coordination and management of the sensory environment, so that the student is better able to perform functional academics and the tasks of daily living, hands-on classroom projects, and eventually vocational skills, as possible.

**COUNSELING**

Counseling is provided to students as indicated on their IEPs. Students who require counseling may receive these services at St. Coletta School. Counseling focuses on helping students improve their social-emotional skills and improve peer interactions within their educational environment. Should a student or family need to access a school social worker to assist with or address a specific situation (McKinney-Vento, other family crisis, etc.), these services can be provided on an as needed basis.

**TRANSITION SERVICES**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) regulations require that all persons with disabilities aged fourteen and older receive transitional and vocational services. All students that are DC residents begin transition planning at age twelve. To this end, St. Coletta

provides transition services (pre-vocational skills and career-based training preparation). The goal of the career-based program is to help students learn about the world of work and provide them with the skills and support needed to make a successful transition to employment, supported employment or an appropriate post-secondary program, upon graduation. In order to provide guidance and instruction, any of the following staff may accompany students into the community: teachers, therapists, and paraeducators (job coaches and teacher assistants). In addition, if a student has a dedicated aide, an aide will accompany them into the community.

### **BEHAVIOR SUPPORT SERVICES**

Our Behavior Team provides positive behavior support strategies designed to help students with challenging behaviors have a safe and successful experience at school. The team, made up of Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs), Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBA), and Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs), conduct Functional Behavior Assessments and from them, develop Positive Behavior Support Plans designed to teach students appropriate and effective alternatives to behaviors of concern. Through the use of its Positive Behavior Training Suite, students may receive additional instructional support through individual work systems focusing on specific IEP objectives which employ the principles of TEACCH and the fundamentals of Applied Behavior Analysis. These systems can then be generalized to the classroom or other settings to further support student instruction.

### **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

St. Coletta believes that each student has the right to assistive technology devices that may remove a barrier to learning and increase access to the educational curriculum and/or educational environment. The Multidisciplinary Team will work together to make data-driven decisions to help with the selection of appropriate assistive technology for each individual student. Assistive technology devices may include adaptive equipment, hearing aids, an augmentative and alternative communication device, or a computer program or adaptation.

### ***How is my child's IEP developed and who participates at the meeting?***

If a child/student enrolls with an active IEP, an IEP review is held; then at a minimum annually thereafter. We expect the LEA representative, the parent or guardian, the transition-aged student, and the teachers and therapists to be active participants in the scheduling and development of the IEP. Re-evaluation meetings are held at least once every three years by the IEP team to determine whether further individualized testing is indicated for the purpose of determining the student's continued eligibility for special education services. If a student enters without an initial IEP, a parent or school staff can refer the student for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services.

### ***Besides participating at the IEP, how will my local school jurisdiction be involved in my child's education?***

The administration of St. Coletta keeps in close contact with the school jurisdictions responsible for each student. It is our goal to work as a team in providing the best possible services for our students. St. Coletta staff members inform the jurisdictions of progress or any other matters of concern involving students.

### ***How do we know our child is progressing? Will my child receive grades?***

Progress is noted on the IEP goals four times per year, as well as during IEP meetings which, at a minimum, must be held annually. These progress reports are sent home to parents and guardians. Parents/guardians are encouraged to make appointments at any time of the year to review their child's progress. Parents/Guardians are invited to the school to participate in parent teacher conferences to discuss your child's progress in more detail. St. Coletta does not use a traditional grading system. Data is maintained for each student to provide additional documentation of progress.

### ***Will my child have to participate in the State-wide testing initiatives?***

Decisions regarding student assessment are part of the IEP process. St. Coletta students often are not able to participate in the general statewide assessment, even with the maximum amount of testing



accommodations allowed; thus, students typically participate in an alternate assessment, as prescribed by the jurisdiction, during those grade equivalent years in which students are required to be tested.

***If I am dissatisfied with some part of my child's IEP what recourse do I have?***

A parent or guardian can ask for a meeting of the Multidisciplinary Team to review the IEP and discuss their child's program at any time during the school year. The goal of the team, including the parent and the student of transition age, is to collaborate to create an educational program which meets the student's needs and provides the student with a free and appropriate public education. If the parent, guardian, or student who is their own guardian, does not agree with the recommendations of the team, the parent, guardian or student can initiate their due process rights and/or notify the local education agent (LEA) representative, as needed. You may call to schedule a meeting with your child's teacher and/or therapist(s) to discuss program concerns at any time. Please visit [www.stcoletta.org](http://www.stcoletta.org) to view a copy of the ESEA Complaint policy. More information about the school's Grievance and Compliant Procedures is available on our website [www.stcoletta.org/school-program/](http://www.stcoletta.org/school-program/).

