



2024-2025

Scholar and Family Handbook

Kindergarten – 12th Grade

Vision & Mission

To be a premier education destination of choice.

Propel Schools, based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is a not-for-profit federation of charter schools dedicated to the mission of catalyzing the transformation of public education so that all children have access to high-quality/high-performing public schools.

Disclaimer:

In a situation where an item in the handbook may misalign with a recently updated approved School Board policy, the policy shall prevail. Recently approved school board policies may not appear in previously published handbooks or may not have been updated in the online copies of the Scholar and Family Handbook. Updated policies will be available on our website: www.propelschools.org

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Introduction to Propel

Propel Schools is a not-for-profit public charter schools network that transforms the lives of children through innovative, scholar-centered learning. Propel sets a standard for creating productive citizens by prioritizing academic and behavioral excellence and fundamental life skills. **Propel believes that to accomplish these goals positive family support is vital.**

Our Promise to Families

High-Quality Academic Experience

Each of our schools provides a rigorous academic environment in which the education is personalized so scholars are prepared for the future, whether they choose a career path, a trade or college. Propel Schools offer small class sizes that focus on providing each scholar with support and individualized attention. Propel prides itself in setting the standard for our scholars to become productive citizens by prioritizing academic excellence and fundamental life skills. Propel has become both a regional asset and a national model, providing measurable evidence of how innovative public schools can expand opportunities for children and families and revitalize communities.

Propel-wide Habits

Excellence is a Habit - The 5 Propel Habits are network-wide expectations for all participants in our learning communities. These Habits were intentionally chosen to embody the skills that will help our scholars succeed not only in Propel schools, but in college, their careers and beyond. Demonstrating, teaching and celebrating the 5 Habits for our scholars is an integral part of our mission at Propel to provide high-quality education to all children.

Propel Habits

Own It	Walk Through the Door	Look in the Mirror	Treat Others the Way You Want to be Treated	Do Your Part
Academics	Attitude	Behavior & Pride	Kindness	Teamwork
Work Hard Set Goals Be Responsible	Get Here Be Positive Never Give Up	Be Accountable Be Honest Be Dedicated	Be Courteous Be Engaged Be Empathetic	We Want... We Can... We Will...

Academic Excellence

Beliefs on Academic Excellence

Propel Schools believes that academic excellence is a requirement of a high-quality education. We recognize the importance of developing, assessing, and expanding academic standards to challenge scholars to achieve at the highest level possible. To this end, Propel Schools shall establish rigorous academic standards in accordance with and may expand upon, those adopted by the State Board of Education. "Academic standards" shall be defined as "what a scholar should know and be able to do at a specific grade level." For purposes of policy, the term

“academic standards” shall be deemed to encompass PA Core Standards, state academic and local academic standards. Propel Schools’ curriculum shall be designed to provide scholars with the planned instruction needed to attain established academic standards. Propel Schools shall assess individual scholar attainment of academic standards and assist scholars having difficulty attaining academic standards. Scholars with disabilities may attain academic standards by completion of their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in accordance with law, regulations, and Board policy.

Grades

Your scholar’s grade will be broken down as follows:

- 95% Academics
- 5% Habits

Academics: Academics make up 95% so your scholar’s grade communicates how much grade-level material they have mastered. If your child has high scores (3’s and 4’s) in Academics, that means they can do grade-level work!

Habits: Habits make up 5% of a child’s grade because the 5 Propel Habits represent the skills that scholars need to be successful in their academic work. If your child has high scores (3’s and 4’s) in the Habits, that means they are consistently demonstrating the skills required for life-long success!

Each week, your child will receive a score between 1 and 4 that represents their current level of mastery of the Propel Habits:

4 = Exceeding Mastery **3** = Meeting Mastery
2 = Approaching Mastery **1** = No Mastery

The chart below summarizes the indicators that may impact your child’s grade for each Habit:

Propel Habit	Indicator
Own It	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participating in discussions ■ Being on task during class ■ Setting & monitoring goals
Walk Through the Door	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Being on time ■ Remaining in assigned seat ■ Remaining inside classroom
Look in the Mirror	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Completing assignments fully ■ Turning in work on time ■ Initiating reassessments
Treat Others the Way You Want to be Treated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Using appropriate language ■ Following class rules ■ Actively listening during class
Do Your Part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sharing ideas with peers ■ Helping peers with work ■ Group work

Standards Based Grading (SBG)

Jumprope is a platform that allows families to view their scholar's academic progress.

Skyward

Skyward is Propel's student information system that allows Propel to keep track of your scholar's academic, behavioral and informational data such as home address of record and parent and family contact information. You can also access Skyward to view your scholar's academic history, complete surveys, and to view other information. Click the links below to access Skyward and for additional information on logging in to the system.

Skyward Access for Families

Skyward Family Access - Log In and Password Reset

High School Course Catalog

For full details on the 9-12 High School experience including [Propel and Act 158 High School Graduation Requirements](#), [Dual Credit](#) information, Academic Curriculum and Course of Study, Credit Recovery, and Grading System, refer to the High School Course Catalog.

