Pittsburgh Clayton Academy

Student and Parent Handbook

2023-2024

Our Mission

Our mission at Clayton Academy is to work collaboratively with staff, students, families, and communities to provide support and interventions that promote positive attitudes and behaviors necessary for academic and social success beyond Clayton Academy.

Our Vision

Our vision at Clayton Academy is to foster a safe, positive, and valuable learning environment through building strong, consistent relationships with all students, families, and communities while cultivating character and leadership qualities necessary for success beyond Clayton Academy.

District Non-Discrimination Policy

Board Policy 102 states in part:

The Board declares that it is the policy of the District to provide an equal opportunity for all students to achieve their maximum potential through the programs and activities offered in the schools 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.

The District is committed to the maintenance of a safe, positive learning environment for all students that is free from discrimination by providing all students course offerings, counseling, assistance, services, employment, athletics and extracurricular activities without any form of discrimination, including Title IX sexual harassment. Discrimination is inconsistent with the rights of students and

the educational and programmatic goals of the District and is prohibited at or, in the course of, District-sponsored programs or activities, including transportation to or from school or school-sponsored activities. Discrimination is also prohibited in any remote learning program or activity of the District.

For the full text of Board Policy 102-Non-Discrimination in School and Classroom Practices, please visit: https://www.pghschools.org/nondiscrimination-policy

Student Dress Code

The purpose of a dress code is to create an atmosphere where students are able to focus on academic achievement instead of their wardrobe. By engaging in the dress code we hope to promote the importance of uniformity and a respectable appearance which is a life skill that can directly support the success of all students.

Due to the climate in our region we are aware that the temperature does fluctuate in the different seasons and accommodations have been made to address these issues. All students will be expected to adhere to the dress code on a daily basis. The dress code is as follows:

1. All students must wear a **black collared shirt.** This may be a short sleeved shirt, long sleeved shirt, or black button down dress shirt. In case of cold weather, a plain black pullover sweatshirt or sweater may be worn over a collared shirt, but be aware that a collar must be showing at all times or the student will be considered out of dress code. No hoods or sweatshirts with zippers are permitted. A long-sleeved t-shirt of any color may also be worn under short sleeved collared shirts.

2. All students must wear **khaki dress pants or shorts.** Pants must be dress-style pants (Dockers, Dickies, etc.). No khaki-colored jeans will be permitted. Shorts must be "Cargo" or "Bermuda" styles. Shorts must be knee length or no more than one (1) inch above the knee.

3. Tennis shoes, dress shoes or boots are required. Sandals and slides are not permitted. Crocs and Ugg slides are not permitted.

4. No jackets, hats or the cold weather knit type earmuff or headbands will be permitted.

5. No jewelry of any kind. This includes piercings. All students will remove all earrings from piercings after entering the building before placing earrings and other personal items in designated property bins. Band Aids and other forms of coverings for piercings will not be permitted. NO EXCEPTION.

Reasonable Search and Seizure

To ensure the safety of all students and staff members in our school and to promote a healthy productive learning environment all students will be subject to a reasonable and appropriate search process upon entering the school daily. If a student is found to be in possession of an item that is deemed illegal or inappropriate that item will be confiscated. All other items such as cell phones, keys, wallets, purses, jewelry, candy/gum, hair wraps, bandanas, combs, brushes, etc. will be collected and safely stored until dismissal when they will be returned to the student.

Prohibited Items

- Jewelry of any kind (earrings, necklaces, watches, bracelets, piercings including eyebrow, nose, lip, etc.)

- Cell phones or other electronic devices

- Headphones

- Wallets or purses

- Outside food, drinks, candy

- Any item considered to be gang affiliated

****<u>If at any time a student is found in possession of a prohibited items after entering the school and clearing the search process, the item will be confiscated. Upon confiscation of the item, parental contact will be made to make arrangements to return the item in question.</u>

Food

During the 2014/2015 school year, Pittsburgh Public Schools began participating in the **Community Eligibility Provision** (CEP) which allows all students in the district to eat for free regardless of their financial standing. All Clayton students receive breakfast and lunch during normal school days. This may not include early dismissal days. If your child has any type of food allergy, medical documentation will need to be provided in order to provide an appropriate alternative.

