

Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8

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Dr. Yarra Howze, Principal

Student Handbook

“Standard of Everyday Excellence for Kids” (S.E.E.K.)

This handbook provides you with the guidelines followed at Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8. Every member of the staff is here to help you have a successful and enjoyable year. Please read this book carefully, as it will answer many questions about your needs and what will be expected of you at Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8.

Pittsburgh-Allegheny is comprised of an elementary school and a middle school. The Middle School is housed on the third and fourth floors of the main building, the fourth floor of the Arch Street wing and in several rooms throughout the Annex building. During classroom transitions, middle school students will use the main stairwell accompanied by an adult. All Pittsburgh-Allegheny students share common spaces such as our Grand Lobby and staircase, auditorium, gym, pool, cafeteria and the Annex. Many unique opportunities exist for collaboration among children in our elementary and middle schools.

The Middle School is comprised of three homerooms for 6th and 7th grades and four homerooms for the 8th grade level. Students are allotted three minutes travel time between periods. That time is to be utilized for taking care of personal needs and moving quietly to the next classroom.

In the beginning of the school year, students and parents will be asked to complete, sign and return many forms. ***It is imperative that these forms be returned to school.*** They include a school contract and Title I Compact, family information sheet, board health packet and medical form, technology acceptable use policy, media/press release form, general field trip consent form, and lunch application form. **It is important to keep the school up to date with correct contact information including your phone number and address.** Accurate records are needed in case of emergencies and for mailing monthly calendars, grades, progress reports, etc.

CORE BELIEFS

- Learning is a lifelong event that reaches beyond the walls of the classroom.
- Each individual in the child’s environment, including parents, students, teachers, and the community, is a resource for learning.

- Through the school, community and home, children will develop a system of mutual respect which recognizes the diversity among us.
- The school, parents and community must work collaboratively to establish a safe and caring learning community.
- Clear goals, expectations and instructional strategies must be set to enable each student to reach his/her full potential.
- Clear communication channels are essential to the entire learning environment.

Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8 will maintain a foundation of character development as a primary goal. Our children will behave appropriately, respect cultural diversity, and will develop self-confidence, self-discipline, and self-reliance. Students will provide service to their school and to the community.

Parents support the philosophy and practices of the Traditional Academy, and are engaged as partners in the education of their children. Teachers and administrators refine their skills and seek professional development opportunities to improve their effectiveness. Teachers will use technology to lead instruction to prepare students. Collaborative efforts of educators, parents and the community help us realized our goals for our students.

PITTSBURGH-ALLEGHENY TRADITIONAL ACADEMY 6-8 ALMA MATER

By Joseph Stammera- vocal music teacher. 1992-93 (revised September 2000)

We sing with one voice,

One heart, one mind.

The past is behind us.

Right now is our time.

As we look to the future,

Your lessons provide

Our lives with a North Star

To serve as our guide

Allegheny, our hearts are true to thee,

Where every challenge is an opportunity.

With glory and honor, we're called to be

Allegheny Traditional Academy

Though high or low, the road may be,
The path we follow is our destiny.
Our education, we owe to thee,
A.T.A. forever, lovingly.
Allegheny, our hearts are true to thee,
Where every challenge is an opportunity.
With glory and honor, we're called to be
Allegheny Traditional Academy.

CAMPUS INFORMATION

All visitors will be admitted into the building through the Commons Street entrance during the school day. Navigating the campus of Pittsburgh-Allegheny 6-8 can present challenges for new families and students. However, students quickly learn their way around the campus. The list of terms below will assist you with campus life:

- Arch Street Wing- the front section of the school that faces Arch Street and the Aviary
- Astros (star) - our official school mascot.
- Royal Blue & White- our official school colors
- The Annex- The annex houses some sixth grade classrooms as well as the Spanish, music and art rooms.
- Fourth floor office- Student Services Suite
- Grand Lobby- main entrance
- Main staircase- largest center staircase used by visitors, students, and teachers.
- RAC (Restorative Adjustment Center) – room assigned for in-school restorative suspension.
- Middle School- located on the third and fourth floor.
- Middle School Main Office- third floor- Principal's office.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Bell Schedule

Bell schedules will be mailed home to families at the beginning of the year. You may also visit our website at www.pps.k12.pa.us for the bell schedule for your child's school.

