



**Classroom Procedures and  
Policies Handbook for  
Students and Their Families**

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Revised August 2019

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## **Mission Statement**

Magnolia Speech School exists to enable children with communication disorders to develop their full potential through spoken language and literacy.

## **Philosophy**

It is the belief of Magnolia Speech School that the barriers imposed by hearing and language impairments can frequently be overcome through early identification and appropriate intervention. It is believed that children with these issues need specialized, self-contained classrooms in order to learn the language necessary to function in advanced academic settings. They must receive as much individualized instruction as possible as well as full parental support and involvement. Parents and staff must work as a team with mutual trust and respect in order for the child to succeed.

Magnolia Speech School treats the whole child by promoting success in learning, social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development while emphasizing the concept of becoming a productive and successful individual. The educational program for each child is individually designed and emphasizes the development of communicative, cognitive, and social skills which will facilitate the child's integration into society. The staff is dedicated to the promotion of an enthusiastic attitude toward learning through positive reinforcement and encouragement. It is the ultimate goal of the school that its students complete this program ready to succeed in other educational programs appropriate to their needs.

## **Our Beliefs**

Spoken language is every child's birthright. If it is possible for a child to develop oral communication skills, he/she should be given that opportunity.

The barriers imposed by hearing and language impairments can frequently be overcome through early identification and appropriate intervention.

Most children who are hearing impaired and language disordered need a specialized, self-contained classroom as early as possible in order to learn the language necessary to function in other academic settings later.

Children with severe communication disorders must receive intensive, aggressive therapy with as much individualized instruction as possible.

Instructors and therapists who work with the students should be highly specialized and well trained in techniques and methodologies to teach spoken language, speech, and listening skills.

Full parental support and involvement are necessary in order for children with communication disorders to reach their potential.

Parents and staff must work as a team with mutual trust and respect in order for the child to succeed.

The whole child should be treated by promoting success in learning, social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development while emphasizing the concept of becoming a productive and successful individual.

The instructional program for each child should be individually designed to emphasize the development of communicative, cognitive, and social skills which will facilitate the child's integration into society.

The instructional program should be based on best practices in the field of listening and spoken language, and should be supported by a comprehensive language-based curriculum.

An enthusiastic attitude toward learning should be promoted through positive reinforcement and encouragement.

When children complete the program at Magnolia Speech School they should be ready to enter and succeed in advanced educational programs appropriate to their educational needs.

## **History**

In the early 1950s, a group of parents with hearing-impaired children in Jackson, Mississippi, began to search for a means to teach their children to talk. Under various leaders such as Dr. and Mrs. George Falconer, these parents struggled with the problems of financial support, facilities, and teacher capabilities. Finally, in September 1956, Magnolia Speech School, Inc., was chartered with Mrs. Elizabeth S. Matthews as its executive director. For more than 18 years, under her capable leadership, the school provided training to children who are hearing impaired and language impaired and grew from its beginning as a single class to a multi-class facility. In 1974, following Mrs. Matthews' announcement of her retirement, the board of directors employed Dr. Charles Gammel as executive director. In the same year, ground was broken for a new building. By the time the children moved into the new school in the spring of 1975, construction costs had exceeded one million dollars; yet it was never necessary that money from the school's operating budget be used for the facility.

In 1991, Dr. Charles Gammel retired and Mrs. Melinda Trotti assumed the position of interim director. Mrs. Trotti was formerly the director of Dogwood School for Speech/Language Impaired Children whose program was merged with Magnolia's that same year in order to provide services to children that were more efficient cost to their families and the community.

In June 1994, Anne Sullivan, M.Ed., CED, became the executive director of Magnolia Speech School. Ms. Sullivan, who has teaching certification in both Hearing Impaired and Speech/Language, had previously spent fourteen years at Magnolia Speech School where she began as a student teacher and rose to the rank of assistant director before moving to Mississippi College where she served as an instructor in the Communication Department for eight years. Ms. Sullivan retired in 2012.

The executive director of Magnolia Speech School from January 2013 until 2014 was Dr. Tina Atkins.

Prior to becoming the executive director of Magnolia Speech School in August 2014, Valerie G. Linn, M.S. in Communicative Disorders/Speech Pathology, was the executive director of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation in Jackson. She served in various capacities including clinic director and senior speech/language pathologist at the Mississippi Society for Disabilities (formerly Mississippi Easter Seal Society) as well as a speech/language pathologist at the Children's Rehabilitation Center, Willowood Development Center, and in county school districts.

Magnolia Speech School continues to grow and prosper, becoming more widely recognized for its excellence in service, its emphasis on auditory skill development, and its willingness to adapt programs to children's needs. The school has gained full accreditation by the Mississippi State Department of Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The Hackett-Bower Clinic at Magnolia Speech School offers expanded audiological services, speech/language therapy, and occupational therapy. Both evaluation services and outpatient therapy are offered at Magnolia Speech School along with clinical services that are available to all students enrolled in the school.

In partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Health, Magnolia Speech School's early interventionists travel throughout the state of Mississippi to the homes of infants and toddlers with hearing loss. The Early Intervention Program offers counseling, technical expertise, parenting support, and a rich curriculum which supports the development of listening and spoken language.

Magnolia Speech School balances tradition with changing times. New opportunities are offered for its students through technology and research. Magnolia Speech School joins other OPTION Schools' listening and spoken language programs nationwide in serving children with cochlear implants. Magnolia Speech School is one of the country's pioneer programs in coupling sensory integration and classroom instruction. A revised, updated, and unique Magnolia Speech School Curriculum is the foundation for instruction and therapy. It is implemented in small group settings and in individual therapy by skilled teachers and support staff.

A School Improvement (Strategic) Plan is revised yearly and approved the Board of Directors of Magnolia Speech School. This plan is used to guide the school through continuous improvements in the areas of instruction and organizational effectiveness.

Magnolia Speech School strives to maintain its original mission: to provide quality services in listening and spoken language for children who are hearing impaired and language disordered, and to prepare these children for successful entry into the world in which they must live.

## **General Information**

The mission of Magnolia Speech School is to enable children with communication disorders to develop their full potential through spoken language and literacy. This mission statement is reviewed and revised as needed during the first meeting of the Board of Directors each school year.

## **Administration**

The ultimate authority of Magnolia Speech School, Inc., resides with its board of directors. The board is composed of men and women who have distinguished themselves as civic, business, professional, and philanthropic leaders. Officers of the board are elected annually and its members are elected for staggered three-year terms. The board's work is to oversee school policies and attend to the operational aspects of the school. This is accomplished primarily through committees elected from its membership or appointed by the president. Non-board voting positions include a teacher representative and a parent representative who also serves as the president of the Magnolia Speech School Parent Teacher Organization.

The executive director of the school attends board meetings and represents the staff to the board. The executive director then informs the staff members of any pertinent board decisions. The executive director is ultimately responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school.

The director of development and communications attends board meetings to report development activities and to devise, with board members, strategies for fundraising.

The comptroller attends board meetings to answer financial questions that may arise.

## **Affiliations and Accreditation**

Magnolia Speech School, Inc., maintains professional relationships nationwide with similar schools for children with challenges in speech, language, and hearing. Magnolia Speech School is a member of OPTION Schools, Inc., an international organization of private schools that teach listening and spoken language skills to children with hearing loss. Magnolia Speech School is an active member of the A. G. Bell Association which also supports spoken language instruction. Magnolia Speech School is currently accredited by the Mississippi State Department of Education and by the AdvancED network.

## **Programs and Services**

Magnolia Speech School offers four programs: The Hackett-Bower Clinic, Listening and Spoken Language educational program for children with hearing loss, Association Method for children with language disorders, and Early Intervention Program for families of children 0-3 years diagnosed with hearing loss. All services and programs provided by Magnolia Speech School are reviewed annually by the administrative staff and the board of directors as to content and delivery.

## **Clinical Services**

The Hackett-Bower Clinic offers services in speech/language therapy, audiology, occupational therapy and physical therapy. Certified and licensed therapists perform initial evaluations and

regular assessments. These evaluations may include hearing, speech, language, academic, and developmental instruments depending on the child's age, performance, and needs. An exit conference will be held with parents after an initial evaluation. Evaluation results and recommendations will be made at that time. A written report of the assessment and recommendations is prepared within two weeks of the assessment.

An educational pediatric audiologist is available to act as a consultant to school districts and teachers. She provides the following services:

- hearing evaluations
- hearing aid fittings/maintenance
- tympanometry
- central auditory processing evaluations
- otoacoustic emissions
- auditory steady state response testing
- auditory brain stem response testing
- cochlear implant mapping
- listening therapy

An occupational therapist offers evaluations, consultation, and therapy to students at Magnolia Speech School as needed. Sensory integration and fine motor skills are addressed in the clinic, in the classroom, and on the school's therapeutic playground under the direction of an occupational therapist.

Audiological services and additional academic assessment are provided at no additional costs to students enrolled at Magnolia Speech School. Speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy are offered through an affiliation agreement with Beyond Therapy.

## The School

The school is a Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) non-public, non-profit, special-purpose school that provides self-contained classes in an intensive, individualized, language development program. The teaching methods at Magnolia Speech School include the multi-sensory **Association Method** for language-disordered students, and a more natural **Listening and Spoken Language** approach developed for children with hearing loss. The children are grouped into small classes (5-8 students) with a teacher and an assistant according to their needs, language ability, and chronological age. Children enrolled at Magnolia Speech School should expect to receive intensive concentration in language, speech, and listening skills. Often a student with typically developing communication skills is placed in the classroom as a peer language model. Each student will have a comprehensive, written Service Plan which is supported by the Magnolia Speech School curriculum. The curriculum areas include: audition, receptive language, expressive language, speech, reading/writing, math, social studies, science, Association Method, gross motor, fine motor, social skills, and auditory processing. Applicable areas are selected for the Service Plan. Behavioral goals are written on an as-needed basis. Progress on the Service Plan will be reported to parents every quarter via conference and written report. Services offered that support classroom instruction include: speech therapy, auditory training, occupational therapy, music, library and computer class. In addition, students participate in enrichment activities through visual and performing arts, field trips, social activities and recreational activities.