***What will my child receive when he or she graduates from St. Coletta?***

In accordance with 5-A DCMR § 3027, students graduating with a High School Certificate will have accumulated at least 28.0 credits in their last four years of attendance at St. Coletta. There will be a minimum of four credits each of: ELA (Employment English), Mathematics (Job/Life Skills Math), Science (Job/Life Skills Science), Social Studies, Career-Based Training and Life Skills courses. Other courses may include Adapted Physical Education, Music Education, and/or Art Education. For the purposes of accountability with the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, the final quarterly progress report (QPR) of the student's IEP at the time of graduation will be analyzed. A student will be deemed to have met the gateway measure of IEP Completion if 80% percent of his or her goals are completed at the Expanding, Progressing or Mastered level. If a student's final QPR does not meet this threshold, it does not impact their ability to graduate with the High School Certificate

Graduating students receive a High School Certificate at a graduation ceremony, if the IEP team has determined that a certificate is indicated. A student may graduate from St. Coletta at the end of the school year in which he or she turns twenty-two, depending upon the jurisdiction. Students who are at least eighteen years of age may choose to graduate sooner. If a student elects to graduate with a high school certificate before the end of the school year in which he or she turns 22, St. Coletta shall inform the student in writing (via Prior Written Notice) that the student remains eligible to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education until the age of 22. Students and families work with appropriate adult agencies from their respective jurisdictions to aid in the transition process and/or identify appropriate programming and/or support for employment after graduation.

***How is the St. Coletta program structured?***

The St. Coletta program is ungraded and structured by age level. Each age level is a designated "house." The age bands of each "house" may vary slightly depending on the individual needs of the students. Your child will be assigned a classroom and teacher. The primary contact for day to day communication is the classroom teacher. Teachers are supervised Assistant Principals and supported by Special Education Coordinators. Special Education Coordinators also oversee the IEP process.

***How can I engage with my child's classroom?***

Daily communications from the classroom will be provided to families by way of ClassDojo. Your child's classroom teacher should provide you instructions for logging into and using the application at the start of the school year. Parents are encouraged to use ClassDojo to communicate with teachers and monitor school-wide announcements. Urgent or time sensitive messages may be relayed to the classroom through our Front Desk team given that teachers/providers/paraeducators are providing services and instruction during school hours.

Due to the family atmosphere fostered at St. Coletta and the needs of the students, the staff may become well-acquainted with the parents/guardians. While such relationships are wholly acceptable, and are in fact necessary for successful education, professional integrity and confidentiality must be maintained at

all times. In keeping with this standard and in alignment with St. Coletta of Greater Washington policies, staff may not babysit, provide respite care, or transport students for pay in their own vehicles. Employees are not permitted to exchange personal information (such as personal cell phone numbers, social media information, or email address) with parents/guardians. All communication regarding the student is relayed through your child's teacher, related service provider, or school administrator. Similarly, we understand the desire to express appreciation to those working with your student at school. Small tokens of appreciation may be provided during appreciation events, though it is the organization's policy that staff are not permitted to accept gifts.

### ***Am I allowed to visit my child's classroom?***

The school welcomes scheduled parent/guardian visits. However, to ensure the safety, privacy and well-being of our students we must know who is in the building at all times. All daily visitors must first sign-in at the school's front desk then wait for a school personnel escort before going any other place on school premises. The school may not be able to accommodate unannounced visits.

### ***Will my child participate in Community-Based Instructional (CBI) activities?***

One of the primary components of the St. Coletta program is community-based instruction. Community-based instructional activities include trips to area museums, parks, libraries, restaurants and other community resources. Generally, community-based instruction is tied directly to the theme or lessons addressed within the classroom to allow for experiential learning to reinforce concepts taught in the classroom. Included in the Back-to-School packet is a Community Outing Participation Form. This form is intended for a select group of commonly visited sites that are a regular part of the day-to-day school programming. For any other CBI outings, a separate permission form will be sent home and must be signed and returned to the teacher in order for the student to participate in that CBI. If parents/guardians do not sign the CBI form, their child will not be included on the outing. Verbal permission, for the most part, will not be accepted unless as authorized by an Assistant Principal under special circumstances.

