



Family Handbook

2026 - 2027

Mission, Beliefs, & Values

Catalyst Academy Charter School's mission is to create a world-class K-8 school that prepares all scholars effectively for college, career, and life. This holistic approach to our scholars' development will equip them with the knowledge, skills, and mindset to be a catalyst for positive change for themselves, and in their families and communities.

Catalyst Academy Charter School's core values are driven by our motto: "Belong. Grow. Achieve." These three words convey what research has demonstrated about the necessary ingredients for success, especially among disadvantaged scholars. Research by Camille Farrington at the University of Chicago, which was featured in Paul Tough's 2016 book *Helping Children Succeed: What Works and Why*, has identified the component beliefs that constitute a positive academic mindset:

- I belong in this academic community.
- My ability and competence grow with my effort.
- I can succeed at this.
- This work has value for me.

At Catalyst Academy Charter School, we synthesize this message into three impactful words.

- **Belong:** We are building a powerful school community where everyone is embraced, respected, and supported in service of our common mission of enabling all our scholars to be successful.
- **Grow:** All Catalyst scholars, teachers, and staff are committed to growing every day to help us fulfill this mission.
- **Achieve:** A great education is a catalyst enabling each scholar to define and achieve his or her dreams.

Catalyst Academy Charter School's educational approach contains six primary components:

1. High Expectations: a school culture where everyone pursues excellence every day;
2. Strong Relationships: parents, teachers, and scholars working from a strong foundation of communication and understanding;
3. Academic Rigor: a college-preparatory curriculum that is rigorous and standards-aligned in classrooms that build scholars' knowledge and critical thinking.
4. Quality Teaching: extensive teacher development resources to ensure highly effective teaching;
5. Innovation and Personalization: application of tools (e.g., personalized learning), approaches (e.g., project-based learning) and structures (e.g., scholar "flex time") to create an innovative, unique path for each scholar;
6. Holistic Scholar Development: explicit focus on social-emotional development and cultivation of scholars' sense of belonging, agency, and identity development

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Address & Telephone Changes

It is very important that every family maintain an up-to-date address, email and telephone number, and emergency contacts with the school. If you have a change in address or contact information during the school year, email operations@catalystacademy.org or contact the office at 412-684-2400.

Please note that if you change your address in SchoolMint, you still need to notify the school. For an address change, an address change form must be completed and two new proofs of residency must also be submitted.

Please be aware that it can take up to two weeks to arrange for transportation from your home district of residency, and families are responsible for transporting their child to school during this time.

After school program

Catalyst Academy partners with Learning Loft to provide an excellent after-school program for our scholars. The program is located at Catalyst Academy and runs until 6:30 PM. Parents must register their scholar separately with Learning Loft. Note that no school bus transportation is available for scholars that stay after school. Families interested in the after-school program should contact Learning Loft to register.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The Board of Directors ("Board") of Catalyst Academy Charter School ("Charter School") recognizes the importance of providing all scholars and employees with a safe school and learning environment in order to promote the educational process. The Board has determined that a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for scholars to learn and achieve high academic standards.

Bullying and cyberbullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a scholar's ability to learn and Charter School's ability to safely educate its scholars in a safe environment. Therefore, in order to ensure and promote a safe learning environment, it shall be the policy of Charter School to maintain an educational environment that is intolerant of bullying and cyberbullying in any form.

Since scholars learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers are directed to demonstrate appropriate behavior, treat others with civility and respect and to refuse to tolerate bullying and cyberbullying. This policy pertains to all scholars and staff, regardless of their status. This policy also applies to all scholars and staff whose conduct out of school materially and substantially interferes with the educational process at Charter School.

Definitions

Bullying and Cyberbullying are defined as an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act, or a series of acts:

1. directed at another scholar or scholars;
2. which occurs in a “school setting”, or occurs outside of school and Charter School reasonably forecasted that the outside-of-school conduct would materially interfere with or substantially disrupt the educational process or program in the school, and the outside-of-school conduct does in fact materially interfere with or substantially disrupt the educational process or program in the school;
3. that is severe, persistent or pervasive;
4. that has the effect of doing any of the following:
 - a. substantially interfering with a scholar’s education;
 - b. creating a threatening environment; or
 - c. substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school

Bullying and cyberbullying

shall encompass acts that occur outside a school setting if those acts meet the requirements found in (1), (3) and (4) listed above.

School Setting shall mean in Charter School, on Charter School grounds, on Charter School property, using Charter School equipment and technology, on Charter School’s server or Charter School’s electronic, web---based, Internet or online programs, in Charter School vehicles(or vehicles of Charter School transportation providers), at designated bus stops or at any activity sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by Charter School and any time spent necessarily traveling to and from these locations.

Additionally, any scholar whose out of school conduct materially interferes with or substantially disrupts the educational process in the school is also subject to this policy. Cyberbullying
Cyberbullying is often seen by sending harmful or cruel material, text messages and/or images or engaging in other forms of social aggression and bullying using the Internet, cell phones, personal digital assistants (“PDAs”) or other technology resources.

All scholars, staff, volunteers and contractors shall comply with Charter School’s Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy, which is required under the Children’s Internet Protection Act (“CIPA”), and review Charter School’s Social Media and Networking Guidelines Policy when using any technology resources. Cyberbullying via the Internet is seen through the use of any one or more of a number of methods, including, but not limited to:

- Email sent to the intended victim;
- Blog entries regarding the intended victim;
- Posts on social networking websites, including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, or Instagram;
- Posting victim’s pictures on the Internet or networking websites with derogatory phrases or questions attached to them;
- Using instant messaging tools to harass victims;
- Creating an Internet parody of the intended victim;

- Creating fake Internet profiles for the victim on a public website;
- Creating or accessing an unauthorized website which harasses or bullies the victim; •
- Using camera phones and/or digital cameras to take embarrassing photographs of scholars and/or staff and posting them online;
- Excluding others from an online group by falsely reporting them for inappropriate language to Internet service providers.

Cell phones are also often used for cyberbullying for things such as calling or text messaging the victim and/or using a victims' cell phone to text or call another victim using harassing language. The use of the Internet or Charter School email does not necessarily have to involve the creation of the offensive materials. Rather, the person creating the offensive material may do it on a home computer and then use Charter School's computers to take such actions as accessing it, viewing it, displaying it for others to see, disseminating copies of it to others or otherwise publicizing the contents. Charter School strictly prohibits the above conduct and any conduct by any scholar or staff that creates or intends to create an intimidating, threatening, offensive or hostile learning environment.

Guidelines

Scholars shall conduct themselves in a manner in keeping with their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other scholars, school staff, volunteers, and contractors. The Board believes that standards for scholar behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the scholars, parents and guardians, staff, and community members of Charter School, producing an atmosphere that encourages scholars to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for school and community property on the part of scholars, staff, and community members. Since bystander support of bullying and cyberbullying can bolster these types of behaviors, Charter School prohibits both active and passive support for acts of bullying and cyberbullying. The staff should encourage all scholars to refuse to engage in these acts and to report them immediately to the Dean of Scholars of Catalyst Academy Charter School.

Reporting Procedures

Any scholar who feels he or she has been bullied or cyberbullied shall have the right to file a complaint of such bullying. Complaints should be reported to the Dean of Scholars. Complaints may also be reported directly to a teacher, guidance counselor, or other administrator who shall immediately report the incident to the Dean of Scholars in order to protect the alleged victim and for prompt investigation. Any staff who sees any incidents of bullying or cyberbullying must immediately report the incident(s) to the Dean of Scholars. All other members of the school community, including scholars, parents, volunteers, and visitors, are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. It shall be the responsibility of the Dean of Scholars to investigate promptly and thoroughly any and all bullying and cyberbullying complaints received or referred by other individuals and to make recommendations based upon the investigation. The investigation is to be commenced within three (3) school days after a report of any bullying is

received. The Board of Trustees requires the Dean of Scholars to be responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy. In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes bullying or cyberbullying, the totality of circumstances, nature of the conduct, and context in which the alleged conduct occurred shall be investigated. If the investigation results in a substantiated charge of the bullying, Charter School shall take prompt corrective action to ensure the bullying and/or cyberbullying ceases and will not reoccur.

Reports to the Dean of Scholars may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report. The Dean of Scholars shall immediately notify the parent or guardian of the perpetrator of the bullying and the parent or guardian of the victim of the bullying of the alleged incident.

Consequences for Violations

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a scholar or staff member who commits one or more acts of bullying or cyberbullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including in school or out of school suspension from Charter School or expulsion or other disciplinary removal from Charter School, in the case of a scholar, or suspension or termination in the case of an employee, as set forth in Charter School's scholar Code of Conduct or Employee Handbook. In some cases, bullying and/or cyberbullying may constitute criminal activity and the Police Department will be notified. This may lead to a criminal investigation and criminal charges against the scholar or staff. Consequences for a scholar who commits an act of bullying and/or cyberbullying shall be unique to the individual incident and will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the scholar, and the scholar's history of problem behaviors and performance, and must be consistent with Charter School's scholar code of conduct. Remedial measures shall be designed to: correct the problem behavior; prevent another occurrence of the behavior; and protect the victim of the act.

The following intervention strategies for protecting victims may be followed as needed:

- Supervise and discipline offending scholars fairly and consistently;

- Provide adult supervision at Charter School sites or other sites used by Charter School, at any activity sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by Charter School during any breaks, lunch times, bathroom breaks and in the hallways during times of transition;
- Maintain contact with parents and guardians of all involved parties;
- Provide counseling for the victim if assessed that it is needed;
- Inform school personnel of the incident and instruct them to monitor the victim and the offending party for indications of harassing, intimidating and bullying and/or cyberbullying behavior. Personnel are to intervene when prohibited behaviors are witnessed; and
- Check with the victim daily to ensure that there have been no incidents of retaliation from the offender or other parties.

Retaliation Prohibited

The Board of Trustees strictly prohibits retaliation or reprisal against any person who reports bullying and/or cyberbullying incidents. Retaliation includes, but it is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal or harassment used against a person who reports, in good faith, incident(s) of bullying and/or cyberbullying. Disciplinary action against any person who retaliates or engages in reprisals for reporting such behavior(s) may include sanctions up to and including expulsion or suspension for scholars and termination for staff engaging in such prohibited conduct. The consequences and appropriate remedial action shall be determined after consideration of the nature, severity, and circumstances of the act.

False Accusations

The Board of Trustees prohibits any person from falsely accusing another of bullying and/or cyberbullying. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a scholar found to have falsely accused another of bullying and/or cyberbullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for an employee found to have falsely accused another of bullying and/or cyberbullying shall be disciplined in accordance with Charter School policies, procedures, and agreements. Annual Distribution of Information The Board of Trustees requires Charter School officials to annually disseminate the policy to all school staff, scholars, volunteers, independent contractors and parents along with a statement explaining that it applies to all applicable acts of bullying and cyberbullying that occur in Charter School, on Charter School grounds, on Charter School property, using Charter School equipment and/or technology, on Charter School's server or Charter School's electronic, web--- based, Internet or online programs, in Charter School vehicles, at designated bus stops or at any activity sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by Charter School and any time spent necessarily traveling to and from these locations. Additionally, any scholar or staff out of school conduct that materially and substantially interferes with the educational process in Charter School is also subject to this policy.

Charter School is required to post this policy on its website and make the policy available in every classroom. This policy shall also be posted at a prominent location within every Charter School building where such notices are usually posted. Charter School shall ensure this policy and its procedures for reporting bullying and cyberbullying incidents are reviewed with scholars and staff within ninety (90) days after its adoption and, thereafter, a minimum of one (1) time per school year.

Compliance

As required by the Federal Broadband Data Improvement Act of 2008, Charter School shall educate elementary and secondary school aged scholars with computer access to the Internet about appropriate online behavior, including online interaction with other individuals on social networking websites, such as Facebook, and in chat rooms and educate them regarding cyberbullying awareness and response.

The Board of Trustees directs the Administration to develop any procedures necessary to implement this policy and to develop appropriate prevention, intervention and education strategies related to bullying and cyberbullying. Acts of bullying and cyberbullying are prohibited by and a violation of Charter School's Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy and its Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA) Policy. Charter School will comply with all applicable federal and state laws relating to bullying and cyberbullying, including, but not limited to, the requirements delineated in the Pennsylvania Charter School Law, 24 P.S. § 1701- 13 A, et seq., the Federal Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), 47 U.S.C. § 254(h) and (l), and the Neighborhood Children's Internet Protection Act (N-CIPA) and any applicable implementing regulations. Charter School will also comply with Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code, the Public School Code, the applicable House Bill 1067 Public School Code amendments relating to safe schools and bullying, and applicable provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) and its applicable implementing regulations regarding the discipline of special education scholars and thought-to-be eligible scholars who engage in an act of bullying.

Arrival & Dismissal Procedures

Arrival

Arrival is between 7:45 - 8 AM. If you are arriving via car, there is a carline on Lemington Ave (see picture). Catalyst staff will be on the sidewalk to help scholars get out of the car. Drivers should remain in the car and depart as soon as their scholar is safely out. You will need to walk your scholar to the front door if you arrive after 8AM.