## Family Services

Founded by the mother of a deaf child, Magnolia Speech School has always recognized the important role of the child's family. In order for children to live a language-filled life, they must be surrounded by sound and words all waking hours, not just at school; therefore, family members and school personnel must work together as a team. Because ongoing counseling and education are necessary for parents to know how to help their children, the following services are offered to assist families:

**Early Intervention Program:** Hearing loss is the most common disability in newborns. When the Mississippi Legislature mandated newborn hearing screening in 1996, the Mississippi State Department of Health contracted with Magnolia Speech School to provide services to families statewide. Services are offered to children with hearing loss in both home-based and center-based settings from newborn to age 3. Magnolia Speech School Early Intervention personnel offer emotional support to these families while providing information that will lead to better understanding of hearing loss. A full range of audiological services is provided to children within the program to ensure that children are fitted with appropriate amplification. Early Intervention Therapists ensure the family is provided information and training concerning current technological options. Many of the children served by this program transition into Magnolia Speech School's full-day classrooms.

**Parent Training and Counseling:** All families need support while adjusting to the special needs of children with communication disorders. While implementing a home program that emphasizes the use of the spoken word, experienced staff members offer support to families of Magnolia Speech School students. Parent orientation sessions are held when a child enrolls. Magnolia Speech School requires that parents meet with the classroom teacher for face-to-face conversation once a month.

## Enrollment Procedure

After initial testing, therapists will make a formal recommendation to the Magnolia Speech School administration as to whether or not a new student should be enrolled in Magnolia Speech School. Once this recommendation is approved, the following criteria must be met:

- Registration forms must be completed and the registration fee paid.
- A case history must be completed accompanied by any pertinent medical reports.
- If applicable, documentation required for an eligibility ruling must be completed.
- A hearing screening or an aided/unaided audiogram
- An intake meeting
- Classroom visits
- A comfort level checklist
- Cottage Acquisition Scales for Listening, Language, and Speech and Service Plan Meeting

Parents are given “Procedural Safeguards” from the Mississippi State Department of Education. This provides important information regarding parents’ rights as defined by both federal and state laws and regulations. The child’s right to receive a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) is explained along with information regarding the development of a Service Plan and the right to placement in the child’s Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Details are then explained regarding rights to due process. Magnolia staff asks that the parent study the “Procedural Safeguards” and return with questions if needed.

## **Transition Policy**

Magnolia Speech School students may transition into regular classes in public school districts, private schools or accredited tutorial programs when the following criteria are met:

1. Formal test scores indicate:
  - a. 85% speech intelligibility
  - b. language standard scores no more than one deviation below the mean and/or a language age within one year of the child’s chronological age and/or the age of the students in the grade the child will enter
  - c. academic testing at grade level in which the child will enter
2. Criterion referenced post-testing on the student’s current Service Plan reflects the child has met a minimum of 80% of his goals for the current school year.
3. Both the child’s current teacher and the department supervisor formally recommend the student as a candidate for transition.

Magnolia Speech School staff is available to provide ongoing support to students and families as the student transitions. Support services may consist of staff members visiting the new school/classroom with the family prior to the child finishing our program. Additionally, Magnolia Speech School staff is available to observe the student during the first semester and make recommendations regarding Service Plan development and/or needed revisions. Parents should make a written request to receive these services.



## Classroom Instruction

Areas of classroom instruction include:

### 1. Listening and Spoken Language Instruction for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Each classroom containing hearing impaired students has a maximum of seven students. When appropriate, one typical hearing student is placed in the classroom for purposes of language stimulation. Because of the low teacher/student ratio, each child receives individualized instruction from the teacher and the teaching assistant. The Magnolia Speech School curriculum is used to set goals and monitor progress for each child. Each student's day includes conversational activities (i.e. journaling, show and tell), academic instruction based on both the Mississippi Public School Common Core and the Magnolia Speech School curriculum, and practice in language use through role-playing, storytelling, problem solving, etc. The students are in an auditory/oral environment for the entire school day. Teachers model language in each activity and experience by using active learning and language-based instruction. As the student learns to imitate the model, the teacher begins to shape and expand the student's communication skills until he or she is using appropriate language structures without the need for a model.

Magnolia Speech School's staff actively monitors each child's amplification. Sound Field Systems are used in the classrooms so that students are able to receive better quality sound. Teaching the children to listen and understand what they are hearing is central to classroom instruction. A "listening attitude" is developed as each hearing-impaired student is surrounded by sound and immersed in language until typical oral skills emerge.