Promotion and Retention

Propel Schools uses multiple factors including academics, attendance, and social/emotional development to determine grade-level promotion and retention. All requests for scholar retention must be approved by the Superintendent. For more specific information, please contact the building principal.

Family Conferences

Propel believes that in order to accomplish our vision and mission, family partnership and engagement is vital. Every Propel family is expected to attend 2 in-person conferences per year. Families will receive important information regarding academics, behavior and assessment.

Scholar Assessment

Instruction for all scholars will be guided by the PA Core Standards and a variety of formative and summative assessments. In addition, Propel will administer diagnostics such as CDTs in all content areas to determine what scholars know and do not know to inform long-term and unit planning.

Standardized Testing

PSSA Assessment - The annual Pennsylvania System School Assessment is a standards-based, criterion-referenced assessment that provides students, parents, educators and citizens with an understanding of student and school performance related to the attainment of proficiency of the academic standards. These standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and Technology identify what a scholar should know and be able to do at varying grade levels. Every Pennsylvania scholar in grades 3 through 8 is assessed in English Language Arts and Math. Every Pennsylvania scholar in grades 4 and 8 is assessed in science.

Keystone Assessments - The Keystone exams were created to replace the Grade 11 PSSA and serve as one component of Pennsylvania's statewide high school graduation requirement. Keystone Exams will help schools guide students toward meeting state standards. The exams are

end-of-course assessments designed to assess proficiency in the subject areas of Algebra I, Literature, and Biology.

School and Afterschool Field Trips

Field trips are experiences that allow scholars to engage with content in a hands-on way. In order to be eligible for a field trip, scholars must exhibit positive behavior as evidenced by the Propel-wide Habits. While attending a field trip experience, scholars must abide by all expectations outlined in the Scholar and Family Handbook. Additional criteria for participation is at a principal's discretion.

Preplanned Educational Tour or Trip

If parents or guardians plan to take a family vacation and have it classified as an "educational trip," they must inform the principal at least one (1) week in advance of the reason for the absence on Propel's "Request for Excused Absences from School for a Preplanned Educational Tour or Trip [Form](#)." Total pre-approved absences during the school year shall not exceed five (5) school days unless approved by the Superintendent/CEO or designee. All pre-approved absences will be recorded as excused absences. A form must be completed for each scholar seeking an excused absence.

Vacations will not be approved as educational trips if any of the following apply:

- If the trip is scheduled during the weeks of PSSA testing, Keystone testing, or other standardized testing applicable to the scholar(s)
- If a scholar is considered truant (3 unlawful absences), habitually truant (6 unlawful absences) or has exceeded ten (10) excused absences
- If a scholar's academic progress is in jeopardy

Scholars are required to complete all assignments and tests deemed necessary by the teacher(s) within a time period that is equivalent to the number of days of excused absence not to exceed five (5) days (e.g., if a scholar missed three (3) days of school, he/she/they will be given three (3) days to make up all missed assignments). The approval of excused absences for preplanned educational tours or trips is at the discretion of the principal and is not guaranteed.

Afterschool Program

The Propel Afterschool Program provides academic support and enrichment, opportunities in the arts and sciences, lessons on healthy lifelong habits and skills and connections among families, schools, and communities. Our Afterschool Program is free to scholars (as spaces are available). All expectations for Propel scholars remain the same for both the school day and Afterschool programming. Click on the [Afterschool Handbook](#) for outlined expectations.

Athletics Programming

Scholar eligibility for Athletics will be based on academic grades and behavioral excellence. Click on the [Athletics Handbook](#) for outlined expectations.

Behavioral Excellence

Scholar Conduct and Discipline

School-wide discipline and Propel-wide Habits are integral parts of teaching and learning. Young people must develop good work habits and mindsets if they are to be successful as scholars and become successful members of the larger community. Because one of the primary

goals of Propel Schools is to promote constructive and respectful behavior, the procedures and consequences described in this Handbook are what are expected.

Propel Schools Board of Trustees has authorized Propel administration and building principals to make reasonable and necessary rules and procedures for guiding scholar and family conduct. The intent of the rules, procedures, and consequences that follow explain how scholars and families will be held accountable for their behavior and the possible procedures for restoring positive behavior. Families are required to play an active role in their scholars' educations and support the school's decisions. **If a suspension is issued, a reinstatement meeting will be held and the parent/legal guardian MUST attend the meeting.**

Behavioral Expectations and Consequences

Propel Schools has placed violations of the Scholar and Family Handbook into three categories based on the seriousness of the offense. Propel administration and building principals reserve the right to determine the seriousness of each offense and place it at the appropriate level. Propel Schools uses the infraction code definitions issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) which are located in Appendix Z of the PIMS Manual Vol 2 found on PDE's website.