Dismissal

Dismissal begins at 3:15PM.

If you are picking up your scholar via car, you will need to park in the neighborhood and walk onto campus to pick up your scholar. To expedite the process, once on campus, parents should use Schoolpass to "check-in" for faster pick-up. Instructions for using Schoolpass will be provided at the beginning of the school year and can be found at the website www.schoolpass.com.

Scholars who are picked up or walk home will be dismissed through the front door of the main office.

Changes to Dismissal

In the beginning of the school year, any scholar that is registered for a bus, will be assumed to ride the bus unless notified otherwise by a parent/guardian.

You can use Schoolpass to manage your scholar's dismissal plan, e.g., your scholar rides the bus M,W,F, but they go to the afterschool program Tu, Th each week. You can also use it to make a one-day only change, e.g. today my scholar will get picked up.

Parents are strongly encouraged to use Schoolpass to make any changes to their scholar's dismissal plans, especially if the change includes riding or not riding the bus. Changes to dismissal plans can be made up until 2:30PM. **In order to avoid missed pickups or missed buses, parents must put in dismissal changes before 2:30PM.**

Additionally, to ensure the safe dismissal of all of our scholars, early dismissals are not permitted after 2:45. If you arrive after 2:45 p.m. for an early dismissal, you will need to wait until your child is dismissed at their normal time.

Attendance Policy

Scholars are expected to come to school every day as part of our school community. Scholars are expected to **arrive for breakfast between 7:45 a.m. and 8 a.m.** Scholars who **arrive after 8:00 will be marked tardy**. Exceptions will be made in cases where external factors were an issue (e.g. severe weather, no-show bus).

Scholars must be present a minimum of 4 hours to be considered present for a half-day. If a scholar is not present for a minimum of 4 hours, they will be considered absent. In all cases, a half-day or full day absence, scholars are required to bring a note. An absence can be excused only with valid documentation. A child with a prearranged early dismissal must be signed out in the main office by the child's legal guardian or a caregiver who has been previously authorized in writing to pick up the child.

The Catalyst Academy Charter Scholar Truancy Elimination Plan can be found on the school website. Catalyst Academy is obligated to adopt and implement compulsory attendance measures for all scholars as per the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Catalyst will contact the Allegheny County Department of Human Services if school staff are persistently unable to get in touch with a child and/or their guardian.

Excuses

Excuses need to be submitted within three days of a scholar's return to school. Up to three (3) consecutive absences can be excused by a parent. On the fourth (4) consecutive absence, a physician's excuse is required.

After ten (10) cumulative excused absences, parents are required to submit a physician's excuse for every subsequent absence. Failure to supply a physician's excuse for absences beyond ten (10) days will result in an unexcused absence.

Excuses notes can be submitted on paper to the front office, or electronically by emailing attendance@catalystacademy.org.

Per Pennsylvania law, a child is "truant" if the child has incurred three or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year. A child is "habitually truant" if the child is subject to compulsory school laws and has incurred six or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year.

If a child is habitually truant, Catalyst will notify the parents, and a parent or guardian will be required to participate with the school to create a Truancy Elimination Plan, which may happen during a School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC). Failure to attend the meeting or adhere to the truancy elimination plan will result in legal proceedings as required by Pennsylvania law. Children, Youth, and Families may also be notified.

What is an excused absence/tardy?

1. Personal illness or injury. Any absence for more than three (3) days requires a note from a physician. The note must be signed by the physician and explain the reason and the dates of the absence.
2. A visit to a medical or dental professional. A note from a doctor or dentist is required to consider this as excused.
3. Death in the immediate family
4. Observance of a religious holiday. An absence may be considered excused if the tenets of a religion, to which a student or his/her parent adhere, require observance of a religious event.
5. Educational family trips with pre-approval by the principal
6. Court or Administrative Proceedings. An absence resulting from the attendance of a student at the proceedings of a court or an administrative tribunal if the student is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness

Birthdays

Birthdays are an important part of childhood. Please refrain from distributing birthday invitations at school unless including everyone in your scholar's class. Due to allergies and other medical issues, please do not send in birthday food or treats.

Bus Transportation Guidelines

BUS TRANSPORTATION IS A PRIVILEGE, NOT A RIGHT

BUS AND BUS STOP CONDUCT

- Catalyst Academy rules, including discipline policies and procedures, apply when scholars are on the bus and at the bus stop.
 - Catalyst Academy administrators are in charge of transportation discipline.
 - Any violations that occur involving the school bus and/or incidents that occur while students are on the way to school (bus stop/neighborhood) or returning from school (bus stop/neighborhood) may result in disciplinary action.
1. Scholars are required to stay seated during the bus ride. Scholars will face forward for the duration of the trip and keep their feet on the floor in front of them and out of the bus aisle.
 2. Scholars will refrain from yelling and/or screaming, using bad language or bullying others on the bus.
 3. Scholars will refrain from eating or drinking on the bus.
 4. Scholars will get on or off the bus only at their assigned stop.

5. Scholars are not allowed to ride a bus that they are not assigned to.
6. Scholars will not refuse to sit in an assigned seat if given one or deny another person a place to sit.
7. Scholars are required to adhere to the Catalyst Academy code of conduct while on the bus.

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE FOR IMPROPER CONDUCT ON THE BUS

First violation of the transportation guidelines, the Dean of Scholars will warn the student and send a notification to the scholar's parent(s)/guardian(s).

The second violation of the transportation guidelines will result in a one day suspension from the bus. The Dean of Scholars will notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s).

Third violation of the transportation guidelines, the student is denied bus privileges for 1-3 days.

The Dean of Scholars and/or the Principal will notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s). If there is a Fourth violation of the transportation guidelines. The student is denied bus privileges for the remainder of the quarter. The Dean of Scholars and the Principal will notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s).

* If a student loses bus privileges, parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible for transporting the student to and from school. Refusal to transport the student will result in unexcused absences. Depending on the severity of the infraction progressive steps may be skipped.

Campus Safety and Supervision of Scholars

Scholars are not to be in the building or on the school grounds after the regular school day unless under the direct supervision of a Catalyst Academy staff member or Catalyst partner.

Posted in every room is a map detailing the relevant evacuation and emergency protocol. Scholars are to follow their teacher according to that map and to stay with their class. In the event of a fire drill or fire, scholars must not stop at bathrooms or lockers. They must go directly to their designated outside location until given further instructions. Any scholar violating this procedure is jeopardizing the safety of the school and will face consequences including possible suspension. There is no talking during a drill or emergency procedure. Talking during a drill or emergency procedure will result in a scholar receiving an appropriate consequence.

In adherence to Pennsylvania's school code, Catalyst Academy has a School Safety Committee.

Civility Policy for Catalyst Academy Community

At Catalyst, we expect that all members of our community (all school personnel, staff, scholars, and scholars' parents/guardians and families) will act with civility towards one another in line with our core value **Belong**.

Civility does not require unqualified agreement or conformity of opinion. Under no circumstances will uncivil conduct at school or at any school-related activity be tolerated. For purposes of this expectation, to be civil means to act with self-discipline in a courteous, respectful and orderly way in every interpersonal communication and behavior. Uncivil conduct includes, but is not limited to:

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

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

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

Child Abuse Detection and Response Policy

This document establishes procedures for School employees to assist in identifying and reporting child abuse and for reporting and training in compliance with the Child Protective Services Law.

Definitions

The following words and phrases shall have the meaning given to them in this section:

- a. Administrator – the person responsible for the administration of the school. The term includes a person responsible for employment decisions in a school. The principal of a school where the abused student is enrolled will serve as the administrator under this policy.
- b. Adult – an individual eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- c. Applicant – an individual who applies for a position as a school employee.
- d. Bodily Injury – impairment of a physical condition or substantial pain.
- e. Certifications – refers to the child abuse history clearance statement and state and federal criminal history background checks required by the Child Protective Services Law and/or the School Code.
- f. Child – an individual under eighteen (18) years of age.
- g. Child Abuse – intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:
 - 1. Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
 - 2. Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
 - 3. Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or series of such acts or failures to act.
 - 4. Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
 - 5. Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
 - 6. Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
 - 7. Causing serious physical neglect of a child.

8. Engaging in any of the following recent acts:

- i. Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
- ii. Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or duration of the restraint or confinement.
- iii. Forcefully shaking a child under one (1) year of age.
- iv. Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one (1) year of age.
- v. Interfering with the breathing of a child.
- vi. Causing a child to be present during the operation of a methamphetamine laboratory, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
- vii. Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent/guardian, who the actor knows or reasonably should have known was required to register as a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender, has to register for life, or has been determined to be a sexually violent predator or sexually violent delinquent.

9. Causing the death of a child through any act or failure to act.

10. Engaging a child in a severe form of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking, as those terms are defined in the law.

The term **child abuse** does not include physical contact with a child that is involved in normal participation in physical education, athletic, extracurricular or recreational activities. Also excluded from the meaning of **child abuse** is the use of reasonable force by a person responsible for the welfare of a child for purpose of control or safety, provided that the use of force:

- 1. Constitutes incidental, minor or reasonable physical contact in order to maintain order and control;
- 2. Is necessary to quell a disturbance or remove a child from the scene of a disturbance that threatens property damage or injury to persons;
- 3. Is necessary for self-defense or defense of another;
- 4. Is necessary to prevent the child from self-inflicted physical harm; or
- 5. Is necessary to gain possession of weapons, controlled substances or other dangerous objects that are on the person of the child or in the child's control.

- h. County Agency – Allegheny County Children and Youth Services.
- i. Direct contact with children – the possibility of care, supervision, guidance or control of children or routine interaction with children.
- j. Independent Contractor – an individual other than a school employee who provides a program, activity or service who is otherwise responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or control of children pursuant to a contract. The term does not apply to administrative or other support personnel unless the administrative or other support personnel have direct contact with children.
- k. Perpetrator – a person who has committed child abuse and is a parent(s)/guardian(s) of a child; spouse or former spouse of the child's parent/guardian; a paramour or former paramour of the child's parent/guardian; an individual fourteen (14) years of age or older who is responsible for the child's welfare or who has direct contact with children as an employee of child care services, a school, or through a program, activity or service; an individual fourteen (14) years of age or older who resides in the same home as the child; or an adult who does not reside in the same home as the child but who is related within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity by birth or adoption to the child; or an adult who engages a child in severe forms of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking, as those terms are defined in the law. Only the following may be considered a perpetrator solely based upon a failure to act: a parent/guardian of the child; a spouse or former spouse of the child's parent/guardian; a paramour or former paramour of the child's parent/guardian; an adult responsible for the child's welfare; or an adult who resides in the same home as the child.
- l. Person responsible for the welfare of a child – a person who provides permanent or temporary care, supervision, mental health diagnosis or treatment, training or control of a child in lieu of parental care, supervision and control.
- m. Program, activity or service: Any of the following in which children participate and which is sponsored by a school or public or private organization:
 - 1. A youth camp or program.
 - 2. A recreational camp or program.
 - 3. A sports or athletic program.
 - 4. A community or social outreach program.
 - 5. An enrichment or educational program.
 - 6. A troop, club or similar organization.
- n. Recent act or failure to act – any act or failure to act committed within two (2) years of the

date of the report to the Department of Human Services or the county agency.

- o. School Employee – an individual employed at Catalyst Academy Charter School. The term excludes an individual who has no direct contact with children.
- p. Serious Bodily Injury – bodily injury which creates a substantial risk of death or which causes serious permanent disfigurement or protracted loss or impairment of function of any bodily member or organ.
- q. Serious Mental Injury – a psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment, that:
 - 1. Renders a child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear that the child's life or safety is threatened.
 - 2. Seriously interferes with a child's ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.
- r. Serious Physical Neglect – any of the following when committed by a perpetrator that endangers a child's life or health, threatens a child's well-being, causes bodily injury or impairs a child's health, development or functioning:
 - 1. A repeated, prolonged or egregious failure to supervise a child in a manner that is appropriate considering the child's developmental age and abilities.
 - 2. The failure to provide a child with adequate essentials of life, including food, shelter or medical care.
- s. Sexual Abuse or Exploitation – includes any of the following: the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another individual to engage in any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting, and filming of any sexually explicit conduct; or any of the following offenses committed against a child: rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, prostitution, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation.
- t. Student – an individual enrolled in Catalyst Academy Charter School under eighteen (18) years of age.
- u. Volunteer – an unpaid adult individual, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service is a person responsible for the child's welfare or has direct contact with children.

Delegation of Responsibility

Pursuant to the procedures, the CEO or designee shall:

- a. Require each applicant for employment to submit an official child abuse clearance statement

issued within the preceding year, except for those exempted by law.

- b. The CEO or designee shall annually inform students, parent(s)/guardian(s), staff, independent contractors and volunteers regarding these procedures. Catalyst Academy Charter School staff, independent contractors and volunteers shall annually receive notice of their responsibility for reporting child abuse in accordance with these procedures.
- c. School employees and independent contractors shall obtain and submit new certifications every sixty (60) months.
- d. Certification requirements for volunteers are addressed in a separate Board Policy.
- e. The CEO or designee shall ensure that the poster, developed by the PA Department of Education, displaying the statewide toll-free telephone numbers for reporting suspected child abuse, neglect and school safety issues be posted in a high-traffic, public area of each school. The designated area shall be readily accessible and widely used by students.