If needed, individual listening therapy is provided to children with hearing loss. Cochlear implant mapping is also available as needed for children whose audiological care is transferred from their cochlear-implant center to Magnolia Speech School. A full range of audiological services are available to each student.

### 2. Association Method Instruction for Language Disorders

The students with language disorders who attend Magnolia Speech School have varied diagnoses/etiologies that have prevented language acquisition from occurring easily or naturally. All of these students need intensive oral language and speech instruction. Teachers who are certified in speech/language and/or special education provide intensive daily instruction in classrooms containing no more than eight children. Each classroom has teaching assistant who works alongside the teacher to help provide a maximum amount of one-on-one time with students. Each student is allowed to learn and progress at his or her own rate. Every student participates in music classes, computer classes, social activities, library time, and physical education.

Core instruction for children with language disorders is based on the Association Method for teaching oral language. This methodology was devised by Mildred McGinnis and has been proven successful in treating children with severe receptive and expressive language deficits, reading disorders, and dyslexia. The instruction is multi-sensory, incremental, and

phonetically based. Magnolia Speech School classrooms for language-disordered children are highly structured and incorporate repetitive drills to build core skills in attention, retention, and recall. These skills are essential for language acquisition. Each student has a Service Plan that outlines goals in thirteen varied curricula areas including language, speech, academics, motor, social interaction, auditory processing, and the Association Method. These students “learn how to learn with language” until they are able to speak clearly and effectively. Ultimately, the goal for each student is to transition into a more traditional school setting and successfully compete in academics.

## **The Magnolia Speech School Curriculum**

The Magnolia Speech School curriculum is used in all classrooms and includes skills in thirteen areas: audition, receptive language, expressive language, speech, reading, math, social studies, science, Association Method, fine motor, gross motor, social interaction, and auditory processing. Teachers and support staff will write Service Plan goals (annually) and lesson plans (weekly) based on the skills, criteria, and activities contained in this curriculum. The curriculum is subject to ongoing revision by committees comprised of teachers, administrators and clinical staff.

## **Annual Assessment Plan**

Baseline performance information gathered from the initial assessments is recorded. Progress is assessed and tracked through the following methods:

1. Criterion-referenced evaluations which are based on the skills and criteria outlined in the Magnolia Speech School curriculum. The skills are reflected in the student’s Service Plan goals and are assessed weekly by the classroom teacher. Each quarter, the results of these assessments are documented in Magnolia Speech School progress reports that are provided to parents and, if applicable, sponsoring school districts. These reports are also included in each student’s permanent cumulative record.
2. Language samples are recorded regularly and analyzed using the Cottage Acquisition Scales of Listening, Language and Speech (CASLLS). The information gathered is used to set goals setting and plan lessons.
3. Annual formal assessment using standardized tests in the areas of speech, language, listening, academics, and development. The resulting assessment information is maintained in each student’s permanent cumulative record.

## **Data Collection and Management**

OPTION Schools, Inc., has developed a Listening and Spoken Language Data Repository (LSL-DR) to advance the mission of OPTION Schools by establishing a national database of children who are attending or have attended a Listening and Spoken Language Program (LSL). OPTION Schools will use LSL-DR to collect, aggregate, and summarize data from LSL programs to describe

the population and to assess overall outcomes. Magnolia Speech School will use this program for quality monitoring by making accessible accurate demographic information and scores that provide specific outcome measurements. Specific information that is collected in this national data base includes, but is not limited to speech-language-hearing information, type of technology used, and non-identifying demographics. The program that OPTION schools has selected to store the data is REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture) which is a secure, web-based application designed to support data capture for research studies. It is housed at Vanderbilt Institutes of Clinical and Translational Research. This system meets all security guidelines for web-based systems and is stored on the Vanderbilt server. No personal identifying information is entered into the system. Only approved professionals have access to data uploaded into the LSL-DR. Parents choosing not to participate in this data management system and should notify the school's executive director of that decision. Choosing not to participate will have no effect on a child's placement or the services they receive at Magnolia Speech School.

## **Financial Support and Funding**

Magnolia Speech School is a non-public, non-profit, special purpose school. Tuition is assessed using a sliding based on parental income from tax returns. **ALL students who are enrolled in Magnolia Speech School are granted financial assistance using funds provided through donations from various United Way organizations, civic clubs, churches, foundations, and individual donors as well as from grants and corporate gifts.** The development office organizes fundraising events to secure adequate funding. The Magnolia Speech School Parent Teacher Organization also offers ongoing financial support.

The Community Foundation of Greater Jackson manages the Magnolia Speech School Endowment Fund, a fund established as a way to help ensure the school's future. Magnolia Speech School receives monthly interest from this fund that is used to help support student tuition and other operating expenses.

Members of the Jackson community and individuals from throughout the State of Mississippi have supported the work of Magnolia Speech School since its founding in 1956. Their financial support and volunteer efforts have enabled the school to offer life-changing services to generations of children with severe communication disorders.

