

# ALLEGHENY-CLARION VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Mrs. Lori Sherman, Principal/Transportation Director



## JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL

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Mr. William Jordan, Principal

February 11, 2020

Dear Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District Jr/Sr High School Parent or Guardian,

The Board of Education at the Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District acknowledges that it is the responsibility of the total school community to create and maintain an atmosphere that is conducive to teaching, learning and living. The district takes great pride in creating an educational environment that enables our school district to do far more than just teach students how to take a test. We are able to accomplish this goal by upholding a strict and impartial discipline program that is essential to ensure that: (a) no student's learning is disrupted by the behavior of an individual or the behavior of the group, and (b) the development of responsible, well-mannered, self-disciplined citizens is promoted.

A-C Valley School District has implemented a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. PBIS is a proactive approach based on a three-tiered model of prevention and intervention aimed at creating safe and effective schools. Emphasis is placed on teaching and reinforcing important social skills and data-based problem-solving to address existing behavior concerns. PBIS provides an alternative approach to punishment that focuses on the prevention of problem behavior by teaching and reinforcing student social skills. Behavioral expectations are positively stated and easy to remember. In other words, rather than telling students what not to do, we will focus on preferred behaviors.

The goal is to create a positive social culture in which pro-social behaviors are explicitly taught and reinforced, and all adults respond to the occurrence of problem behavior in a consistent manner. Secondary prevention is intended to support students at risk of engaging in more serious problem behaviors. Strategies for secondary prevention address a child's needs before more intensive individualized supports are necessary. A smaller number of students require more individualized and intensive plans than primary and secondary prevention practices provide. At the third tier prevention level, individualized and comprehensive plans address the unique needs of children who engage in serious problem behaviors.

A-C Valley School District complies with the provisions of the IDEA, and Federal and State regulations, when disciplining students with disabilities for violations of district policy, or school rules and regulations. As necessary, Positive Behavior Support Plans are developed and maintained for students to improve desirable behaviors and decrease targeted behaviors. The school counselors and school psychologist work with learning support teachers and general education teachers to develop behavior plans directed by Functional Behavior Assessments.

This program coupled with an outstanding educational staff that are certified and highly qualified were able to increase our School Performance Profile (SPP) Score in the Elementary school from a 55 in 2017-18 to 67 in 2018-19, and at the Jr/Sr High School, the SPP from 69.4 in 2017-18 to 71.3 in 2018-19. More detailed information about A-CV and the SPP score can be found at <http://paschoolperformance.org/>. The SPP score is based on multiple factors that represent the whole child such as; PSSA Scores, Keystone Scores, Students Growth, Attendance, College and Career Standards, Attendance Rate, Graduation rate, NOCTI Scores, and Post-Secondary Transition to School, Work or the Military. The school board, administration and staff are happy with last years improvement on the SPP scores.

However, we would like to make you aware that the Jr/Sr High School is on the list of the bottom 15% for performance on the combined Math and ELA tests on the 2018-2019 PSSA and/or Keystone exams. This designation is based on data from **ONLY** the 2018-2019 Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and/or Keystone Exams for Math and ELA. The PSSA and Keystone exams are annual exams given to Pennsylvania students at various grade levels to measure their academic progress.

Data taken from the SPP also shows A-CV HS ELA is 53.6 and the state average is 62.1, A-CV Math is 34.8 and the state average is 45.2, and A-CV Science is 69 and the state average is 66. The positive that is taken away from these test scores is that our student growth in ELA is 83.7 and the state average is 75, A-CV student Math growth is 93 and the state is 75.3, and student growth in Science is 86 and the state is 75.1. Overall, the district is proud of the increase in academic growth over a period of one year.

The district feels this snap shot and designation does not provide the whole picture of our educational programming. Our philosophy on educational achievement spans much farther past one standardized test. We feel that with an adequate funding source, the district could develop a remedial program that focused on the PSSA/Keystone remediation for students who are not great test takers. Murphy (2017) shows data analysis from the faculty-facilitated remediation strategies to be an appropriate method to increase exam scores. Due to limited revenue, the A-CV school district chose not to add a formal remediation program.

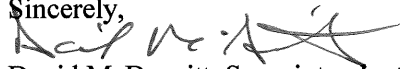
Another reason these types of programs were not created is due to escalating cyber school costs. The district is mandated to use revenue including, but not limited to, your local tax dollars to pay for outside cyber schools located all over the state of Pennsylvania. Over the past five years, our district has spent \$1,258,064.20 on cyber school costs.

This designation is linked to the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program (OSTCP) that was created pursuant to Act 85 of 2012 (72 P.S. § 1701-G.1, *et seq*) and amended by Act 86 of 2016 (24 P.S. § 2001-B, *et seq*). This program enables eligible students residing within the boundaries of low-achieving schools to apply for a scholarship to attend another public or nonpublic school. Keep in mind that in 2017 many of these popular cyber schools had graduation rates that ranged from 31.3% to 70.8% (A-CV is 98.2%) and their SPP scores range from 35.5% to 61.1% (A-CV 71.3%) (Retrieved from <http://www.paschoolperformance.org/Downloads.html> and <https://www.education.pa.gov/Data-nd-statistics/Pages/Cohort-Graduation-Rate.aspx>.)