### ***How is my child transported to school and on community-based instruction outings (CBIs)?***

Children are transported to and from school by their local public school jurisdiction. Transportation to and from is a related service and must be provided in accordance with the child's IEP. Problems with transportation should be referred to the local jurisdiction, as well as to the school office. In the event that a student is unable to be transported home from school at the end of the day via bus due to illness or unsafe behavior, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide transportation home for their child in a timely manner.

The school owns passenger vans that may be used to transport students during the school day on CBIs. Only employees on the insurance policy for these vans may drive them. For school-wide trips, St. Coletta can charter buses. Staff and students frequently utilize the Metro rail and bus systems. Permission slips for community-based instruction will specify travel arrangements and modes of transportation.

### ***What is the length of the school day?***

School will be in session from 8:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Students will attend according to a half-day schedule on Wednesday (8:30am to 12:30pm). Students not being transported by bus are expected to be picked-up from the school no later than 3:30pm (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) and 1:00pm on half day dismissals (Wednesdays or other designated half day dismissal days).

### ***What if I have to pick-up or drop off my child at school?***

If you bring your child to school, you must come in with your child and sign them in via the front desk after parking in the school's lot. Visitors may not park along Independence Avenue. Those dropping students off are asked to remain with their student in the lobby area until a staff is available to escort the student to class. Students with a fever or presenting symptoms of illness may not be permitted to attend class in-

person until cleared by a health provider.

Parents must also sign students out at the school's front desk when picking students up from school. If you are picking up your child early or have pre-planned appointments, parents/guardians are expected to notify the Front Desk staff and child's teacher by 2:00 p.m.

### ***Do you offer before and after school care?***

There is no before school care or after care available. Parents may drop off students beginning at 8 a.m. and may pick students up beginning at 3 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and at 12:30pm on Wednesdays.

### ***What are the policies regarding attendance?***

Regular attendance is critical to ensure that students have every opportunity to progress academically. St. Coletta's school day begins promptly at 8:30 a.m. Students who arrive after 8:30 a.m. are documented as tardy (excused or unexcused) and, currently, students must attend for 60% of the school day to be considered "present."

Parents are responsible for communicating their child's absence to the school. Place a call to our student absence line at: (202)350-8680ext. 1101 or select option #3 when prompted. If the school does not receive a call from a parent/guardian, our attendance manager will call home to inquire as to the reason for the student's absence from school. **A written note by the parent/guardian must be received by the school within 5 days upon the student's return to school, as per DC regulations.** If a student is absent for 3 consecutive days or 10 cumulative days, further documentation, from a doctor or other staff from an agency or organization, may be requested in order to excuse the absence(s). At 4 unexcused absences, the school social worker calls the home to discuss attendance regulations and inform parents of accrued absences.

The reason for each absence is recorded. Valid excuses for absences include: illness (a doctor's note may be required), death in a student's family, observance of a religious holiday, required court appearances, lawful suspension or exclusion from school by school authorities, medical or dental appointments, and other absences approved in advance by the principal upon the written request of a parent or guardian. Any absence that does not meet the criteria of an excused absence or fails to satisfy the documentation requirement of an excused absence within the allowable time frame will be classified as an unexcused absence. If a student or parent anticipates an absence not covered by the excused absences listed above, they may submit a request for an excused absence due to a special circumstance to the school principal.

Withdrawal or disenrollment will be considered for students with a history of non-attendance and/or disengagement. Disengagement includes extended absence from school without communication/notification/documentation as well failure to complete required paperwork (such as residency verification). Disenrollment will only occur once the school team has made sufficient attempts to reengage the family, obtain documentation supporting extended absences, and provided notice of withdrawal by way of a Prior Written Notice.

### ***What are the policies regarding truancy?***

#### District of Columbia Students

DC's Compulsory Education and School Attendance law requires youth ages 5 to 17 to be in school. Current DC regulations stipulate that in order for a student to be marked present for the school day, he or she must be present for at least 60% of the day. Students who are tardy or leave early for more than 40% of the day will be counted as absent.