Morning Procedure

All students will arrive on Arch Street and report directly to the metal detectors entering the main building on Commons Street. **STUDENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO ENTER THROUGH THE ARCH STREET DOORS OR THE CAFETERIA DOORS. NO EXCEPTIONS!** Cell phones, smart watches, and ear buds will be turned in at the metal detectors and collected in bins by homeroom. All items will be returned to students at the end of the day. Open food items will be thrown away. Teachers will report to the cafeteria at 8:50am to welcome their homeroom students. Students will sit at designated tables with their homeroom class. Dismissal from breakfast in the cafeteria will begin promptly at 9:10 am. Homeroom teachers will walk each class to their homerooms. Homeroom teachers and main office announcements will inform students of daily events. All students must be in their homerooms no later than 9:15 a.m. or a lunch detention will be issued. Tardy students must report directly to the main office with a tardy excuse from their parent upon arrival.

Breakfast

Eating breakfast at school is a privilege, and students may be excluded for improper behavior or loitering. Everyone is expected to clean up his or her own area. Students must leave the cafeteria when prompted in order to report promptly to homeroom. Food is not permitted outside of the cafeteria. Students who arrive late will quickly finish breakfast in the cafeteria under the supervision of a staff member and then promptly report to HR with a pass from a staff member.

Lunch

The importance of appropriate cafeteria and recess behavior must be stressed with students. Good behavior at lunch sets the tone for the afternoon and maximizes instructional time. The following rules and procedures will make the cafeteria a more pleasant area:

- No food is permitted outside the cafeteria.
- Students must have a pass if they are leaving the cafeteria during lunch.
- Table manners are expected. Misuse of food or related items will result in consequences.
- Students will remain seated in the cafeteria until dismissed by teachers.

- A supervised recess will accompany each lunch session. Safety is our number one concern.
- Students will proceed quickly, quietly and in an orderly fashion to and from lunch/recess period with a teacher.
- Teachers will report to recess/lunch area at 1:25pm to escort students to 6th period class.

Early Dismissal

Normal medical and dental appointments should be scheduled during school hours outside of the school day when possible. While it is not always possible to schedule appointments outside of school hours, it is important that families try to keep early dismissals to a minimum. When children are called from class early, it is not only interrupting their education, but is also a disruption for all students in the classroom. Early dismissal arrangements should be made in advance. Early dismissal The school must be notified in writing, stating the time and reason for the early dismissal. Students should bring the written request to the main office during the homeroom period. If it is absolutely necessary to excuse a student during school hours, parents are asked to do the following:

- Notify the child's teacher, in writing, stating the reason for the early dismissal and provide a telephone number to verify the early dismissal. The office will issue an early dismissal note after verification.
- **Report to the 3rd floor middle school Main Office to pick up the child** at the designated time and sign him/her out of the building. Middle school parents will not be permitted to sign out middle school students from the elementary main office location. For safety reasons, no student is permitted to wait outdoors unsupervised.
- If someone is picking up the child other than the parent/guardian, inform the office secretary. No child will be released to anyone other than a parent or legal guardian unless prior arrangements have been made and the person provides a valid photo identification.

Attendance

The educational, social, and emotional skills that a child develops during middle school will remain with them throughout their lives. The first part of the day is significant because it establishes the ground work for the rest of the day; in the same manner as the first report card period sets the tone for the remainder of the school year.

As of January 31, 2007, the following new attendance requirements in Pennsylvania became effective:

1. **Parents must submit excuses for absences within (3) days or the absence becomes permanently unlawful.**
2. Parents will receive a Notice of Unlawful Absence after the first and second absences.
3. If there is a third unexcused absence, parents will receive a **Notice of Unlawful Absences** and a warning that they may be liable in court without further notice. Parents and school staff will meet to establish a Truancy Elimination Plan.
4. A fourth unlawful absence will cause a citation to be issued by the District Magisterial Justice. Habitual truants may be fined or face other consequences.
5. Any student who misses more than 10 days –excused and/or unexcused absences - in one school year will be required to submit verification that the absence was due to illness, injury or hospitalization, impassable roads, religious observance, or bereavement.

Missing a class without teacher permission or legal excuse will be considered a class cut and will receive a consequence. This can include a parent conference, in-house suspension or suspension from school.

Tardiness

Students who arrive to homeroom after 9:10 a.m. are considered tardy. Students arriving to school after 9:15 a.m. for any reason must first report to the third floor Main Office to sign in **BEFORE** going to class. Students entering after 10:00 a.m., must have a written excuse for their tardiness. The only exception is the late arrival of a school bus. Excessive tardiness interferes significantly with the learning process and is disruptive to our educational environment. The school staff will work with parents to improve punctuality. Being prompt to all classes is required. There are two minutes between classes for transitions and to take care of personal needs. If a student is detained by a teacher, that teacher will provide a pass for the student. Initial steps to correct the problem will include a verbal warning, documented phone call home and lunch detention or a different consequence.

- Two accounts of tardiness will result in parental contact and lunch detention.
- Three accounts of tardiness will result in a further consequence.

If the student does not attend after-school detention, he/she will be assigned RAC (in-house suspension) the following day.

Procedure for Issuing Grades

Twenty four (24) or more days absent in one school year shall be considered excessive and the student shall not be eligible to receive credit for the course being taken at that time. Tardiness that results in a student missing class or subject period will be considered and unexcused

absence when calculating grades. Parents can track student progress through Home Access Center (HAC).

Student Dress Code

Students are permitted to wear only plain solid navy blue or khaki jumpers, skirts, slacks or walking shorts. No sweat suits, velour or spandex pants, or jeans are permitted. Skirts and shorts must be no more than two inches above the knee. Plain solid white, light blue or navy-blue blouses or shirts with collars or turtlenecks are required. Members of the National Junior Honor Society are permitted to wear red shirts of the same description. Undergarments should be solid in color and must not be seen. Earrings should be no larger than a quarter, necklaces should not be longer than your shirt collar. Only white or dark colored socks or tights may be worn. No sandals may be worn or shoes without closed heels.

Members of the National Junior Honor Society are permitted to wear red shirts of the same description. Undergarments should not be seen. Only white or dark colored socks may be worn.

Students may wear plain solid white or navy-blue sweaters or vests. All uniform T-shirts must have collars. Logos should **NOT** be larger than a quarter. All belts must be plain black, brown, white or navy blue. Tennis shoes are permitted to be worn in the middle school.

Students are expected to be clean and neat at all times. **Failure to follow the code is a breach of the Pittsburgh Allegheny 6-8 Tradition Academy contract. The consequences for failure to conform to the dress code are an immediate call home and placement in all day in-school suspension (RAC), unless the parent can bring in the proper uniform.** Students may not dress out of uniform for field trips unless specifically informed to do so in a letter to the parent.

School Nurse

A Nurse Practitioner is assigned to Pittsburgh Allegheny 6-8 Traditional Academy. The school nurse performs various testing services such as physical examinations and vision/hearing screenings. She is certified to identify contagious conditions. When necessary, she makes referrals for parental follow-up. The nurse practitioner works closely with school personnel in case of suspected neglect or abuse. For students who take medication on a regular basis, the proper forms must be filled out and submitted to the nurse accompanying the medications. Students may not carry medicine on their own.

Fire Drills

The purpose of the fire drill is to establish a procedure for evacuating the building quickly and safely in case of an emergency. It ensures proper student and adult reaction to emergency

situations. Students are to exit the classrooms and follow predetermined routes to the outdoors. It is absolutely essential that all children are silent and orderly.

When the fire alarm sounds:

- Students will form a line quickly, quietly and in an orderly manner.
- Teachers or monitors will close classroom doors; windows should be closed if it does not cause a serious delay. Attendance sheets will be carried out by teachers.
- No one is permitted to stop to obtain outer clothing or backpacks after the alarm sounds.
- Occupants will walk to the nearest unobstructed exit and leave the building in an orderly fashion
- Assistance will be provided according to a pre-arranged plan for those students incapable of moving at a moderate speed during the drill.
- Each class will proceed to the pre-determined point outside the building that provides enough distance to allow the fire department to carry out the necessary operations without interference from students.
- Each teacher will use an attendance sheet to account for all of the students assigned to that class during the fire drill.

If for any reason a student is out of the classroom when the first drill or disaster drill is sounded, they are not to attempt to rejoin their class. If a fire alarm has sounded, they are to exit the building and meet their group in the designated area.

Severe Weather Drill

Pittsburgh experiences a variety of weather conditions during the school year which have caused weather emergencies. For high winds and tornado drills, an alarm will sound and there will be an announcement made for all students and staff to proceed to the predetermined safe areas within the building. These safe areas will be located away from outside windows and walls. Further directions will be given as needed.

Textbooks/Technology

Children are responsible for textbooks and technology assigned to them during class periods. They are expected to take good care of the books and technology and will pay for any damaged learning materials owned by the school that are abused or lost. Promotion certificates and report cards may be held until the adequate compensation is paid.

Personal Items

Students are asked to be extremely careful about leaving valuable items unattended on desks, in classrooms, in the lunchroom and in unlocked lockers. The school is not responsible for lost

or stolen articles. Cell phones and other technology items must be turned into the school staff to be secured in a locked area. If a cell phone or smartwatch is seen, it will be confiscated. Parents will be notified to plan to retrieve the phone from the main office. Students who refuse to turn in their phones when directed will be suspended.

Personal Messages

If there is a need to contact your child, please call the school rather than calling a personal cell phone. **Students are not permitted to use their cell phones during school hours.** However, the office staff will not take a telephone message for a student unless it is a true emergency. Please make arrangements with your child before leaving for school concerning changes in routine. We try to avoid interrupting our teaching staff during the instructional day. The school cannot be held responsible for telephone messages which are not of an urgent nature.

Hall Behavior

Students are always expected to walk to the right in the hallway. To ensure safety in the hallways, all students will adhere to one-way traffic. Appropriate levels of quiet are expected in the hallways and stairways. Failure to demonstrate appropriate behavior during transitions throughout the day will result in a consequence.

Horse-playing and Rough-housing

Horse playing often leads to injury and more serious school disruptions. Students are reminded weekly at student meetings to refrain from engaging in horse-play. Violations may result in a suspension.

Bathroom Privileges

Students may visit the bathrooms during the two-minute transition time between classes. True emergencies will be the only exception of time out of the classroom. If a medical problem necessitates frequent bathroom visits, a note must be submitted to the main office from a doctor.

Lockers

Each student on campus is assigned a locker. Students are to quietly visit their lockers at designated times: before homeroom, before lunch, after lunch and at the end of each school day. Locks must be purchased and used by each Pittsburgh-Allegheny 6-8 student.

A student's locker is the property of the school and must be used for the purposes intended: a storage area for books, school supplies and outdoor garments.

If school officials have reasonable suspicion that the student has illegal substances or weapons in the locker, the school will conduct a search of that locker.

Assembly and Auditorium Behavior

Assemblies will be held at various times throughout the school year. Each class has an assigned section in the auditorium. Students are to sit with their class unless otherwise instructed. It is important that children learn and demonstrate appropriate audience behavior. Students must sit quietly and give their attention to the speaker and/or performance. Students are expected to be respectful and responsive at all times. Entry and exit from the auditorium must be quiet and orderly. A student's inability to adhere to the aforementioned auditorium behavioral expectations will result in a consequence in accordance with the student code of conduct.

Field Trips

Field trips are scheduled to enhance the educational process or to provide opportunities for achievement, recognition, or reward. Attending field trips is a privilege. Therefore, if a student's behavior is thought to potentially disrupt the activity, the student may not be permitted to attend field trips. Classroom teachers and the principal make the final decision. Signed parental permission slips must be returned before any student leaves the campus. A generic field trip form with confirmed parental consent will be kept in the student's file.

Communication

Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8 teachers intend to keep an open line of parent/teacher communication. This includes monthly calendars, letters carried or mailed home, progress reports, report cards, conferences, telephone calls, school messenger system (such as Talking Points), email, and requested parent conference days.

Blackboard Connect

Blackboard Connect is our mass notification system that gives Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8 the ability to reach you in minutes. This system will be used to communicate time sensitive information, event invitations, and/or attendance notifications. It is the most efficient way to keep our campus safe and to keep our families informed and involved. These messages can be relayed through phone calls, emails and by text. Parents have the option to set up the ways in which you would like to be notified.

Student Services Personnel

A full-time social worker has been assigned to the campus. The social worker will provide assistance and guidance to students by supporting them in establishing educational, social and career-oriented goals. In addition, the social worker will support parents and caretakers by

facilitating meetings, phone conferences, and acting as a liaison between families and the school staff.

Special programs are designed to: assist students in accomplishing their individual goals, provide an orientation for new students to the school, assist students moving on to a new school, and support students who are selecting high schools and academic courses. To assist some students in adjusting to the unique demands of middle school, our campus offers the following services: counseling, mediation, organization presentations, and agency outreach services. The SAP team (Student Assistance Programs) is partnered with external service provider agencies, and the school's CORE team to support the needs of our students.

ACADEMICS

Honor Roll

Children who achieve a grade point average of 3.00 to 3.49 receive Honor Roll status. Children who achieve a grade point average of 3.50 to 4.00 receive High Honor Roll status. Please note the different units attached to courses. They can range from .5 to 2.0 units depending on the class. Grade point average (GPA) is weighted accordingly. Students who maintain a grade average of 3.4 and above could be eligible for membership into the National Junior Honor Society.

Homework

Homework provides many benefits to students and parents. Homework incorporates skill practice which is necessary for retention and mastery. It enriches and supplements the classroom experiences. It also provides parents with information about what is being taught in the classroom and the quality of their child's work. In addition to the academic benefits, the consistent completion of homework promotes the student's ability to improve their time management skills, ability to adhere to deadlines, and manage their organization skills. It also assists in the development of responsibility, self-discipline, imagination and creativity.

Homework is assigned four nights a week. Homework in grades six through eight can range from one to two hours daily. Homework for a particular subject is ten percent of a student's grade. Parents can help their student(s) successfully complete homework assignments by: providing an appropriate home environment for their students to complete homework, establishing a consistent homework time, reviewing homework for neatness and accuracy, and contacting the teachers for clarification and assistance when needed. Parents are encouraged to create an email tree for establishing consistent communication with teachers throughout the school year.

Probation Letters

Every student enrolled in Pittsburgh-Allegheny 6-8 must attend school regularly, adjust to the school culture, and achieve academically and socially. All rules and regulations of the District

Code of Conduct and the Traditional Academy Code must be followed as outlined in the contract. Failure to meet these requirements could result in magnet probationary status. Probation letters are sent to the homes when this occurs. At this point, parent conferences will be scheduled. We will work together to help your child achieve. **Students who do not attend school (attendance less than 90%), make an effort to achieve success and adjust to the culture of the Traditional Academy (6 or more days of suspensions) may lose their magnet status and their place at Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8.**

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- **Honors Day Out** – quarterly reward activities for honor roll and perfect attendance
- **Science Fair**- annual event to celebrate inquiry based scientific reasoning
- **Service Learning Project** – the student body will participate in a service project each year
- **Career Fair** – 6th -8th grades will participate in an annual Career Exploration Fair

Extra-curricular Activities

Extra-curricular activities offered at Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8 include: Interscholastic Athletics, Intramural Sports, Extended Day Tutoring Program, National Junior Honors Society, Yearbook Club, Book Club, African American Challenge Bowl, Student Council, Leadership Clubs, and many other new and exciting activities that will be introduced at the Back to School Night.