If you wish to explore this opportunity for your child, you must go to the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) website [www.newpa.com/ostc](http://www.newpa.com/ostc) to review the list of scholarship organizations for the school districts and nonpublic schools that are participating in this program. DCED has information regarding the application process. Scholarships are contingent upon available funding. Additional information is available at the PA Department of Education website <http://www.education.pa.gov/K12/Opportunity%20Scholarship%20Tax%20Credit%20Program/Pages/default.aspx#tab-1>.

If you have questions about this letter or our educational program, please contact David McDeavitt at 724-659-5820 or Bill Jordan at 724-659-4661.

Sincerely,



David McDeavitt, Superintendent of Schools

#### References

Murphy, A. (2017). *The Effectiveness of Remediation Type in Promoting Student Success on Standardized Test Scores in a Traditional BSN Program*. Available at SSRN 2971755.



## Overview of the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program

**Establishment:** The Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program provides scholarships to eligible students who wish to attend a participating public or nonpublic school of their choice.

**Eligibility:** The Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program allows businesses to contribute to an opportunity scholarship organization that provides funding to eligible students who reside within the attendance boundaries of a low-achieving school. A low-achieving school is defined as a public elementary or secondary school in Pennsylvania that ranks in the bottom 15 percent of its designation as an elementary or secondary school based on combined Mathematics/Algebra 1 and Reading/Literature scores on the most recent annual assessment (PSSA, and/or Keystone). This term does not include a brick-and-mortar charter school, cyber charter school or area vocational-technical school. Students (including students entering kindergarten) who reside within the boundaries of a low-achieving school as of the first day of classes will be eligible to apply for an opportunity scholarship. Eligible students may include children residing within the boundaries of a low-achieving school who:

- Currently attend a low-achieving school;
- Are currently enrolled in a non-public school;
- Were previously home schooled; or
- Were previously attending a charter or cyber charter.

Eligible students are defined as those school-age children living in the attendance boundary of a low-achieving school as of the first day of classes. The income information and information on additional allowances for people with disabilities can be found on the Department of Community Economic Development's (DCED) website at: [www.newpa.com/ostc](http://www.newpa.com/ostc)

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will annually publish a list of the bottom 15 percent of elementary schools and the bottom 15 percent of secondary schools.

**Continuation of Scholarship:** A scholarship organization may award a scholarship to an applicant who resides within the attendance boundary of a low-achieving school to attend a participating public school or a participating nonpublic school selected by the parent of the applicant. If an applicant who received an opportunity scholarship under

for the prior school year resides within the attendance boundary of a school that was removed from the list of low-achieving schools provided by the department, the applicant may receive an educational opportunity scholarship. The scholarship may be for each year of enrollment in a participating public school or participating nonpublic school for up to the lesser of five years or until completion of grade 12 provided the applicant otherwise remains eligible.

**Funding:** Opportunity scholarships are funded by businesses making contributions to scholarship organizations in exchange for a tax credit. The amount of scholarships cannot exceed the amount of business contributions made to scholarship organizations. Even if a student is eligible for a scholarship, that scholarship is contingent upon funds being available.

**Requirements:** The scholarship can only be used for tuition costs and school-related fees at the participating nonpublic school or nonresident public school district. A scholarship shall not be awarded for enrollment in a home education program. The combined amount of scholarship and additional financial aid may not exceed the tuition rate and school-related fees associated with the participating school. Scholarship funds received by a parent are not considered taxable income. A participating public or nonpublic school may not charge a higher tuition rate than its normal rates for non-participating students.

**Transportation:** A resident school district that provides transportation to its own students must provide transportation for a resident student attending a participating nonpublic school that is located within 10 miles of the resident school district's boundaries. A resident school district that provides transportation to its own students may provide transportation for a resident student attending a nonresident public school that is located within 10 miles of the resident school district's boundaries.

**How to Apply for an Opportunity Scholarship:** Opportunity scholarships will be awarded by approved opportunity scholarship organizations, not the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) nor PDE. The list of opportunity scholarship organizations is available on DCED's website at, [www.newpa.com/ostc](http://www.newpa.com/ostc). This link provides specific instructions on how to contact approved opportunity scholarship organizations. Approved opportunity scholarship organizations will provide details regarding their application process. Parents should work through the approved opportunity scholarship organizations, not DCED, to participate in this program.

**Awarding of Scholarships:** In awarding an opportunity scholarship, a scholarship organization shall give preference to eligible applicants who:

- Received a scholarship for the prior school year;
- Who meet certain income limits; or
- Who meet certain income limits and who reside in a first class school district, a district with an average daily membership greater than 7,500 that has received an advance of its basic education subsidy, or a district that has received an advance of its basic education subsidy and is either subject to a declaration of financial distress under section 691 of the Public School Code or is engaged in litigation against the commonwealth in which the school district seeks financial assistance from the commonwealth to allow the school district to continue to operate.

**Parental Responsibilities:** Under the program, parents are responsible for contacting and enrolling their students in a participating public or nonpublic school.