If a student reaches 3 unexcused absences, a letter is sent home alerting the parent of attendance concerns. If a student accrues 5 unexcused absences, an attendance conference will be scheduled with the parent and school social worker. The purpose of the conference will be to **review educational and attendance concerns, develop attendance intervention strategies, and identify local community**

**resources to improve school attendance. If a student accrues 10 unexcused absences, a report of educational neglect will be made to CFSA, as required per DC regulations.** When a student accrues 15 unexcused absences, a referral will be made to Court Services Division of the Family Court and to the Juvenile Student Division of OAG.

Further information may be found at:

[https://dcps.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcps/page\\_content/attachments/FINAL%20DCPS%20Attendance%20and%20Truancy%20Policy%2008-21-18.pdf](https://dcps.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcps/page_content/attachments/FINAL%20DCPS%20Attendance%20and%20Truancy%20Policy%2008-21-18.pdf)

<http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/dccode/>

<http://www.dcregs.org/Gateway/ChapterHome.aspx?ChapterID=230295>

#### Maryland Students

The *Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)* requires students ages 5 to 16 to attend school (some jurisdictions specify 18 years). If a student has 3 unexcused absences, a letter will be sent home alerting the parent of attendance concerns. If a student accrues 5 unexcused absences, an attendance conference will be scheduled with the parent and school social worker. Students who are habitually truant, or miss more than 20% of days within a school year, will be referred to the Department of Juvenile Services.

Further information may be found at:

<http://www.oag.state.md.us/Opinions/2010/95oag191.pdf>

#### Virginia Students

The Commonwealth of Virginia's Compulsory Attendance Law, Code of Virginia, 22.1-254 requires students ages 5 to 18 to attend school. If a student has 3 unexcused absences, a letter will be sent home alerting the parent of attendance concerns. If a student accrues 5 unexcused absences, an attendance conference will be scheduled with the parent and school social worker. If attendance does not improve, the family will be referred to Juvenile Court.

Further information may be found at:

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14/section22.1-254/>

<https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/policies-regulations-and-notices/attendance-policies>

<https://www.acps.k12.va.us/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=4160&dataid=4258&FileName=13-Attendance%20Policy.pdf>

### ***What is the school's policy on bullying?***

St. Coletta is committed to creating a safe learning environment for all students. It is the policy of St. Coletta to prohibit bullying, harassment or intimidation of any person on school property, school-sponsored functions, while in transit to school or school-sponsored functions, or by the use of electronic technology. Students who are found in violation of St. Coletta's bullying policy will be subject to consequences that are consistent with the school's bullying and discipline policy. Copies of the school's Anti-Bullying and Discipline policies are available on the school's website: [www.stcoletta.org/school-program/](http://www.stcoletta.org/school-program/).

### ***What is the school's policy on reporting suspected abuse or neglect?***

In accordance with DC Code (§ 4-1321.02) and St. Coletta policy, all school staff are considered mandated reporters. As such, any person who knows or has cause to suspect that a child has been or is in immediate danger of being abused or neglected must immediately report it to School Administrators. Training on these requirements is reviewed with all St. Coletta staff annually. Should a parent suspect abuse or neglect, they may also contact the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), Adult Protective Services (APS), or Child Protective Services (CPS) to make a report. CPS can be reached at (202) 671-7233. APS may be reached at (202) 541-3950 and MPD may be reached at (202) 727-9099.

### ***Does my child need a physical exam before he or she can attend the school?***

District of Columbia regulations require that a physical and dental exam and a current record of immunization be on file for each student. This means, EACH AND EVERY YEAR, students are required to have a new physical and dental exam. St. Coletta may require more frequent physical exams for children with serious health and medication issues. DC students must comply with OSSE's Immunization Policy in order to attend school in-person. Students without current immunizations will have 20 school days to submit proof of required immunizations once notified by the school of non-compliance. If proof of immunization has not been provided within 20 school days, your child will not be allowed to return to school until documentation of needed immunizations is provided to the school. Each missed school day will be an "unexcused absence" until the proof of immunization is submitted. These absences will be "excused" once the proof of immunization is provided. Information about OSSE immunization policy can be found at the following link:

[https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page\\_content/attachments/Immunization%20FAQ%20for%20Families\\_061422\\_0.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/Immunization%20FAQ%20for%20Families_061422_0.pdf)

### ***What other documents are required annually for my child to remain enrolled at St. Coletta?***

All families of St. Coletta students must have a current back-to-school packet completed each year. These packets contain Emergency Care Forms, permissions, copies medical forms/authorizations, and annual notifications (school policies, Parent Handbook, FERPA, Medicaid, etc.). Completion of documents are required for students to attend community outings. Similarly, families should contact the school Nursing team to determine what medical authorizations need to be renewed.

