Pittsburgh Public Schools – Student Support & Positive School Culture Guide
202~~5~~6-202~~7~~6 School Year

In Pittsburgh Public Schools, we are committed to working together with the Pittsburgh community to ensure a welcoming and safe learning environment for our students and staff. In the PPS Student Code of Conduct 202~~6~~4-2~~7~~5, you will find information about shared commitments, student rights, supports and services available to students aimed to reduce barriers for successful learning, and rules of student conduct.

Language Assistance

For copies in languages other than English, please contact the English as a Second Language (ESL) Department at 412529-3620. If a non-English speaking family has questions or would like an interpreter, they can call 412-529-6463 and request the documents in the language that they prefer.

Español

Para obtener copias en idiomas distintos del inglés, por favor, póngase en contacto con el Departamento de Inglés como Segundo Idioma (ESL) al 412-529-3620. Si una familia que no habla Inglés tiene preguntas o le gustaría un intérprete, pueden llamar a 412-529-6463 y solicitar los documentos en el idioma que prefieran.

العربية

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नेपाली

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Kiswahili

Kwa nakala za lugha zingine ambazo si Kiingereza, tafadhali wasiliana na Idara ya Kiingereza kama Lugha ya Pili (ESL) namba ni 412-529-3620. Ikiwa familia isiyozungumza Kiingereza ina maswali au ingependa huduma za mkalimani, wanaweza kupiga simu kwa 412-529-6463 na kuomba hati hizo katika lugha wanayopendelea.

O'zbekcha

Ingliz tilidan boshqa tillardagi nusxalarni olish uchun 412-529-3620 raqami orqali Ingliz tilini ikkinchi til sifatida o‘qish (ESL) bo‘limiga murojaat qiling. Agar ingliz lida so‘zlashmaydigan oilalarda savollar bo‘lsa yoki ularga tarjimon kerak bo‘lsa, 412-529-6463 raqamiga telefon qilib, hujjatlarni o‘zlari afzal ko‘rgan lda berilishini so‘rashi mumkin.

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TERMS TO KNOW – QUICK REFERENCE

PPS: Pittsburgh Public Schools RP: Restorative Practices PBIS: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports SAIC: School Attendance Improvement Conference SAIP: School Attendance Improvement Plan CYF: Office of Children, Youth, and Families AEDY: Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth	IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act NOREP: Notice of Recommended Educational Placement PWN: Prior Written Notice FBA: Functional Behavioral Assessment DOH: Department of Health PDE: Pennsylvania Department of Education IEP: Individualized Educational Program ATOD: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs Intervention Program Synchronous Learning: instructors and students gathering and interacting in real-time. Asynchronous Learning: students access materials and complete self-paced assignments, without the need for simultaneous participation.

NONDISCRIMINATION NOTICES

Pittsburgh Public Schools offers all programs and activities without discrimination on the basis of race, color, age, creed, religion, sex, gender (including gender identity or expression), sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, marital status, pregnancy or disability. School sponsored programs and activities shall be made available on an equal basis to all individuals, consistent with state and federal law. For more information regarding the nondiscrimination policies of the District, to report a violation, or file a complaint, contact the District's Title IX Compliance Officer or Designee.

Title IX Compliance Officer
Dr. Kimberly Cruz
Student Support Services
341 S. Bellefield Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
TitleIXComplianceOfficer@pghschools.org

The Pittsburgh Public Schools is committed to protecting students from harassment and discrimination. Here's what students and families should know about Title IX and your rights:

A. Title IX is a federal law that protects all students from discrimination based on sex. This includes sexual harassment.
    a. Examples of behavior that may violate Title IX or District rules include:
        i. Unwanted or inappropriate physical contact
        ii. Sexual comments, jokes, or gestures about someone's body or appearance
        iii. Sharing or spreading sexual rumors
        iv. Leaving someone out of activities or opportunities of their sex
B. Title IX: Student and Family Rights and Responsibilities
    a. Student Rights
        i. To learn in a safe, respectful school environment
        ii. To report concerns without being punished or ignored

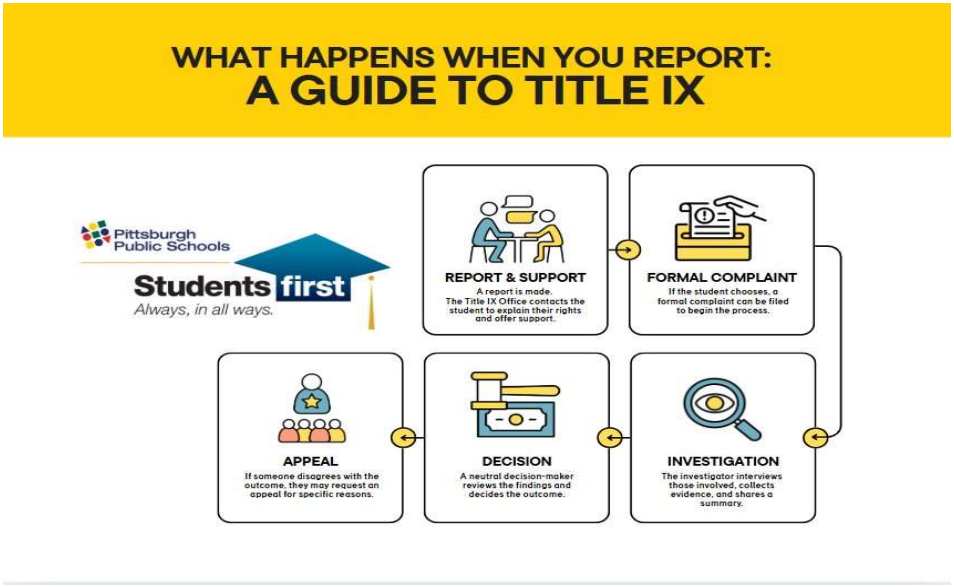
iii. To get support like schedule changes, check-ins or counseling when needed

b. Family Responsibilities

i. Talk with your child about healthy boundaries, respectful behavior and consent

ii. Encourage them to speak up if something feels wrong or uncomfortable

C. Understanding the Title IX Reporting Process



D. Who to Contact

a. Start by telling your principal or assistant principal of something has made you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or disrespected.

E. What Happens Next

a. The Title Ix Office will contact you (through your school email) to talk about what happened and explain your options. You'll also learn about supports that are available – no pressure, just help.

b. What Supportive Measures Look Like

i. Changes to your class schedule or lunch period

ii. Help from a school counselor or social worker

iii. Staff check-ins to make sure you feel safe

iv. Other support tailored to your needs

Preventative Education and Training

To support families, a general overview video explaining the District's preventative education aligned with District policy, Title IX and sate guidance is available on the District's website. Families are encouraged to view the video and continue these important conversations at home.

Title VI Notice
It is the District's policy to assure full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI requires that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program, activity, or service of the District.

Section 504/ADA Notice
The Pittsburgh Public Schools hereby give notice that it is the District's policy to assure full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Act provides protection against discrimination for individuals with disabilities. Students in school settings fall under the civil rights protection of Section 504. The law and regulations prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability from all school programs and activities in both public and private schools receiving direct or indirect federal funding. Section 504 accommodations could be available to identified students with disabilities, who have been evaluated. Section 504 is designed to provide equal access and fairness in general education to students with disabilities, thereby leveling the playing field for them through what is known as a Section 504 Accommodation Plan. To qualify for accommodations under Section 504, the student must be evaluated and meet the Section 504 identification criteria. A student is entitled to a Section 504 Accommodation Plan if they have been identified and the evaluation shows that the individual has a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Prohibition Against Bullying
Pittsburgh Public Schools is committed to providing all students and employees with the right to a safe, positive, and civil educational environment, free from harassment and/or bullying. Bullying and harassment create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, detract from the safe environment necessary for student learning, and may lead to more serious violence. Therefore, the District strives to maintain an educational environment in which bullying and harassment in any form is neither tolerated nor permitted.