Guidelines

a. Duty to Report

School employees, independent contractors, and volunteers shall make a report of suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:

- 1. The school employee, independent contractor or volunteer comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation and the practice of a profession or through a regularly scheduled program, activity or service.
 - 2. The school employee, independent contractor or volunteer is directly responsible for the care, supervision guidance or training of the child.
 - 3. A person makes a specific disclosure to a school employee, independent contractor or volunteer that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse.
 - 4. An individual fourteen (14) years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to a school employee, independent contractor or volunteer that s/he has committed child abuse.
- b. A child is not required to come before the school employee, independent contractor or volunteer in order for that individual to make a report of suspected child abuse.
 - c. A report of suspected child abuse does not require the identification of the person responsible for the child abuse.
 - d. Any person who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse, regardless of whether the report is required, cooperates with an investigation, testifies in a proceeding, or engages in other action authorized by law shall have immunity from civil and criminal liability related to those actions.

- e. Any person required to report child abuse who willfully fails to do so may be subject to disciplinary action and criminal prosecution.
- f. Any person who knowingly or intentionally makes a false report of child abuse or intentionally or knowingly induces a child to make a false claim of child abuse may be subject to disciplinary action and criminal prosecution.
- g. Any person who engages in intimidation, retaliation, or obstruction in the making of a child abuse report or the conducting of an investigation into suspected child abuse may be subject to disciplinary action and criminal prosecution.
- h. The school shall not retaliate or discriminate against any person for making, in good faith, a report of suspected child abuse.

i. Reporting Procedures

1. School employees, independent contractors or volunteers who suspect child abuse shall immediately make a written report of child abuse using electronic technologies (www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis) or an oral report via the statewide toll free number (1-800-932-0313). A person making an initial report of suspected child abuse must also submit a written electronic report within forty-eight (48) hours after the oral report. Upon receipt of an electronic report, the electronic reporting system will immediately respond with a confirmation, providing the school with a written record of the report.
2. A school employee, independent contractor or volunteer who makes a report of suspected child abuse shall immediately, after making the initial report, notify the building principal or administrator and if the initial report was made electronically, also provide the building principal or administrator with a copy of the report confirmation. The building principal or administrator shall then immediately notify the CEO or designee that a child abuse report has been made and if the initial report was made electronically, also provide a copy of the report confirmation.
3. When a report of suspected child abuse is made by a school employee, independent contractor or volunteer as required by law, the school is not required to make more than one (1) report. An individual otherwise required to make a report who is aware that an initial report has already been made by a school employee, independent contractor or volunteer is not required to make an additional report. The person making an initial oral report is responsible for making the follow-up written electronic report within forty-eight (48) hours, and shall provide the building principal or administrator with a copy of the report confirmation promptly after the written electronic report has been filed. The building principal or administrator shall in turn provide a copy of the report confirmation to the CEO or designee.
4. If the CEO or designee reasonably suspects that conduct being reported involves an incident required to be reported under the Safe Schools Act, the CEO or designee shall inform local law enforcement, in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

j. Investigation

1. School officials shall cooperate with the Department of Human Services or the county agency investigating a report of suspected child abuse, including permitting authorized personnel to interview the child while in attendance at school.
2. Upon notification that an investigation involves suspected child abuse by a school employee, the building principal or administrator shall immediately implement a plan of supervision or alternative arrangement that has been approved by the CEO for the school employee under investigation. The plan of supervision or alternative arrangement shall be submitted to the county agency for approval.

Training

The school shall require its employees and independent contractors who have direct contact with children to have completed mandatory training on child abuse recognition and reporting. The training shall include, but not be limited to, the following topics:

- 1. Recognition of the signs of abuse and sexual misconduct and reporting requirements for suspected abuse and sexual misconduct.
- 2. Provisions of the Educator Discipline Act, including mandatory reporting requirements.
- 3. School policy related to reporting of suspected abuse and sexual misconduct.
- 4. Maintenance of professional and appropriate relationships with students.

Employees are required to complete a minimum of three (3) hours of training every five (5) years.

Additional Child Abuse Risk Mitigation Measures

One on one interactions with students must always be observable, i.e., another person can freely walk into the space. No one on one interactions with a student should be in a locked room.

All school staff have a responsibility to help ensure the safety of our school community and its students. This includes monitoring difficult to observe spaces, e.g., restrooms. School administrators will at times explicitly assign duties that may include restroom or other space monitoring. If any staff has concerns about a specific space lacking enough monitoring, they should report it to their supervisor, the Principal, or the CEO.

Code of Conduct & Behavior Support Policy & Procedures

The motto of Catalyst Academy Charter School is *Belong. Grow. Achieve.* These three important words are reflective of our underlying values that greatly inform our approach to discipline.

Belong. We are building a strong, inclusive, supportive community for all of our scholars. Therefore, we are committed to avoiding suspension and expulsion unless circumstances determine it necessary in accordance with the behavior support matrix included below. In the event of an infraction that does or could mandate suspension, the involved scholar(s) due process rights will be protected. Whenever possible, we will use restorative practices. This is well-aligned with our focus on developing healthy relationships, social-emotional development,

and a strong sense of community.

Grow. A growth mindset applies to all facets of personal development. In addition to academics, behavioral choices can be improved with effort and skill development. Indeed, it is our belief that in many cases, children don't want to misbehave, but they often lack the skill set to cope with specific situations. These challenges are often more acute for low-income children whose brain development has been impacted by exposure to several adverse childhood experiences (ACE), e.g. abuse, neglect, poverty, divorce, and exhibit behavioral challenges as a result. Our overall approach is to not only focus on consequences, but as importantly to build our scholars skill base through research-backed general approaches, e.g. social-emotional learning and school-wide positive behavioral intervention strategies (PBIS). This positive, skill development approach is aligned with our focus on our scholar's holistic growth.

Achieve. Our scholars' future achievement in college, career, and life, will require that they consistently make healthy behavioral decisions. Consequently, we must hold all members of the school community to high behavioral standards, and provide the modeling, culture, and the explicit support necessary for scholars to meet these standards.

Behavior Support Practices and Beliefs

We believe that every scholar can grow and achieve if they are given the opportunity and receive the necessary support for their success. Our approach to supporting scholars' emotional and behavioral needs are rooted in restorative practices. We begin with clear expectations to set scholars up for success. Our school wide expectations directly connect to our Core Values.

➤ School wide Expectations:

I take pride in myself for my growth and achievements.

I take pride in being an important part of our school community.

- I communicate respectfully with peers and adults.
- I follow directions the first time.
- I am where I am expected to be.
- I keep my hands, feet, and objects to myself.
- I ask for help when I need it.
- I stay focused so everyone can learn.

We seek to understand the emotional challenges of our scholars and provide them the necessary scaffolds to overcome the social and emotional barriers that interrupt their instructional time. We explicitly teach social and emotional content daily through the direct support of behavior and class Community Time. Our restorative interventions, responses, and consequences are logical, appropriate, and proportionate to the behavior being displayed in the school environment. We clearly define behaviors based on their impact.

➤ **Level 1 behaviors** are actions that impede one's own learning and productivity.

➤ **Level 2 behaviors** are actions that impede one's own learning and productivity as well as the learning and productivity of others. These actions may also cause or unintentionally lead to unsafe environments.

➤ **Level 3 behaviors** are actions that impede on the learning, productivity and/or the safety of the class and/or school community

➤ **Level 4 behaviors** are actions that significantly disrupt the safety, productivity, or

operations of the school community

We use our CACS Scholar Support and Behavior Response Matrix to determine appropriate supports and next steps for scholars demonstrating these leveled behaviors.

CACS Scholar Support and Behavior Response Matrix			
In Classroom		Out of Classroom	
Level 1 - Educator Supports	Level 2 - Educator + Possible In-Class Dean Support	Level 3 - Dean/Principal Support Out of Class	Level 4 - Dean/Principal Supports Out of Class
Disruption to Self	Disruption to Others	Disruption to School Community	Disruption to School Safety
<u>Example Behaviors</u> ● Failure to comply with initial directive ● Putting one's head down ● Leaving one's seat without permission ● Technology violations ● Minor class disruptions (talking without raising hands, off-task conversations, volume disruptions) ● Uniform violations ● Not prepared for class ● Not using classroom systems (materials, hall pass)	<u>Example Behaviors</u> ● Failure to comply with 2 - 5 directives (non-safety concern) ● Out of seat with minor classroom disruption ● Technology violations ● Low-intensity inappropriate language (name calling, swearing accidentally) ● Minor vandalism/theft (writing on desk, taking pencils) ● Low Intensity horseplay (i.e. chasing) ● Continuous classroom disruptions ● Excessive tardiness to class or leaving group during transition (i.e. stopping in BR without permission)	<u>Example Behaviors</u> ● Leaving the classroom without permission/eloping (in view) ● Technology violations meant to cause physical or emotional harm ● Directed Abusive Language/Profanity/Inappropriate Gestures ● Property damage or Theft (major) ● Throwing classroom items ● Chronic (4+) Level 2 Behavior ● Chronic(4+)Uniform Issues ● Inappropriate displays of affection ● Verbal Altercation ● Horseplay (higher intensity - hitting, punching, persistent lower intensity horseplay)	<u>Example Behaviors</u> ● Leaving the classroom without permission/eloping (out of view) ● Leaving the school building ● Possession or use of a weapon or object being used as a weapon ● Fighting or Physical Aggression towards scholars or staff ● Sexual Harassment ● Bullying ● Harassment or Threats ● Possession/influence/sale of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol or vapes ● Chronic (2+) Level 3 Behaviors

The behaviors listed are a non-exhaustive list			
Level 1 - Educator Supports Disruption to Self	Level 2 - Educator + Possible In-Class Dean Support Disruption to Others	Level 3 - Dean/Principal Support Out of Class Disruption to School Community	Level 4 - Dean/Principal Supports Out of Class Disruption to School Safety
In Classroom		Out of Classroom	
<i>Plan for Response to behavior:</i> 1. Communicate to scholar opportunity to self-correct behavior 2. Communicate and log reminder point(s) in DOJO 3. Implement classroom-based interventions to prevent, stop, mitigate behavior 4. If the same behavior continues: a. Repeat steps 1 - 3 b. Contact home c. Schedule restorative recess/lunch to make up missed work and/or to complete restorative activity ■ Example: Missed work goes home for homework to get signed by family member/guardian ■ Example: Restorative activity can be done in-class at a reflection desk		<i>Possible Responses to behavior:</i> ● Time out of classroom ● Opportunity and guidance for Reflection ● Reflection Activity (project, assignment linked to specific behavior) ● Restorative activity (Make It Right activity) ● Community Service ● Loss of privileges ● Loss of athletic team or club eligibility ● Parent Conference ● Parent Pick Up ● Parent Sit-In ● Restorative Lunch or Recess If necessary... ● Suspension ● Referral to outside partner or services ● Report to law enforcement ● Expulsion	
The responses listed are a non-exhaustive list.			
Level 1 - Educator Supports Disruption to Self	Level 2 - Educator + Possible In-Class Dean Support Disruption to Others	Level 3 - Dean/Principal Support Out of Class Disruption to School Community	Level 4 - Dean/Principal Supports Out of Class Disruption to School Safety

Possible Restorative Interventions & Consequences (consider interventions and appropriate time interval): ● Reteaching/Modeling/Restating expectations ● Redirection ● Preventative recognition of undesired behavior (ex: offer alternative seating option, use of cool down space)	Possible Restorative Interventions & Consequences for Chronic Behavior (to be considered as team- educators, Deans of Scholars, counselors, etc.) ● Classroom environment observation by LT, DOS ● Classroom observation by LT, DOS, Counselor ● Peer Mediation
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● Recommend a replacement behavior, followed up with praise when partial compliance is exhibited (bounce back points) ● Behavior incentive / positive phone call after replacement behavior is utilized with consistency ● Planned ignoring ● Use proximity ● Private, Restorative & short conversation ● Classroom/Community Circle ● Restorative Lunch or Recess to makeup missed work ● Additional homework assignment(s) to makeup missed work, signed by parent ● Behavior reflection activity and/or Make It Right activity	● Confiscation of item ● MTSS Referral ● Behavior contract, individual student plan with targeted replacement behavior created with parent support ● Parent collaboration meeting / Parent visit / Parent Sit-In ● Counseling Referral ● Classroom/Community Circle
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Unsafe Behaviors Policy

Catalyst Academy Charter School must ensure that all Catalyst students are educated in settings free from restrictions or injuries caused by the challenging behaviors of other students.

An unsafe behavior is defined as acts directed towards a person and or property that pose a threat to the safety or welfare of others in the school community. Examples of unsafe behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Fighting/Hitting
- Throwing items
- Destruction of school property
- Misuse of emergency system
- Spitting
- Biting
- Indecent exposure
- Sexually explicit behavior
- Elopement

Per our unsafe behavior procedure, scholars displaying unsafe behaviors will need to be picked up by a designee immediately. As a part of the reintegration process, the parent and the scholar will need to participate in a restorative meeting.