Parents/Guardians of students attending the charter school must also complete residency verification, a process required by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). Parents/Guardians may prove that they are a bonafide resident of the District through submission of specific documents meeting criteria established by OSSE. Residency verification must be completed for all new and returning charter school students without exception. Families experiencing loss of permanent housing are advised to contact the school's Homeless Liaison for assistance completing residency verification requirements. Our Homeless Liaison will support with connecting families to resources throughout the city and student transportation to/from school. The liaison can also provide information about McKinney-Vento, a federal law focused on supporting enrollment and education for students experiencing homelessness. St. Coletta's Homeless Liaison is Laura Ottenritter (ext. 1069; [laura.ottenritter@stcoletta.org](mailto:laura.ottenritter@stcoletta.org)).

### ***What happens in the event of inclement weather or school closures?***

During inclement weather days, St. Coletta will notify families of the school's operating status through the school's website, ClassDojo, text alerts, social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter), and local news stations. To receive texts from the school, families must first provide the school with a phone number and/or email. Families will then "opt-in" by responding "YES" to a text sent to their mobile device.

MD and VA Students:

Parents should attend to their individual jurisdictional weather-related decisions on closures, delays and early dismissals.

St. Coletta will make-up instruction on days that were originally scheduled as non-instructional days (e.g. Staff Development Days, breaks).

### ***My child takes medication. How are medications administered?***

All medication, both prescription and over-the-counter (Tylenol, cough drops, etc.), must be in the original labeled container and accompanied by an Authorization of Administration of Medication form. The form must be signed by the physician and the parent/guardian, and is required for all medicines administered at school. Medicines **cannot be transported to school by the student, nor by the bus driver/aide. Medications may only be brought in-person by the parent/guardian or sent through the mail.** The school needs to know what additional medications are administered in the home, in the event an

emergency occurs during school hours. Medication procedures are overseen by the school nurse. Individual medications can be administered by staff that are medication trained. If a student requires a nursing procedure such as g-tube feeding or suctioning, an authorization form is required from the health care provider. In addition, parent/guardian permission is required in writing to apply sunscreen or any other lotion to a child.

### ***Are meals provided?***

St. Coletta School stresses healthy meals and snacks. All students receive hot breakfasts and lunches (multiple options are available) which are prepared daily in a USDA-approved kitchen. Students are also provided with snacks on an as needed basis. As all meals and snacks are provided by the school, and since many of our students have specific food allergies, outside food is carefully monitored. Some families may elect to send lunch with their child due to dietary restrictions and/or preference. Please notify your child's teacher if you plan to send your child's lunch in daily. Families wishing to celebrate student birthdays may provide store bought items only. **Coletta does not permit snacks or meals containing peanut products.**

### ***How is student behavior managed?***

It is the philosophy of St. Coletta School to foster productive student behavior. Toward this goal, staff are expected to provide: clear rules for student conduct, collegiality among staff members, a pervasive caring environment for students, effective instruction, and a focus on providing positive reinforcement and options for students.

Effective methods for responding to disruptive student behavior include:

- Using positive redirection and reinforcement whenever appropriate;
- Developing positive personal relationships with students that indicate high teacher expectations and respect for students;
- Closely monitoring performance and behavior;
- Using brief, non-disruptive interventions;
- Handling conflicts calmly and avoiding engaging in power struggles;
- Clarifying students' choices so that options are clear and students are responsible for the consequences of their choices;
- Using effective listening skills to help students identify problems and gain insight.

When students exhibit serious behavioral difficulties, a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP) may need to be developed. St. Coletta School has Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) to support this process. The development process should include the multidisciplinary team involved with the student and the following six steps:

- Attempt to determine the function(s) of the behavior through an FBA;
- Focus on one or two specific student behaviors that need to change in order for the student to have a successful school experience;
- Determine specific interventions to bring about these changes;
- Assign responsibility to staff for implementing each intervention;
- Determine the data to be collected to test the effectiveness of the intervention; and,
- Review the program at a minimum annually, or as determined by the IEP team.