Magnolia Speech School receives generous financial gifts from dedicated enterprises and organizations. Parents wishing to discuss fundraising ideas should approach the Director of Donor Engagement

## **Parent Partnering and Communication**

Parents of Magnolia Speech School students are considered educational partners. Open, honest communication between home and school is necessary for the student success. Daily notes are often exchanged between parents and staff for purposes of reporting and discussion of the student's needs and progress. For families in which English is not the first language, Magnolia Speech School will utilize the services of volunteers to interpret as needed. Every family is encouraged to make regular classroom observation visits and every parent is required to have monthly meetings with their child's teacher. Both supervisors and administrators at Magnolia Speech School have open door policies for parents. Service Plan meetings are held annually while other parent/staff meetings are held throughout the year.

## **General Schedule**

The calendar school year begins in August and continues through May. This term is followed by a summer session that concludes at the end of June. There is no school during the month of July.

Before-School Care is available in the cafeteria for students who arrive at school between 7:15am and 8:00am. The cost of this care is \$1.50 per 15 minutes (minutes are rounded to the closest quarter hour). Beginning at 8:00am, students go to their respective classrooms. Instruction begins at 8:15am. Students arriving after 8:15 will be considered tardy.

Students receiving individual listening therapy, speech/language therapy and/or occupational therapy will receive these services at various times throughout the day. Certified teachers provide music and computer instruction throughout the week. All students participate in physical education activities and library time.

Lunch period is from 10:50am until 12:30pm with classes rotating through the lunchroom in 30-minute intervals. Following the lunch period, students will either rest or have play time, depending on their age. Students participate in free play, organized games, or sports during morning and afternoon breaks. They are grouped by age and size on appropriate playgrounds, weather permitting. Students should be dressed appropriately for outdoor play. If weather does not allow for outdoor play, students will play in the gym.

School dismissal begins at 2:55 p.m. After-School Care is available from 3:15 until 4:30. If a student has not been picked up by 3:15, he/she will be sent to After-School Care at a charge of \$1.50 per 15 minutes (minutes are rounded to the closest quarter hour). There will be a charge of \$1.00 per minute for every minute a student is left past 4:30pm.

## **Student Information**

### **Attendance**

School attendance guidelines are set forth by Mississippi Compulsory School Attendance Law.

School hours are 8:15am - 3:00pm, Monday through Friday, August through June. Teachers and assistants arrive by 7:45am to organize for the day. Students may enter the classrooms between 8:00 a.m. and 8:15 a.m.

School attendance and promptness are extremely important. Parents should call the school office to report any tardiness or absence. Should a student arrive after 8:15, the parent will be asked to sign their child in and wait in the lobby with their child until the teacher or the teacher's assistant come to escort the student to the classroom.

Early dismissals are not permitted after 2:30. Parents should make the teacher aware of any planned early dismissals or expected absences beforehand. This allows teachers to plan student work and assignments accordingly. When students are picked up early, parents will wait in the lobby and the student will be escorted to the parent. These procedures help to lessen interruptions in the classroom.

### **Parent Participation**

Nothing is more important to a student's success than parental involvement. As a condition of enrollment at Magnolia Speech School, parents must agree to attend the Service Plan conference and meet monthly with their child's teacher. All parents are encouraged to observe their child in the classroom, participate in PTO, and have regular individual meetings with their child's teacher and/or therapists. Parents are asked to schedule observations ahead of time with the office manager or language supervisor. When observing stop in the school lobby prior and sign in. Observations are limited to one-hour sessions. Staff and parent communication is crucial. A parent wishing to contact a Magnolia Speech School staff member during school hours may call the school office to request a meeting.

### **Fees**

All fees are the responsibility of the parent(s) and must be paid in full by the 20th of each month with automatic draft being the preferred method of payment. It is the parents' responsibility to notify the office manager of informational changes related to billing such as address changes or changes with automatic bank drafts.

If monthly tuition is not paid by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month, a late fee of \$25.00 will be added to the amount due. Tuition payments or other fees that are paid to the school by check and returned by the bank, for any reason, will be charged a \$25.00 returned check fee.

Tuition not paid by the end of the month will result in a warning from the school administration. If tuition is still delinquent after two months, the child will be suspended until the account can be brought current.

## **Morning and After-School Care**

Morning Care is available 7:15 - 8:00am and After-School Care is available 3:15 - 4:30pm. A fee of \$1.50 per 15 minutes will be charged for this service (minutes are rounded to the nearest quarter hour). A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for any student who remains after 4:30. Daycare is billed monthly.

It is not necessary for students to bring toys, blankets, or other personal items to daycare. The school provides toys and activities for the students and will not be responsible for any lost items that were brought from home.

## **Lunches/Dietary Restrictions**

Parents are to provide daily lunches for their child. Please send juice, milk, or water (no soda). Please make your child's teacher and the office manager aware of any dietary restrictions. Magnolia Speech School staff will make every necessary accommodation.