Bullying means an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act or series of acts directed at another student or students, including cyberbullying, which occurs in a school setting, that is severe, persistent or pervasive and has the intent or effect of: creating an intimidating or hostile environment that substantially interferes with a student's education; or physically, emotionally or mentally harming a student; or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical, mental, or emotional harm; or placing a student in reasonable fear of damage to or loss of personal property. Bullying may include acts that occur outside of school if those acts are intentional, electronic, verbal, or physical, are directed at another student or students, are severe, persistent, or pervasive, and have the effect of (i) substantially interfering with a student's education; (ii) creating a threatening environment; or (iii) substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

The District prohibits cyberbullying which may wholly or partially occur outside the school setting, and which meets the above-referenced criteria regarding the act's nexus to the school setting or the education of any District student. Electronic acts which may occur on social media, blogs, Facebook, X, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, and other similar Internet sites which may be created, can result in a violation of District policy.

Reporting and Investigation of Bullying / Harassment

Reporting

Students and others who have been the victim of, or have information about, bullying/cyberbullying or harassment are strongly encouraged to make a report to the school. A teacher, counselor, school social worker or school administrator will field complaints and ensure that they are properly addressed under the District's Prohibition Against Bullying & Harassment Policy and administrative procedures.

Individuals who wish to file a bullying complaint form can be found here: https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/pghboe/Board.nsf/files/C7LLD8560262/$file/102_Report%20Form_ARhttps://go.boarddocs.com/pa/pghboe/Board.nsf/files/C7LLD8560262/$file/102_Report Form_AR-1 of 3_final (1).pdf1%20of%203_final%20(1).pdf

Investigation

Complaints of bullying or harassment, once received, are investigated by the school principal or a designee, such as an assistant principal, school counselor or social worker. In certain cases, the Compliance Officer for Student Bullying & Harassment or the PPS Law Department will investigate the complaint. This will occur if the school principal or other school employee is the alleged perpetrator of the conduct, or if the conduct is particularly severe in nature. For peer-on-peer bullying and harassment, the parents of all students involved in the conduct will be contacted. Investigations typically include interviews with students, staff and others who may have knowledge about the conduct and a review of other information, materials or records relative to the incident.

Findings of the investigation of bullying or harassment will be provided to all individuals involved in the incident. A copy of the report is also maintained by Compliance Officer and the school.

If the investigation reveals that bullying or harassment has occurred, intervention and corrective action will be taken to ensure that the conduct stops. Intervention and corrective action may be any number of measures the school or Compliance Officer believes will be effective to prevent further incidents. Intervention and corrective action could include separating the students involved, assigning students to counseling, or instituting discipline consistent with the Code of Student Conduct.

District Compliance Officer for Student Bullying & Harassment's contact information.

Compliance Officer for Student Bullying & Harassment
Office of Student Support Services
341 S. Bellefield Avenue, Room 440
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
studentservices@pghschools.org
Phone: (412) 529-3918
Fax: (412) 622-3954

Safe2Say Something Program

One tool for maintaining safe and supportive schools is the Safe2Say Something Program. Safe2Say is an anonymous reporting system operated by the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General. The program teaches how to recognize warning signs and signals, especially within social media, of someone who may be a threat to themselves or others. When a warning sign is present, say something to a trusted adult or use the anonymous Safe2Say reporting system. Safe2Say offers a 24/7 Crisis Center (1-844-SAF2SAY), mobile app, and website where anonymous tips can be made. District students and staff are educated on how to utilize and report concerns through Safe2Say. For more information or to make an online tip, visit www.safe2saypa.org.

Student's Rights

Right to a free public education

All persons between the ages of 6 through 21 years are entitled to a free and full education in the public schools. A student under the age of 21 can enroll in school even if they already have a Graduation Equivalency Diploma ("GED"). Students who have not graduated may not be excluded from their education merely because they have reached 18 years of age if they are fulfilling their responsibilities as students. A student may not be excluded from public schools or from extracurricular activities because of being married, cohabitating, pregnant, or parenting.

Rights of immigrant students:
A student's citizenship or immigration status cannot be requested, and perceived citizenship or immigration status cannot be used to deny access to public education. The school may not inquire as to the immigration status of a student or the student's parent/guardian.

Rights of Pregnant, Parenting and Lactating Students:
Students who are pregnant, parenting, and/or lactating are welcome at the District. Pregnant and parenting students may request reasonable adjustments to facilitate access to their educational and extracurricular programs and will be excused for days missed due to pregnancy and/or parenting with reasonable time to complete make-up work. Pregnant and parenting students have the option to join the ELECT Teen Parenting Program through the District.

Rights of Students Experiencing Homelessness, Living in Foster Care and/or Experiencing Educational Instability:
The District offers immediate enrollment and educational stability for students experiencing homelessness, living in foster care and/or experiencing educational instability. The District will promptly enroll students who move between school entities due to homelessness, adjudication, foster care, and juvenile justice or court-ordered placements. The District adheres to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to support students in foster care, and ensures that educational and graduation barriers are removed for all students experiencing education instability.

Right to Free Speech and Freedom of Expression:

Students have the constitutional right to express themselves unless such expression materially and substantially interferes with the educational process, threatens immediate harm to the welfare of the school or community, encourages unlawful activity, or interferes with another individual's rights. Students have the right to discuss issues that impact their education with school board members, District administration, and school administration.

Students may use publications, such as handbills, announcements, and other means of common communication, so long as the use of school facilities is approved by the authority in charge of those facilities, and they obey laws governing libel and obscenity. The school principal may require students to submit for prior approval a copy of all materials to be displayed, posted, or distributed on school property.

Students and student organizations have the right to use designated bulletin boards; however, the school principal may restrict the use of certain bulletin boards. The school principal may require that notices or other communications be officially dated before posting, and that such materials be removed after a prescribed reasonable time to assure full access to the bulletin boards.

Students have the right to express themselves in an official school newspaper. Students have a right and are as free as editors of other newspapers to report the news and to editorialize, however school officials shall supervise student newspapers published with school equipment, remove obscene or libelous material, and edit other material that would cause a substantial disruption or interference with school activities. School officials may not censor or restrict material simply because it is critical of the school or its administration. Prior approval procedures regarding copy for school newspapers shall identify the individual to whom the material is to be submitted and shall establish a limitation on the time required to decide. If the prescribed time for approval elapses without a decision, the material shall be considered authorized for distribution. Students who are not members of the newspaper staff shall have access to its pages. Written criteria for submission of material by non-staff members shall be developed and distributed to all students. Students have the right to circulate petitions, conduct polls, set up information tables, organize clubs, and sponsor speakers and activities.

Students are asked to show proper respect to their country and its flag; however, students may decline to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and may refrain from saluting the flag based on personal belief or religious convictions but shall respect the rights and interests of classmates who do wish to participate.

A confidential communication made by a student to certain school personnel will not be revealed in legal proceedings under the law. However, information received in confidence from a student may be revealed to the student's parents, the principal or other appropriate authority where the health, welfare or safety of the student or other persons is clearly in jeopardy. Confidential communications may also be revealed in the scope of a mandated report of suspected child abuse made in accordance with State law and District policy: BoardDocs® Pro.

Right to freedom of unreasonable search and seizure:

The school shall not conduct unreasonable searches and seizures of students. No student may conceal on their person or in a purse, handbag, book bag etc., any weapon, narcotic, dangerous drug, drug paraphernalia, alcohol or any other substance or object that is in violation of this Code, local statutes, ordinances, or school rules. If the school administrator has reasonable suspicion that a student is in possession of an item that constitutes a violation of law, Board policy, school rules, or which poses a threat to the health, safety or welfare of the school population, the administrator may cause a search of the student's person and belongings to be conducted.

The search must be conducted by a District employee of the same gender as the student and in the presence of at least one other District employee. All searches and pat downs that do take place at school should happen (unless emergency situations make it impossible) outside the view of other youth and school staff. Strip searches are NOT permitted. A strip search is defined as being conducted by removing part or all of a student's clothing to inspect private areas and undergarments.