Outside food/snacks are only permitted to be brought into the building by student government members (further information below).

Attendance/Excused Absences

Pittsburgh Public School's attendance policies will be followed during the time of enrollment at Clayton Academy. In case of absence, a parent or guardian is responsible for providing written documentation within three (3) school days in

regard to their child's absence(s). Any absence from school that is not accounted for through written documentation will be considered unexcused and subject to truancy procedures.

Tardiness

All students are expected to be present and on time daily. If a student arrives after the start of morning assembly (7:28am), he or she will be deemed tardy. When tardy, the student should be prepared to present some form of documentation as to the reason for his or her tardiness. Excessive tardiness could result in disciplinary action.

Inclement Weather

In the case of inclement weather, reference the district website as well as the local news channels to obtain information in regard to cancellations or delayed schedules. When schools are operating on a two-hour delay, students should report to their bus stops two hours after their designated pick-up time. If there are ever any questions or concerns about inclement weather, please contact the school.

Our Program

Clayton Academy operates a PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) model that focuses on creating a positive and restorative peer culture and community within the school building. Clayton implements behavior expectations and norms for students to adhere to that will allow them to become productive and eliminate any anti-social, anti-positive behaviors that have caused them problems in the past. Through establishing norms, staff members can

provide a solid foundation and high expectations for all students that are necessary for them to become productive and effective students when they return to their sending schools.

The four foundational behavioral expectations that are presented are:

At Clayton Academy we are…

1. Respectful
2. Independent
3. Safe
4. Engaged

Students are expected to always adhere to these standard behavior expectations and are responsible for helping to create a culture within the building in which all students and staff maintain these expectations. Students who refuse to adhere to these established expectations will find it difficult to earn the positive incentives that are available to them within the PBIS model. In these instances, student conferences, parent conferences, and contact with probation officers (where applicable) may be deemed necessary.

Behavior Matrix (Expectations and Norms)

Clayton Academy Behavior Expectations and Norms

	Campus	Classroom	Hallway and Transitions	Cafeteria	Assembly	Bus
Expectations **We are...**	**Behavior Norms** **At Clayton we will...**					
Respectful	✓ Treat staff with respect. ✓ Treat peers with respect. ✓ Use appropriate language. ✓ Tell the truth.	✓ Raise our hand for attention. ✓ Take care of learning equipment.	✓ Stay quiet.	✓ Thank the lunch personnel.	✓ Respect assembly as sacred.	✓ Treat the bus driver with respect.
Independent	✓ Follow the Code of Student Conduct. ✓ Follow the dress code. ✓ Keep our shirts tucked in.	✓ Use non-verbal redirections. ✓ Complete all of our work. ✓ Complete our own work. ✓ Ask for missed assignments. ✓ Wait until last five minutes to ask for log signatures.	✓ Ask for permission to be in the hallway. ✓ Ask for permission to use the bathroom or water fountain.	✓ Put our waste in the trashcan.	✓ Give positive feedback to our peers.	✓ Keep the bus clean and tidy.
Safe	✓ Keep our hands to ourselves. ✓ Only touch our own property. ✓ Stand up to bullying.	✓ Stay in our seat unless we have permission.	✓ Walk in the hallway.	✓ Stay in our seat.	✓ Sit in a straight line.	✓ Stay in our seat. ✓ Keep our hands to ourselves.
Engaged	✓ Demonstrate positive behavior. ✓ Support the positive behavior of others.	✓ Always be attentive. ✓ Participate when called upon by the teacher.	✓ Walk with our class. ✓ Walk in line.	✓ Talk to the people sitting at our table.	✓ Actively participate. ✓ Stay attentive. ✓ Keep our eyes on the speaker.	✓ Pay attention to our surroundings.