Building Positive Academic Habits

➤ **Class Dojo**

Class Dojo is the system we use to record helpful and unhelpful choices scholars make throughout the school day. The primary use of dojo is to provide a snapshot of a scholar's day for their families. Reviewing Dojo with your scholar allows you to have intentional conversations about the choices they make throughout the day as well as keep an open line of communication with the classroom teacher through messaging within the app if you so choose. When we communicate with each other for positive and constructive feedback about a scholar, it allows us to build a stronger relationship and ensure that we are on the same page with expectations and support for the scholar.

Scholars receive scholar points (positive feedback) and reminder points (constructive feedback) throughout the day. They can earn positive points for anything. They earn reminder points for unhelpful choices. Our hope is that earning positive points will reinforce scholars' motivation to make helpful choices.

➤ **Color System in Grades K - 4**

Scholars at Catalyst Academy Charter School work with their teachers, support staff, and the school's culture team towards making helpful choices during the school day that positively impact their learning, peer relationships, and interactions within the school community. As a result of the choices scholars make during the day, they have the opportunity to earn "scholar points" or "reminder points" as highlighted in the section above. At the end of each day, scholars earn a "color" based on the number of reminder points they earned that school day. This color helps families understand the type of day scholars had and should serve as the foundation of reflection for the next day.

■ *Blue Day: 0-4 Reminder points "I made a lot of helpful choices today on my own."*

■ *Green Day: 5-9 Reminder points "I needed a little help with some of the choices I made today."*

■ *Yellow Day: 10-18 Reminder points "I needed more help making helpful choices today."* ■ *Red Day: 19+ Reminder points "I made a lot of unhelpful choices today."*

➤ **Scholar Weekly Tracker and the School Store in Grades 5-7**

Catalyst Academy Charter School will use ClassDojo to document and track scholar points (positive feedback) and reminder points (constructive feedback) for scholars in 5th through 7th grade. Scholars will be responsible for tracking their points in the weekly tracker to be shared with their families. Additionally, scholars will get to purchase items at the school store using the points they've earned for their positive choices.

Custody/Court Orders

If there is a legal arrangement of custody concerning your scholar, you must provide a current copy of that court document to the school. A personal note is not sufficient. The law requires the school to have a copy of court orders and custody arrangements for reference. The same rules apply to all Protection From Abuse (PFA) orders. For questions pertaining to custody records, please contact the front office.

Dress Code

Monday - Thursday Dress Code	
Tops	Catalyst Academy polos purchased directly from Catalyst Academy • Short or long-sleeved must have Catalyst Academy logo Female scholars may wear khaki jumpers over polo in grades K-2.
Bottoms	Khaki pants or shorts (non-tight fitting) • Shorts can be worn until Oct. 1 • Shorts can be worn starting May 1 Female scholars may wear khaki skorts or skirts • Skorts worn Grades K-5 • Skirts worn Grades 6-8 All bottoms must be an appropriate length. They should not be shorter than two inches above the knee.
Shoes	Any closed-toed flat heel shoe is appropriate. Sandals, slides and Crocs may not be worn. Socks must be black, white, or grey. Female scholars are permitted to wear stockings in black, white, or grey. Leggings are not permitted.
Outerwear	A cardigan, crewneck sweater or sweatshirt in white, gray, black or navy may be worn over the Catalyst Academy polo. Jackets or hoodies are not permitted to be worn in the classroom.

Accessories	Earrings worn in the lower lobe. • No earrings larger than a dime Grade K-5 • No earrings larger than a quarter Grade 6-8 Modest neck jewelry for Grades 3-5. Modest jewelry of all kinds may be worn for Grades 6-8. No Hats except for religious purposes.
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Friday Dress Code	
Tops	Catalyst Academy t-shirt or sweatshirt College t-shirt or sweatshirt
Bottoms	Jeans are permitted on Fridays Khaki pants or shorts (non-tight fitting) • Shorts can be worn <i>until</i> Oct. 1 • Shorts can be worn <i>starting</i> May 1 Female scholars may also wear khaki skorts or skirts • Skorts worn Grades K-5 • Skirts worn Grades 6-8 All bottoms must be an appropriate length. They should not be shorter than two inches above the knee.
Shoes	Any closed-toed flat heel shoe is appropriate. Sandals, slides and Crocs may not be worn. Socks must be black, white, or grey. Female scholars are permitted to wear stockings in black, white, or grey. Leggings are not permitted.

Outerwear	A cardigan, crewneck sweater or sweatshirt in white, gray, black or navy may be worn over the Catalyst Academy polo. Jackets or hoodies are not permitted to be worn in the classroom.
Accessories	Earrings worn in the lower lobe. ● No earrings larger than a dime Grade K-5 ● No earrings larger than a quarter Grade 6-8 Modest neck jewelry for Grades 3-5. Modest jewelry of all kinds may be worn for Grades 6-8. No hats except for religious purposes.

Education for Children Experiencing Homelessness

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was established in 1987 and amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. The Act defines the term “homeless children and youths” as individuals

who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The federal mandate ensures that homeless children and youth have access to the same free and appropriate public education as other children. Children who are homeless may qualify for assistance with school lunch, school supplies, tutoring and transportation so that they can remain in their school of origin. If you believe that your scholar may qualify for this service, please contact:

Myra Powell, Parent & Community Advisor
Phone: 412-219-4596
Email: myra.powell@catalystacademy.org

Jaquaylay Huger, School Social Worker
Phone: 412-684-2400
Email: jaquayla.huger@catalystacademy.org

Electronic Devices

Scholars are permitted to bring electronic devices to school, and turn them in upon arrival to be safely stored during the school day. Scholars are not permitted to use personal devices during the school day. This includes but is not limited to cell phones, smartwatches, tablets, bluetooth headphones or earpods. If a scholar does not turn in a device during arrival, it will be confiscated by a staff member and it will only be returned directly to a parent or guardian.

Catalyst Academy assumes no responsibility for lost, damaged, or stolen cell phones or other electronic devices. **No video, photo or audio recordings are to be taken in school, on school grounds, or on the bus.**

Emergency Contact Information

In the event of an emergency, Catalyst Academy will contact all parents and families via email and phone call. It is vitally important that parents and families keep their emergency contact

information on file up-to-date. If there is ever a change to your contact information, alert the Front Office Manager as soon as possible.

Equal Employment Opportunity Statement

The School provides equal employment opportunities without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, veteran status or other legally-protected class or characteristic. The School prohibits any such discrimination. This policy applies to all employees and applicants and it applies to recruiting, hiring, compensation, training, placement, transfer, promotion, demotion, discipline, and termination. The School seeks to fill all positions with qualified candidates without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, or veteran status or other legally-protected class or characteristic.

Family-School Communication

At Catalyst, we believe that a strong partnership between families and school is essential to every scholar's success. When families and educators communicate regularly and work together, scholars receive the consistent support they need to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. We encourage open, respectful, and ongoing communication throughout the school year.

The school and teachers use several methods to keep families informed:

- **Weekly School Communication:** Families receive a weekly email from the school with important announcements, upcoming events, reminders, and other schoolwide information.
- **Teacher Communication:** Teachers communicate with families through phone calls, email, and ClassDojo to share updates, celebrate successes, and address questions or concerns. Families are encouraged to use these same methods to communicate with their child's teacher.
- **Daily Scholar Communication:** Scholars bring home a daily communication folder that includes important papers, notices, homework, and other information from school. In addition, all scholars have a log or tracker that provides families with insight into how their child met school expectations throughout the day. For upper grade scholars, the tracker is both a daily communication tool for families and a tool for developing personal responsibility in scholars. It encourages scholars to reflect on their behavior, take ownership of their choices, and build the habits of accountability that support long-term success. We encourage families to review these materials each evening and discuss them with their child.

Communicating with School Staff

Our teachers and staff are committed to maintaining strong communication with families while also ensuring that their first responsibility during the school day is the supervision, instruction, and care of scholars. Because staff members are actively teaching and supporting students throughout the day, they are often unable to answer phone calls immediately.

If you need to contact a staff member, please leave a voicemail, send an email, or message them through ClassDojo. Staff members will respond as soon as they are able, typically within one school business day. If there is an urgent need to communicate, please contact the front office, so that our team can continue to balance timely communication with providing every scholar the attention they deserve.

FERPA and Scholar Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day Catalyst Academy Charter School ("School") receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the School CEO a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the School to amend a record should write to the School CEO, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
3. The right to provide written consent before the School discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to School officials with legitimate educational interests. A School official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school board. A School official also may include a volunteer or contractor outside of the School who performs an institutional service of function for which the School would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the School with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another School official in performing his or her tasks. A School official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the [School] to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20202

FERPA permits the School to disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless you have advised the School to the contrary in accordance with School procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the School to include this type of information from your child's education records in certain School publications. Examples include:

- A playbill, showing your student's role in a drama production;
- The annual yearbook;
- Honor roll or other recognition lists;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of team members.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, two federal laws and state law require local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving assistance under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to provide military recruiters, upon request, with the following information – names, addresses and telephone listings – unless parents have advised the LEA that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent. If you do not want the School to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the School in writing on the FERPA Opt-Out form.

The School has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's name
- Address
- Telephone listing
- Electronic mail address
- Photograph
- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- The most recent educational agency or institution attended
- Student ID number, user ID, or other unique personal identifier used to communicate in electronic systems that cannot be used to access education records without a PIN, password, etc. (A student's SSN, in whole or in part, cannot be used for this purpose.)

FERPA also permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in §99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to School officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, §99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the School to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A School

may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student –

- To other School officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the School has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the School has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in §99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(2) are met. (§99.31(a)(1)) The School may designate after-school providers with whom it has written agreements with to provide after-school programming to School students as other School officials who may have access to education records.
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of §99.34. (§99.31(a)(2))
- To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the State educational agency in the parent or eligible student's State (SEA). Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of §99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf. (§99.31(a)(3) and 99.35)
- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§99.31(a)(4))
- To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed ● to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system ● and the system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose ● records were released, subject to §99.38. (§99.31(a)(5))
- To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency who has the right to access a student's case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible for the care and protection of the student. 20 USC §1232g(b)(L).
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the School, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction. (§99.31(a)(6))
- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§99.31(a)(7)) ● To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§99.31(a)(8))
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. (§99.31(a)(9))
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to §99.36. (§99.31(a)(10))
- Information the School has designated as "directory information" under §99.37. (§99.31(a)(11))

Grievance Policy & Procedures

The Board of Trustees of Catalyst Academy Charter School recognizes that it has the primary responsibility to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations governing educational programs. The Board encourages the early, informal resolution of parental complaints and incidents whenever possible and appropriate. To resolve complaints that cannot be resolved through such an informal process, the Board shall adopt a uniform system of complaint processes specified below.

This process will be prompt, impartial, and equitable and shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations. For purposes of this policy and the accompanying regulation, "Complaint" means a written and signed statement alleging one or more violations of paragraphs #1-4 below. If the complainant is unable to put the complaint in writing, due to conditions such as a disability or illiteracy, the charter school shall assist the complainant in filing the complaint.

The charter school shall investigate and resolve the following complaints:

1. Any complaint alleging charter school violation of applicable state or federal law or regulations including but not limited to Free and Reduced Lunch and special education programs;
2. Any complaint alleging unlawful discrimination in programs and activities against any person based on his/her actual or perceived characteristics of race or ethnicity, color, ancestry, nationality, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, religion, marital or parental status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, or genetic information or based on his/her association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics. Unlawful discrimination includes, but is not limited to, discriminatory bullying, discriminatory intimidation, and sexual harassment;
3. Any complaint alleging that the charter school has not complied with legal requirements related to the implementation of its charter;
4. Any complaint alleging retaliation against a complainant or other participant in the complaint process or anyone who has acted to uncover or report a violation subject to this policy;
5. Any complaint alleging non-discriminatory bullying shall follow the procedures in the School's Anti-Bullying Policy.

The Board recognizes that informal dispute resolution can, depending on the nature of the allegations, offer a process to reach a resolution to the complaint that is agreeable to all parties.

Due to the implicit power imbalance between adults and scholars, such a process may only be offered to resolve complaints that involve both scholars and adults on a voluntary basis. Such a process shall not be offered or used to resolve any complaint involving sexual assault or sexual battery, even on a voluntary basis. In filing and investigating complaints, the confidentiality of the

parties involved shall be protected as required by law.

As appropriate for any complaint alleging retaliation, unlawful discrimination, or bullying, the Principal shall maintain the integrity of the complaint process and shall keep confidential the identity of the complainant and/or the subject of the complaint, if he/she is different from the complainant.