Copies of the FBA and PBSP are discussed with and given to parents/guardians and staff working with the child. A copy is placed in the student's record.

St. Coletta staff members are trained in the Mandt System. All staff receive training in the Relational Section (Building Healthy Relationships, Communication, and Conflict Resolution). Depending on the specific needs of the school program, selected staff members receive training in the Conceptual and Technical Sections (Medical Risks of Restraint, Assisting and Supporting, Separating and Restraining.) Only staff members trained in the Conceptual and Technical level are allowed to intervene using physical techniques. The Mandt System teaches a graded system of interventions, beginning with non-physical

options and gradually moving towards physical options.. Physical intervention is used only as a matter of last resort when someone is a danger to themselves or others and the attempted non-physical interventions have not been successful. Parents must be notified if a restraint is utilized and a behavior plan must be developed.

There are quiet rooms at St. Coletta that are available for students to use if they need to calm themselves. These rooms are unlocked and students are never left alone. Use of the quiet room requires that an administrator be notified, an incident report written and the parent notified. St. Coletta policy prohibits the use of mechanical and chemical restraints.

The St. Coletta School Behavior Management Plan **strictly prohibits**:

- Corporal punishment
- Deprivation of drinking water or food necessary to meet daily nutritional needs;
- Denial of the use of toilet facilities;
- Any action humiliating, degrading or abusive;
- Deprivation of health care including counseling;
- Intrusive aversive therapy;
- Use of mechanical and/or chemical restraints.

If abuse or neglect is suspected, the school will contact Child Protective Services (CPS), Adult Protective Services (APS) or the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). Before CPS/APS comes, a parent/guardian may be notified, unless the parent/guardian is the suspect. CPS/APS or the MPD may interview the child without consent from the parent or guardian. The parent may also contact any of these entities should they suspect any abuse or neglect. CPS may be reached at (202) 671-7233. APS may be reached at (202) 541-3950 and MPD may be reached at (202) 727-9099.

### ***What is St. Coletta School's policy on student suspension?***

While St. Coletta School is dedicated to serving students with challenging behaviors by providing intensive behavior supports, there may be incidents where suspension is deemed necessary. In accordance with the "Student Fair Access to School Act of 2017", no student under the eighth grade equivalent will be subject to an out-of-school suspension. This includes, but is not limited to: drug and/or weapon possession, incidents that may result in serious bodily injury, and other incidents of such nature in which it is felt the safety of the student and others is at risk. . Dependent on the seriousness of the offense and/or danger to others, outside authorities may also be contacted. Further disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion, may be considered. Parents will be notified via certified mail and phone of this decision within 24 hours of the suspension.

If suspension equals ten consecutive or cumulative days over the school year (five, if the student is a DCPS student), then a Manifest Determination IEP meeting must be held. A Manifest Determination Meeting, per DCPS and other jurisdictional regulations, will be scheduled within ten days to determine if the behavior was a manifestation of the child's disability. Depending upon the outcome of this meeting, the recommendations of the IEP team will be implemented. Please refer to the Discipline Policy within your yearly Back-to-School packet and posted at [www.stcoletta.org/school-program/](http://www.stcoletta.org/school-program/).

### ***My child has difficult behaviors. Can he/she be discharged from the program?***

Although St. Coletta is committed to serving difficult-to-place children, there are times when we feel we cannot provide the intensity of service that a child requires. An IEP to discuss placement would be held in these circumstances and our recommendations of such would be made. DCPS or other jurisdictions would then provide alternate placement options. In terms of day-to-day behavior difficulties, we are dedicated to providing students the needed supports to be successful in the classroom.

### ***What is the school's weapons/drug policy?***

Any student who brings a weapon or an object that could be used as a weapon to school, brings drugs to school, or is involved in a situation that causes serious bodily injury can be suspended or expelled

immediately. Depending upon the seriousness of the offense or the danger to others, outside authorities may be called. Further disciplinary action as noted under the student suspension policy section and within the Discipline Policy will be followed.