Most classrooms have a snack each day. These are generally supplied by the teacher or a parent. If a child has a limited or restricted diet i.e. gluten-free, dairy-free, that child's parents must provide their teacher with snacks that are suitable for their child to eat. For convenience, these snacks can be sent to school on a daily, weekly or bi-weekly basis.

## **Attire**

Parents should ensure that their child is dressed appropriately each day based on the season. Footwear should be comfortable and suitable for outdoor play and physical education (sneakers, well-fitting sandals etc.). Flip-flops are not allowed.

## **Classroom Observation**

Any parent wishing to observe their child's class in progress should schedule an observation session with the office manager or language supervisor. Sign in at the reception desk and get a key to the observation booth. Teachers should be informed of the parent's visit in advance so that the teacher can plan a meaningful session that focuses on that child. Observers should speak quietly while in the observation booth. The door to the observation booth should remain closed so that observers will not be seen by their child through the two-way mirrored window. Parents are asked to observe their child's classroom only. Observation sessions are restricted to one hour or less. Guided observation with a staff member present may help observers better understand the classroom activity. Parents opting for a guided observation session should schedule in advance with the teacher and/or supervisor.

## **Transportation**

Parents are required to submit a written list of people who are authorized to pick up their child from school. No child will be released to someone who is not included on their list of approved drivers. If it becomes necessary for someone other than the people included on the list to pick up a child, written notification from the parent must be sent to the school with the student authorizing staff to release the child to that person. Parents may also email authorization to [beverly.cunningham@magnoliaspeechschool.org](mailto:beverly.cunningham@magnoliaspeechschool.org).

Morning carpool is 8:00 – 8:15am. For safety reasons, parents are asked not to park and enter the school with their child during this time. Staff will be available to help the child exit the car and proceed to their classroom.

Afternoon carpool is 2:55 – 3:15pm. For safety reasons, parents are asked not to park and enter the school to pick up their child during this time. Staff will be available to assist the child in entering the car.

Drivers should not block or impede the flow of traffic during carpool nor should they exit their car during carpool drop-off or pick-up. Staff will not place a child in a car without a car seat. For safety reasons, drivers may not use cell phones during carpool time.

During the first few days of the new school year, staff will be waiting in the lobby to assist parents in helping their children reach their classrooms. Ultimately it is the goal of Magnolia Speech School that each student go to their classroom independently. Therefore, parents will not be allowed to escort their children to class after those initial few days.

Please do not park under the covered drive, in front of the mailbox, or in the fire lane.

## **Parent and Teacher Meetings**

All parents are expected to attend the “Back to School” meeting in August.

Parents will receive progress reports every quarter (October, December, March, and May). Each student will have an annual formal comprehensive evaluation performed after which a meeting will be scheduled to discuss the scores with parents. Informal assessment (including language sampling and analysis) is ongoing. Mandatory individual parent and teacher conferences will be held monthly to discuss progress, special needs, or problems.

Teachers are available for conferences daily from 7:45 – 8:15am and during lunch break. They are also available Monday- Thursday from 2:45 – 3:30pm. Appointments may be made by contacting the teacher directly. Conferences should be scheduled in advance to allow the teacher appropriate planning.

Should parents have any questions or concerns regarding their child’s therapy or hearing, they may schedule a conference by contacting the audiologist or therapist directly.

Any written communication to parents from Magnolia Speech School staff will be sent by mail, email or as a note sent home with the student. Parents should not text a teacher after

school hours unless they have been requested to do so by that teacher. In the case of an emergency, please call the school office.

## **Student Records**

Careful records are kept by Magnolia Speech School on each student's progress. All of these files are confidential and available only to school staff who are directly involved with that student's education. Magnolia Speech School is occasionally host to university students who work with our students to receive practicum experience. While they do have access to certain student records, these students are bound by the same privacy laws as Magnolia Speech School staff. The confidentiality guidelines and policies set forth by the Mississippi State Department of Education are strictly followed and enforced by Magnolia Speech School. No student records are released without proper written parental consent. When a student leaves Magnolia Speech School, the student's account must be paid in full in order to transfer or release student records.

## **Health**

All children enrolled at Magnolia Speech School must submit a Certificate of Compliance from the Mississippi State Department of Health or from their physician indicating that all required immunizations are current. A student will not be allowed to attend school if proof of current immunizations is not provided. If a student's immunizations are not kept current, Magnolia Speech School will suspend the student until they are brought current. If there is a medical reason why a student cannot receive immunizations, parents must have a Mississippi State Department of Health Medical Exemption Request (Form 139) completed and signed by their child's physician and turned in to the school office.