The following complaint shall not be subject to the Board's Complaint Policy but shall be referred to the specified agency: Any complaint alleging child abuse or neglect shall be referred to Childline and the appropriate law enforcement agency. Complaint Process:

Step 1: Parent contacts school/teacher/staff regarding a complaint

Step 2: If unresolved, School offers a meeting or conference

Step 3: If unresolved, parent files a formal written Complaint with Principal

Step 4: Investigation of the complaint (within 5 business days when feasible; no more than 10 business days)

Step 5: If unresolved, Parent presents a formal written Complaint to the Board of Directors.

Step 6: Response to the complaint and final written decision (within 30 calendar days, but may be extended to 60 with Board approval)

Health and Illness

Guidelines for Student Health

It is important to maintain a healthy school environment for all scholars and staff. Please keep the following guidelines in mind:

A parent/guardian will be notified and asked to pick up their scholar if they have:

- a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher
- active vomiting or diarrhea
- suspected contagious illness (pink eye, flu, Covid 19)
- a serious injury or appears obviously ill
- a live louse/lice found on head

Guidelines for Communicable Diseases/Health Concerns

Catalyst Academy aligns its guidelines with the Allegheny County Health Department for communicable diseases/issues:

- Pink Eye: Scholar is excluded from school until all discharge is gone and eyes are dry, regardless of whether antibiotic drops have been started.
- Strep Throat: Scholar is excluded from school for 24 hours after the initiation of treatment.
- Head Lice: Scholar may return to school after completion of first treatment. All cases of head lice should be reported to the school nurse.

To prevent possible exposure of contagious illnesses to others:

- Scholars with a temperature above 100.4 degrees must be fever-free for 24 hours without the use

of fever-reducing medication (Tylenol, ibuprofen) before returning to school.

- Injuries/illnesses occurring at home or over the weekend should be addressed prior to returning to school.
- If a scholar vomits or has diarrhea during the night or in the morning before school, they should be kept at home for 24 hours from the last episode.
- If they have red, swollen, itchy eyes, have purulent drainage, or have a crusty appearance upon awakening, they should be kept home and see a doctor.

Homework Guidelines

At Catalyst, we believe that meaningful learning extends beyond the school day. Homework helps scholars develop important habits such as responsibility, independence, organization, and time management. We also recognize that research shows children thrive when they have time to read, talk with their families, play, and get enough sleep. For this reason, we are committed to assigning homework that is purposeful, age-appropriate, and manageable.

Homework is intended to reinforce learning that has already taken place in the classroom and should be completed independently whenever possible. While scholars may need support in establishing routines and managing their time, the work itself should be something they are able to complete on their own. If your child consistently struggles to complete homework or requires significant assistance, please contact your child's teacher so we can work together to provide the appropriate support.

Depending on their grade level, scholars will receive either daily homework assignments or a weekly homework packet. Additionally, scholars at every grade level are expected to read (independently or with a loved one) every night.

Families can support their child's success by:

- Establishing a consistent homework routine with a quiet place to work.
- Encouraging the completion of assigned work by checking that daily assignments or weekly packets are finished.
- Reading with or encouraging your child to read independently for at least 20 minutes each evening.
- Helping your child develop routines for returning completed homework to school.
- Making time for conversation, play, and a healthy bedtime routine to ensure your child gets adequate sleep.

Inclusive Learning at Catalyst Academy

The main components of the special education program at Catalyst Academy Charter School ("Catalyst") are also the same components of IDEA, the federal law related to special education. The special education program ("Inclusive Learning") at Catalyst is built on the following:

- The identification of scholars with disabilities ("exceptionalities");
- The development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- The inclusion of all scholars in the least restrictive environment (LRE);
- The engagement of families in decision-making processes for the exceptional scholar;
- The provision of related services;
- And transition services for scholars 14 years or older

Reporting Requirements of Catalyst Academy under IDEA

Child Find is the legal requirement of schools to identify all school age children who have disabilities and may be entitled to special education services. Catalyst is required to evaluate any scholar who presents as an individual who may benefit from specially designed instruction.

Child Count is another legal requirement of schools to report the number of scholars who receive special education services by grade level, by disability category, and by age of the scholar.

Annual Public Notice of Special Education Services and Programs, in compliance with state and federal regulations, any educational entity that receives federal or state funding is required to issue an annual public notice to community families communicating Catalyst's Child Find and Child Count procedures and findings in both print media and on the Catalyst website.

Identification of scholars with Exceptionalities

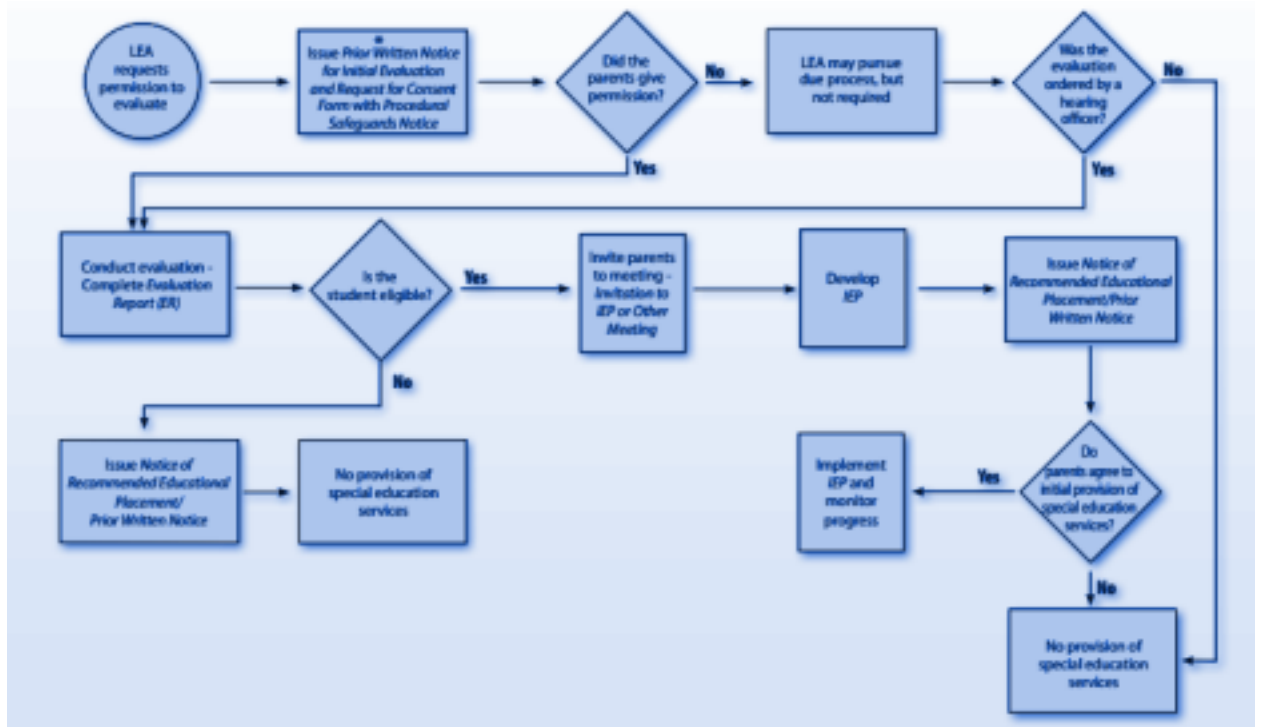
Catalyst Academy closely monitors the performance of scholars with and without IEPs through the Catalyst Academy Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model. To qualify for special education services, a scholar must meet a three-part test:

1. They must be school age (i.e. 5-21 years old);
2. They must have a disability recognized under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (see below);
3. They must require specially designed instruction to meet their needs in the school setting (see below).

There are thirteen disability categories under IDEA:

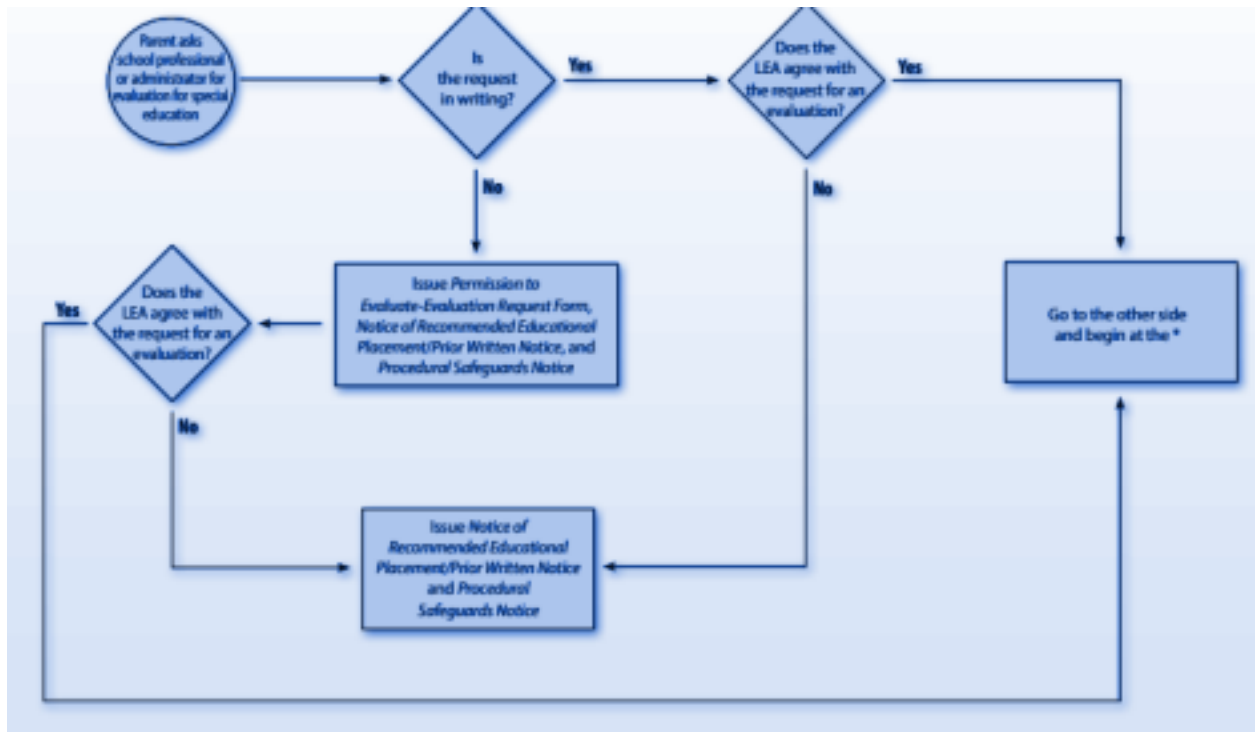
● Autism	● Other Health Impairment (OHI)
● Deaf/Blindness	● Physical Disability
● Deafness/Hearing Impairment	● Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
● Emotional Disturbance	● Speech & Language Impairment
● Intellectual Disability	● Traumatic Brain Injury
● Multiple Disabilities	● Visual Impairment
● Orthopedic Impairment	

Should a scholar progress through each MTSS tier without significant growth in one or more skill sets, Catalyst staff and the scholar's family should discuss an evaluation for special education services. The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) provides the following flowchart to explain a **school-requested evaluation** for special education services:



(PaTTAN, January 2019)

A **parent or legal guardian** may also request an evaluation for special education services for their child. PaTTAN describes this process through the following flowchart:



(PaTTAN, January 2019)

It's important to note that there are scholars who have disabilities who do not need special education services (i.e. they do not require an IEP). These scholars are often eligible for Section 504 plans, which differs from an IEP in three major ways:

1. Section 504 plans fall under a civil rights statute while an IEP falls under an educational benefits law;
2. Section 504 plans can follow a scholar following graduation from high school, while an IEP does not;
3. An IEP includes specific plans regarding related services, accommodations, modifications, measurable annual goals, and the degree to which the scholar will not be educated with nondisabled scholars among other specificities

Scholars who qualify for an IEP are provided with educational services that align with their disability category. These educational services are designed to meet their individual needs and strengths. In addition to the educational services a scholar with an IEP may receive, there are other services called related services the scholar might require to benefit from special education. These related services include transportation, speech pathology and audiology, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, social work services, and nursing.

The extent of special education services and the location for the delivery of such services are determined by the IEP team (including parents and staff) at an annual IEP team meeting and are reevaluated every three years for all disability categories except for scholars with an Intellectual Disability, who are eligible for reevaluation every two years. Procedural Safeguards are distributed to families of students who receive special education services annually. They describe a parent or guardian's rights under federal and state law as well

as the process families may follow should they wish to formally seek dispute resolution.

Scholars with exceptionalities and their families can expect to engage in a continuum of support and be embraced by a culture of dignity at Catalyst. Our leadership and instructional staff believes that scholars with exceptionalities at Catalyst belong in a community that not only supports them, but challenges them to achieve and grow commensurate with their abilities.

Screening and Evaluation for Special Education

As reviewed above, Catalyst closely monitors scholar performance throughout the academic year. Evaluations for special education services can be requested by the school or by the parent or legal guardian of the scholar in question. The request triggers a Meeting to Determine Eligibility in which the school team and parent meet to review student data and current interventions. The team works together to determine if an evaluation is appropriate at this time.

Should a parent or legal guardian wish to request an evaluation for special education services and the Meeting to Determine Eligibility, they should submit a written request to the attention of:

Director of Inclusive Learning, Catalyst Academy Charter School
7061 Lemington Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
412-684-2400
operations@catalystacademy.org

All information collected as part of an individual scholar referral or evaluation is treated in a confidential manner and does not become part of the scholar's permanent record file. A written policy regarding the confidentiality of scholar records is available for review by contacting:

Director of Inclusive Learning, Catalyst Academy Charter School
7061 Lemington Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
412-684-2400
operations@catalystacademy.org

An evaluation of a scholar for special education can be an overwhelming process for families. That is why Catalyst staff consider our core beliefs--Below. Grow. Achieve.--in our continuum of support. Our staff believes:

- Your child belongs in a thriving, engaging community;
- Your child is entitled to an exceptional education that meets their needs and strengths;
- Your child can experience success at school (and may even love school!);
- Your child and their future matter to Catalyst

Internet Acceptable Use Policy

The Internet is a global network linking computers around the world. Internet use provides valuable opportunities for research, curriculum support, and career development. Catalyst Academy Charter School offers Internet access to its scholars and staff. The primary purpose of providing access to the internet is to support the educational mission of Catalyst Academy Charter School. Catalyst Academy Charter School expects that scholars and staff will use this access in a manner consistent with this purpose. While the Internet is a tremendous resource for electronic information, it has the potential for abuse. Catalyst Academy Charter School makes no guarantees, implied or otherwise, regarding the factual reliability of data available over the Internet. Users of the Catalyst Academy Charter School Internet service assume full responsibility for any costs, liabilities, or damages arising from the way they choose to use their access to the Internet. Catalyst Academy Charter School has installed special filtering software in an effort to block access to material that is not appropriate for children.

The following is a list of prohibited behaviors. The list is not exhaustive, but illustrates unacceptable uses of the Catalyst Academy Charter School's Internet service.

- disclosing, using or disseminating personal identification information about self or others;
- accessing, sending or forwarding materials or communications that are defamatory, pornographic, obscene, sexually explicit, threatening, harassing, or illegal;
- using the Internet service for any illegal activities such as gaining unauthorized access to other systems, arranging for the sale or purchase of drugs or alcohol, participating in criminal gang activity, threatening others, transferring obscene material, or attempting to do any of the above;
- using the Internet service to receive or send information relating to dangerous instruments such as bombs or other explosive devices, automatic weapons or other firearms, or other weaponry;
- vandalizing school computers by causing physical damage, reconfiguring the computer system, attempting to disrupt the computer system, or destroy data by spreading computer viruses or by any other means;
- copying or downloading of copyrighted material without authorization from the copyright holder, unless the copies are used for teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research. Users shall not copy and forward or copy and upload any copyrighted material without prior approval of the principal;
- plagiarizing material obtained from the Internet (Any material obtained from the Internet and included in one's own work must be cited and credited by name or by electronic address or path on the Internet. Information obtained through E-mail or news sources must also be credited as to sources.)
- using the Internet service for commercial purposes;
- downloading or installing any commercial software, shareware, freeware or similar types of material onto network drives or disks with

School Technology Policy

The use of school system technology resources, such as Chromebooks and other electronic devices, networks, and the Internet, is a privilege, not a right. All scholars must sign the Catalyst Academy Charter School Technology Use Agreement before being assigned a Chromebook

Vandalism and theft will result in revocation of technology use privileges and disciplinary action. Vandalism is defined as:

- Any malicious attempt to harm or destroy network resources.
- Damaging computer equipment and/or data of anyone connected to the network.
- Any stickers/decals or markings made to the outside or inside of the device.
- Removing or altering any labels or identifying information on the device.

The Manager of Operations and designated staff work closely with building administrators in cases of suspected vandalism or theft. In the case of an off-campus theft incident, scholars or guardians are responsible for filing a police report as well as notifying the school.

Lost or stolen technology is the responsibility of the scholar and must be reported to staff immediately. Once technology is reported as lost or stolen the scholar will have 14 days to find the missing technology before a replacement fee will be assessed to their account. Once the fee is assessed the scholar will be provided another device.

If the original device is found, the scholar must return the original device to have the replacement fee removed. If the original device is returned with damage, the scholar will be assessed fees to cover the damage.

The Chromebook is issued to the scholar who, with his/her parents or legal guardians, is the only authorized user of that Chromebook. Although each scholar accepts responsibility for the care and use of the Chromebook, the Chromebook remains the sole property of Catalyst Academy Charter School. Damage or negligence to the Chromebook not due to normal wear or tear will be subject to a fee charged to the parents or legal guardians.

Medication Administration Policy

Catalyst Academy Charter School ("Catalyst") understands that taking medication can be a serious health matter for scholars and their families. Catalyst requires parents/guardians to administer scholar medications at home rather than at school whenever possible, as there are safety concerns about scholars forgetting to take the medication, having a reaction to the medication or other scholars taking the medication. Catalyst acknowledges that some scholars may require prescription or non-prescription medication for chronic or short-term illnesses during the school day to enable them to remain in school and participate in their education. When a licensed health care provider deems it medically necessary that a medication be administered during the school day, the following policy shall apply.

Objective

It is the objective of this policy to specify the conditions and circumstances under which medication shall be administered during the school day.

Definitions

"Medication" is an F.D.A. (United States Food & Drug Administration) approved drug or preparation used for the treatment or prevention of disease that is (a) prescribed by a health care provider, who is licensed to write a prescription in any state in the United States of America (a "prescription medication"), or (b) an over-the-counter medication (a "non-prescription medication"). "Licensed health care provider" is a medical doctor (M.D.); doctor of osteopathy (D.O.); dentist (D.M.D. or D.D.S.); nurse practitioner (C.R.N.P.); physician assistant (P.A.C.); or doctor of optometry (O.D.);

"F.D.A. approved label" is the official description of a drug product which includes: indications; who should take the drug; adverse effects; instructions for uses in pregnancy, children and other populations; and safety information for the patient;

"Self-administration" means medication administered directly by the student to herself/himself not in the presence of a school nurse.

Policy

It is the policy of the Board that:

1. Catalyst shall not be responsible for the diagnosis of a student's illness;
2. The administration or self-administration of prescription and non-prescription medications during the school day will be permitted when:
 - a. a licensed health care provider deems it medically necessary for the student to take medication, either prescription or non-prescription, during the school day; b. the Authorization for Medication Administration Form is completed and signed by the licensed health care provider;
 - c. the Authorization for Medication Administration Form is signed by the parent/guardian;
 - d. the medication is delivered to the health office in a container with an FDA approved label;
 - e. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible for assuring that the medication delivered to the Health Office is up to date and that the supply of medication is renewed as needed.
3. Non-compliance with these procedures may result in the student not receiving his/her medication;
4. The CEO or designee shall formulate administrative procedures that a parent/guardian must follow before any medication (prescription and/or non-prescription) will be administered or self-administered to his/her child during the school day. The procedures shall include a written request from the parent/guardian to administer the medication with a written order from the licensed health care provider;
5. Self-administration will be permitted where a licensed health care provider and parent confirm that there is a medical need for, and the student is responsible for and capable of, self-administering the medication. Such confirmation shall acknowledge that Catalyst assumes no liability for such self-administration. Prior Health Office approval is required. Catalyst may require that these written confirmations be updated from time to time;
6. Where a student demonstrates the capability for self-administration and for responsible behavior in the use of an asthma inhaler and/or EpiPen, the student may possess and use the inhaler and/or EpiPen at school. Students are prohibited from providing any medication or inhaler to another student, and violations of this policy will result in the immediate confiscation of the inhaler and the medication, loss of privileges of possessing same, and discipline under other Catalyst policies concerning controlled substances. Prior to receiving permission for self-administration with an inhaler or EpiPen, the student and parent shall provide a written statement from a licensed health care provider describing the drug, the dosage, the time the medication is to be taken and the diagnosis and the reason the medicine is needed. The licensed health care provider's statement shall also indicate the potential of any serious reaction that might occur, as well as any necessary emergency response, and shall also indicate whether the student is qualified and able to self-administer the medication. The student must notify a staff member immediately following each use of an EpiPen. The provisions of paragraph 4, above, shall apply to self-administration by inhaler;
7. Except as specifically provided for in this Policy and any accompanying administrative procedures, all medications (prescription and/or non-prescription) must be delivered to the health office for storing and administering and students are not permitted to carry medications on their persons

during the school day, unless all requirements for permission for self-administration are met. Violations of any provision of this Policy or any related procedures may result in disciplinary action; 8. For life-threatening situations indicating incipient anaphylactic shock, trained staff shall be authorized to administer the prescribed Epi-pen. The CEO or designee shall designate the procedures to be followed, including training of staff, forms to be completed in advance by the parent/guardian and procedures for emergency administration of the medication; 9. Nothing in this policy is designed to prevent the administration of first-aid including the administration of Glucagon and/or EpiPen to a student without the express written permission of a parent where deemed necessary by a nurse pursuant to her/his professional judgment; 10. Catalyst will not administer or allow self-administration of homeopathic or herbal remedies; 11. The CEO or designee shall periodically review state standards and direct the responsible personnel accordingly; 12. Field Trips: Situations involving children with life threatening medical conditions and students taking daily medications will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Parents of children who receive routine medication during school hours may choose to have their children not receive their medication on the day of the field trip if the nurse cannot attend. Any questions should be directed to the school nurse; 13. All medications must be retrieved by parents or an adult designee at the end of the school year. Medications will not be returned to students. Any medication not picked up at the end of the school year will be properly disposed of. No medication will remain at school over the summer; 14. Exceptions to this Policy must be approved by the CEO and/or the Principal.

Non Discriminatory Policy

Catalyst Academy Charter School as a matter of policy provides educational opportunities without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, disability, or age. In addition, RePublic Schools does not permit or condone discrimination based on race, creed, color, national origin, religion, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, physical disability, or age in employment matters or assignment in programs or services provided.

Possession of Weapons Policy

Purpose

Catalyst Academy Charter School (the "School") is committed to providing a safe and secure educational environment for students, staff, and visitors. In accordance with the Pennsylvania Public School Code, 24 P.S. § 13-1317.2, and the terms of this Possession of Weapons Policy (the "Policy"), the possession of weapons on School property, at any School sponsored activity, or on any public vehicle providing transportation to School or a School sponsored activity is prohibited.

Definitions

As used herein:

"Weapon" shall include but not be limited to any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nunchaku, brass or metal knuckles, firearm, shotgun, rifle, BB or pellet gun, taser/stun gun, chemical agent, mace, explosive device, firecracker, and/or any other tool, instrument or implement used to threaten or inflict harm. The term Weapon shall also include any simulated, toy or look-alike

weapon.

“Possession” occurs when a student has physical possession of a weapon or a weapon is under the student’s control (including in the student’s locker, bag, desk, or vehicle) while the student is on School property, as defined herein.

“School property” includes all buildings, grounds, and facilities owned, leased, or used by the School; locations of School sponsored events or activities; and any public vehicle providing transportation to/from the School or to/from a School sponsored event or activity.

Prohibited Activity and Discipline

The Board of Trustees of the School (the “Board”) prohibits the possession of weapons on School property, at any School sponsored activity, or on any public vehicle providing transportation to School or

a School sponsored activity. In accordance with 24 P.S. § 13-1317.2(a), the Board shall expel, for a period of not less than one (1) year, any student who violates this Policy. Such expulsion shall be in conformance with required due process proceedings and Board policies.

Pursuant to 24 P.S. § 13-1317.2(c), the School’s Chief Executive Officer (the “CEO”) may recommend modifications to the expulsion requirements for students on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with relevant factors including, but not limited to, the student’s age, intent, and disciplinary record. Any such modifications must be approved by the Board and documented accordingly. In the case of an exceptional student, the CEO shall take all necessary steps to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Act, as required by 24 P.S. § 13-1317.2(c).

As set forth in 24 P.S. § 13-1317.2(d), this Policy shall not apply to: (1) weapons being used as a part of a program (e.g., ROTC, archery, etc.) approved by the School by an individual who is participating in the program and under strict supervision, or (2) weapons that are unloaded and in the possession of an individual crossing School property to obtain access to public or private lands used for lawful hunting, if the entry on School property is authorized by School authorities.

Any person who has a permit to carry a concealed weapon will not be permitted to carry a concealed weapon on School property, excluding law enforcement personnel.

Reporting Requirements

Persons observing or becoming aware of the possession of weapons on School property, at any School sponsored activity, or on any public vehicle providing transportation to School or a School sponsored activity shall immediately report such activity to the School administrators.

The CEO or their designee shall react promptly to information and knowledge concerning the possession of weapons on School property and shall report such activity to the student’s parents or legal guardians and to local law enforcement officials in compliance with state laws and regulations and the procedures set forth in the School’s memorandum of understanding with local

law enforcement officials.

The CEO shall annually report all incidents involving possession of weapons to the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Office for Safe Schools using the Safe Schools Report.

General Guidelines

This Policy shall be reviewed and distributed annually to staff, students, and parents or guardians. Staff shall receive regular instruction and training on state law regarding possession of weapons on School property, including with respect to recognizing and reporting weapons. Staff shall cooperate with local law enforcement in detecting and prosecuting all violators of this Policy.

Exceptions to this Policy may be made by the CEO, who shall prescribe special conditions or administrative regulations to be followed.

Transfer Students

Pursuant to 24 P.S. § 13-1317.2(e.1), when the School receives a student who transfers from a public or private school during a period of expulsion for an act or offense involving a weapon, the School may assign that student to an alternative assignment or may provide alternative education services, provided that the assignment may not exceed the expulsion period.

Adopted 8.5.2025

Promotion and Retention

Adhering to guidance from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Position Statement on Grade Retention and School Promotion, Catalyst Academy employs a holistic approach when considering the retention and/or promotion of a scholar. According to NASP, *"over the past four decades the effectiveness of grade retention fails to support its efficacy in remediating academic deficits."* Therefore, the approach of Catalyst Academy will be to collaborate with all necessary stakeholders to create a service model that ensures:

- Multi-tiered problem-solving models to provide early and intensive evidence-based instruction and intervention to meet the needs of all students across academic, behavioral, and social-emotional domains
- Equitable opportunities to learn for students from diverse backgrounds
- Universal screening for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional difficulties
- Frequent progress monitoring and evaluation of interventions

This also means families play an important part in ensuring their scholar is regularly attending school in order to participate in all opportunities for learning, intervention and support. These factors will support our team, in collaboration with the scholar and their family, when determining promotion or retention.

Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232h; 34 CFR Part 98) applies to programs that receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). PPRA is intended to protect the rights of parents and students in two ways: It seeks to ensure that schools and contractors make instructional materials available for inspection by parents if those materials will be used in connection with an ED-funded survey, analysis, or evaluation in which their children participate; and It seeks to ensure that schools and contractors obtain written parental consent before minor students are required to participate in any ED-funded survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning:

- Political affiliations;
- Mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student and his/her family;
- Sex behavior and attitudes;
- Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating and demeaning behavior;
- Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
- Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers; or
- Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program).

Parents or students who believe their rights under PPRA may have been violated may file a complaint with ED by writing to the Family Policy Compliance Office. Complaints must contain specific allegations of fact giving reasonable cause to believe that a violation of PPRA occurred.

For additional information or technical assistance, you may call 202-260-3887 (voice). Individuals who use TDD may call the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Additionally, you may contact us at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-5920

Public and Family Conduct at School Events

Catalyst Academy Charter School is a learning community that prioritizes the safety and respect of our scholars, staff and school community. In alignment with the Civility Policy referenced elsewhere in this handbook, Catalyst Academy Charter School has the authority to prohibit any individual from accessing or attending a school event, school buildings and school grounds when the individual's conduct constitutes disruptive or aggressive behavior or includes any of the following: abusive or profane language, threatening behavior or harassment, weapons, illegal controlled substances, alcoholic beverages and intoxication on school premises ("Prohibited Behaviors"). In the event that any scholar's parent/guardian or family member, or any other individual is disruptive,

aggressive, or displays any Prohibited Behaviors during a school-related activity, school personnel shall direct the individual to cease such conduct. If the individual fails to do so, school personnel shall request the individual to leave the premises, and school personnel shall refer the matter to school administrators for further administrative action, criminal prosecution, or legal action, which may include, but not limited to, a prohibition from any further participation in school-related activities and being excluded from Catalyst Academy Charter School properties.

Scholar Belongings

Scholars should only bring items to class that are requested by teachers and/or support learning. Scholars who violate this rule may have their item(s) confiscated for a period of time in the Front Office. Repeated violations of this policy may result in indefinite confiscation irrespective of any costs or fees scholars and/or their families may incur as a result.

Scholar backpacks will be searched as they enter the school building. Any items deemed dangerous and/or potentially disruptive to the learning environment will be confiscated. Additionally, any electronic devices (phone, smart watches, tablets) will be kept during the day and returned during dismissal. If a scholar does not turn in their electronics at the beginning of the day and attempts to use it during the day, it will be confiscated and a parent/guardian will need to come to the school to pick it up.

Skateboards, roller blades, skates, or scooters are not permitted on school property. If they are brought in, they will be confiscated and held in the Front Office.

Scholar Goal Circles

Scholar Goal Circles are an important opportunity for parents, guardians, and other members of a scholar's support system to meet with teachers and school administrators. Scholar Goal Circles are similar to traditional parent teacher conferences, but they have a few key distinguishing characteristics. They center the scholar in the conversation. Scholars, supported by their teachers, will be active participants in the conversation. The discussion will be goal-oriented, both to note prior progress and also to set goals for the next period. Finally, the term "circle" signifies the importance of having the scholar's support circle attend the meeting. In addition to parents and guardians, this can include other important family members (e.g., grandparents), mentors, coaches, etc. Catalyst will communicate scholar goal circle dates in advance and parents sign up for an appointment time to meet with their scholar's primary general education teacher. Parents will also have the opportunity to speak with Talent teachers and school administrators during these events.

School Closings

Catalyst Academy Charter School follows Pittsburgh Public Schools inclement winter weather announcements. However, Catalyst School has a climate controlled building with air conditioning and does not follow Pittsburgh Public Schools' heat protocol. Families should check the Catalyst Academy Facebook and Instagram pages for general updates and can expect communication directly from school leadership confirming announcements.

School Lunch and Breakfast

Catalyst participates in the National School Lunch Program. Catalyst's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) ensures all scholars receive breakfast and lunch at no charge. Menus will be distributed monthly.

Catalyst Academy Charter school promotes healthy nutrition. Breakfast and lunch will be provided by the school daily. Scholars may bring outside food items however there will not be refrigeration provided unless medically needed. We are not able to offer the use of a microwave to students to heat food and Catalyst Academy cannot accept food delivery services for student meals during the school day.

In order to keep scholars safe, parents of children with food allergies are required to communicate any/all needs with faculty and staff proactively. This information should be included in student's enrollment paperwork and be updated with the nurse or front office when necessary. Catalyst Academy will take reasonable precautions to ensure scholar safety.

Listed below are a few examples of healthy choice items as well as items that are not allowed in school.

Examples of Healthy Choices	Examples of Items Not Allowed
✓ Water and Natural Fruit Juices ✓ Fresh Fruits ✓ Fresh Vegetables ✓ Sandwiches on Whole Wheat Bread ✓ Graham Crackers ✓ Sugar Free Jell-O ✓ Yogurt ✓ Raisins ✓ Applesauce ✓ Cups of Fruit ✓ Cottage Cheese ✓ Dried Fruit ✓ Granola Bar ✓ Pretzels ✓ Crackers ✓ Cheese ✓ Whole Grain Cereal/Cereal Bars ✓ Veggie Chips	✗ Juices with added sugar or high fructose corn syrup ✗ Chocolate and Strawberry Milk ✗ Candy ✗ Soda ✗ Cookies ✗ Doughnuts ✗ Cake

Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print,

audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (PDF), from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. Email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Scholar Search Policy

School administration reserves the right to search a scholar, a locker, a bag, a person, or vehicle on school property if the administration feels it is in the best interest of the safety of the school.

Catalyst Academy Charter School provides spaces such as hooks, cubbies, and lockers for storage of scholars' books, school materials and personal property. This policy is designed to establish guidelines for situations in which these scholar areas, including lockers may be searched or inspected.

Procedures. School lockers are the property of Catalyst Academy Charter School. Scholars have a limited expectation of privacy. Scholars are required to ensure that their lockers do not contain spoiled food items or beverages, or soiled clothing which may attract pests, create odors or cause unhealthy conditions. A scholar locker may be opened and inspected, with or without the consent of the scholar, whenever there are odors, pests, or other indications that a locker may contain these items or similarly unhealthy conditions.

Lockers will not be used to store any substance or item that is prohibited by law, school policy or rules, or that presents a threat to the health, safety or welfare of the school's community or property

Catalyst Academy Charter School may conduct without suspicion unannounced blanket or random searches of lockers if school officials determine in good faith that a substantial problem is threatening the welfare or safety of scholars and staff and that blanket or random searches may help solve or eliminate the problem.

Before such a search is conducted, Catalyst Academy Charter School will take the following steps:

1. The CEO or his/her designee and the school principal will jointly approve the search.

2. The CEO or his/her designee and the school principal will determine the method and scope of the search. Blanket searches will include all lockers in a school or all lockers in a section of a school. Random searches will include only those lockers chosen at random without discretion of school officials. For example, searching every fourth locker in a school.
3. The scholar will be notified and be given an opportunity to be present before an individual locker cleanliness inspection or search based on reasonable suspicion. If, however, the school has reasonable suspicion that a locker contains something that poses a threat substance or an item that poses a threat to the health, safety or welfare of the school population, the scholar locker may be searched without prior warning and without the scholar being present.
4. A principal shall open a scholar locker on the request of law enforcement only upon presentation by the requesting officer of a duly authorized search warrant, or that the circumstances otherwise permit the search to be lawfully conducted in accordance with the standards applicable to law enforcement actions, or on the intelligent and voluntary consent of the scholar. School staff will not interfere with or obstruct searches initiated by law enforcement, but may assist when law enforcement officials have requested such assistance.

The signature page at the end of this handbook serves as an acknowledgment of this policy. Failure or refusal to sign the acknowledgment will have no effect on the school's right to search scholar lockers.

The school reserves the right to search a scholar's locker at any time based on reasonable suspicion for the purpose of determining whether the locker is being used improperly for the storage of contraband, drugs or controlled substances, illegal objects or anything that poses a threat to the school population.

Inspections or searches may include but not be limited to the use of certified drug-sniffing dogs, metal detectors or any similar means or device used to protect the health, safety and welfare of the school population.

The principal or designee will be present whenever a scholar locker is searched on the basis of reasonable suspicion or a cleanliness inspection. The principal or designated staff shall maintain written records of all occasions when a locker is searched or inspected. Such records shall include the reason(s) for the search/inspection, persons present, objects found and their disposition.

The principal will be responsible for the safekeeping and proper disposition of any substance or item found in a scholar locker if such substance or item is prohibited by law, school policy or rules, or presents a threat to the health, safety or welfare of the school's community or property.

Confiscated substances

or items may be used as evidence in a disciplinary hearing. Illegal or dangerous substances or items will be given to law enforcement officials. Scholars are responsible for the security of their lockers.

Scholars, parents and staff will receive a copy of this policy annually per the scholar and Family Handbook and via the school website. The CEO or his/her designee will develop procedures to implement this policy.

Title I

Title I is a 100% Federally funded supplemental education program that provides financial assistance to local educational agencies to improve educational opportunities for educationally deprived children. Title I programs are designed to help children meet the state content and performance standards in reading, language arts, and mathematics.

Catalyst Academy receives Title I funding. As a Title I school, Catalyst must ensure that information related to scholar and parent/family programs, meetings, and other activities are sent to the families of Title I children in a format and in a language that family can understand.

Catalyst Academy will engage with scholars' families through a flexible number of meetings in the morning and/or evening. Catalyst will provide parents of participating children with a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessments used to measure student progress, and the achievement levels of the challenging state academic standards. If requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible.

A School-Parent Compact is developed with parents and family members during the current academy year. The compact outlines how parents, school staff, and scholars will share in the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and the parents will build and develop partnerships to help children achieve the state's high standards. The compact:

- describes the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children served under this part to meet the challenging state academic standards, and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning; volunteering in their child's classroom; and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time;
- addresses the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum;
- mandates parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child's achievement;
- frequent reports to parents on their children's progress;
- provides materials and resources to families to promote the child's education at home;
- reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities; and ensuring regular two-way, meaningful communication between family members and school staff, and, to the extent practicable, in

a language that family members can understand either in print or through a translator

TITLE I SCHOOL – PARENT – STUDENT COMPACT

The School Parent Compact will describe school-parent compact will be jointly developed with parents and family members and the compact outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share in the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and the parents will build and develop partnerships to help children achieve the State's high standards (*ESSA, Section 1116(d)*).

School

The school understands the importance of the school experience to every student and their role as educators and models. Therefore, the school agrees to carry out the following responsibilities to the best of their ability:

- Provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children served under this part to meet the challenging State academic standards (required);
- Address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum through;
 - parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child's achievement
 - frequent reports to parents on their children's progress;
 - reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities; and
- Ensuring regular two-way, meaningful communication between family members and school staff and, to the extent practicable, in a language that family members can understand;
- Treat each child with dignity and respect;
- Strive to address the individual needs of the student;
- Acknowledge that parents are vital to the success of child and school;
- Provide a safe, positive and healthy learning environment;
- Assure every student access to quality learning experiences;
- Assure that the school staff communicates clear expectations for performance to both students and parents

Parent

The parent understands that participation in his/her student's education will help his/her achievement and attitude. Therefore, the parent will continue to carry out the following responsibilities to the best of his/her ability:

- Volunteering in their child's classroom;
- Supporting their child's learning;
- Participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their child and positive use of extracurricular time;
- Create a home atmosphere that supports learning;
- Send the student to school on time and well-rested on a regular basis;

- Attend school functions and conference;
- Encourage their child to show respect for all members of the school community and school property;
- Review all school communications and respond promptly

Student (all school discretion to include items below)

The student realizes education is important. He/she is the one responsible for his/her own success. Therefore, he/she agrees to carry out the following responsibilities to the best of his/her ability:

- Get to school on time every day;
- Develop a positive attitude toward school;
- Be responsible for completing homework on time;
- Be cooperative by carrying out the teacher's instructions and ask for help when needed;
- Do daily work that is neat and reflects the student's best effort;
- Be respectful to all school members and to school property

Title IA Complaint Resolution Procedures

Introduction

On December 10, 2015 a new Federal education law was signed by President Obama. This law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requires schools that receive federal Title IA funding adopt written procedures for resolving complaints filed.

Definition

A "complaint" is a written, signed statement filed by an individual or an organization. It must include:

- A. A statement that a school has violated a requirement of federal statute or regulation that applies to Title IA.
- B. The facts on which the statement is based.
- C. Information on any discussions, meetings or correspondence with a school regarding the complaint.

Complaint Resolution Procedures

1. Referral – Complaints against schools should be referred to Catalyst's Federal Programs Office:

Federal Programs Director
Catalyst Academy Charter School
7061 Lemington Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
412-684-2400

2. Notice to School:

- a. The Federal Programs Office will notify the school Principal and CEO that a complaint has been received. A copy of the complaint will be given to the CEO and Principal with directions given for the Principal to respond;

3. Investigation:

- a. After receiving the Principal's response, the Federal Programs Office, along with the

- CEO, will determine whether further investigation is necessary. If necessary, the Federal Programs Office and the CEO may do an onsite investigation at the school;
4. Opportunity to Present Evidence:
 - a. The Federal Programs Director may provide for the complainant and the Principal to present evidence;
 5. Report and Recommended Resolution:
 - a. Once the Federal Programs Director has completed the investigation and the taking of evidence, a report will be prepared with a recommendation for resolving the complaint. The report will give the name of the party bringing the complaint, the nature of the complaint, a summary of the investigation, the recommended resolution and the reasons for the recommendation. Copies of the report will be issued to all parties involved. The recommended resolution will become effective upon issuance of the report;
 6. Follow up:
 - a. The Federal Programs Director and the CEO will ensure that the resolution of the complaint is implemented.
 7. Time Limit:
 - a. The period between the Federal Programs Director receiving the complaint and resolution of the complaint shall not exceed sixty (60) calendar days.
 8. Right to Appeal:
 - a. Either party may appeal the final resolution to the Department of Education.

Parent Right-to-Know Letter

Parent Right to Know Information as Required by The Elementary and Secondary Education Assistance (ESEA) [Section 1112(e)(1)(A)] and the Every Student Succeeds Act [Section 1112(e)(1)(A)]

Dear Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s):

Your child attends Catalyst Academy Charter School, which receives Federal Title I funds to assist students in meeting state achievement standards. Throughout the school year, we will be providing you with important information about this law and your child's education. This letter lets you know about your right to request information about the qualifications of the classroom staff working with your child.

At Catalyst Academy Charter School, we are very proud of our teachers and feel they are prepared to give your child a high-quality education. As a Title I school, we must meet federal regulations related to teacher qualifications as defined in ESEA. These regulations allow you to learn more about your child's teachers' training and credentials. We are happy to provide this information to you. At any time, you may ask:

- Whether the teacher met state qualifications and certification requirements for the grade level and subject he/she is teaching,
- Whether the teacher received an emergency or conditional certificate through which state qualifications were waived, and
- What undergraduate or graduate degrees the teacher holds, including graduate certificates

and additional degrees, and major(s) or area(s) of concentration. You may also ask whether your child receives help from a paraprofessional. If your child receives this assistance, we can provide you with information about the paraprofessional's qualifications.

Our staff is committed to helping your child develop the academic knowledge and critical thinking he/she needs to succeed in school and beyond. That commitment includes making sure that all of our teachers and paraprofessionals meet applicable Pennsylvania state requirements.

If you have any questions about your child's assignment to a teacher or paraprofessional, please contact the principal, Meryl Johnson meryl.johnson@catalystacademy.org.

Sincerely,

Meryl Johnson

Use of Force Policy

Purpose

Catalyst Academy Charter School (the "School") is committed to providing a safe and secure educational environment for students, staff, and visitors. In accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, this Use of Force Policy (the "Policy") outlines the permissible use of force by School Security Personnel in certain circumstances.

Definitions

As used herein:

"Deadly Force" means the use of Force which, under the circumstances in which it is used, is readily capable of causing death or serious bodily injury to another.

"Force" means any effort applied to control, restrain or overcome the resistance of another.

"Reasonable Force" means the minimum amount of Force necessary to prevent harm, used proportionally to the threat.

"School Property" means all grounds, real property, buildings, facilities, and structures owned or leased by the School, and shall also include vehicles owned or contracted by the School.

"School Police Officer" means a law enforcement officer employed by the School with the prior approval of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas for routine safety and security duties on School Property.

"School Resource Officer" means a law enforcement officer employed by a police department and whose stationing on School Property is established by a written agreement between the School and the controlling municipality of the police department.

“School Security Guard” means an individual employed or contracted by the School for routine safety and security duties on School Property.

“School Security Personnel” means School Resource Officers, School Police Officers, and School Security Guards.

Use of Firearms

Authorization to Carry a Firearm

School Security Personnel are not authorized to carry firearms on School Property unless the following requirements are met:

1. School Security Guard.
 - a. The School Board of Trustees (the “Board”) must take official action at a public Board meeting to authorize the carrying of a firearm by a School Security Guard as a condition of employment, or as part of a written agreement with a qualified independent contractor for school security services, and each security guard must have completed training requirements specified in Section 1314-C(b)-(c) or Section 1314-C(e) of the Public School Code.
2. School Police Officer.
 - a. The Board must take official action to appoint the School Police Officer, and the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas must expressly authorize that the School Police Officer may carry a firearm, and the School Police Officer must have completed the training requirements specified in Section 1305-C of the Public School Code.
3. School Resource Officer.
 - a. The police department must assign the School Resource Officer to School Property in compliance with the terms of a written agreement with the municipality, and the School Resource Officer must complete the required training specified in Section 1313-C(a.1) of the Public School Code.

After their appointment, all School Security Personnel who carry a firearm are required to complete the necessary training to actively maintain their ability to lawfully carry firearms on School Property in compliance with Article XIII-C of the Public School Code.

Notification to Local Police Departments

The School shall provide notification to local police departments of the names and identities of all School Security Personnel and shall take other reasonable measures so that local police know and are familiar with School Security Personnel.

Selection, Storage, Maintenance and Carrying Firearms on School Property

School Security Guards and School Police Officers who are authorized to carry firearms on School Property shall comply with the written guidelines developed by the School regarding the selection, storage, maintenance, and carrying of firearms while on School Property. School Resource Officers shall comply with their police department’s policies, rules, and regulations regarding the selection, storage, maintenance, and carrying of their firearms while on School Property. School Security

Personnel carrying firearms on School Property must possess them on their person at all times unless the firearm is properly secured in the firearm safe/rack located in a police department vehicle or a firearm safe/cabinet on School Property.

Revocation or Suspension of Approval to Carry Firearm

Any School Security Personnel who are approved to carry firearms on School Property are subject to having said privilege suspended or revoked at any time for any reason. The Chief Executive Officer of the School ("CEO") is authorized to temporarily suspend such privileges pending discussion with, and action by, the Board to determine whether such privileges should be restored, permanently revoked, or other appropriate action be taken. Approval for any School Security Personnel to carry firearms will be automatically revoked if the conditions for lawful carry are suspended, revoked, or fall into noncompliance.

Use of Force

Authorized Use of Reasonable Force

School Security Personnel may use Reasonable Force to perform their duties, including: (i) to quell a disturbance or prevent an act that threatens physical injury to another, (ii) to obtain possession of a weapon or other dangerous object, (iii) for the purpose of self-defense, and (iv) for the protection of persons or property.

Prohibited Use of Force

School Security Personnel are prohibited from using unreasonable Force. Unreasonable Force is Force that is unnecessary or excessive given the totality of the circumstances presented to the School Security Personnel at the time force is applied. Use of unreasonable Force will result in the School Security Personnel being subjected to disciplinary action and/or removal from their duties on School Property.

Factors to Determine Reasonable Force

The basis for determining whether the use Force is reasonable or unreasonable must be assessed from the perspective of reasonableness of School Security Personnel placed in a particular circumstance. The reasonableness assessment must account for the fact that School Security Personnel must often make split-second judgments in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving. While the perception of School Security Personnel may be taken into consideration when making this assessment, other objective factors should be predominately used to determine the reasonableness of force. These factors may include but are not limited to:

1. The severity of the crime or situation at issue.
2. Whether the person poses an immediate threat to the safety of the School Security Personnel or others.
3. Whether the person is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight.
4. The influence of drugs/alcohol or mental capacity of the individual.
5. The time available to School Security Personnel to make a decision.
6. The availability of resources and/or other individuals to de-escalate the situation.
7. The proximity or access of weapons to the person.

8. The environmental factors and/or other exigent circumstances.
9. The training, mental attitude, age, size, and strength of the person and/or School Security Personnel.

School Security Personnel shall use a level of Force that is necessary, commensurate with the threat posed and within the range of objectively reasonable options. Force shall only be used when needed. School Security Personnel shall assess each incident to determine based upon this Policy, and their training and experience, which use of Force option will de-escalate the situation and bring it under control in a safe and prudent manner.

Use of Force Options

The level of Force employed must be commensurate with the threat posed by the person and the seriousness of the immediate situation. The following list of options for use of Force are those available to School Security Personnel, but does not suggest the order in which they must be deployed in any specific situation:

1. Presence.
 - a. Presence is established through the identification as School Security Personnel in proximity to the person.
 - b. The presence of School Security Personnel alone is only an appropriate Force option when the person is cooperative without the need for additional directives.
2. Constructive Authority.
 - a. Use of authority to exert control without actual physical contact with a person. b. Examples of constructive authority include, but are not limited to, verbal commands, persuasion, gestures, warnings, and un-holstering a firearm.
 - c. Whenever practical, School Security Personnel should attempt to de-escalate situations using verbal techniques prior to, during, and after the use of physical Force.
3. Physical Contact.
 - a. Involves physical contact with a person to effectively accomplish a legitimate lawful objective.
 - b. Examples including separating people involved in an altercation, or securing, or maneuvering to secure a person who poses a threat to others.
 - c. This level of Force should not be used with the intent to inflict pain or injuries on the person.
 - d. School Security Personnel may use handcuffs to detain a person in order to protect that person or others pending further law enforcement steps.
4. Use of Pepper Spray/Striking Implement.
 - a. School Security Personnel must complete required training on the proper use of tasers, stun guns, pepper spray or striking implements before carrying such items on School Property.
 - b. Tasers, stun guns, pepper spray or striking implements may only be used to protect officers or others from assault, to overcome resistance, or restrain a violent person when other alternative levels of Force are inappropriate or have proven ineffective.

Use of Deadly Force

Deadly Force on another person shall only be utilized as a last resort to protect human life when alternative levels of Force have proved to be ineffective or would be inappropriate under the circumstances given the threat confronting the School Security Personnel.

School Security Personnel are authorized to use deadly force, including discharge of a firearm, when immediately necessary to: (i) protect School Security Personnel or others from what is reasonably believed to be a threat of death or serious bodily injury; or (ii) prevent the escape of a person who has committed or attempted to commit a violent act when School Security Personnel have probable cause to believe this person will pose a significant threat to human life upon escape.

Documentation

All uses of the Force by School Security Personnel via physical contact, use of pepper spray/striking implement or deadly force shall be documented and investigated.

Policy Limitations

Nothing in this Policy shall be construed to permit, allow, or authorize any student, student's parent/guardian, visitor, employee, or independent contractor to carry or discharge a firearm on or into School Property, unless they are expressly authorized by virtue of their employment or appointment as School Security Personnel to carry a firearm on School Property.

Nothing in this Policy is intended to supersede or modify the policies, procedures or rules regarding the carrying, storage, discharge, use or maintenance of a firearm adopted or enforced by the police department employing any School Security Personnel. In the event that this Policy conflicts with the applicable police department's policies, procedures, or rules, School Security Personnel shall abide by their own police department policies, procedures, or rules regarding such matters.

In the event of uncertainty as to any requirements of this Policy, the CEO or designee shall consult with legal counsel.

Adopted 8.5.2025

Visitors and Volunteers

Catalyst Academy is eager to share the work of our scholars and experience our school community. Visitors may schedule a time to come to the school or arrange a meeting with an administrator or staff member by calling the Front Office.

Community members, family members or guests who are interested in volunteering with Catalyst are encouraged to reach out to our Parent Community Advisor, Myra Powell myra.powell@catalystacademy.org for more information.

All visitors are required to show appropriate identification and sign-in in the front office. During the duration of their visit, visitors are required to wear a visitor's badge.