These expectations apply throughout the school day and at school-sponsored events including the Athletics and Afterschool Program. Additional rules and expectations may be established in each area (acting responsibly, being prepared, etc.) by school staff to guide scholar behavior in classrooms and elsewhere in the school.

Major II Violation - Office Managed Incidents

See [Appendix Z](#) for a comprehensive list of violations

Consequences

Because of the serious nature of the infraction, an automatic 3 Day Out of School Suspension will be imposed

Potential extension of Consequences following 3-day suspension

- Extension of Out of School Suspension up to 7 additional days
- Assign Drug or Alcohol Training
- Loss of Privileges
- Citation
- Expulsion
- Placement Outside of Propel
- Restitution (monetary or school community service)
- Referral for Required Outside Services, Counseling, PPIW or SAP

Expectations for Families

- Attend a mandatory Informal Hearing immediately following the 3 day Out of School Suspension
- If consequences are extended, attend additional hearings or meetings

Major I Violation - Office Managed Incidents

Examples but not limited to:

- Plagiarism/Unauthorized Distribution of Class Materials
- Use of AI
- Bus Violation

- Cell phone when not permitted
- Directed Abusive Language/Profanity
- Horseplay
- Inappropriate Gestures
- Inappropriate/Unreciprocated displays of affection
- Instigating a fight
- Large Classroom Disruption
- Leaving the school building
- Odor of Drug/Tobacco/Alcohol
- Out of Bounds
- Physical Aggression
- Posting or referencing drug paraphernalia
- Posting/Recording without consent
- Property damage
- Repeated failure to comply
- Sexual Contact
- Skipping class
- Smartwatches/Airpods when not permitted
- Technology violations intended to cause harm/ sexually explicit/violent
- Unauthorized taking a device from the classroom/school

Potential Consequences

- Before/After School Detention
- Saturday Detention
- Lunch/Recess Detention
- Out of School Suspension
- Loss of Privilege
- School Community Service
- Refocus Room
- Referral to Counselor or PPIW or SAP
- Principal Determined

Expectations for Families

- Attend a Mandatory Meeting with the Principal/Assistant Principal to Review Data (Academic, Attendance, Behavior) and Create an Action Plan

Minor Violations

Examples but not limited to:

- Academic Dishonesty (Copying)
- Cursing
- Derogatory Language Towards Identity
- Disagreement/Bickering
- Dress Code Violation
- Extended time out of class
- Failure to comply with an initial directive
- Impermissible Gum/Food/Drink
- Harmful Interactions
- Impermissible Headphones
- Inappropriate displays of affection
- Inappropriate gestures
- Inappropriate/hurtful language

- Minor Disruptions
- Minor Vandalism/Theft
- Off-Task
- Out of seat
- Tardy to class
- Use of Technology Violation
- Violations of personal space

Potential Consequences

- Teacher Redirection
- Before/After School Detention
- Saturday Detention
- Lunch/Recess Detention
- Loss of Privilege
- School Community Service
- Refocus Room (if available)
- Referral to Counselor or PPIW or SAP
- Principal Determined

Expectations for Families if the behavior is repeated or persists and requires Office Managed Support

- Attend a Mandatory Meeting with the Principal/Assistant Principal to Review Data (Academic, Attendance, Behavior) and Create an Action Plan.
- If it continues after the implementation of the Action Plan, then may move to Office Managed Major I.

Prohibited Items

Unless authorized by the school administration, a scholar may not have in his/ her/their possession any of the following items:

- Cellular devices/phones, Personal radios, mp3 players, iPods, electronic handheld games, cameras, personal computers, Apple watches
- Toys or playing cards of any type
- Items associated with gambling
- Pornographic or obscene material
- Tobacco, tobacco products, or lighting devices
- E-cigarettes, vape pens
- Prescription and over-the-counter medicines
- Drugs and weapons (see Major Level III Violations for consequences and review the Weapons Policy for additional information)
- Toy, look-alike, or imitation firearm or weapon
- Explosives
- Other items that the administration finds are disruptive to the learning environment
- ****Prohibited items will be confiscated and will not be returned**

Electronic Communication Devices/Cell Phones

If scholars possess cell phones or other electronic devices without permission during the school day, they will be treated as prohibited items (see above). The school is not responsible for any damage or loss including as a result of theft. **Confiscated cell phones will not be returned until the end of the school year. There are no exceptions.**

Criminal Activity

Propel will report to the appropriate authorities any criminal act upon suspicion that such an act has been committed. The school shall also cooperate with the authorities in the prosecution of such offenses. This applies to all stakeholders including scholars and parents/guardians.

Weapons

Any instance of possession or suspicion of possession of a weapon; including a toy, look-alike, and imitation weapon, will be reported to the appropriate authorities. A weapon shall include, but not be limited to, any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nunchaku, firearm, shotgun, rifle and any other tool, instrument, or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury. Propel will cooperate with the authorities in the prosecution of such offenses. Possession of a weapon may be grounds for expulsion from the school. Any object used in a threatening manner shall be considered a weapon even if its normal use is not as a weapon. This applies to all stakeholders including scholars and parents/guardians.