Students may not attend school if they have any signs or symptoms of illness such as fever greater than 100°, vomiting, diarrhea, severe congestion/coughing, sore throat, etc. Should a child become sick while at school, parents will be contacted and asked to pick up their child within an hour. Students must be free of fever, diarrhea or vomiting for 24 hours before returning to school. Parents are asked to contact the school immediately if their child is diagnosed with a contagious condition such as "pink eye", impetigo, head lice, etc. A doctor's release will be required before the student is allowed to return to school.

In order for a student to receive any type of medication (prescription or over-the-counter), parents must complete an Authorization to Dispense Medication Form detailing the name of the medication, dosage and times to be given. No medications will be dispensed without parental permission. A separate form must be completed for each medication to be given. Prescription medications should be brought to the school office in the original bottle with the pharmacy label.

The Magnolia Speech School building as well as its entire campus (including the parking lot) is smoke free. Anyone found smoking on the school grounds will be asked to leave.



## **Supplies**

Students will receive a School Supply List that is specific to their particular classroom prior to the beginning of the school year. The supplies may be brought to school on Teacher Meet and Greet day or on the first day of school. Personal items such as coats, book bags, lunch boxes, etc., should be labeled with the child's name clearly visible.

Regardless of the student's age, all parents are asked to provide a change of clothing for their child that can be left at school. The change of clothes should be placed in a bag that is clearly labeled with the child's name. If a child is in diapers or pull-ups, parents should bring a minimum of a week's supply at a time to be kept in the child's cubby. Also, parents should provide their choice of wet wipes.

If a child wears hearing aids, parents must supply spare batteries to be kept on hand by their child's teacher. Teachers check hearing aids twice daily and need to have fresh batteries available to them in case of failure. A working hearing aid is essential for the student's class participation and involvement. Parents should strive to keep the aid in good working order at all times.

If a child has a cochlear implant, it must be maintained. Parents must provide to their child's teacher the following: 1) a set of replacement batteries and 2) an extra set of cords. These are crucial to the student's ability to participate in the classroom. All students who have implants and/or hearing aids are expected to wear them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with the only exceptions being while bathing and sleeping. If a child arrives at school without the device, the parent will be contacted and asked to bring it to school immediately.

## **Parties**

Parents wishing to have a birthday party for their child during school hours should make arrangements in advance with their child's teacher. Because these parties are generally held in the lunchroom, the teacher will need to make sure the lunchroom is available on the desired day and time. Reserving the lunchroom for this purpose will be done on a first come/first serve basis. Teachers may also elect to hold the parties in the classroom or little kitchen.

Special parties will be held at the school on the following occasions: Fall Festival, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter and on the last day of school. Parents may volunteer or may be asked to help prepare for these and other celebrations throughout the school year.

## **Field Trips**

Magnolia Speech School students participate in field trips each semester. Field trips enhance language and learning experiences and are designed to be both fun and educational. Teachers will send home trip information and permission forms in advance. Signed permission slips (and money if required) must be turned in to the teacher prior to the trip. Students without a signed permission slip will not be allowed to participate. While parents are welcome to accompany their child, siblings are not permitted on class outings. If a parent agrees in advance to help chaperone a trip but becomes

unable to do so, they should inform the teacher of this at least three days prior to the trip so that the teacher can make other chaperone arrangements.

## **PTO**

The Parent-Teacher Organization provides amazing support and resources to the students, staff, teachers and parents of Magnolia Speech School. Parents are encouraged to join and participate in PTO meetings and fundraising activities. Participating in the PTO is also a great opportunity for parents to get to know one another and work together to help support and expand programs and activities at Magnolia Speech School.

## **Off-Campus Informational Presentations**

Magnolia Speech School administrative staff will sometimes make informal presentations at civic clubs, United Way functions, churches, etc. as part of an effort to raise awareness about Magnolia Speech School. A teacher and student frequently participate in these presentations as representatives of the school. A request may be made to parents for this purpose. Parental permission will be required in writing before a student is allowed to participate. Details regarding where and when the meeting will be held and which staff member(s) will be accompanying the student will be provided. Magnolia Speech School students have always enjoyed these outings and are proud to represent their school in this way.

## **Professional Development**

According to the guidelines set forth by the Mississippi State Department of Education, each school is required to provide professional development opportunities for its certified staff in order to maintain accreditation. All certified staff are required to obtain a specific number of Continuing Education Units to maintain licensure from the Mississippi State Department of Education and/or the Mississippi State Department of Health. Professional Development days are indicated on the Academic Year Calendar parents receive prior to the beginning of the school year.

## **Discipline**

The basis of Magnolia Speech School's student discipline policy is the belief that a positive approach creates the optimum environment in which children learn. It is mandated that each child be treated with respect. A reward system is used to encourage good behavior. Removal of privileges or "time out" may be used to discourage unacceptable behavior. Certain behavioral incidents require written notification to parents. If the teacher and administration come to the conclusion that a formal behavioral intervention is necessary, parents will receive a written, detailed description of the plan that will require their signature before being implemented.

It is the policy of Magnolia Speech School, set forth by its Board of Directors, that no form of corporal punishment, manhandling, or verbal abuse of a student will be tolerated under any circumstances.