Restorative Practices at Clayton

Restorative practices are a proactive approach that builds students' capacity to self-regulate, make decisions, and self-govern. Without these 21st-century skills, students will not make the academic strides they need to achieve their aspirations, and in the case of alternative education students, will not learn to self-regulate behaviors that have caused them problems in the comprehensive school setting. The core of restorative practices centers on a restorative culture. We create classrooms that allow students to govern what happens through shared decision making and exercising choice responsibilities. We teach, and expect peers to help reinforce, the pro-social skills that are needed to have positive relationships with peers and staff. When faced with conflict, students are guided to advocate for themselves and their peers, take responsibility and make amends. The goal of using restorative practices in the school setting is to develop students with the following restorative characteristics that help them transition back into the restorative communities of their sending schools.

<u>Restorative Characteristics</u>

- I remain calm during conversations.
- I listen without interrupting.
- I recognize and accept responsibility when I have harmed someone in my school community.
- I give, and accept, apologies.
- I seek support from peers or staff when I find myself in an issue.

Pittsburgh Public Schools Code of Conduct

Along with following the established foundational behavior expectations and norms of the PBIS program at Clayton Academy, and participating in the restorative community of the school, each student is responsible for:

1. Following the district code of conduct as well as the school's procedures, policies, and directions from staff daily.

2. Refraining from any illegal activity.

3. Maintaining safe behavior at all times.

Clayton Academy will use the PPS Code of Student Conduct, and any consequences outlined within, to enforce consequences for serious infractions. While we do maintain our own behavior expectations and norms, as described, all students are PPS students and fall under the purview of the Code of Conduct at all times.

AEDY Timeline and Formal Periodic Reviews

The information below explains the timeline of a student's placement at Clayton, and explains the process of how Formal Periodic Reviews are conducted to determine a student's eligibility to return to their sending school.

1. Student commits weapon, assault, or chronic disruptive behavior infractions that lead to a suspension and/or application to alternative education.

2. District discipline panel or hearing officer makes recommendation/finding for student to be placed in alternative education.

3. Student's sending school completes a behavior assessment (BASC-3) about the student to give information to the alternative placement about behavior areas of concern.

4. Student and parents/guardians complete an intake meeting at Clayton Academy.

5. Within the first five days of enrollment the student's case manager will work with the student, using the behavior assessment and information from the application, to create one or more behavior goals for the student to work on during their enrollment.

6. Teachers and staff complete weekly behavior check sheets for the student to track the student's progress toward meeting their behavior goal(s).

7. Around the 45-day mark of the student's enrollment, the student's case manager will call a meeting with staff, parents, and the student to discuss the student's progress toward meeting their behavior goal(s). If it is determined that the student met their behavior goal(s) they will return to their sending school. If the student has not met their behavior goal(s) they will remain in alternative education and the review process will occur every 45 days until the student meets their behavior goal(s) and can transition back to their sending school.

8. When it is determined that the student can return to their sending school the case manager and student will work together to create a transition plan. This plan will be shared at a transition meeting with the student, parents/guardians, case manager and transition team from the sending school.

9. Clayton Academy staff will remain in contact with the sending school to monitor the success of the student's transition. If the transition is unsuccessful within the first two weeks of the transition period, with the implementation of the transition plan and any supports outlined, the student may be returned to the AEDY program.

Program Processes During Enrollment

Due to the fact that Clayton Academy is an alternative school established to support the behavioral and social/emotional needs of students who experience some difficulty in these areas, there are certain processes within a school day that differ from a traditional school. Some of these processes will be explained to better assist in allowing parents/students to understand the day-to-day operations of the school.

Assembly

Assembly is a formal group process that occurs at the beginning and end of every day. It utilizes positive peer relationships to improve behavior, set goals for the day, and reflect on the day. It also serves many purposes in regard to the development and implementation of our desired school culture. Everyone on campus participates in the daily assembly. Staff supports the assembly process to help promote positive behavior and goal setting for the day. Students take the time in the morning to plan what they want to accomplish that day, and in the afternoon they reflect on how well their day went. Peers provide appropriate feedback, intervention, and support to each other as needed. Staff also uses this as a forum to deliver information and expectations pertinent to the day's schedule on campus.

Individual and Group Counseling

Students will participate in various individual and group counseling opportunities each week. These opportunities will consist of three types of counseling experiences.