Smoke-Free/Tobacco Free Policy

Propel is committed to providing a healthy and productive environment for staff, scholars, families and community members. We believe that education has a central role to play in establishing healthy habits for children. We also believe it is appropriate to take measures to help scholars resist the use of tobacco. Scholars are NOT permitted to use or possess tobacco products of any kind or any form including e-cigarettes and vape pens while in a school building, on school property, in a school vehicle, in a school bus, or while attending any school-sponsored function at any time. All stakeholders are NOT permitted to use tobacco products of any kind or any form including e-cigarettes and vape pens while in a school building, on school property, in a school vehicle, in a school bus, or while attending any school-sponsored function at any time. School restrooms have been upgraded with the addition of instruments that will alert school teams to the use of vape pens in the space.

Scholar Phone Use

Scholars are not permitted to use the school phones to make phone calls during the school day unless given permission and accompanied by school staff. If there is an emergency an adult will make a phone call home. If a scholar dials 911 from a school telephone as a prank or joke, this will be considered a violation of school discipline.

Bus Safety and Expectations

- Be at the bus stop 5-10 minutes before the scheduled time
- Parents/guardians are responsible for the supervision of scholars before boarding and after departing from the bus
- Cross in front of the school bus when crossing a street
- Keep buses clean, sanitary, and orderly
- Obey bus drivers/monitors, as they are in full charge of buses and scholars while in transit
- Always ride seated in an assigned seat facing the front of the bus
- Never cause damage to the school bus, and report any noticed damage to the driver. Any scholar disfiguring or mutilating a bus will be required to pay for the damage and denied further use of buses.
- Never get off the bus at any stop other than your assigned bus stop, unless you have written permission from a parent/guardian as well as the bus driver
- Never fight, scuffle, or incite any disturbance creating a hazard to the safety of others on the bus

- Never use obscenities or profane language on the school bus
- Do not extend arms or head out of the bus window at any time

School officials will act upon referrals given by the school bus driver

- First Referral – Bus Discipline Letter
- Second Referral – 1-day bus suspension
- Third Referral – 3-day bus suspension
- Fourth Referral – 5-day bus suspension (Parent/Guardian Conference will be scheduled before the child is permitted to ride the bus)
- Fifth Referral – 10-day bus suspension (Parent Conference will be scheduled before the child is permitted to ride the bus)
- Sixth Referral – Loss of bus privileges for the remainder of the school year

The above consequences are the bare minimum for each referral. School officials reserve the right to impose greater consequences depending on the severity of the situation. In addition, bus audio and video recordings are not always available as evidence to confirm violations. Accounts given by the driver, monitor and/or additional investigation may be used to substantiate referrals.

Behavioral Excellence for Families

At Propel, we believe that our school teams and families must be partners in education in order to arrive at the best possible outcomes for our scholars.

Civility Expectations

It is an expectation of Propel Schools that all school personnel, staff, scholars, and scholars' parents/guardians and families are required to act with civility in all of their interpersonal school-related interactions. Civility does not require unqualified agreement or conformity of opinion. Under no circumstances will uncivil conduct at school or at any school-related activity be tolerated.

For purposes of this expectation, to be civil means to act with self-discipline in a courteous, respectful and orderly way in every interpersonal communication and behavior.

Uncivil conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- using an inappropriately loud voice
- using profane, vulgar, or obscene words or gestures
- belittling, jeering, or taunting
- using personal epithets
- using violent or aggressive gestures or body language
- repeatedly and inappropriately interrupting another speaker
- repeatedly demanding personal attention at inappropriate times
- purposefully and inappropriately invading personal space
- purposefully ignoring appropriate communications
- wrongfully interfering with another person's freedom of movement
- wrongfully invading another person's private possessions
- any other behavior that inappropriately disrupts school-related activities or violates the Propel Schools policies and expectations

An expression of disagreement or a discussion of a controversial viewpoint is not uncivil if such expression or discussion is appropriately presented and does not disrupt a school-related activity.

- Any school personnel who are uncivil shall be subject to disciplinary action per the guidelines in the Employee Handbook.
- Any scholar that is uncivil shall be subject to disciplinary action per the Scholar and Family Handbook.

In the event that any scholar's parent/guardian or family member is uncivil during a school-related activity, school personnel to whom the uncivil actions are directed shall immediately warn the family to communicate or act civilly. If the parent/guardian or family member fails to correct the uncivil behavior as directed, the affected school personnel shall notify the family that the school activity is terminated, and the affected school personnel shall refer the matter to school administrators for further administrative action, criminal prosecution, or legal action, which may include, but not limited to, a prohibition from any further participation in school-related activities and being excluded from Propel campus buildings.

Family Expectations and Procedure for Addressing School Concerns

Propel's mission and vision is to provide a high-quality educational experience to all scholars. As we strive to redefine school and defy expectations, we hold the expectation that parents/guardians/families will be our partners in education. Together, we will overcome challenges and celebrate scholar success.