### ***Does the school have an emergency preparedness plan?***

St Coletta staff has a safety plan to be implemented in the event of a chemical or biological attack. If a terrorist action should materialize, we will immediately go into a lockdown mode. This means that parents and guardians should not come to the school, but should await notification from the school. If you have a cell phone number that the school does not have, please provide it by calling the Front Desk or notifying your student's teacher. The building occupied by St. Coletta has windows that are sealed. In case of a biological or chemical event, we would shut down our air handlers and close off the ventilation systems to the best of our ability. We will not open the doors to anyone except official security or police personnel since to do so would compromise the air in the building. No one should come before they are notified. Emergency water and food supplies are stocked in the building. There will be enough food and water to last three to four days.

The school has a delineated plan for fire and other emergency-related events (e.g. earthquake, tornado, violent intruder). All staff are trained in emergency procedures. Students and staff practice drills throughout the year as prescribed by regulations.

**Regarding transportation and emergency planning:** Though this is largely in the hands of the local school jurisdictions, we have communicated to them our suggestions. If buses, taxis and vans are en route and close to the school, students will be delivered to the school. If transportation has recently departed the school with students, they will return students to the school. If buses, taxis or vans are close to students' homes for pick-up in morning or delivery in afternoon, students will be taken to their home. If students are at a career-based training site and the event is chemical or biological they will have to remain there with the staff that accompanied them. We will work with employers to discuss their safety procedures. If the event is not chemical or biological, students will be retrieved from training sites and brought back to St. Coletta. Parents/guardians will be notified when it is safe to come and get their children. In the event of an emergency or crisis-related event, St. Coletta will send a text message and/or e-mail to parents notifying them of the emergency. To receive this message, a cell phone number and/or e-mail, must first be provided by the parent/guardian to the school. Once the school has a number on file, families need to "opt-in" in order to receive text messages. Families may opt-in by responding "YES" to a text message sent to their device. This text message system will only be used in the event of an unusual circumstance.

As you are well aware, there are no guarantees in these situations and we will all do whatever we can to ensure the safety of our students first and everyone involved.

### **Parent/Guardian phone numbers/e-mail addresses::**

It is critical that you provide the school with current phone numbers, in case of an emergency. If your phone number changes, it is your responsibility to call and update us so we can update our records. Your phone number (and e-mail address if you have one) will be added to our emergency text notification system so that in an event of an unusual occurrence, we can notify you and provide instructions, if needed. If you do not want your information in this system, please call the school to inform us.

### ***Why can't I send my child to school when they are sick?***

Health regulations require that a child with a contagious illness, a severe cold, sore throat or cough, or who has a badly upset stomach must be kept home. A child with a fever must be kept at home for 24 hours after the temperature has returned to normal. The office should be immediately informed regarding a child who has a contagious illness or infection. **If your student is exhibiting any symptoms of illness, please do not send them to school.**

Students exhibiting the below symptoms cannot remain at school:

- i. Fever of unknown cause (temperature of 100.4 or higher)



- ii. Vomiting of unknown cause (3 times or more or as otherwise determined by school nurse)
- iii. Diarrhea of unknown cause (3 times or more or as otherwise determined by school nurse)
- iv. Reported diagnosis of communicable disease

Once contacted, parents/guardians must make arrangements to pick students up as soon as possible, if and when they become ill. The nursing team may recommend pick-up for students if they appear generally unwell, uncomfortable, or unable to access programming.

### ***Who is allowed to see my child's records?***

All data in your child's educational record is available for parents' and guardians' inspection and review. Student educational records include a cumulative file and incident reporting file kept onsite at school in a secure space as well as electronic records kept by your child's jurisdiction (e.g. PowerSchool's Special Programs or Maryland Online). Records specific to medical needs (e.g. visit notes, medication/feeding logs, authorizations/orders) are also electronically maintained by the school's nursing team.

Parents/Guardians have the right to:

- Inspect and review the student's scholastic records within a reasonable period, but not to exceed 45 days from the day the school receives a request for access;
- An explanation and interpretation of records;
- Copies of records and names of people who have seen the records;
- Give or withhold consent to other people seeing their child's records except to the extent that The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1993) (FERPA) authorizes disclosure without consent;
- Request destruction of records which are no longer needed;
- Request that information be amended that is inaccurate, misleading or violates privacy or rights;
- File a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with the requirements of FERPA (1993) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act HIPAA(1996);
- Review only records pertaining to their child.

No one else, other than authorized school and LEA level personnel, may review the student's records without a Release of Information form signed by the parent or guardian, unless as authorized by FERPA. Please see the FERPA Guidelines as provided as part of your yearly back-to-school packet.

### ***What about photographs?***

St. Coletta School uses student photos for instructional and classroom purposes throughout the school year. In addition, sometimes pictures are needed for school publicity purposes (including social media platforms or other community outreach purposes). Student photos will not be released publicly without permission from the parent/guardian. A photographic release form is provided for this purpose. If you wish to change the level of permission for your child, please contact the school and request a new photo permission form.

Please be advised that parents desire to take pictures/videos during special holiday performances or other-school special events. It is reasonable to expect that parents/guardians want pictures/videos of their children performing in special activities and many students/families enjoy receiving annual class photos. Additionally, students take a class photo each school year on our scheduled Picture Day. The Nursing department may take photos to document injury and maintain them as a part your child's medical record (kept separately from the cumulative file). If you do not want your child's photograph or video taken in either circumstance, let your teacher know that you do not want your child to participate.

### ***What is the school's policy on cell phones and electronic devices?***

The use of cell phones and electronic devices are not allowed in the classroom. If you need to contact your child, please call the main office and they will be notified. If a student continuously disregards school policy on personal cell phone and electronic device use, the school will require that the device is placed in a secure location during the day to be returned to the student at the end of the day. The parent/guardian

will be notified. A meeting will be scheduled with the parent/guardian, teacher and school administrator as necessary. The school is not responsible for any electronic devices students bring to school.

### ***Can I learn about the qualifications of my child's teacher?***

A parent/guardian may inquire about the qualifications of their child's teacher at any time. All inquiries may be directed to the school principal or assistant principals.

### ***How will the school inform the parents about the State Education Agency Complaint Resolution Policy?***

St. Coletta will send a copy of the District of Columbia State Education Agency Complaint Policy to families annually. Families may also use the school's board as one avenue for conflict resolution if an issue cannot be resolved between the family and school-based leadership. Contact information for the school's board can be found in the "People of St. Coletta" portion of this handbook. Information about St. Coletta's complaint policy can be viewed by visiting the school's website ([www.stcoletta.org/school-program/](http://www.stcoletta.org/school-program/)).

### ***Is there a dress code?***

St. Coletta students are not required to wear uniforms. Clothing should be safe, comfortable and not restrictive to learning activities. Open-toed shoes, high heels, and heavy work/hiking boots are not permitted. Clothing should be free of loose strings around the neck or other items that could cause injury during active play; this includes, but is not limited to, heavy chains (worn as necklaces, belts, or hanging from belt loops). Short skirts and dresses should be an appropriate length and blouses must have no less than a two inch strap. In the event your child needs a change of clothing, it is requested that you send an extra pair of clothing to school (labeled with your student's name), including underwear.

### ***Can my child participate in Special Olympics?***

Interested students aged 8 years and older may participate in Special Olympics provided that appropriate paperwork has been supplied to the school. Special Olympics provides opportunities for peer social interaction and exposure to life-long leisure and healthy lifestyles. A separate medical form and permissions are required to be completed, if you want your child to participate. Please contact Shandell Matthews at (202)350-8680 ext. 1024 or [smatthews@stcoletta.org](mailto:smatthews@stcoletta.org) to obtain the required forms.

### **CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS**

Charitable Contributions are essential to sustain the quality of services at St. Coletta School because tuition and fees cover only a portion of the cost needed to meet the needs of each child in our care. Each year we must raise approximately \$500,000 to meet our general operating expenses. Achieving this goal requires the support of foundations, corporations, organizations and hundreds of individuals in the metropolitan area. Contributions allow us to bring special services such as community-based instruction, participation in Special Olympics, adaptive equipment in Assistive Technology, arts programs and field trips to our children and young adults. St. Coletta invites and appreciates your support.

### **More Questions?**

Please call 202-350-8680

*St. Coletta of Greater Washington admits students and clients of any race, color, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, gender or age to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded to or made available to students and clients of St. Coletta. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age or veteran's status in educational programs or in other school-administered activities. St. Coletta does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, veteran's status, or any other factor protected by local, state, or federal law with regard to employment.*

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*School employees are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services or Adult protective Services.*

*Handbook Revised April 2024*  
*Handbook Available online at [www.stcoletta.org](http://www.stcoletta.org) and is subject to revision*