1. Morning Circle

   Restorative Circle is a structured form of community dialogue where members can allow for all voices to be heard in an environment that is neutral. This takes place every morning at the start of first period and is done with the students' homeroom groups. Rather than relying on a single leader, the circle acts as a democratic community to help students work through issues and situations that impact their classroom either academically or socially, directly or indirectly. Contributing to a circle allows students to build positive classroom and school culture as well as feel that they have a voice in their community and promotes a sense of belonging.

2. Small group sessions with staff counselors and social workers are offered to all students as a class period on a daily scheduled basis. These sessions use the *ReThink Ed* curriculum. *ReThink Ed* employs a daily lesson format that includes instructional video, discussion questions, individual activities and home and school connections —to teach essential prosocial skills to children and adolescents. This approach allows students to take the behavior expectations and norms they are taught every day and practice using them in real-world situations.

3. Individual sessions with staff counselors and social workers are offered to students on a weekly scheduled basis as well as on an as-needed basis. During these sessions, students work with a staff member to create and monitor individual behavior goals. These sessions are extremely important because creating and reaching individual behavior goals is the basis for students being able to transition back to their sending schools. These

individual sessions give students the support they need to monitor their progress and work to improve any areas that may be hindering them from reaching their individual goals.

In all three of these environments, students are expected to show positive social skills that make the circle or counseling environment feel safe and productive for everyone involved, with the idea that working on these social skills in groups will attribute to them being used widely in all settings of the school building.

PBIS Incentives

Clayton Academy utilizes a student leadership and incentive system to promote positive pro-social behaviors within the classroom and school setting. In addition, the incentive system serves to continuously provide recognition for positive behavior, which is necessary for the growth of all students. On a weekly basis, students can exhibit their leadership skills and earn the opportunity for more and new incentives. All students are provided with feedback that allows them to understand how they can earn the next set of incentives.

Tier 1 Incentives

These incentives are awarded to all students based on completion of group goals. Typically goals are set for the Middle School and High School around the RISE behavior expectations. If these goals are met, as a group, for the week, all students in either Middle School or High School will earn the incentive. This typically includes dress down days, free periods, Spirit days/weeks, etc.

Tier 2 Incentives

These incentives are awarded to smaller groups of students and may be based on individual or group successes. These incentives can be earned by a combination of meeting RISE behavior expectations, and also students working towards their individual behavior goals. These incentives include field trips, special lunches, movie days, etc.

Tier 3/Phoenix Student Government Incentives

Students earn a leadership role in the Phoenix Student Government, by showing the consistent ability to grow toward their individual weekly behavior goals and follow the RISE expectations and norms of the school. The purpose of student government is to give support to the student leaders in the school and help them with their own personal growth, encourage responsibility, promote academics, facilitate social interaction among the leaders, and create a positive peer culture. Members of this group are student leaders who promote the positive peer culture of the school. These students earn incentives including a relaxed dress code, the ability to bring snacks and food for breakfast and lunch, Student Government lunches, the ability to participate in all incentive field trips, and the ability to have more freedom throughout the building in terms of bathroom breaks, running errands for teachers, etc.

Staff Intervention for Behavior

All staff members will use their best judgment to select the appropriate intervention technique based on the individual circumstances where staff intervention is deemed necessary. In making such determinations, staff are trained and certified yearly in the Safety Care de-escalation and physical management program which prompts staff to redirect student behavior with the

least intrusive technique. The least intrusive technique available, however, will vary based upon the circumstances of the intervention.

Safety Care recognizes three types of redirection/de-escalation. These are called the Help, Wait and Prompt Strategies.

The Help Strategy

This is an initial attempt by a staff member to determine what might be causing the student to display a behavior issue, and allows the staff member to suggest alternative options that may help the student re-focus or stop a negative behavior. This is used in the early steps of de-escalation/redirection. This may be asking a student if they want to change seats, get a drink, take a bathroom break, or work on a different piece of classwork, etc.

The Prompt Strategy

If initial help from a staff member is not helping a student de-escalate or maintain appropriate behavior, it may become necessary for the staff member to begin prompting specific alternatives to challenging behavior. This may be a non-verbal or verbal prompt that could include asking the student to sit down, work quietly, step into the hallway to speak with the teacher, etc. At Clayton prompts or redirections will start at the non-verbal level as much as possible and proceed through the levels of redirection that are listed below as needed.