Chain of Command: Who To Contact If You Have a Concern

If your concern involves academics/learning/curricula:

- Classroom Teacher
- Assistant Principal/Principal
- Senior Director of Academics
- Assistant Superintendent
- Superintendent

If your concern involves conduct/truancy/bullying:

- Classroom Teacher
- School Counselor
- Assistant Principal/Principal
- Assistant Director of Scholar Affairs
- Assistant Superintendent
- Superintendent

If your concern involves school bus schedules/school bus conduct/school bus safety:

- School Bus Driver
- School Bus Company
- Assistant Principal/Principal
- Assistant Director of Scholar Affairs
- Assistant Superintendent
- Superintendent

Should a family feel a need to present a concern about a Propel School, we want to be sure that all stakeholders are using the most effective avenues of communication. This ensures that your concerns will be given the time, attention, and consideration necessary for solution-based outcomes.

All concerns that are directed to the Propel Schools Administrative Office are required to be in

writing prior to being addressed. The individual sharing the concern MUST be a legal guardian and/or the individual who has scholar educational rights.

Operational Excellence

Dress Code

Propel has a uniform scholar dress code in order to provide an environment where the focus is on learning and the distractions of dress are kept to a minimum. All scholars are expected to be properly dressed in the school uniform every day. All parents and guardians are expected to support their children by ensuring that scholars are properly dressed when they leave for school each morning. Scholars must be properly dressed throughout the school day and during all school activities, including before and after school activities and field trips. Parents and guardians will be notified in advance of any exceptions to this rule (field trips requiring old clothes, for example). Daily uniform checks will be conducted. Any apparel item that impedes instruction is not to be worn in school.

Acceptable Clothing

- **Shirts:** Solid pale yellow, navy/ pale blue, or solid white dress shirt with collar, polo style knit shirt with collar, button down oxford or turtleneck, long or short sleeves. All shirts must cover the midriff area. Any shirt worn under a uniform shirt must be solid white, blue, or yellow with no visible design/color.
- **Pants:** Only solid navy blue or khaki dress pants (Dockers style, for example) are permitted. **Denim is not permitted.**
- **Shorts, Skirts, Skorts or Jumpers:** Solid navy blue or khaki, knee length or longer. **Denim is not permitted.**
- **Sweatshirts** with the Propel logo or solid pale yellow, navy, pale blue, or solid white sweatshirts are acceptable to be worn in school. Sweatshirts may not have hoods.
- **Sweaters:** Solid blue, yellow or solid white button-down, cardigan-style sweaters are acceptable clothing to be worn in school.
- **Tights and Socks:** Solid white or blue tights, matching knee socks, or leggings may be worn under skirts.
- **Shoes:** Black or brown dress shoes; plain black, white, blue, or grey tennis shoes (with small, colored logos) may be worn. During the winter, boots may be worn. Boots may not be extended above the calf.
- **Belts:** Belts are not required but are highly recommended. Belts should be black, brown, blue or khaki and worn at the waist level.
- ****Propel t-shirts:** May **only** be worn for special events at the discretion of administration.

Unacceptable Clothing

The following items are NOT permitted to be worn:

- Cargo-style pants with patch pockets, jeggings or form-fitting pants, denim, yoga or spandex pants of any color
- Outerwear (including coats, jackets, fleece, and other related clothing) is not permitted to be worn in school
- Hooded sweatshirts
- Patterned tights, knee socks, or leggings
- Jewelry that becomes a distraction to the learning environment
- Croc-style shoes or brightly colored shoes and/or boots

- Sandals or open-toed shoes or flip-flops
- Hats, bandanas, sweatbands, and scarves are not to be worn in school

General Uniform Information

Shirts must be buttoned to the second button and tucked inside pants for all scholars. Pants must be worn at the waist. Sweaters cannot be worn alone. They must be worn over uniform shirts. Clothing must be in good repair, clean, and without writing or markings. Coats, hoods, or jackets MAY NOT be worn in school

*****Violations of the dress code are considered violations of the Scholar and Family Handbook and repeated violations will be treated as described in the Behavioral Excellence section.**

School Attendance

Consistent attendance at school is not only essential for academic, social, and behavioral excellence, it is also the law. It’s the parent/guardian’s responsibility to ensure that children attend school regularly as required by the state of Pennsylvania. As per state guidelines, scholars must be in attendance 50% of the day to be considered present for the day.

Immediately upon returning to school after an absence, scholars are to present a written absence note to the Attendance Specialist. The note should outline the dates of absence, the reason for the absence, and contain a parent/guardian signature. Absences for illness, quarantine, family emergency, death of a family member, medical and dental appointments, authorized school activities, pre-approved educational travel, including college visitations, pre-approved religious instruction or bona fide religious observance or court appearances will be considered excused.

When a scholar accumulates three or more days of unexcused absences, a student is considered truant and a legal written notice will be sent to the parent/guardian informing them that there has been a violation of the compulsory attendance provisions of PA School Law. Further violations can result in a citation or truancy complaint being filed against the parent/guardian with the district magistrate.

Any absence beyond 10 days must be accompanied with a medical doctor’s excuse. A scholar with a chronic health condition and/or other serious problems may petition for a waiver to the attendance policy. As per state guidelines, scholars must be in attendance 50% of the day to be considered present for the day. Scholars with 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences may be permanently dropped from the school’s enrollment. Scholars who have accumulated 20 total absences, both excused and unexcused, will be reviewed for possible grade-level retention for the next school year.

Late Arrivals - Tardiness

Those scholars who are not in their seats and prepared to learn when the first class begins are considered tardy to school. If a scholar is tardy, they must enter their Skyward ID number into the system upon entry. Tardiness for reasons of illness, funeral, medical and dental appointments, religious observance or court appearances will be considered excused. All other tardies will be considered unexcused. Excessive unexcused tardies may be converted into unexcused absences and may lead to possible prosecution before the magistrate.

Early Dismissals

Early dismissals may be requested for funerals, doctor appointments, and court appearances.

Parent/Guardian requests for scholar early dismissal must be made no later than 8:30 AM on the morning of the day of the requested early dismissal. Scholars are to present an early dismissal note, which includes the date, time and reason for the early dismissal plus the signature of the parent/guardian. Scholars will not be permitted to leave for an early dismissal after 3:00 PM.

If an individual picking up a scholar is not a parent/guardian, emergency contact or otherwise authorized (in writing) by the parent/guardian, the scholar will not be dismissed to that individual.

At the time of the early dismissal, the parent/guardian/authorized individual will use the intercom at the school entrance to provide their full name and the full name and grade level of the scholar that they are picking up. Parents/guardians/authorized individuals will then present a valid photo identification and then sign out the scholar. For the safety of our scholars, if an individual does not present a valid photo ID, the scholar will not be released.

Dismissal Changes

If an emergency situation arises that necessitates the early dismissal of a scholar, every effort should be made to alert the school office by telephone about the urgent need for a scholar's early dismissal. Please note that frequent random scholar early dismissals are disruptive to the educational process and should be avoided. Excessive unexcused early dismissals may be converted into unexcused absences and may lead to possible prosecution before the magistrate or referral to outside service agencies.

Truancy

The PA School Code explicitly defines “truant” as a child subject to compulsory school laws “having three (3) or more school days of unexcused absence during the current school year.” The law streamlines the definition of “habitual truancy.” Under the law, “habitual truancy” is defined as a child subject to compulsory school laws “having six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year.” Therefore, a child is habitually truant once he or she accumulates six unexcused absences during the course of the school year. These absences do not need to run consecutively. A child will be considered chronically absent when enrolled for 90+ days and absent (excused or unexcused) more than 10% of the school days enrolled.

The law has “procedural” requirements by which Propel Schools will abide. The first pertains to procedures schools must follow when a child is “truant”; the second pertains to the procedures a school must follow when a child is “habitually truant.” Propel Schools will notify in writing the person in parental relation with a child within ten (10) school days of the child’s third unexcused absence that the child has been “truant.” This notice will include a description of the consequences that will follow if the child becomes habitually truant in the future and may include the offer of an attendance improvement conference. If the child continues to be truant and incurs additional absences after this notice has been issued, Propel Schools will require the scholar and parent/guardian to attend a scholar attendance improvement conference.

Habitually Truant Scholars Under Fifteen Years of Age

If a habitually truant scholar is under fifteen (15), Propel Schools will refer the child to either (1) a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) the county children and youth agency (CYS) for services or possible disposition as a dependent scholar under the Juvenile Act.

Additionally, Propel Schools may file a citation against the parent of a habitually truant scholar under fifteen (15) in a magisterial district court. If a habitually truant scholar is fifteen (15) or older, Propel Schools will either: (1) refer the scholar to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) file a citation against the scholar or parent in a magisterial district court. If a habitually truant scholar aged fifteen (15) or older incurs additional absences after a school refers that scholar to an attendance improvement program or the scholar refuses to participate in an attendance improvement program, the school may refer the scholar to the local CYS agency for possible disposition as a dependent child. The new law defines “school attendance improvement conference” as a “conference where the child’s absences and reasons for the absences are examined in an effort to improve attendance, with or without additional services.” Propel Schools will invite the following individuals to the conference: the scholar, the person in parental relation to the child, appropriate school personnel, and recommended service providers (e.g. case managers, behavioral health providers, probation officers, children and youth practitioners, etc.). Propel Schools will hold the conference even if the parent/guardian declines to participate or fails to attend after the school provides advance written notice and makes attempts to communicate via telephone. There is no legal requirement for either the scholar or parent to attend an attendance improvement conference. Propel Schools will document the outcome of any attendance improvement conference in a written attendance improvement plan. Propel Schools may not take further legal action to address unexcused absences until after the date of the scheduled attendance improvement conference has passed. Attendance improvement conferences will not be perfunctory warnings and further absences will result in legal action against the scholar or parent. Propel Schools will create attendance improvement plans in conformity with the overriding purposes of the law.

Propel Schools will abide by the law for the procedure when referring cases of habitual truancy to the magisterial district courts. The venue will be determined based on the location of the school in which the child is enrolled. A magisterial district court will provide notice of the hearing to the following: the school, the person in parental relation, the local CYS agency.

Emergency School Closing/Delayed Opening

Under the guidance of the Superintendent, a Propel School may modify school hours or cancel school due to weather-related conditions that **affect scholar transportation**.

Changes in school operation may include 2-hour delays and school closures. There may be instances in which Propel Schools will operate on a regular schedule and the school district in which you reside (and that transports your scholar) may choose to modify their operating schedule. Scholars will follow the schedule set forth by their transportation provider.

Two Hour Delays

Propel does not have two-hour delays unless there is a rare instance in which **ALL** sending districts for your Propel School call 2-hour delays. A 2-hour delay for a Propel School will **NOT** be called after 6:00 a.m., as families cannot be expected to make childcare arrangements on very short notice.

Weather-related school closings and delays will be communicated to families by two methods:

1. Blackboard Connect/Connect 5 automated calls and emails
2. Local News Station Broadcasts & their corresponding websites

Closing and delay information **will not** be posted on social media or on Propel Schools website.

If there is an instance in which a Propel School will be closed due to an operational building-related issue (disruption in power, heat, water, etc.) affected families will be notified via Blackboard/Connect 5 automated telephone calls and email messages.

- Modified Schedule
- Emergency Closing
- Individual School Closing Due to Emergency Conditions
- Communication - Connect 5 and Local News Channels

Transportation

Propel Schools does not provide transportation to and from school. The school district of residence is responsible for providing transportation. The law requires school districts to provide transportation to resident scholars attending a Propel School "on such dates and periods that the charter school is in regular session" if: The charter school is located within the school district or the charter school is located not more than ten miles by the nearest public highway beyond the school district boundary. The law allows a school district to ask a child, regardless of age, to walk up to a mile and a half to a bus stop or school. The mile and a half is measured by public roads and does not include any private lane or walkway of the child's residence. All questions and concerns about assigned routes, bus stops, and/or any bus grievance are out of the realm of Propel Schools control and need to be directed to the resident bus company.

Failure to update and maintain accurate parent/guardian/ residency information and scholar home address of record information may result in loss of transportation until such matters are resolved. Scholar withdrawal from enrollment may occur if parents/guardians do not respond to repeated requests for completion of the change of address form.

Any change to daily scholar transportation must be made in writing by the parent/guardian no later than 8:30 am on the morning of the request. This includes notification to the school if scholars are not taking their regular bus home or that scholars will be picked up by a pre-identified, parent/guardian-authorized individual, who will be prepared to present a valid photo identification upon arrival at the school.

Scholar and School Related Procedures

[Emergency Contact Information](#)

Health, Safety and Wellness

Food Service Program

- **Breakfast/Lunches**
- **[Scholar Celebration Snack List \(Wellness Policy\)](#)**
- **[Food Allergy Management Policy](#)**

Safety and Security

Fire Drills

For the safety of all scholars and staff, Propel completes a monthly fire drill at each school. A letter will be sent home to families upon completion of the drills.

School Security Drills

For the safety of all scholars and staff, Propel completes at least 2 school security lockdown drills per year. The superintendent will provide advance written notice to parents/guardians that the school security drill will be held.

ALICE Training

All scholars will participate in grade-appropriate ALICE Training. A letter from the principal will be sent home prior to the training and parent/guardian will have an option to ‘opt their child out.’

Safe2Say Something

Propel Schools participate in the Safe2Say Something program. Safe2Say Something is a youth violence prevention program run by the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General. The program teaches youth and adults how to recognize warning signs and signals, especially within social media, from individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others and to “say something” BEFORE it is too late.

Metal Detectors

The installation of metal detectors at each Propel School provides an additional layer of safety to school buildings. As a risk-reduction tool, they will help to identify potentially dangerous metal items before the items are brought into a building. Screenings by trained school teams will take place upon scholar arrival. Families will be notified about the screening procedures and reminders about prohibited items.

Telephonic Communication

- For the safety of our scholars and staff, telephone calls to Propel buildings or originating from a Propel building may be electronically monitored or recorded.
- When calling a Propel School building, keep in mind that, due to a high call volume or a high level of activity in the school office, we may not be able to answer your call immediately.
- When leaving a voicemail message, please provide the following information: your name, your scholar’s name and grade level, your telephone number and your email address.
- Voicemail messages will be returned by school office staff as soon as possible

Legal Custody and Court Orders

Propel Schools will take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety of scholars and rights of family members. Parents/guardians who are involved in custody situations regarding their children must submit a copy of the standing and current court order to the school office immediately. Court orders will be fully honored by Propel Schools. Please inform the school and provide updated documentation when necessary. Documentation must be re-submitted each school year.