### **Suspension/Expulsion**

Termination of services may occur if parents are uncooperative or do not work with staff to meet the Service Plan goals that have been mutually agreed upon. Services might also be terminated if teachers and staff feel it is in the best interest of the student to transfer to another program. At Magnolia Speech School, there is zero tolerance for aggressive acts and/or threats, whether it is to students or to employees. Such behavior will result in expulsion from the school grounds.

### **Parent Complaint**

If a parent wishes to file an official complaint regarding a staff member, the following will take place:

- The individual filing the complaint will be asked to make a written report detailing the nature of the offense.
- The school administration will meet with the employee in question to review and discuss the complaint. Details of the meeting will be recorded including what, if any, disciplinary actions were imposed. All records regarding the event will be placed in the employee's personnel file.
- The Personnel Committee of the Magnolia Speech School Board of Directors will be advised of the complaint and of the results of the employee meeting.

### **Student Harassment or Abuse**

Sometimes the nature of the communicative disability of students served at Magnolia Speech School interferes with their ability to protect themselves from inappropriate sexual advances and the ability to report such conduct. At all times the staff of Magnolia Speech School is cognizant of the safety and well-being of all students. Students are constantly in the presence of at least one staff member.

Safeguards against allegations of sexual misconduct with students will be provided in the following ways:

- Self-help skill deficits (e.g., dressing, toileting) will be identified by staff and parents, and permission to teach such skills at the school will be obtained in writing from the parents.
- Parents will be notified that staff members of the opposite sex may be assisting their child in the bathroom when necessary and teaching various self- help skills to their child.

## **Complaint Procedure for Student Harassment or Misconduct**

An individual who believes he/she has witnessed harassment of or misconduct by a student should report the incident immediately to the executive director so that a prompt investigation into the matter may be conducted. Once reported, interviews will be conducted with all parties involved in the alleged incident. If it is determined that misconduct did occur, the student's parents will be notified. A report will be written documenting the incident and filed in the student's school record.

## **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

In accordance with MS Code 43-21-353, any school employee having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a neglected child or an abused child, shall immediately report their suspicions to the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

## **Emergency Information**

Parents are asked to provide emergency contact information at the beginning of each school year. It is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school immediately should any of this contact information change. Parents are also asked to provide student medical information such as allergies, current medications, dietary and/or activity restrictions and any other medical information parents feel is pertinent for the care of the student. School staff should be notified of any changes to this information.

In the event of severe weather, parents should monitor local media reports for announcements concerning Magnolia Speech School. Parents will receive messages via NotifyMySchool.com regarding school closings, etc. The school will conduct preparedness drills for fire, severe weather and school-wide emergency situations.

Magnolia Speech School conducts background checks for all employees.

The Magnolia Speech School grounds are fenced and gated. The gate is open 7:15 – 8:20 am and 2:30-3:15 pm for the ease of parents dropping off or picking up their children. A security officer monitors the parking lot during this time frame. The gate remains closed at all other times to prevent unauthorized entry to the school grounds. If a parent comes at a time when the gate is closed, they should key "000" into the security gate keypad and identify themselves when the receptionist answers. The gate will then be opened allowing them to enter the parking lot.

# Appendices

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Appendix B: Staff and Teachers

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**Appendix B  
Staff and Teachers  
2020-21**

**Administrative Staff**

Executive Director  
Valerie Linn, CCC-Sp/L  
Admissions Coordinator/Instructional Specialist  
Nancy Davis, M. Ed  
Office Manager  
Beverly Cunningham  
Support Specialist  
LeAnne McGinty  
Capital Campaign Manager  
Joshua Friedel  
Director of Donor Engagement  
Maria Smith  
Comptroller  
Angie Turner, CPA

**Teachers**

Mary Alford  
Andrea Barksdale  
Cheri Burney  
Sarah Byrd  
Kelanie Farmer  
Ami Hall  
Akilah McFarland  
Melanie Priest  
Joy Sanders  
Sharon Smathers

**Teacher Assistants**

Jessie Burrell  
Olivia Cole  
LaShayla Ford  
Velma Fowler  
Emily Holland  
Faith Joyce  
Darla Kemmerer  
Chelsea McNeese  
Betty Murphy  
Kelly Nusbaum  
Tiffany Watkins

**Clinic Staff**

Audiologist

Gina Russell, CCC-AuD

Psychometrist

Ashley Schmelzer

Speech/Language Pathologist

Nikki Hajje, SLP\*

Taylor Hilbun, CCC-SLP\*

Occupational Therapist

Melissa Newman, OT\*

**Support Staff**

Dyslexia Therapist

Holly Moore

Library/Morning Care

Velma Fowler

Computer Lab

Rebecca Carter

After Care

Velma Fowler

Betty Murphy

**Early Interventionists**

Ashten Chatham

Molly Eastland

Charlotte Warfield

\*Beyond Therapy