Interscholastic Athletics

Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8 sponsors girls' and boys' teams for the following sports:

- **Fall** (September and October)
 - Volleyball
 - Co-ed team Cross-Country
 - Flag Football
 - Cheerleading
- **Winter** (November – February)
 - Swimming
 - Basketball
- **Spring** (March – May)
 - Soccer
 - Wrestling

The teams are open to all middle school girls and boys who meet the following qualifications:

1. Have a 2.0 GPA or better on their report card and maintain that average or above throughout the season

2. Pass a physical examination within six weeks of the start of each sport season

Students may only participate in one sport per season. If a student is assigned to RAC or suspended they cannot participate with the team that day.

PERFECT ATTENDANCE

This is defined as being in school on time, everyday all day long. Any excused absence, tardiness, early dismissals, medical excuses, or out of school suspensions rule out having perfect attendance. Bus tardiness or bus absences are the only exceptions. For each marking period, students with perfect attendance may participate in the Honors Day Out field trip.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to participate in meaningful ways in our school culture. Opportunities are open for parents to meet with grade-level teams at the request of the parent or the team. Opportunities exist for parent participation on our Parent School Community Council (PSCC), and to represent Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8 at district wide meetings. Volunteer work at our school is always encouraged, as long as the parent has filed the required clearances with the district. We actively support interested parents in obtaining clearances. Opportunities for involvement also include Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), and evening Content Nights are held monthly for staff and families to get together for fun and learning.

CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT

Pittsburgh-Allegheny Traditional Academy 6-8 adheres strictly to the District Student Code of Conduct. In addition:

- Students are to **show respect for all staff**, other students, parents, visitors and property through consistent demonstration of appropriate behavior and appropriate language.
- Students will follow the directives of **all adults in charge**
- Students will comply with all aspects of the Allegheny 6-8 uniform dress code, unless otherwise instructed.
- Students are to report promptly to their assigned areas when they arrive to school each day. For safety purposes, students must behave in a manner appropriate to school and follow the directions of the adults in charge.
- Students will quietly visit their lockers four times each day (during homeroom, before and after lunch, and at dismissal) under teacher supervision.
- Students will sit in their assigned seats in all classes and common areas unless otherwise excused by the adult in charge.
- Students will remain in the classroom and assigned area unless permitted or directed to go elsewhere (with a hall pass).
- Students will utilize the bathroom during their transition time between classes (or during class for emergencies only).

- Money is not to be brought to school except for purchase of snacks and/or other approved school activities
- Eating is permitted only at breakfast and lunch times (in the cafeteria) or during approved activities. Students are not permitted to bring candy, gum, beverages, or any other snacks to school to consume during class time.
- Toys, games, and any type of permanent markers (example: sharpies, etc.) are not to be brought to school except for pre-approved activities.

Bus Behavior

Students must behave appropriately and safely while being transported on the school bus. They must remain seated, talk softly, and open windows ONLY when directed by the driver. They may not “hang out” of windows, shout at passers-by, move about or eat on the bus, throw things, or touch other individuals. Video cameras are randomly installed on school buses to ensure safety for all.

Any misbehavior that distracts the driver is a very serious hazard to the safe operation of the bus, and jeopardizes the safety of all the passengers. When an incident is of a more severe nature, it may result directly in a bus suspension or out-of school suspension. Continued misconduct by student on the bus will ultimately result in the complete loss of bus transportation privileges. ***Students do not have the autonomy to change their bus assignments for after-school destinations.*** For safety reasons, children must go home on their assigned bus. Students are insured only for their assigned buses and may not ride on unassigned buses.

Students are expected to follow the regulations of the Traditional Academy Code. They must also follow all staff established rules and procedures. For more information, please refer to the Code of Student Conduct, available on the district website, www.pps.k12.pa.us.