Lost and Damaged School Property

Scholars are responsible for taking care of and returning school property provided for their use—including but not limited to locks, lockers, lab equipment, books, and technology. Families will be billed for lost or damaged items. Scholars with outstanding balances may be excluded from school activities and reports may be held.

Medications and other Mandated Vaccination Requirements

Guidelines for Medication Administration

Unless specifically authorized by Board policy, scholars are not permitted to carry or self-administer medication at school, on school vehicles, or at school-sponsored activities on or off school property. This includes both prescribed and over-the-counter medicines (Tylenol, Advil, etc.). Scholars who need to take medication during school, at any school-sponsored activity, or on a conveyance providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity shall consult the Board Policy on Medication Administration, and the Propel Schools Medication Permission Form, which can be found on the Propel Schools website under the Health Forms tab at <https://www.propelschools.org/about/policies-forms>

Field Trip Medications

Due to current Pennsylvania State Mandates, school medications **MAY NOT BE SENT WITH THE TEACHER** for school field trips, should the school nurse be unable to attend the field trip. Parents of scholars with life-threatening medical conditions and those taking daily medications will be handled on an individual basis. Parents of scholars who receive routine medication during school hours may choose to have their child not receive their medication on the day of the field trip if a nurse cannot attend. Any questions should be directed to your child's school nurse.

Accidents

If your child is injured at school, we will make them comfortable and begin appropriate first aid procedures. If you cannot be reached, we will attempt to contact the emergency numbers you have shared with the school. If your scholar needs to be transported to a hospital, an ambulance will be called. A school staff member will accompany your scholar to the hospital and stay with them until you arrive.

When to Keep Your Child Home from School

On occasion, it may be necessary for your scholar to remain home due to an illness. The Allegheny County Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have provided the following guidelines:

- Your scholar should not be sent to school hoping that he or she will feel better after arriving.
- Your scholar should be kept home following an overnight bout of nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea and watched for further symptoms.
- Your scholar should remain home if he/she/they has had a temperature of 100 degrees or higher.
- Your scholar should have a normal temperature for 24 hours without fever-reducing medicines before returning to school.

In the instances that your scholar has any of the illnesses below, please follow the indicated instructions:

Whooping Cough: excluded from school until 5 days from the start of appropriate antimicrobial treatment.

Pink Eye: 24 hours after initiation of treatment.

Strep Throat: 24 hours after initiation of treatment.

Lice: Until treated with a pediculicidal agent. Seven days after treatment a health care provider or school nurse shall re-examine for infestation.

Chicken Pox: Six days from the outbreak of the last crop of blisters with all pox marks dried.

Impetigo, scabies or ringworm: Until judged non-infectious by the physician or 24 hours after initiation of treatment.

Bed Bugs: Propel Schools will follow guidelines from the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Scholar and School Related Policies

- [School Visitation](#)
- [Internet Safety Policy](#)
- [Scholar Network Internet Policy](#)
- [Anti-hazing](#)
- [Anti Bullying](#)
- [Cyber-bullying](#)
- [Suspension And Expulsion Policy](#)
- [Transgender Policies](#)
 - [K-8](#)
 - [9-12](#)
- [Wellness Policy](#)
- [Food Allergy Management Policy](#)
- [School Search Policy](#)
- [Photo Opt-Out Form](#)
- [Dual Credit](#)
- [Enrollment](#)
 - **Updating Pertinent Information**

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure all pertinent information including but not limited to telephone numbers, addresses, medical information, court orders/custody orders and emergency contacts are up to date. If there is a change in residency, a [change of address form](#) must be completed within 10 days of the move.
- [Volunteer Policy](#)

Parents/Guardians as Partners in Education

- [Records Retention and Destruction Policy](#)
- [Scholar Records Rights Under FERPA](#)
- [Annual Child Find Notice and Scholar Records Notice](#)
- [Annual Notice of Special Education Services](#)
- [Personal Identifiable Information](#)
- [Non-Discrimination Policy](#)
- [Title IX Policy](#)
- [Title I School/Family/Parent/Scholar Compact](#)
- [Title I Part A: LEA Parent Engagement Policy](#)
- [Title I Parents Right to Know Letter](#)
- [Title I Complaint Resolution Procedures](#)

Handbook Affirmation Page

All parents/guardians are required to review this handbook with their children and complete this page. Failure or refusal to sign this page will have no effect on the parents/guardians and scholars' expectations to abide by the procedures and policies or Propel's right to uphold the procedures and policies.

Scholar Last Name:

Scholar First Name:

2023 - 2024 Scholar Grade Level:

Scholar's Propel School:

By my signature below, I hereby affirm that I have read and understand the information and policies outlined in the Propel Scholar and Family Handbook, including, without limitation, the Acceptable Use Policy.

Parent /Guardian First Name

Parent /Guardian Last Name

Parent/ Guardian Signature

Date

Approved By	Date
Dr. Tina Chekan	
Board of Trustees	