Right to freedom of unreasonable use of force:

Corporal punishment of any sort is absolutely prohibited. Reasonable force may only be used by administrators and staff: to stop a disturbance, to obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects, for the purpose of self-defense, or the protection of persons or property. The use of excessive force is strictly prohibited. The District complies with all policies, procedures, laws and regulations regarding restraint and seclusion of students with disabilities, and commits to only use such procedures as a last resort, when a student is acting in a manner that presents a clear and present danger and other, less restrictive measures, have not stopped the behavior. Link: Policy 212.1.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR STUDENTS & SCHOOL CULTURE and CLIMATE

School Community Member Responsibilities and Commitments to Support a Positive School Culture and Climate				
Staff	School Administrators	Students	Parent/Guardians	Board Members, Superintendent & Central Office Administrators
• Be familiar with interventions and supports available for staff to use in classrooms and school. • Be able to • identify which interventions and supports are appropriate considering an individual's needs • Engage in respectful, culturally competent interactions with students and parents/guardians. • Maintain inclusive and positive school and classroom environments conducive to learning. Utilize deescalation and restorative strategies when • engaging with students to avoid verbal or physical confrontation. Address conduct with multiple strategies and interventions to ensure that removal from learning is the last resort.	• Be familiar with interventions and supports available for staff to use in classrooms and school. • Address multiple strategies and interventions to ensure that removal from learning is the last resort. • Provide a copy of any written school rules and procedures to all students, staff and parents/guardians. • Ensure that individual school rules comply with District policy Make school rules and procedures available in the student's and parent's/guardian's preferred mode of communication. • Monitor implementation of the school safety plan. • Ensure efficient utilization of resources. • Ensure due process for students prior to exclusion from school.	• Attend school and classes. • Remain engaged in learning throughout the entire day. • Make up work when absent. • Make effort toward reaching educational goals. • Help maintain a positive school culture and climate. • Follow school rules and procedures to the best of their ability. • Respect the health & safety of all students and staff in the school setting. Respect for physical and mental health of self as well as others Respect for facilities and all school property (ie. laptops, books, bathrooms, etc.)	• Be familiar with the Code of Student Conduct and Infraction Levels Guide. • Be familiar with written school rules and procedures issued by your child's school. • Reinforce the need for students to respect others' rights and follow school rules. • Keep an open line of communication with your child's school. • Make sure to share your current contact information with the school. • Support your child in reaching their educational goals. • Show respect for all members of the school community.	• Set Board level policy to support positive educational environments and outcomes, and to maximize instructional time. • Ensure the equitable provision of resources and positive behavior supports across all schools in the District.

	Support all students in reaching their educational goals.			
• Support students in reaching their educational goals.	• Show respect for all members of the school community.			

Shifting Culture, Climate, and Practices

PPS continues its commitment to student growth and learning. We strive to maximize instructional time by moving away from reactionary and exclusionary practices toward proactive approaches and interventions. Student and staff competencies continue to be built up so that we can create the conditions necessary for each classroom to be a positive and affirmative place for growth and learning.

The ~~2024-25~~2026-27 **Student Support & Positive School Culture Guide** and the K-**5 and 6-12 Student Code of**
Conduct & Infraction Levels Guides are designed to reflect our commitment to student equity, positive school cultures and climates, and a continued effort to maximize instructional time and reduce disparate outcomes for students. All students are entitled to interventions and support that will allow them to successfully participate in their education. Exclusion from school must be a last resort, reserved for only the most serious of offenses and should generally apply only after other interventions and appropriate support have been provided to the student. The support and interventions described in this section must be implemented in ways that recognize and value culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse backgrounds. These interventions will be regularly evaluated, including community feedback, to ensure they are not being implemented in ways that are inconsistent with critical, culturally affirming approaches to creating a positive school culture and climate.

Further, this proactive approach is an extension of the District's **Multi-Tiered System of Supports** (MTSS) process. MTSS is a framework for providing services that meet the needs of all students using data analysis and decision making to effectively address academic and behavioral needs for instruction and intervention. Instruction and intervention are represented through multiple tiers that increase in intensity based on student need. Tiered interventions are provided to students in both academics and self-regulation, which support their overall academic success.

Pittsburgh Public Schools defines positive school culture as exhibiting an equitable teaching, learning and working environment where students, families, employees and communities feel welcome, respected, supported and engaged socially, emotionally, intellectually, behaviorally and physically. Research on school improvement has consistently found that transforming school cultures is difficult work, but it can be done. In addition to supporting the academic growth of students, schools must also provide students with the social-emotional tools they need to become young adults who build upon their success and learn from their setbacks. This development is what we want for every PPS student. When we reinforce the positive deeds and qualities of our students with enthusiasm and encouragement, students will recognize the value of positive actions.

Restorative Practices

Expanded implementation of **Restorative Practices (RP)** to all schools and programs is a key strategy to creating a positive and supportive school culture. Through RP, students connect with school staff and other students to build a strong community. Students develop appropriate social-emotional skills, come to understand how their actions affect others, and work to repair any harm done. It is an approach built on respect, communication, and strategies for success. We understand that when everyone is treated with respect, classrooms are safe and healthy environments that support both teaching and learning. RP is designed to help all students understand the impact of their behavior and find ways to "restore" their place in the school community.

Learn more about Restorative Practices here: https://www.pghschools.org/domain/1339

Positive Behavior Intervention Supports

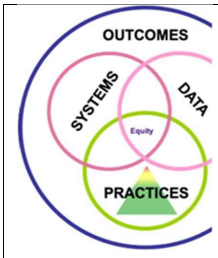
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based three-tiered framework for improving and integrating all the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes. It is a strengths based and positive approach to create the kinds of schools where all students are successful. The school-wide PBIS program includes teaching expectations and positive reinforcement because students will succeed when offered informative corrective feedback and pro-social skills. When students know what is expected of them, they are more likely to behave appropriately. Principals, teachers, and staff at every school in the District work together to set up behavioral expectations and subsequent rewards that are specific to their school. Expectations are reinforced and acknowledged at places like morning meetings, classrooms, and school-wide events.

Tier #1 focuses on school-wide programs and practices that apply to everyone in the building and serves as the primary level of behavior intervention prevention. This would include classroom management strategies that establish basic expectations for students, public posting of expectations, frequent acknowledgments, and teaching desired behaviors. Approximately 85% of students meet the expectations and are rewarded for their good behavior.

Tier #2 acknowledges that some students need additional support to keep their behavior on track. Teachers and staff meet with these students in small groups to set more specific behavior objectives and provide instruction to build skills. Using Restorative Practices techniques, they work together to help the students understand how their behavior affects others and strive to welcome them back into the classroom and school community. Only 10% of all students fall into this group.

Tier #3 services provide individualized instruction and interventions for students with more intensive needs. If a student does not respond to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions, they will be given an individualized behavior or academic instruction plan to help them achieve their goals.

Pittsburgh Public Schools is committed to implementing PBIS with culturally responsive practices, recognizing that subjective determinations of behaviors that are acceptable or unacceptable are shaped by cultural values. When implemented effectively, schools are more positive places where students love to learn and staff experience satisfaction in their work.



Systems
The way schools operate are their foundational systems. In PBIS, these systems support accurate, durable implementation of practices and the effective use of data to achieve better outcomes.

Data
Schools generate multiple pieces of data about students every day. Within the PBIS framework, schools use data to select, monitor and evaluate outcomes, practices, and systems across all three tiers.

Practices
Key to improving outcomes are the strategies to support students at every level. In PBIS, these interventions and strategies are backed by research to target the outcomes schools want to see.

Outcomes
The outcomes from PBIS are what schools achieve through the data, systems, and practices they put in place. Families, students, and school personnel set goals and work together to see them through. In PBIS, outcomes might be improved student behavior, or fewer office discipline referrals.

Source www.pbis.org

Social Emotional Learning

While it is essential for children to master important academic skills, such as reading and mathematics, it is equally important for students to develop the "soft skills" that we all need to navigate the world successfully. These include things like how to manage their own feelings and emotions, how to respect others and how to build strong, positive relationships. This is called **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL).**

Our core resource for supporting SEL in our schools is Wayfinder. All students experience the core lessons associated with their grade band. These lessons are reinforced through supplemental resources that help to reteach and deepen the core skills and competencies below:

- Purpose

Your decisions and interactions with the world are guided by a deep connection to your values.

- Self-Awareness

You understand yourself on many levels, from how you function to what nourishes and sustains you.

- Adaptability

You are willing to try again when you make mistakes and are comfortable navigating uncertain situations with flexibility and openness.

- Empathy

You are in tune with the feelings and needs of others and willing to act for a common good.

- Collaboration

You are a relationship -builder who actively partners with others and facilitates belonging efforts across communities.

- Agency

You utilize self-awareness to understand when you need support and how you can support others in working toward a shared goal.

At Pittsburgh Public Schools, we believe that SEL is the foundation on which academic learning takes place. When students feel confident in their abilities and their value to their class, when they know how to ask for and offer help and understand that resources are available to them, they are better able to achieve their full potential. Importantly, we recognize that SEL must be implemented in ways that are culturally affirming/sustaining, culturally humble, antiracist, anti-ablest, anti-oppression, trauma-and healing- informed, and informed by contemporary, critical research.

To better serve our students, we strive to deepen our own SEL. Teachers and school staff participate in lessons and discussions about SEL competencies and seek to understand themselves and their power, privilege, and identity as they do this work. We try to make connections to elements of SEL throughout the day to show students that this is important, that people care about it, and that it is relevant to everyday life. Most importantly, we try to model our behavior in a way that helps students become more aware of their own competencies.

Mental and Behavioral Health Supports

School-based mental and behavioral health supports are available to all PPS students as a resource. Staff will actively educate students on the importance of seeking help, either for self or others, when a concern exists. Students, staff, and parents will receive an annual overview of the District's Student Assistance Program and available mental health partnerships, their purpose and how to access help. In addition, school staff will be educated about warning signs for childhood behavioral health concerns along with steps to support the student through those concerns.

Resolve Crisis Services

If you or your child is having a crisis and want help, as an Allegheny County resident you can call or visit Resolve's walk-in center. Resolve Crisis Services is free to all residents of Allegheny County.

Call resolve Crisis Services 24-hour hotline: 1-888-7-YOU-CAN (7968226).	Email For non-urgent matters and basic questions: resolve@upmc.edu	Walk-In Crisis Center 333 N Braddock Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15208 (East End of Pittsburgh)	National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org

Ways Resolve can help:

- If you have a crisis, large or small.
- To refer someone to our crisis services.
- To access our mobile crisis teams.
- If you are waiting for your child to get into the CACTIS program.
- If you have a family member or friend in crisis.
- If you need help finding other mental or behavioral health support services in the community.
- If you are a law enforcement officer with questions about our crisis services within Allegheny County.
- If you are a health care provider seeking help for yourself or your clients.

CACTIS Program (Child and Adolescent Chronic-Disorders Treatment Intervention Services)
CACTIS runs under the umbrella of resolve Crisis Services but is for children and teens awaiting treatment.
CACTIS is an outside provider in connection with UPMC.

Contact CACTIS for details, or if your child ~~needs intervention~~needs intervention or crisis services.
Phone: 412-864-5065
Email: CACTISreferral@upmc.edu
Fax: 412-864-5012

Transgender and Gender Expansive Student Supports

The District maintains a nondiscrimination policy outlining the rights of transgender and gender expansive students: Board Policy 102.3 – Nondiscrimination – Transgender and Gender Expansive Students. The policy outlines services and supports to fulfil the guarantee of equal access for our transgender and gender expansive students – ranging from topics of confidentiality and transition support to establishing Transgender/Gender Expansive Point Teams as a school resource and using gender-expansive language. If the School does not have a School Counselor, the Social Worker will assume such role.

The Role of a School Social Worker

School Social Workers are the link between the school and the students, families, and the community to promote and support students' academic success and wellbeing. Some of the services that school social workers provide are crisis intervention, attendance support, support for housing instability, connecting students and families to resources, providing direct support to students in school (individual, group, SEL), identify and report suspected child abuse and neglect, screening for suicidal ideation, self-harm, homicidal ideation (and then providing support needed), obtain and coordinate community resources to meet student needs. Social workers are also trained members of the Student Assistance Program (SAP). If the School does not have a Social Worker, the School Counselor will assume such role.

The Role of a School Counselor

The Counselor is responsible for providing assistance to students by supporting them in making educational, occupational, and life goals/plans. This position also assumes responsibility to educate, assess, and provide intervention, referral, and support to students and/or their families regarding their identified needs. The Counselor also designs a sequential academic program to accomplish these goals /plans, while meeting the objectives and maintaining confidentiality of students and their families to the greatest extent permitted by law and District policy. If the School does not have a Social Counselor, the School Social Worker will assume such role.

Role of School Security & Safety Staff

PPS maintains its own Division of School Safety, including School Security Aides (SSA) and School Police Officers (SPO). Their role is to provide support that ensures the safety and welfare of students and staff during school and school related activities. PPS school police officers do not carry firearms. School security staff receive trainings specific to their roles , including training in de-escalation and Restorative Practices. The Division of School Safety and the Office of Student Support Services coordinates training programs to ensure school safety staff receive training relevant to supporting students in the school setting.

Some events require a referral to the school police. However, referral to school police does not necessarily mean criminal charges will be filed and many events do not require a referral to school police. Before consulting with school police about an incident, administrators must consider these important factors: (1) the seriousness of the situation; (2) the school's ability to defuse or resolve the situation; (3) the student's intent; (4) the student's age; (5) whether the student has a disability, the type of disability and its impact on the student's behavior; and (6) any other factors the administrator believes to be relevant. For students with IEPs and 504 Plans who have positive behavior support plans, an updated functional behavior assessment and positive behavior support plan are required subsequent to a referral to PPS School Police Officers or local law enforcement. For a student with a disability who does not have a positive behavior support plan, upon notification to a local police department that a student with a disability has committed an incident listed in section 1303-A(b)(4.1) or (4.2) of the Safe Schools Act, the school entity shall convene the student's IEP team. At this meeting, the IEP team shall consider whether a positive behavior support plan should be developed to address the student's behavior.

Infraction codes that trigger mandatory notification to school police are identified with an asterisk beside the code. Other infraction codes should be handled with the appropriate administrative disciplinary action.

Consistent with the Police Memorandum of Understanding between the District and the Pittsburgh Police, in the event a child with a disability commits a mandatory notification offense, the District shall provide immediate notification to the local Law Enforcement Authority regardless of the disability. Such notification shall state that the child has an IEP or service agreement that includes a behavior support plan, may include the School Entity's recommendation that Law Enforcement Authority intervention may not be required, and may advise that the District will act to address the student's behavior need as required by applicable federal and state law and regulations, including 22 Pa. Code §§ 14.133 (relating to positive behavior support), 15.3 (relating to protected handicapped students—general) or 711.46 (relating to positive behavior support). The local Law Enforcement Authority may take the recommendation under advisement but reserves the right to investigate and file charges.

Issuance of Summary Citations by a PPS School Police Officer (SPO)

A moratorium on the issuance of summary citations for PPS students is in effect until a policy and administrative guidelines are created by the Policy Committee in collaboration with the Safety and Operations Committee and authorized by the Board of Education. The moratorium remains in effect.

ATTENDANCE

General Requirements
All students ages 6 through 18 must attend school. This is known as the compulsory school attendance requirement. When students do not attend school on a regular basis, they are tardy or truant. Intervention strategies will be utilized with the goal of improving school attendance for truant students, with a special focus on eliminating barriers to school attendance. Below is a summary of important school attendance rules and procedures. PPS's Attendance Policy can be found in full on the District's website at: Board Policy 204 - Attendance.

Chronic Absenteeism

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has shifted its focus from *truancy* to *chronic absenteeism* to highlight the impact all absences have on students when they miss too much school. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing ten percent or more of the academic year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences, suspensions and time missed due to changing schools.

Attending school every day helps children to learn and grow. We know that missing 10% of school (missing 2 days per month or 18 days per school year, whether absences are excused **or** unexcused) can have negative unintended consequences.
We will continue to address chronic absenteeism at the student, school, and district levels. We will work with families to provide necessary information and resources to ensure that students have the support they need to maintain regular attendance.

Eligibility for The Pittsburgh Promise®: The Pittsburgh Promise® is a scholarship program for eligible Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) students. The program uses attendance as one of several criteria when determining eligibility for scholarships. The Pittsburgh Promise® attendance criteria is available here: Eligibility — The Pittsburgh Promise. Out-of-school suspensions and unexcused absences shall count against a student when determining eligibility for the Promise. All other absences are not counted against a student in determining eligibility for the Promise.

Key Attendance Terms:
Unexcused Absence: When Student is not in attendance at school and a written excuse is not provided within 3 days.
Tardy: Arriving after the posted start time for class or school without a written excuse.
Truant: Student has had 3 or more unexcused absences

Habitually Truant: Student has had 6 or more unexcused absences.
SAIC: School Attendance Improvement Conference, where reasons for missing school are reviewed in an effort to improve a student's attendance.
SAIP: School Attendance Improvement Plan, the plan outlining efforts to improve student's attendance.

Excused Absences

Illness	Health Care or Therapy	Quarantine
Family Emergency or Death	Recovery from Accident	Court Attendance
Religious Holidays	College Visits	Other Approved Urgent Reasons



Tardies to School or Class

Arriving on time to school and class is an important factor to school engagement and success. Repeated unexcused absences or their equivalent, including unexcused tardy minutes, constitute truancy as defined in this guide. Schools will provide interventions and support for class and school tardies before assigning disciplinary consequences.

Parent Support Steps after Absences

When a student is absent, their parent/guardian receives notice from the school in the parent/guardian's preferred language, on the day of the student's absence. Parents/guardians have 3 school days from the date the child missed school to turn in a written excuse. Until the excuse is received, the absence is treated as unexcused. Parents/guardians can submit an excuse for up to 10 absences per school year. After that, an excuse from a licensed healthcare provider is required for absences due to medical reasons. For absences due to funerals, court, or extraordinary matters, a valid excuse and proof is necessary. A principal may use their discretion to excuse a student for a temporary period for urgent reasons.

Parents/guardians can submit absence excuses in paper form or electronically, by sending an email.

If a legal excuse is not submitted, the absence will be considered unlawful and noted as unexcused. Three unexcused absences will lead to additional interventions, including providing supports to students and families to overcome attendance barriers. If unresolved, referrals to community and out of school supports will be made and, as a last result, truancy charges can be filed with the local magistrate. PPS will not expel or assign out-of-school suspension, disciplinary reassignment or transfer for attendance concerns. PPS will permit students to make up schoolwork missed as a result of the absence upon return to school, regardless of whether the absence was excused or unexcused.

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School Support Steps after Absences

After the first and second unexcused absence for a student, the school will send written notice to the parent/guardian indicating the dates of absence. After the third unexcused absence, a similar notice is sent which also explains that if attendance does not improve the student will be considered "habitually truant" after six (6) or more unexcused absences. The notice shall also include that a habitually truant student may not transfer, during the school year, to a cyber charter school, unless a judge determines the transfer to be in the best interests of the student, and shall include resources available to assist the student to return to compliant compulsory attendance and opportunities for academic recovery in response to truant behavior.

All notices must be sent to the parent/guardian in their preferred language and mode of communication. Parents/guardians whose preferred language is identified will be offered an interpreter.

When unexcused absences continue, a School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC) is held. The purpose of the SAIC is to create a support plan to ensure regular attendance. The parent/guardian (or person acting in that role) and the student, among other individuals outlined in Policy 204-Attendance, must be invited in writing to the conference. If the student receives special education services or has an accommodation, then the IEP team and/or 504 Team shall participate in the meeting. The purpose of the conference is to discuss reasons for the absences in an effort to improve attendance, with or without additional services. The discussion and outcomes of the SAIC shall be reflected in writing in a School Attendance Improvement Plan ("SAIP").

PPS will prioritize working together with parent/guardians (or persons acting in that role) to eliminate attendance barriers. Before any additional steps are taken, the SAIC must be held, even if the student and/or parent do not attend. If the unexcused absences continue after the SAIC, a referral will be made to the Department of Human Services, or Office of Children, Youth, and Families (CYF) for additional support. For students 15 years of age or older, PPS may file a truancy citation against either the parent or the student, but not both. For students under the age of 15, PPS may only file against the parent. A referral to the local magistrate via truancy citation is never required but may be made as a last resort. Penalties for truancy issued by the local magistrate can involve fines, community service, completion of school attendance improvement programs, suspension of student driving privileges, and/or ineligibility to apply for a driver's license for up to 6 months.

Contacts for School Attendance Support				
School Counselor/ Social Worker Find out who your child's counselor/social worker is:		Attendance Works Contact Us - Attendance Works	Gwen's Girls Caring Connections for Youth Program	A+ Schools 1901 Centre Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Pittsburgh Public Schools / Homepage (pghschools.org)			(412) 904-4239	(412) 697-1298

Students with Disabilities and Attendance

Prior to filing a truancy citation with the local magistrate, an IEP or 504 Team meeting will be held to review each student's individual circumstances and supports. Students with disabilities may not be removed from the rolls based on attendance.

Remote Learning and Attendance
The District will take daily attendance even during periods of remote learning during the 2023-2024 school year. Students who maintain good attendance will receive the most from remote learning opportunities provided by the District. Refer to your child's school's website for specific information about remote attendance.

Below is a list of additional attendance criteria in effect when students are engaging in remote learning:

- Synchronous Learning: All students who have access to the coursework and participate in assigned synchronous lesson(s), or complete alternate standards for attendance determined by the Students IEP or 504 Plan, will be marked PRESENT.

- Asynchronous Learning: Students will be marked present for asynchronous learning days if they have logged into Learning Management System (currently, Schoology and Microsoft Teams and/or CLEVER) and attempted to complete assigned work, or complete alternative standards for attendance determined by the Student's IEP or 504 Plan. Students will be marked present if they complete assigned work before 11:59 p.m. on the conclusion of the asynchronous remote learning day, even if it was completed the day before.

- Technology Access and Attendance. Students who do not have access to the coursework, either because they do not have a working device, do not have access to the internet, or for other reasons, will not be counted as absent. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the District so they can help provide what is needed for the student to access remote learning. Leniency will be extended to students who do not have a District-issued computer or who have internet/connectivity issues. Students who experience verified technology issues will be marked present so long as the student or parent/guardian has maintained contact (i.e., telephone or email) with the assigned staff person.

- Attendance Support. School staff will work with parents/families to create support plans to ensure regular attendance for every class.

Camera Usage and Attendance during Remote Learning

In order to maximize student engagement, it is important for students to have their cameras on during virtual meetings and online instruction. Camera engagement helps the student receive appropriate face to face instruction. Engagement of both the students and teacher fosters active learning. There will not be punitive consequences for students who do not engage their camera. Teachers use strategies to encourage students to participate in class with the camera on. An engaged camera is not required to participate in class, except for programs in which camera engagement is a curricular requirement.

The District acknowledges parents may have privacy concerns and, to that end, schools shall provide education on how students can blur their background during video conferencing or on the virtual learning platform. Parents/guardians who wish for their child's device camera to be disabled may contact their school principal for next steps. Parents/guardians who have completed the process for cameras to be disabled will work with the school principal and their child's teacher to determine the process for determining that their child is present on all required class meetings and calls.

Dress Code

While the School District recognizes the right of students to freedom of expression in speech and the wearing of apparel, a dress code has been established to foster a positive learning environment for all. Students have the right to dress in a manner that celebrates their racial, cultural, religious, and gender identities, and that reflects their gender expression (including gender neutrality) .

Students must not wear any apparel or jewelry that by words, signs, pictures, or any combination thereof appearing on said clothing or jewelry advocates or promotes sexual activity or violence, or the use of alcohol or drugs or demeans or degrades another because of race, sex, gender (including gender identity or expression), religion, national origin or disability.

District policy is administered through school level procedures which must be implemented equally across all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender (including gender identity or expression), or sexual orientation. The dress code will be equally enforced without regard to body shape or size. Teachers, administrators, and other school staff shall avoid objectifying conversations about dress and appearance. Students will not be asked to leave their classroom or school for violating dress code. Schools are prohibited from issuing In-School-Suspensions (ISS) for dress code violations. Schools will work with students whose dress is not in compliance with the dress code in a discreet manner to provide an acceptable solution (e.g., parent/guardian contact, permitting student to change into other available clothing, or have a variety of extra clothing articles available to students when their dress does not meet dress code requirements). Students in need of support obtaining school uniforms should contact their guidance counselor or person designated by the school. Highly mobile/vulnerable students shall be provided adequate time and support to ensure that they are aware of and comply with the dress code. Nothing in the Code of Conduct restricts or bans students from wearing religious ~~garb~~attire or head coverings. Parents with questions regarding religious dress are encouraged to discuss them with the school principal.

The District is committed to upholding the Pittsburgh and Allegheny Crown Act~~s~~, and the Pennsylvania Crown Act, also known as the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act, prohibiting discrimination based on natural hairstyles, textures and hair coverings, particularly targeting racial discrimination. Furthermore, students have the right to wear protective hairstyles, including braids, locs, puffs, afros, twists, wigs, including styles that include elements such as headbands, head wraps, bonnets, barrettes or beads. Students will not be discriminated against on the basis of their hair texture.

School principals are authorized to establish within their school an additional dress code, or a uniform policy as outlined in Board policy and regulations. Schools that implement a prescribed dress or uniform policy at school or school sponsored events will maintain one list of appropriate attire for all students, instead of including lists by gender. Parents/guardians should access their child's school-specific dress code for further information. Students who are experiencing homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Act will be provided with assistance obtaining a uniform. Individual school dress code provisions must be consistent with Board policy, administrative guidelines, and this Code of Student Conduct. Specifically, school level dress code must follow the general guidelines in Board Policy 221 – Dress Code. Access Board Policy 221 – Dress Code here: ht tps://go.boarddocs.com/pa/pghboe/Board.nsf/Public.

~~**Bus Rules**~~
School Bus Conduct:

All school rules, including school discipline procedures and protections, apply when students are on the bus and at the bus stop. ~~Schools shall outline bus behavior expectations and inform students and parents of such expectations.~~ School buses are considered an extension of the school environment, and all school rules and expectations apply while students are being transported to and from school or school-sponsored activities. Safe transportation requires cooperation between students, families, drivers, and school administrators.

Students are expected to follow the directions of the bus driver and adhere to all safety expectations while riding the bus.

Failure to follow these expectations may result in disciplinary action, suspension of transportation privileges, and the imposition of financial responsibility for damage caused to District or contractor property.

~~Engaging in or causing disruptive behavior on the school bus and at the bus stop which creates a substantial risk of or results in injury may result in disciplinary action. Prohibited activities include but are not limited to: Spitting, throwing objects, standing, fighting, yelling, and placing body parts outside of windows~~.

To ensure safety, all school buses, and vehicles with passenger capacity of thirty-six (36) and above shall have video cameras installed. Other buses and vehicles may also be equipped with audio-recording equipment. Use of such video and audio recording equipment is authorized for school discipline and security purposes.

Additional Resources

For a list of additional, local resources, parents/guardians should reach out to their child's school.

Rules of Student Conduct, Behavior, Definitions and Infraction Levels

Progressive discipline is a structured approach used to address student behavior in a fair, consistent, and age-appropriate manner. The purpose of progressive discipline is to teach and reinforce appropriate behavior while providing students with opportunities to correct their actions. Disciplinary responses may include interventions such as verbal redirection, counseling, restorative practices, parent/guardian notification, written referrals, loss of privileges, suspension, or other consequences permitted by district policy and law. The level of disciplinary action will be determined based on the nature, severity, and frequency of the behavior, the student's age and developmental level, and the student's prior disciplinary history. The District reserves the right to apply more serious discipline when warranted by the circumstances. The goal of progressive discipline is to support student growth, maintain a safe and respectful learning environment, and promote accountability.

Exclusionary discipline involves the removal from an instructional setting, and it's reserved for the most serious of offenses and is to be used after interventions and supports – as listed in this Guide - have been attempted to alleviate the behavior of concern without success. Students who are excluded from school are still permitted to continue with their education through other means (e.g., virtual asynchronous work, synchronous work, and/or alternative placement).

In an effort to maximize instructional time and to reduce exclusionary discipline, particularly for our youngest learners, the following definitions – developed by a cross-functional group of PPS stakeholders - distinguish non-violent from violent offenses. Guidance interventions and disciplinary actions will be provided accordingly. Suspensions for non-violent offenses are strongly discouraged overall, and are specifically prohibited for students in Kindergarten through second grade. District Assistant Superintendents will review data on a periodic basis to ensure the non-violent suspension ban is implemented with fidelity across all PPS elementary schools.

Non-Violent Offenses: An infraction or offense that does not necessarily pose a threat to the health, safety or property of others. Non-violent offenses include all Level 1 infractions and the following non-violent Level 2 infractions:

- Unauthorized presence of students during school hours (school or private property)
- Possession or use of tobacco or electronic smoking devices
- Academic dishonesty
- Misuse of computers/electronic device
- Profanity & vulgarity/verbal altercation (to student)
- Profanity & vulgarity/verbal altercation (to staff)
- Inappropriate sexual behavior
- Repeated Level 1 or 2 non-violent infractions that the Threat Assessment Team determines not to be credible

Violent Offenses: (a) An infraction or offense that is inclusive of any of the following elements: the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person or property of another, or (b) any other offense that is a felony and that, by its nature, involves a substantial risk that physical force against the person or property of another may be used in the course of committing the offense. Violent offenses may lead to an out of school suspension. The following Level 2 Infractions are considered violent offenses:

- Damage, destruction or vandalism of property
- Harassment
- Fighting
- Bullying/cyberbullying
- Hazing
- Physical aggression/altercation
- Theft/robbery
- Inciting a disturbance or melee
- Terroristic Threats that the Threat Assessment Team determines to be credible

All infractions classified as Level 3 offenses of the Code of Student Conduct, listed below, may lead to out-of-school suspension for students enrolled in Kindergarten through fifth grade:

- Assault on a School Employee, Student or Other Person
- Weapons and Dangerous Instruments
- Drug Offenses
- Arson
- Aggravated Hazing

School Accountability
Each PPS school has established a discipline committee for school culture and climate, which convenes at least once each month to review available discipline data and discuss strengths and weaknesses of the school's disciplinary climate. Schools regularly use behavior data to guide the teaching and support that takes place at the individual student level, classroom level, and school level. Consistent with Policy 102.5 - Equity and Excellence in Education, the District work to eliminate the racial predictability and disproportionality in all aspects if its administration. Schools shall also submit an annual report to the Office of Student Support Services specifying the various intervention strategies and corrective measures available at the school for students with academic or behavioral difficulties and make this report available to parents/guardians, students, and personnel.

STUDENT CONDUCT RULES AND INFRACTION LEVELS

- See Separate K-5 Student Code of Conduct & Infraction Levels Guide
- See Separate 6-12 Student Code of Conduct & Infraction Levels Guide

EXCLUSIONS FROM CLASS – PROCEDURES

In-School Suspension (Exclusion from Class)

- In-School Suspension involves exclusion from class and assignment to a designated learning space under the direct supervision of school personnel. Direct supervision means school personnel are physically in the same location as students under their supervision. This assignment may be given a name other than "In-School Suspension" specific to each school's PBIS system. In-School Suspensions shall be utilized in accordance with District Policy 218 – Suspension and Expulsion.
- The duration of the exclusion from class may be less than 1 class period, 1 class period, several class periods, or a full day of classes.
- Parents/guardians must be notified of each exclusion from class and may request a conference with the principal.
- A student may not receive an in-school suspension unless the student has been informed of the reasons for the suspension and has been given an opportunity to respond before the in-school suspension becomes effective.
- The parent of any student who receives an in-school suspension which exceeds 5 consecutive school days shall be offered a conference with the principal. In-school suspensions exceeding 5 days will trigger an IEP or 504 team meeting for students with disabilities. In school suspensions exceeding 10 days will trigger the school to offer an informal hearing. The purpose of the informal hearing is to enable the student to meet with the appropriate school official to explain the circumstances surrounding the event for which the student is being suspended.
- The student's school entity has the responsibility to make provision for the student's education during the period of the in-school suspension. Students with a disability who are excluded from class shall be provided educational services as required by their IEP and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

EXCLUSIONS FROM SCHOOL – PROCEDURES

Out-of-School Suspension (Exclusion from School Properties)

- Out-of-School Suspensions shall be utilized in accordance with District Policy 218 – Suspension and Expulsion.
- Out-of-school suspensions for 1-10 days may be given by the principal or person in charge of the public school.
- A student may not be suspended out of school until the student has been informed of the reasons for the suspension and given an opportunity to respond. Prior notice of the intended suspension need not be given when the health, safety or welfare of the school community is threatened.
- Parents/guardians and the Superintendent shall be notified immediately in writing when the student is suspended out of school.
- Suspension of a student from their normal in-person school program (i.e., temporary assignment to remote learning) prompts all procedural protections outlined below.
- When the out-of-school suspension exceeds 3 school days, the student and parent shall be given the opportunity for an informal hearing within the first 3 days of the suspension.
- Out-of-school suspensions may not be made to run consecutively beyond the 10-school day period.
- Students shall have the responsibility to make up exams and work missed while being disciplined by suspension and shall have access to and be permitted to complete these assignments.
- Informal out-of-school suspensions are prohibited.
- A student that receives an out-of-school suspension should not be disciplined twice for the same infraction. If field trips, assemblies, or any other activities occur while the student is serving their out-of-school suspension, they may not attend such event; however, should the event occur outside of the time period in which the student is serving their out-of-school suspension, they shall not be excluded from such event unless there is a safety concern.
- Students with a disability who are excluded from school shall be provided educational services as required by their IEP and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Discipline of Students with Disabilities

- The discipline of students with disabilities (student supported through Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans is subject to state and federal law in addition to the Code of Conduct. To the extent any conflict exists, state and federal law will prevail. In deciding disciplinary measures, the school cannot discipline students when the conduct in question was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability or was the direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP or Section 504 Plan, with the exception of limited, special circumstances.
- Students eligible under the IDEA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and students who are "thought-to-be" eligible, cannot be suspended out of school for more than 10 consecutive school days, 11–15 cumulative school days if the removals constitute a pattern, or 15 cumulative school days in one school. Removals of more than 10 consecutive school days, 11–15 days if a pattern exists or more than 15 cumulative school days are subject to special rules and limitations, including a manifestation determination.
- A student diagnosed with intellectual disabilities may not be suspended from school unless the school administrator has received written approval by the parent/guardian on the appropriate Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) form or hearing officer authorization.
- If the misconduct includes possession of weapons or drugs, or the student inflicts serious bodily injury on another person, then a student, including a student with intellectual disabilities, may be removed for 45 school days regardless of whether the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability.

- Any record of proposed discipline for disruptive behavior that is determined to be the manifestation of a student's disability must be removed from the student's discipline record.
- Specific questions regarding the discipline of students with disabilities should be directed to the Program for Students with Exceptionalities at 412-529-3132.
- School teams must initiate a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) for students with disabilities immediately once the student has reached eight (8) days of suspension in one school year. This provision applies to all students who are thought-to-be eligible or have been found eligible for an IEP or 504 Plan. Teams may need to complete an FBA before reaching 8 cumulative days of suspension, dependent upon individual circumstances.
- The student's IEP or 504 Team will then determine whether, based upon data, the student demonstrates behaviors which impede their learning or the learning of others, and, if so, subsequently develop or revise a Positive Behavior Support Plan for the student. School teams and parents are encouraged to convene the IEP team after a student is assigned a disciplinary exclusion from school.

Expulsion

- Expulsions shall be utilized in accordance with District Policy 218 – Suspension and Expulsion. Expulsion is any exclusion from school for a period exceeding 10 consecutive school days.
- A student facing expulsion has a right to a formal hearing prior to expulsion.
- During the period prior to the hearing and decision of the governing board in an expulsion case, the student shall be placed in their normal class, unless it is determined after an informal hearing that a student's presence in their normal class would constitute a threat to the health, safety or welfare of others and it is not possible to hold a formal hearing within the period of a suspension, the student may be expelled from school for more than 10 school days.
- The formal hearing shall be held within (15) school days of the notice of the charges unless a delay is mutually agreed to by both parties.
- Any student so expelled shall be provided with alternative education through the District's existing alternative education programs.

Education during Expulsion from School

- Students who are under 18 years of age are still subject to the compulsory school attendance law even though expelled and shall be provided an education.
- Students who have been excluded from school are educated at Clayton Academy.
- Students with a disability who are excluded from school shall be provided educational services as required by their IEP and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Student's Right to an Informal Hearing

- A student is entitled to an informal hearing for; out-of-school suspensions lasting 3 or more days; prior to being transferred to an alternative education program, or when an in-school suspension exceeds 10 consecutive school days.
- The purpose of the informal hearing is to enable the student to meet with appropriate school officials to explain the circumstances.
- The informal hearing is held to bring forth all relevant information regarding the event for which the student may be suspended and for students, their parents or guardians and school officials to discuss ways by which future offenses might be avoided.

- Parent or guardians must: be given notice, in writing of the reasons for the in-school or out-of-school suspension; as well as the time and place of the informal hearing.
- A student has the right to: question any witnesses present at the hearing and to speak and produce witnesses on their own behalf.
- The school will hold the informal hearing within the first 3 days of the suspension.

Student's Right to a Formal Hearing

- A student is entitled to a formal hearing prior to being expelled (i.e., excluded from school for more than 10 consecutive days). Parents or guardians must be given notice by certified mail of the charges and at least 3 days' notice of the time and place of the hearing.
- A copy of the expulsion policy and notice that legal counsel may represent the student and hearing procedures shall be included with the hearing notice. A student may request the rescheduling of the hearing when the student demonstrates good cause for an extension.
- A parent/guardian has the option to waive their right to a formal hearing by accepting the discipline in lieu of proceeding to a formal hearing but the parent must be presented with the waiver in writing prior to acceptance.
- The hearing shall be held in private unless the student or parent requests a public hearing. The student may be represented by counsel, at the expense of the parents or guardians, and may have a parent or guardian attend the hearing.
- The student has the right to be presented with the names of witnesses against the student, and copies of the statements and affidavits; the right to request that the witnesses appear in person and answer questions or be cross-examined and the right to testify and present witnesses on their own behalf. The student may also choose not to testify and shall not be threatened with punishment or later punished for refusal to testify.
- A written or audio record shall be kept of the hearing. The student is entitled, at the student's expense, to a copy. A digital copy shall be provided at no cost.
- The proceeding shall be held within 15 school days of the notification of charges, unless mutually agreed to by both parties.
- The school has the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that the student violated a school rule. Hearsay is generally admissible but must have corroborating non-hearsay evidence, as well.
- Evidence lawfully obtained by searching students and/or their personal belongings is admissible.
- Under FERPA, PPS is obligated to provide students and parents/guardians access to records related to school discipline.
- Notice of a right to appeal the results of the hearing shall be provided to the student with the expulsion decision.

The Role of PPS's Discipline Panel

If a student is facing a long-term out-of-school suspension for violation of a Level 4 conduct infraction (grades 6-12) or an infraction involving Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs ("ATOD"), their case will be referred to the Discipline Panel who is responsible for considering recommendations for disciplinary actions for the student.

- The Discipline Panel ("Panel") plays a critical role in making sure students who have been transferred from their home schools for discipline reasons are monitored and returned as quickly as possible.

- The Panel reviews discipline information submitted for all long-term exclusions (more than 3 days), Level 4 conduct infractions, and infractions involving Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs ("ATOD") to ensure consistency and equity in discipline across the District, compliance with the Code of Conduct, and compliance with special education rules and regulations.
- The Panel is led by the Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services and includes Principals from both the Student Achievement Center ("SAC") and Clayton, a comprehensive school principal, social workers from both SAC and Clayton, and a representative from the Program for Students with Exceptionalities ("PSE").
- The panel engages in weekly meetings to review student discipline information and records, maintain data regarding student disciplinary transfers, and communicate with principals regarding discipline across the District. The Law Department is also consulted when needed. This includes reviewing student discipline records involving Level 4 infractions and elementary drug infractions. The Panel keeps record of all Level 4 infractions and results. Further, the Panel reviews students referred for Alternate Education for Disrupted Youth ("AEDY") placement to ensure the student is eligible for AEDY based on state criteria.
- In addition, the Panel does a quarterly review of all students placed at SAC and Clayton to determine if a return to home school is warranted. Special circumstances related to discipline and placements at SAC or Clayton are discussed by the Panel. Lastly, the Panel reviews student PSS7 Forms ("Behavior Performance Review") and ensures students were afforded the procedural protections if the student was suspected to have a disability before their conduct infraction.
- The Panel communicates with families and individual schools when necessary. This includes the tracking of days and communication with schools when students are ready to return from 45 day and Alternate Education placements. The Panel also coordinates ATOD classes for infractions involving marijuana, drug paraphernalia, and alcohol.
- In addition to the above work on the Discipline Panel, the Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services and the Panel's PSE Representative (where an IEP or suspected disability is present) review all student discipline referrals that involve out-of-school suspension of over 3 days.

Important Provisions for Families to Know about the Most Serious Infractions (Weapons, Drugs)

Possession of Weapons & Dangerous Instruments
A student shall not possess, handle, or transmit any item defined by the Pennsylvania School Code as a weapon (hereinafter "weapon") while on any school property, while at any school-sponsored or approved activity or while walking or being transported in any manner to or from a school or school-sponsored or approved activity.

The term "weapon," by School Code, includes but is not limited to any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, explosive, nunchaku, firearm, shotgun, rifle, and/or any other tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury. When determining whether an object is a weapon, schools must consider what the object is practically and functionally intended to do. The manner in which a student uses an object does not convert an otherwise non-weapon into a weapon.

Referral for expulsion and a formal hearing

Once a weapon is confiscated, the principal contacts the school police and completes a long term suspension packet which must be returned to the Office of Student Support Services. Within three (3) days of the infraction, the administrator must recommend disciplinary consequences based on the totality of the circumstances. Once

the recommendation has been made, the Office of Student Services will schedule a formal hearing before the Discipline Hearing Officer who will either recommend to uphold the discipline recommendation made by administration, or to recommend clemency. The parent/guardian may waive their right to a formal hearing and accept the recommended disciplinary action in lieu of attending the hearing.

Clemency for Possession of a Weapon
Possession of weapons that meets one of the following criteria will be referred for clemency in PPS:

1. Possession of weapons by an elementary school student. Administration shall confiscate the item that is in violation of the District's weapons policy. In cases involving Kindergarten through Grade 5, the recommendation of the Hearing Officer will be to grant elementary clemency unless additional exclusion is warranted based on extenuating circumstances. Upon receiving clemency, the student will be immediately returned to the school they attended prior to the exclusion from school.
2. Possession of a weapon brought into the school setting by mistake and turned over upon staff request.

The following procedures are followed by PPS school administrators when clemency is the recommendation for possession of a weapon (infraction code 306 or 406). Administration will complete a long term suspension packet and referral for a formal hearing, with the recommendation of clemency. If both Administration and the Hearing Officer recommend clemency, the student will be returned to their home school unless the circumstances warrant an out-of-school suspension, ranging from one (1) to three (3) days, based on the factual circumstances.

Self-Defense Items. Self-defense items are considered dangerous instruments and are prohibited on school grounds as they are tools or instruments capable of causing serious bodily injury. These items are confiscated when they become known to staff either through intake or through some other means (report, observing the item, etc.). There is no difference in how the items are treated based on whether a student voluntarily surrenders the item or if it is confiscated. A tool, instrument or implement which can be carried on one's person and is manufactured or commonly intended to be used for the primary purpose of self-protection. Examples include but are not limited to pepper spray, self-defense keychains, self-defense rings, tactical pens or flashlights, and kubatons. Self-defense items may be considered weapons capable of inflicting serious bodily injury if they are either used or threatened to be used, as further defined below:

1. A self-defense item is threatened to be used when a student is in possession of the item and is a direct threat to the bodily safety of another person.
2. A self-defense item is used when a student employs the item, intentionally or unintentionally, which results in injury of another person.

PPS will only charge a student with a weapons violation if the student has used or threatened to use the self-defense item against another individual. Schools shall consult with the Office of Student Support Services on any self-defense item prior to classifying a self-defense item as a weapon and recommending exclusion beyond 10 school days. Mere possession of self-defense items shall not subject a student to exclusion for up to one (1) school year.

Lookalike Item. Any imitation of a knife, cutting instrument or tool, nunchaku, firearm, shotgun or rifle. While students may have access to lookalike weapons that are often sold as toys or costume accessories, such items are

prohibited in the school setting or at school sponsored events. Students who bring in lookalike weapons shall have them confiscated and will receive no discipline consequence unless the item was used to perpetrate some other conduct prohibited by the Code of Student Conduct.

Use, Sale or Possession of Drugs

Students shall not possess, use, distribute, or be under the influence of any controlled substance, including marijuana. PPS recognizes that marijuana has become more readily available for medical purposes as a result of the state's Medical Marijuana Act, 35 Pa. C.S. § 10231.101, et seq. However, marijuana remains an illegal substance according to federal law. Pennsylvania's legalization of marijuana for medical purposes does not supersede enforcement of federal drug laws, including those that prohibit the presence and use of drugs on school property, including the Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. § 71118. Possession of marijuana is a criminal offense under State and Federal law and is also a violation of the District Policy 217 – Drugs and Alcohol: https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/pghboe/Board.nsf/Public#.

The prohibition of marijuana on school grounds extends to marijuana, THC, or THCa in any form, including marijuana products. Prohibited forms of marijuana extend to these substances in any form, including but not limited to, wax-based, edibles, pill, oil, topical forms such as gels, creams or ointments, extracts, flower or bud forms, and forms administered by vaporization or nebulization, tincture, or liquid. PPS will abide by any state or federal guidance which may be issued relating to the possession of marijuana or marijuana products on school grounds.

Students found to be in possession of less than 5 grams of marijuana on a first offense are referred for a 307 Code of Conduct violation. Students in possession of 5 grams or more of marijuana, or a second offense for possessing less than 5 grams, will be referred for a 407 Code of Conduct violation. Students who present a medical marijuana prescription, card or certification authorizing the use for their own medical condition shall receive no disciplinary consequence for possessing or using marijuana on school grounds. However, all controlled substances, including marijuana, shall be confiscated by school administration and provided to custody of the Division of School Safety.

Alternative Education Placements

- Students must be seriously, persistently, and currently disruptive to be placed in an Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY) setting. A disruptive youth is defined by law as: having disregard for school authority, including persistent violation of policy and rules; drugs on school property or during school-affiliated activities; violent or threatening behavior on school or during school-affiliated activities; possession of a weapon on school property; criminal act on school property or during school-affiliated activities; misconduct that would merit expulsion under school policy. Only students in grades 6-12 are eligible for placement in an AEDY program, and only after all other options for improving behavior have been exhausted.
- All students recommended for placement in AEDY must be provided with due process prior to placement, including a transfer hearing.
- AEDY referrals and placements cannot discriminate on the basis of disability, race or other prohibited status.
- Once placed in AEDY, the Transition Requirements include:
    - There is a presumptive exit date of 45 days (or less).

- For students with disabilities (including students with IEPs and 504 plans) the transition team must meet within first 5 days of the AEDY placement to develop transition plan.
- Transition team develops goals for the student's program and clear exit date.
- An Individual student Positive Behavior Support Plan is developed.
- AEDY programs cannot be used as placement for students transitioning back from mental health/residential placement.
- AEDY programs cannot be used as placement for student transitioning back from court ordered delinquency or dependency placement.

- More information on AEDY can be found at: https://www.education.pa.gov/Policyhttps://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/Purdons/Pages/Alternative-Education-for-Disruptive-Youth.aspxFunding/BECS/Purdons/Pages/Alternative-Education-for-Disruptive-Youth.aspx
- No student eligible for special education pursuant to the IDEA shall be transferred to an Alternative Education Placement except in accordance with all federal and state law and regulations pertaining to discipline of students who are eligible for special education, which include the requirement that a manifestation determination review be held. Students with disabilities cannot be referred to Alternative Education due to behavior or conduct which is caused by the student's disability, has a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability, or was the direct result of the LEA's failure to implement the student's IEP or 504 plan. All students with disabilities will receive a free and appropriate public education while at the Alternative Education Placement and must be appropriately supported in making process toward the goals in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
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STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

PPS has established health and safety protocols to prevent the spread of communicable diseases such as COVID-19. District guidelines and procedures can be found at: https://www.pghschools.org/covid19.