1. Friendly Non-Verbal

When staff observe a student not following an expected norm, staff will give that student a helpful non-verbal gesture. These gestures are made with eyes, hands, head, or other body parts. These gestures, often given

with empathy, are used to change behavior of the student at the immediate time of the problem. If a student does not change his or her behavior, a concern non-verbal technique may be utilized.

2. Concerned Non-Verbal

A concerned non-verbal is given by staff through stern and forceful facial gestures, hand gestures, or other non-verbal gestures. Concerned non-verbal gestures are used to change behavior or actions of a student at a particular time to a positive alternative. If a student does not respond to this level of intervention, a helpful verbal technique may be utilized.

3. Helpful Verbal

A helpful verbal is given by staff through verbally communicating a positive alternative behavior, in a cordial manner. If a student does not respond to this level of intervention, a concerned verbal technique may be utilized.

4. Concerned Verbal

A concerned verbal is given by staff in the event that the student is not responding to less intrusive de-escalation or redirections. This may be necessary if a student is continuing to escalate their behavior in a redirection situation. Concerned verbal prompts are made by using a louder voice to act as an alarm to other staff that a student is escalating in a negative behavior. This will allow support staff to become aware of a situation and come to offer assistance.

5. Staff Support

Staff support is used to alert a student that his or her actions have reached a high level of concern. Additional staff will enter the situation to offer support to the initial staff member and student. Support staff may offer help and prompt strategies to the student in an attempt to help them de-escalate with a different staff member. In addition, supporting staff also observe the prompting and redirection to ensure that all staff act professionally and to maintain a safe physical environment in the event that the student becomes a threat to himself/herself or others.

6. Staff Guide/Transport

If the first five redirection techniques fail in de-escalating a student, a staff guide, or transport may be used. The purpose of these intervention options is to communicate to the student that his or her behavior is becoming a major concern, and to remove the student from the agitating situation and environment. It provides the student with a final attempt to gain self-control by changing the environment that is escalating the student's behavior.

The Wait Strategy

In some cases, the best intervention may be to monitor the situation and give the student time to calm down and de-escalate. Many times a student is able to become less angry and get settled once they are removed from an agitating situation and given space. In the Wait Strategy, staff will monitor a student for safety, in a non-stimulating environment. Potentially dangerous objects will be removed from the area and staff will stand quietly and wait for the student to

calm down. They will then switch back to the Help or Prompt strategies when they feel that the student is ready to receive feedback.

<u>Physical Management/Manual Holds</u>

If all de-escalation and redirection techniques have failed, and the student becomes an immediate threat to himself/herself/themself and/or others, staff will place the student in a hold. Staff will use the least amount of physical management possible to de-escalate the situation. When the student is no longer out of control or a threat to himself/herself/themself or others, the student will be released from the hold and staff will counsel the student to discuss the incident and alternative replacement behaviors with the goal of returning the student to the classroom. The de-escalation and physical management program that is used at Clayton is Safety Care. All staff is trained and certified yearly in using Safety Care hold techniques.

Restorative Conversations and Circles after Behavior Issues/Physical Management

In the event that a student exhibits a behavior issue that has caused a disruption to the learning environment and culture of the classroom or school, or a crisis situation occurred that resulted in physical management, a Restorative Conversation will take place between the student and any staff and/or peers that were involved. This may be done as a Restorative Conversation or a Restorative Circle. These are powerful tools to develop communication, build relationships, and restore culture after a situation has occurred. These conversations allow students and staff to express their feelings and thoughts, as well as give input on the issues that need to be resolved. Staff can help students think through their

actions, take responsibility for the harm they have caused others, understand the consequences of their actions, and identify alternative behaviors and responses that may have improved the situation.   All staff is trained on the use of these Restorative Practices and will use them to continuously facilitate a positive school culture.

Additional Resources for Parents:

Please click on the link below to learn more about our District's Code of Conduct
- Code of Conduct

Please click on the link below to learn more about our District's Non-Discrimination Policy
- Non-Discrimination Policy

Please click on the link below for information about Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness
- Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness