



Student & Family Handbook 2025-2026

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A Message from our CEO/Principal

Dear Students and Families,

Welcome to a new and exciting school year at Pan American Academy Charter School! We are delighted to have you as part of our school community and are looking forward to a year filled with growth, learning, and achievement.

This Student and Family Handbook is designed to serve as a comprehensive guide for you throughout the school year. It contains important information about our school's policies, procedures, and expectations, ensuring that everyone is informed and prepared for a successful academic journey.

Inside this handbook, you will find details on:

- **Academic Policies:** Guidelines on grading, homework, and academic integrity.
- **Code of Conduct:** Expectations for student behavior and disciplinary procedures.
- **Support Services:** Resources available to support student well-being and academic success.
- **Health and Safety Protocols:** Procedures to ensure the safety of our students and staff.

We encourage you to read through this handbook carefully and discuss its contents as a family. Understanding these guidelines will help create a positive and productive school environment for everyone.

Our school's success is built on the active involvement and support of our students, parents, and staff. We value your partnership and look forward to collaborating with you to deliver an exceptional educational experience.

Thank you for your commitment to our school community. Let's make this year a remarkable one!

Warm regards,

Dr. Darcy Russotto
Chief Executive Officer/Principal
Pan American Academy Charter School

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About Us

Pan American Academy Charter School is an independent, free, public K-8 charter school serving a little over 750 students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

We have the highest academic expectations for students. All Pan American teachers are dedicated, caring, skilled professionals. They help all students achieve by bringing culture and hands-on learning into the classroom every day. Through our focus on inquiry-based learning, Pan American is cultivating the next generation of strong, internationally minded, bilingual leaders in our community.

A unique feature of Pan American Academy is our implementation of a dual language program. All students in kindergarten through eighth grade participate in the dual language program. Our students will learn to speak, read, and write in English and Spanish. We offer a biliterate, bicultural, academically enriched program in English and Spanish, enabling students to maximize their individual talents.

As an authorized IB World School, we have been authorized by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) to implement the Primary Years Programme (PYP) curriculum in grades K through 4 and the Middle Years Programme (MYP) in grades 5 through 8. Our curriculum aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

Parents at Pan American Academy Charter School are encouraged and expected to be a part of their children's schooling. We want you to feel comfortable at the school, and help us to help your child learn, grow, and gain a global perspective that teaches them to interact and learn effectively throughout their lives.

Mission & Vision

Mission

Our mission is to prepare bilingual, internationally minded inquirers who learn and contribute to the community through service and action.

Vision

We will foster a supportive school community culture that promotes well-being, enabling all students to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

Values And Beliefs

At Pan American Academy, we believe in achieving our goals with **C.A.R.E.** by being Compassionate, Accountable, Respectful, and Engaged.

Our students will strive to be:

⌘ Inquirers	⌘ Principled	⌘ Balanced
⌘ Knowledgeable	⌘ Open-minded	⌘ Reflective
⌘ Thinkers	⌘ Caring	
⌘ Communicators	⌘ Risk-takers	

It is also vital to focus on developing personal attitudes towards people, the environment, and learning. These positive attitudes contribute to the well-being of the individual and of the group. At Pan American Academy, students are expected to demonstrate appreciation, commitment, confidence, cooperation, creativity, curiosity, empathy, enthusiasm, independence, integrity, respect, and tolerance.

GOVERNANCE AND SCHOOL POLICIES

School Board of Trustees

Nelson Flores, Ph.D., Board Chair
Jake Becker, Treasurer
Dana Espinosa, Secretary & Parent Representative
Jessika Garcia, Parent Representative
Derek Coffman

Caroline C. Gorman, Esq.
Ashley Feuer-Edwards

The Board of Trustees of the Pan American Academy Charter School (PAACS) is responsible for establishing policies under which the school operates. This Student and Family Handbook outlines the school's Code of Conduct, which aims to inform students, parents, and school personnel about the expected conduct and behavior of all students, thereby ensuring a safe learning environment. These rules are intended to promote self-respect, respect for others, and respect for property. It is therefore expected that all students enrolled herein abide by all school policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct, and accept responsibility for their actions and behavior.

School Board Meetings

The monthly School Board meetings for the Pan American Academy Charter School Board of Trustees are generally held on the third Monday of each month at 4:30 p.m. Meetings are held via Zoom with links provided upon request from the school board liaison.

Board Accessibility & Public Comment

The Board of Trustees recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues and the importance of involving members of the public in Board meetings. To facilitate a fair and orderly expression of comments, the Board will provide a period for public participation at every Board meeting. Public comments will be limited to topics related to the operation of the Pan American Academy Charter School. Written requests to address the Board must be submitted to the Board Liaison 24 hours prior to the Board meeting. The request is to be submitted via the school website, by U.S. mail, or by hand delivery to Jeanette Rivera, Pan American Academy Charter School, 2830 North American Street, Philadelphia, PA 19133, ATTN: Board of Trustees Public Comment Request

Parent Concerns Resolution Process

At PAACS, we value open communication with families and strive to address all concerns in a timely and respectful manner. Situations or incidents may occasionally cause parents concern, and we aim to provide a convenient, meaningful way for parents to meet with school officials and discuss these matters.

Parents are encouraged to complete a Parent Concern Form, which is available in the school office or on the school's website. Upon receiving the form, the Principal, Assistant Principal, or another appropriate administrator will review and investigate the concern as necessary. A conference with the student and/or parent will be scheduled within five (5) days of receipt of the form or as soon as practicable. Parents and students are encouraged to resolve concerns informally by requesting a conference with the teacher, staff member, or administrator involved. Many issues can be resolved quickly through direct communication, rather than initiating a formal grievance process.

If concerns remain unresolved after administrative review, parents and students may address the PAACS Board of Trustees through the public comment process at a scheduled board meeting. The request must include the topic to be addressed, the name of the individual presenting the comment, and a copy of the comment for board review. Written comments may be submitted in advance and will be read into the record (subject to the time limits below).

To ensure fairness and efficiency, the following rules govern public participation during board meetings:

1. Public comment is limited to 30 minutes per meeting.

2. Each individual or representative of a group is limited to three (3) minutes. Written comments will be read into the record, but are also limited to three minutes.
3. An individual or group representative may address the Board once per meeting on a specific topic. A second opportunity to speak may be granted at the discretion of the Board Chair, only after all other participants have been heard and time remains.
4. All speakers must state their name, place of residence, and the topic they wish to address.
5. All remarks must be directed to the Board Chair. Board members and administrators will not respond to public comments during the comment period.

Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Policy

Pan American Academy Charter School (PAACS) is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning and working environment for all members of our school community. We strictly prohibit discrimination, harassment, and retaliation of any kind.

PAACS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity or expression), age, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnic background, marital status, pregnancy, disability, veteran or military status, or any other category protected by state or federal law. This applies to all school programs, activities, educational opportunities, and employment practices.

In accordance with Title IX, PAACS also prohibits sexual harassment as a form of unlawful discrimination based on sex. Questions about Title IX can be directed to the school's Title IX Coordinator or the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education.

Any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation is inconsistent with our values and will not be tolerated. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action under the student code of conduct or other applicable school policies.

For more details about our **non-discrimination policies and procedures**, please visit our website at www.panamcs.org.

COMPLIANCE AND LEGAL NOTICES

Legal Notices / Right to Know

Pan American Academy Charter School complies with all federal and state requirements to keep families informed about their rights and the protections provided to students. This includes information on student privacy (FERPA, PPR), special education services, non-discrimination policies (Title I, Title IX, Section 504), services for students experiencing homelessness (McKinney-Vento Act), health and safety policies, and mandatory reporting laws to protect children. To read the full list of annual legal notices and to find contact information for our Right to Know Officer, please visit www.panamcs.org. If you have any questions, please contact the School Administration. We are here to help.

Language Access

PAACS ensures that families with limited English proficiency have meaningful access to information and resources. All essential communications will be translated, and interpretation services are available upon request. Please contact the main office for assistance.

Civil Rights Grievance Procedure

To file a complaint of discrimination or harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age, parents and students may submit a grievance form or contact the Civil Rights Coordinator: Lisandra Kelly, Director of HR and Operations, lkelly@panamcs.org. You may also file with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Complaints will be handled promptly and in accordance with state and federal law.

Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect

Pennsylvania law requires all school employees and contractors to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Human Services (DHS). This includes concerns related to physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse.

At Pan American Academy Charter School (PAACS), staff members must report any suspicion of child abuse directly to the Commonwealth's ChildLine hotline (by phone or online). After making the report, the staff member also notifies the school counselor, who is responsible for following up on all child abuse cases within the school.

The school counselor may or may not inform the parents/guardians that a report was made, depending on the circumstances and the safety of the child. All discussions about suspected abuse are confidential. Information may only be shared with other staff members on a "need to know" basis if it is in the best interest of the child or the safety of the school environment. Examples of situations that may cause a report include, but are not limited to:

1. Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on a child's body.
2. Severe or harmful verbal reprimands.
3. Clothing that is improper for size, cleanliness, or weather conditions.
4. Transporting a child without proper car restraints (car seats, seat belts, etc.).
5. Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
6. Leaving a child unattended for any period of time, including in a vehicle.
7. Failing to meet the special needs of a child with disabilities.
8. Sending a sick child to school overmedicated to hide symptoms that require the child to remain home.
9. Children showing behaviors that suggest they may be experiencing abuse.

Safe2Say Something

Safe2Say Something is a youth violence prevention program run by the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General. The program teaches youth and adults how to recognize warning signs and signals, especially within social media, from individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others, and to "say something" BEFORE it is too late. With Safe2Say Something, it's easy and confidential to report safety concerns to help prevent violence and tragedies. The Safe2Say system is an anonymous way for you to submit a tip to your school. You do not need to share your name, phone number, or any other information unless you choose to.

What types of things should I report?

If it makes you uncomfortable, submit a tip. It will be up to your school to determine the next steps. Do you think someone is going to harm themselves? Have you come across something online that concerns you? Submit this kind of thing. Safe2Say Something is the easiest way to let someone know that there is a problem and let them handle it. The best part is that they will never know who submitted it. It's that simple.

Here's how it works:

- Submit an anonymous tip report through the Safe2SaySomething system
- Tip Line: 1-844-SAF2SAY (723-2729)
- Website: <https://www.safe2saypa.org>
- Crisis center reviews, assesses, and processes all submissions
- Crisis center sends all submissions to the school administration and/or law enforcement for intervention
- If needed, the crisis center may contact tipsters anonymously through the app

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & STUDENT RECORDS

Title I School-Parent Compact

We value your role in helping your child achieve high academic standards through the Title I Program. The following is an outline of some of the ways you and school staff can build and maintain a partnership to share the responsibility for supporting your child's learning.

School Responsibilities

- Provide high-quality standards-based curriculum, technology, and instructional materials
- Strive to address the individual needs of each child
- Provide parents with Title I program resources and training
- Provide opportunities for ongoing communication between you and the staff through:
 - annual Title I Parent/Staff Meeting
 - ongoing program updates regarding your child's progress in the Title I program
 - various opportunities to communicate with administration and instructional staff via phone, web, Classroom Dojo, mailings, email blasts, conferences, etc.

Parent Responsibilities

- Create a home environment that supports learning
- Read with my child for at least 15 minutes each day
- Send my child to school regularly
- Monitor homework assignments, giving help and support when needed
- Monitor television watching and computer usage, and encourage positive use of your child's extracurricular time
- Review all school communication and respond promptly
- Actively participate in decisions relating to the education of my child

Student Responsibilities

The student realizes education is important. The student is the one responsible for their own success. Therefore, the student 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 asking 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

Please review this Compact with your child. Please contact our main office or your child's classroom teacher if you have any questions. Thank you for your continued support and involvement in your child's education.

Parent Code of Conduct

At Pan American Academy Charter School (PAACS), we are committed to creating a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment for all students, staff, and families. We expect all parents/guardians to model behavior that reflects courtesy, decency, and respect at all times, both on and off school grounds.

General Expectations: Parents/guardians must maintain **control over their behavior** and interactions at all times. Interactions with staff, students, and other families should be **professional and constructive**, even when conflicts or differences of opinion arise.

Prohibited Behaviors

- Threats of any kind toward an employee, student, parent, or any adult associated with PAACS are strictly prohibited. **Any threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities and may result in temporary or permanent restriction from school grounds.**
- Corporal punishment (physical discipline) is not supported or allowed on school property. While verbal reprimands of your own child may be appropriate, verbal abuse is not tolerated.
- Disciplining or correcting another child (not your own) is strictly prohibited.

Addressing Concerns

- If a parent has concerns about another child's behavior, they should direct those concerns to the classroom teacher, Assistant Principal, or Principal, not the other child's parent.
- Parents may not approach or confront another parent regarding their child's behavior. All concerns must be directed to the school staff, who will handle the matter appropriately.
- While parents may wish to know the outcome of reported concerns, the school cannot share details with other students due to confidentiality policies. Likewise, we will never discuss your child's behavior with another parent.

Conflict Resolution

If a conflict arises, the Assistant Principal or Principal will arrange a meeting with the parent/guardian to discuss concerns and find solutions. Parents are encouraged to work collaboratively with teachers to address behavior or disciplinary questions in a positive and respectful manner.

Parent Access to Student Records

Pan American Academy Charter School recognizes the rights of parents/guardians to access their child's educational records in accordance with state and federal laws.

Requesting Records

Parents/guardians may request to review their child's records by visiting the school office. Please allow up to **72 hours** for processing your record request. Records will be reviewed in the presence of the school principal or designee, ensuring that parents understand the information and have the opportunity to ask questions or address any errors.

Separated or Divorced Parents

In accordance with the Custody and Grandparent Visitation Act:

- Both parents have the right to access their child's records unless a court order explicitly denies access to the non-custodial parent.
- Custodial parents must provide the school with legal documentation of custody arrangements.
- When a non-custodial parent requests records:
 - 1. The custodial parent will be notified of the request.
 - 2. The custodial parent has five days to present a court order denying access.
 - 3. If no court order is provided, access will be granted following the standard review procedure.
- If custody has not been determined by the courts, both parents will be given access to the student's records.

Student Media Release

By acknowledging the Student Media Release via the Enrollment Form, Pan American Academy Charter School (PAACS) grants permission to use their child's photos, videos, or schoolwork on the school's website, social media, or other publications to celebrate student achievements and promote school events. This consent remains in effect throughout the student's enrollment unless revoked in writing by contacting information@panamcs.org or the main office.

Enrollment & Withdrawal

Pan American Academy Charter School offers admission for available openings in grades K-8. PAACS offers available slots using a random lottery selection process and a numbered waiting list system. Applications to PAACS are valid only for the school year in which they are submitted. Applicants not awarded admission are placed on the waiting list for the duration of the school year. The waiting list does not roll over to the next school year. Students must reapply for the next school year. Slots are determined by current enrollment numbers.

How to Apply

Families can obtain and apply for admission online at ApplyPhillyCharter.org or by calling the Apply Philly Charter toll-free number at 1-800-891-3999. Families are welcome to visit the School for assistance, and they will be provided with information on how to apply. Subject to availability, they may also be offered a computer or tablet to access ApplyPhillyCharter.org. The online application is available for translation into Spanish.

Lottery and Enrollment Preference

Preference in the enrollment and waiting list process is given as follows:

- Sibling Preference: For siblings of students currently enrolled in the charter school.
- Area Preference: To students living in the 19133 or 19134 zip code area.
- Founding Member: A child of a member of the Pan American Academy Charter School's founding board.

Required Documentation for Enrollment and Timeline

- Proof of Age
- Proof of Residency
- Record of Required Immunizations
- Act 26 Form / Parent Registration Form
- Home Language Survey

Students who submit these five required documents by the enrollment deadline are considered enrolled for the 2025-2026 school year.

Withdrawal from School

If a student moves or must withdraw from school during the school year, parents/guardians must complete a withdrawal form. The form is available at the school office. When possible, parents/guardians should provide a minimum of two weeks' notice of the withdrawal. At the time of withdrawal, all student technology equipment must be returned to the school. The school can then provide a printout of the student's current classes and grades. Withdrawal from PAACS means that the student will no longer be on PAACS's enrollment rolls or entitled to educational services at PAACS, and, on the effective date of the withdrawal, the student shall be considered a student of his/her school district of residence.

Support for Families Experiencing Homelessness

Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act, all children and youth are guaranteed access to a free, appropriate public education—even if they lack a fixed or stable home.

If your family is experiencing homelessness or housing instability, our school social worker can help with enrollment, school participation, and additional support services.

Contact the School Social Worker at 215-425-1212 or email studentservices@opanamcs.org.

Emergency Contact, Child-Custody Status, and Change of Address

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the office of any changes in emergency contacts, address, phone number, or child custody status to ensure that the school has accurate and up-to-date information. Parents/guardians are requested to provide the school with a phone number where they can be reached during the school day. Please visit/call the main office or email information@panamcs.org to update information.

STUDENT HEALTH & NUTRITION

School Health Services

Pan American Academy Charter School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the health and well-being of every student. Our Wellness Center, open Monday through Friday during the school year, is staffed daily by a health room aide and/or licensed practical nurse (LPN), under the supervision of a registered nurse (RN). The overarching goal of our health services is to help students achieve and maintain their best possible health, enabling them to focus on learning and academic success.

Health Records: The Wellness Center maintains health records for each student. Parents/guardians must promptly inform the school of:

- Changes in health status,
- Current medications or long-term medication therapy,
- Medications that have been discontinued,
- Recent hospitalizations, medical treatments, or surgeries,
- Immunizations or booster updates.

Medications in School: Pennsylvania law (PA Code §12.41) prohibits students from carrying prescription or over-the-counter medications. All medications must be checked in with Wellness Center staff for safe storage and administration.

Medication requirements:

- Whenever possible, medications should be administered at home.
- If medication must be given during school hours, a Medical & Parental Consent Form (signed by the parent and the student's physician) is required. Forms are available online or in the main office.
- Medication must be provided in its original container, properly labeled.
- Students with inhalers or EpiPens must also store these in the Wellness Center

Mandated Screenings & Examinations: Pan American Academy adheres to Pennsylvania Public School Code §1402 and 28 PA Code §§ 23.1–23.45 for health screenings and exams.

Physical Exams:

- Required at school entry (Kindergarten or 1st grade), 6th grade, and 11th grade.
- Private physicals are acceptable if performed within one year of the required grade.

Dental Exams: Required at school entry, 3rd grade, and 7th grade.

Screenings:

- **Vision, height, weight, and BMI:** All grades.
- **Hearing:** Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 7th, and 11th grades.
- **Scoliosis:** 6th and 7th grades.

Parents/guardians will be notified if screenings reveal potential concerns. Students lacking required documentation may be provisionally admitted for up to 5 school days; after this period, exclusion may occur if the records remain incomplete (per 28 PA Code §23.85).

Stay Home When Sick: To protect the health of all students and staff, children should stay home when they are sick and return only when their symptoms have resolved. Students may not attend school if they have:

- A fever of **100.4°F or higher**,
- Vomiting or diarrhea,
- Persistent coughing or difficulty breathing,
- An unexplained or contagious rash,
- Any contagious illness (e.g., strep throat, pink eye, flu) until cleared by a healthcare provider.

Return-to-school rule: Students must be fever-free (without medication) for 24 hours and symptoms must be improving before returning to class.

Injuries & Emergencies: All student injuries must be reported to school staff for first aid and documentation. In the event of a medical emergency, 911 will be called immediately, and parents/guardians and emergency contacts will be notified. Please ensure that your contact information is up-to-date via the school portal or the main office.

Head Lice and Bed Bugs

Parents should check their child's hair regularly, especially after vacations or sleepovers, and notify the school if lice are detected. Consistent combing and treatment are the most effective solutions. Pan American Academy follows the guidelines of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health and the CDC for lice management. Students may return to school once treatment has begun and there are no live lice present.

Bed bugs do not spread disease, but prompt action is required. Parents should inspect bedding and personal items if bed bugs are suspected and inform the school immediately. The school will work with families to address the issue discreetly and in line with public health recommendations.

Immunization Requirements

In accordance with Pennsylvania State Law (28 PA Code §§ 23.81–23.87), all students attending Pan American Academy Charter School are required to provide documented proof of immunizations prior to the first day of school. The state mandates that children receive age-appropriate vaccinations, including, but not limited to, the DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis), Polio, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), Hepatitis B, and Varicella vaccines. Students who do not have up-to-date immunization records may be granted a provisional enrollment period of up to five school days to provide documentation. After this period, they may be excluded from school until their records are complete. Medical or religious exemptions are permitted; however, unvaccinated students may be excluded from school during outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, as directed by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. Parents/guardians are responsible for submitting updated immunization records, including booster information, to the Wellness Center as soon as they are administered.

Child Nutrition Services and Wellness

PAACS understands that good nutrition is essential to a student's health and development. We encourage our students to eat nutritious school meals, enabling them to concentrate and learn effectively. Our Wellness Policy guides us in promoting physical activity and healthy nutrition to our school community. The school is committed to promoting and protecting children's health, well-being, and ability to learn by encouraging healthy eating habits, good hygiene, and regular physical activity.

School Meals: Breakfast and lunch are served at no cost to all students regardless of income. PAACS falls under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) – a provision from the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 that allows schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) with high poverty rates to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. CEP eliminates the burden of collecting household applications to determine eligibility for school meals.

School Menus: Our monthly breakfast and lunch menus are available on the school's website. Simply click the **Menu** tab on the calendar, or go directly to the **Calendar** page to view them.

Food Allergies/Special Dietary Needs: We are a nut-free school. Foods containing peanuts or tree nuts are NOT permitted in the building. Parents are required to inform the school nurse and the classroom teacher of any food allergies and dietary restrictions their children may have. If special dietary needs are required, a written request must be provided by the physician.

Lunches and Snacks from Home

- Fast food, candy, soda, and beverages high in sugar, as well as any meals that do not meet nutritional standards, are not permitted.
- Must be ready-to-eat meals. Meals will not be heated and prepared for individual students.
- Meals may not be shared with other students.
- Glass containers are not permitted.

Physical Education and Activity: Physical activity will be offered to all students in Physical Education class and integrated across the curriculum with activities that are safe, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate for all students. Additionally, when available, the school will offer the opportunity to participate in athletic clubs or other extracurricular activities. These activities will be available to students who demonstrate interest, are team players, and follow the Pan American behavioral expectations.

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

School and Office Hours

School Day Start Time	School Day End Time
8:05 am	3:15 pm

The main office will be open from 8:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m., daily.

Communication Channels

Every effort should be made to keep open lines of communication. Oftentimes, the school sends communications and information that are important for families to read. Communication and information are provided via:

1. School Messenger (phone/texts/emails)
2. Class Dojo (communication app)
3. School Website (panamcs.org)
4. Social Media - [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) @panamcs2008

Additionally, teachers will provide parents with their school-issued phone numbers to assist with communication. Calls or texts received before or after business hours or during instructional time will not be answered immediately. Please allow a 24-hour response time. In the event of an emergency or urgent matter, please call the main office at 215-425-1212.

Parents/guardians must schedule an appointment to meet with their child's teacher. To request a conference, parents can send an email or a note (via your child) indicating their preferred day and time. The teacher will confirm or propose a new time.. Meetings during school hours are available only if both staff and parents agree.

The CEO /Principal is available before or during the school day to meet with parents who request an appointment. Appointments may be requested in writing, by email, or by phone. The CEO or Principal will respond to the parent/guardian as soon as possible to confirm or reschedule the appointment.

Tips for Staying Involved

- Check Class Dojo each day for news and updates
- Use www.panamcs.org as a resource (There's a calendar!)
- Attend school events and workshops – both social and academic
- Make sure homework and school assignments are completed
- Sync our events calendar to your Google Calendar
- Read all notices sent home or via email
- Attend Parent-Teacher Conferences – December & March
- Follow us on Social Media!
- Volunteer as a chaperone for school trips
- Contribute financially to fundraisers, no matter how big or small
- Spread the love for Pan American Academy Charter School and let other families know about our wonderful school!

Building Access and Visitor Policy

For the safety and security of everyone, all entrances to the building are kept locked. The main school entrance is located at the front of the building, on the corner of American and Cambria Streets. To enter, please ring the buzzer. A security camera is present at this entrance, and the front desk attendant will grant you access after you identify yourself by name. Upon entering, all visitors are required to **sign in and obtain visitor clearance** before proceeding to other areas of the building. Please have a **valid photo ID** (such as a driver's license or other state-issued identification) readily available for our visitor system. **Parents are strongly encouraged to schedule appointments in advance** to help reduce wait times and mitigate the spread of illness.

Substance-Free Environment

Pan American Academy is committed to maintaining a completely substance-free environment. Smoking, alcohol, illegal drugs, and cannabis products are strictly prohibited within any area of the school building or on campus at all times. This includes all forms of smoking, such as vaping products.

Traffic Safety

Your cooperation is essential for maintaining a safe environment during arrival and dismissal. Please slow down when entering and exiting campus and pay close attention to the guidance and direction of our Security Team. To ensure a smooth traffic flow and the safety of our students, please refrain from double parking on American Street and avoid parking in the bus lane on Cambria Street. **Vehicles found double-parked or in the bus lane will be issued a ticket.** Please park in legal parking spaces on American, Somerset, or Cambria Streets.

If your child walks to and from school, please reinforce the importance of obeying all pedestrian traffic rules. This includes walking on sidewalks, using crosswalks, and obeying all stop signs and traffic lights.

Student Transportation

Bus transportation is provided by the School District of Philadelphia for eligible students in grades 1 through 6. Eligible students in grades 7 and 8 are provided with SEPTA Fare Cards. Please contact the office for information if your family needs transportation services. Families should advise teachers of the usual dismissal procedure (school bus, SEPTA, walking home, or pick-up) for each student. Generally, students who ride the bus in the morning will also ride the bus in the afternoon. Changes to school bus transportation should be communicated to the main office by 2:30 p.m.

Bus Schedules: Bus schedules, routes, and bus stops are determined and provided by the School District of Philadelphia's Department of Transportation. The Transportation Dispatch Department is staffed with five customer service representatives who are available to answer your questions from 5:30 am until the last student is off the bus and is safely home. To reach Dispatchers, call 215-400-4350 and choose from the menu options. Visit [Transportation – The School District of Philadelphia](#) for more information.

Bus Riding Expectations: Students are expected to follow the same behavioral expectations as they do while inside the school and must adhere to any rules established by the bus driver or the School District. Because the safety of our students is of utmost importance to us, we kindly request that you review with your child the expected behaviors of all students while riding the school bus. These expectations and the accompanying consequences will be strictly enforced. Students are expected to:

- remain seated and facing the front of the bus at all times
- to be respectful of one another and the bus driver at all times
- keep their hands and all belongings inside the bus
- refrain from arguing, cursing, and using physical aggression
- not eat or drink on the bus

Please be advised that failure to adhere to the above expectations will result in consequences. These consequences are 1 to 3-day suspensions from riding the bus, as well as serving after-school detentions. Repeated occurrences of not meeting expectations on the bus will result in expulsion from the bus.

Student Walkers & Public Transportation: Students who walk or use public transportation do so at their own risk. The school does not provide crossing guards for all intersections; please review safe walking routes with your child to ensure their safety. A student's transportation plan should be clearly indicated on the emergency contact form.

Arrival and Dismissal Guidelines

Students are expected to attend school every day and to arrive on time. It is also expected that students will be picked up on time at the end of the day.

Morning Arrival: Gates open for student arrival at **7:50 a.m.** Please note that **parents are not permitted to enter through the gate** during morning drop-off. If your child arrives before 7:50 a.m., they must remain under your direct supervision outside the gates, as staff supervision is not provided before this time.

Kindergarten	3rd Street Gate and into the Main Building (<i>Only kindergarten students and their siblings will be permitted to enter this gate</i>)
Grades 1-4	American Street Gate and into Annex (<i>NO kindergarten students will be permitted to enter this gate</i>)
Grades 5-8	American Street Gate and into the Student Cafeteria

Car Drop-off: If you're dropping off your child by car, please use the **designated drop-off area, marked by orange cones, located on American Street**. It's crucial to enter the drop-off line to ensure your child's safety. Attempting to bypass this line will block traffic and create an unsafe drop-off point. For an added safety measure, please have your child ready to exit the vehicle on the passenger side, directly onto the sidewalk.

We follow a "**Kiss and Go**" procedure to keep the line moving efficiently. This means you kiss your child, drop them off, and then continue on your way. Please make sure your child has everything they need before entering the drop-off line to help expedite the process. **Drivers are not permitted to park and leave their cars in the drop-off lane.**

Late Arrival to School: The Gates will remain open until 8:15 am. Students will be considered late after this time. They may enter the school building using the Main Entrance on American Street. They will be checked in by a staff member upon arrival, receive a late pass, and go to their classroom. Excessive lateness may result in a referral to the Student Services office.

End of Day Dismissal: The school day concludes at 3:15 p.m., after which all students exit the building or proceed to their designated dismissal areas. Teachers may not release a student in grades K-4 unless the designated adult or sibling of the student has come to the line. **Students will not be sent out from the schoolyard to parents waiting in cars.** Once an adult approaches the student's class line, the students must touch elbows with the teacher and indicate who is there to pick them up.

Kindergarten	Annex gate on 3rd Street. Parents will pick up students in the Kindergarten Schoolyard Area and proceed to exit through the 3rd Street closest to the corner on Cambria St.
Grades 1-4	American Street Gate. Parents will enter the school yard and meet their child's class line.
Grades 5-8	Front Entrance. Students are released on their own.

Inclement Weather Dismissal

Kindergarten	3rd Street Gate. Parents will enter the building and proceed to their designated classroom.
Grades 1-4	American Street Gate. Parents will enter the school yard and report to the Annex.
Grades 5-8	Front Entrance. Students are released on their own.

Early Dismissals & Pick-Up Procedures

The main office and faculty begin preparing for student dismissal at 2:30 pm. During dismissal preparation, staff availability is limited due to supervision and safety responsibilities. **Therefore, early dismissals will only be granted before 2:30 pm.** Students will only be released to individuals and daycares listed on the child's emergency contact form. If your child needs to go home with someone not on the emergency contact list, written permission is required. Photo identification may be requested for anyone other than the parent/guardian picking up a child. We cannot release students based on verbal permission (phone calls). Changes to daycare pickup must be communicated to the main office by 2:30 p.m.

Late Pickup Policy

PAACS dismisses promptly at 3:15 pm daily. We understand that delays may occur, and we encourage families to plan for unexpected delays by arranging backup transportation or having multiple emergency contacts. We ask parents to inform the school as soon as possible if they anticipate being late to school. If a child is not picked up by dismissal, school staff will contact the parent/guardian listed on the emergency contact form. If parents are unreachable, the emergency contact will be called. If no one can be reached and one hour has passed, the Philadelphia Police will be contacted. Parents arriving late must enter through the main entrance and sign the Late Pickup Register.

Repeated late pickups may result in referrals to counseling to address potential transportation issues. Additionally, administrative action may be taken for chronic lateness. In cases of repeated neglect, reports may be made to child welfare authorities.

Encourage your child to get involved in After-School Programming and Extracurricular Activities here at school. Note: Space is not guaranteed and an application is required. If your child receives a SEPTA fare card, they should use public transportation to get home and should not be here after 3:15 p.m. unless they are participating in a school-sponsored activity.

Extracurricular & Athletic Activities

Pan American Academy offers a range of extracurricular opportunities, including clubs, activities, tutoring, and athletics. To join after-school clubs, students and parents/guardians must complete an After-School Participation Waiver, available on our website, and return it to the main office. Some students may be required to attend after-school academic or behavioral sessions based on individual needs.

Students participating in Interscholastic Athletic Competitions must follow the Metropolitan Philadelphia Athletic Association (MPAA) policies and bylaws. A current athletic physical (dated after June 1) using the MPAA form is required for participation.

Participation in all extracurricular programs is a privilege and requires good academic standing and positive behavior. Students failing to meet these standards may be removed by the Instructional Team, as outlined in the Code of Conduct. Clear goals will be provided to help students regain eligibility.

After-School Eligibility: Any student who has not made restitution for damaged property or lost or damaged technology will not be allowed to participate in After-School Activities.

Attendance: Students must attend all scheduled extracurricular activities, including tutoring, practices, meetings, and events, at the designated times and locations. Students who are late or absent on the day of a competition or practice may not participate unless the absence is excused and approved by the Principal. Excessive absences may result in suspension from after-school activities until attendance improves.

Academic Standing: Students must maintain their grades and complete all classwork and homework. The following grade criteria will be used:

- (1) Basic - Full participation in activities, but must improve their grades to maintain eligibility
- (2) Basics - Limited participation in activities; students must prioritize improving grades and will not be able to participate in activities such as practices or games
- (1) Basics and/or (1) Below Basic - No participation in extracurricular activities until grades improve

Behavioral Standing: Students must comply with our school's Code of Conduct. Any student not complying with school rules and regulations may be subject to restrictions on participation. The following behavior criteria will be used, with provisions for case-by-case analysis by administration:

- Suspension and/or Fighting - Students may be dismissed from extracurricular activities
- Excessive Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) and/or Detentions - Students may be dismissed from all extracurricular activities
- Occasional ODRs and/or detentions - Students are at risk of limited participation and will not be able to participate in activities such as practices or games

Participation in Multiple Activities: Administrative approval is required for students who wish to participate in one sport and/or one or more extracurricular activities that occur simultaneously.

Breakfast, Lunch, and Recess

Breakfast and lunch are typically provided in the student cafeteria. Breakfast is served daily from 7:50 am to 8:10 am. All K–5 students go outside for recess, unless there is inclement weather. The lunch and recess schedule is as follows:

Grade Level	Lunch Period	First Half of Period
2	10:30 - 11:15 AM	Cafeteria
3	10:30 - 11:15 AM	Recess
K	11:15 - 12:00 PM	Cafeteria
1	11:15 - 12:00 PM	Recess
6/7	12:00 - 12:45 PM	Cafeteria
7/8	12:00 - 12:45 PM	Recess
4	12:45 - 1:30 PM	Cafeteria
5/6	12:45 - 1:30 PM	Recess

Lunch and Recess Expectations

At PAACS, we encourage students to demonstrate respect, responsibility, and safety during lunch and recess. The following expectations help ensure that all students have a positive experience:

- Students will use their inside voices while eating
- Students will remain in their seats unless they have permission to leave
- Students will listen to and follow directions from all adults in the cafeteria and schoolyard
- Students will clean up after themselves and keep the cafeteria and bathrooms clean to show respect for our school community
- Students will keep their hands, feet, and bodies to themselves at all times
- Classes will be dismissed to recess when they show they are ready to leave the cafeteria.
 - Students are quiet and attentive
 - Tables and floors are free of trash and personal items.

Classes that follow these expectations during lunch will earn rewards and points that can be redeemed for prizes.

School Trips, Special Events, and Parent Volunteer Requirements

Pan American Academy Charter School organizes school trips and special events to support classroom learning. Students may only participate with a signed parental permission form on file, and no student will be excluded due to inability to pay. Parents wishing to chaperone or volunteer must provide the required Pennsylvania criminal and child abuse clearances (and FBI clearance if they have lived in the state for less than 10 years). For safety reasons, private vehicles are not permitted for student transportation. If a student's behavior raises safety concerns, a parent/guardian may be required to accompany the student, or alternative arrangements will be made.

Birthday Celebration Guidelines

To ensure safety and inclusivity, Pan American Academy Charter School does not celebrate student birthdays with food or drinks, as this may cause allergies or dietary restrictions. Families may send non-food items for the entire class (e.g., pencils, bookmarks, small party favors); however, balloons are not permitted. Teachers may recognize birthdays through simple classroom activities. Invitations to parties outside of school may not be distributed at school unless the entire class is invited, and the school cannot share or forward personal contact information between families.

Emergency Drills

State law requires that schools conduct emergency drills throughout the school year to ensure the safety of all students and staff. At PAACS, we hold monthly fire drills as well as periodic shelter-in-place and lockdown drills. These drills are supervised by school personnel to ensure students know how to respond calmly and safely in any emergency situation.

Evacuation/Fire Drills– students will follow these procedures:

1. Rise in silence when the alarm sounds.
2. Walk to the assigned place briskly, in a single file line, and in silence.
3. Stand in a single-file line, facing away from the building.
4. Return to the building when the signal is given.

Shelter-In-Place– students will follow these procedures:

1. Rise in silence when the message is given.
2. Walk briskly to the assigned place in a single file line.
3. Sit in the assigned class area in silence.
4. Return to the classroom when the designated signal is given.

“Lock Down” Drills– students will follow these procedures:

1. Listen for the CODE
2. Stay in the room and sit on the floor away from the door.
3. All doors are locked and will remain locked until an "all clear" announcement is made.

Emergency School Cancellations

PAACS monitors announcements from the School District of Philadelphia regarding weather-related closures, delays, and early dismissals. If closures or delays occur, families will be notified through automated messaging, local media outlets, and updates posted on the school website.

If the school closes after the day has started, students will be dismissed according to our pick-up procedures. Students will follow their regular transportation plan unless the school is notified otherwise. For example, if early dismissal occurs on a Tuesday and your child typically takes the bus on Tuesdays, they will be sent on the bus unless the office receives alternate instructions.

It is essential that parents have an emergency plan in place for unexpected early dismissals. Parents must keep contact information (phone numbers and email addresses) up to date. Students should be familiar with their family's emergency plan.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMMING

At Pan American Academy Charter School, we are dedicated to fostering student success through a rigorous curriculum, a global perspective, and a supportive learning environment. As an IB World School, we encourage students to think critically, act with integrity, and develop the skills needed to make meaningful contributions to a diverse and interconnected world. Our Student Services Department works closely with families and teachers to ensure the academic, social, behavioral, and emotional well-being of every student.

Dual Language Program

Our Dual Language Program follows a 50/50 model, with equal instruction in English and Spanish. This bilingual approach not only develops strong language proficiency but also enhances cognitive growth and cultural understanding. By immersing students in two languages, we prepare them for academic excellence and the ability to thrive in a global society.

International Baccalaureate Program

Pan American Academy Charter School is an IB World School, offering both the Primary Years Programme (PYP) for students in Kindergarten through Grade 5 and the Middle Years Programme (MYP) for students in Grades 6 through 8. Through an inquiry-based curriculum delivered in English and Spanish, students develop critical thinking, global awareness, and essential life skills. The IB framework nurtures internationally minded individuals who value their shared humanity and work to create a better, more peaceful world.

Assessments & Testing

At PAACS, assessments play a crucial role in monitoring student progress, guiding instruction, and ensuring that all students meet Pennsylvania's academic standards. We use a combination of classroom-based assessments, benchmark assessments, and state-mandated assessments to track learning, measure growth, and provide targeted support. All of our assessments are completed online. Students will use their iPads to complete assessments during school hours. It is essential that students bring their charged iPads to school every day.

Classroom-Based Assessments: Teachers regularly assess student understanding through quizzes, essays, projects, and other assignments. These assessments help identify each student's strengths and areas for growth, enabling teachers to tailor instruction and provide targeted support.

Benchmark Assessments: Students participate in benchmark assessments throughout the school year, such as STAR or IStation (ISIP), in key subjects like English Language Arts, Spanish Language Arts, and Math. Students in grades 3 through 8 will also participate in the Firefly Benchmark assessment to prepare for the PSSA. These assessments provide valuable data to monitor progress over time and help design appropriate interventions or enrichment activities.

State Assessments: As required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), students in grades 3–8 take the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in English Language Arts and Mathematics, with Science testing administered in grades 5 and 8. English Language Learners (ELLs) complete the WIDA ACCESS assessment to measure English language proficiency.

The annual testing schedule, including windows such as the PSSA testing window, is shared at the start of the school year, posted on the website calendar. School Dojo messages will also be sent in advance of testing dates. Additional updates and reminders will be communicated through newsletters, teacher announcements, and the school website.

Opt-Out and Test Review: Parents/guardians with religious objections to state assessments may request to review the test materials in person at the school and submit a written opt-out request to the CEO or Principal, in accordance with PDE guidelines.

Test Results and Reporting: Assessment results, including PSSA and benchmark data, are shared with families through mailed score reports and Parent-teacher conferences. These results provide families with a clear understanding of their child's progress and identify areas that require additional support.

Participation Requirements: State law mandates that at least 95% of eligible students participate in PSSA and Keystone Exams. Schools with lower participation rates may face penalties that impact their performance ratings. Parents are encouraged to ensure their child is present on test days, as some selective Philadelphia schools consider these results in their academic placement decisions.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 Service Plans will receive all necessary accommodations as outlined in their plans. All testing is conducted in accordance with PDE's Handbook for Assessment Coordinators and Secure Test Administration procedures.

Grading Practices and Scale

At Pan American Academy Charter School, our grading practices are designed to provide clear, consistent, and transparent learning goals for students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators. Grades reflect what a student is expected to know and be able to do to master the content of a course. These common grading practices, established to ensure consistency across all teachers and subject areas, are based on best practices and educational research. This approach ensures fairness and accuracy, providing clarity for students and families regarding grading criteria and academic expectations. The chart below outlines the letter grade assigned to each numerical percentage, which is applied consistently across all subject areas.

Advanced (A)	Proficient (P)	Basic (B)	Below Basic (BB)
93-100	80-92	66-79	0-65

Promotion Requirements

The Board recognizes that the emotional, social, physical, and educational growth of students will vary and that students should be placed in the educational setting most appropriate to their needs at various stages of their growth.

A student shall be promoted when s/he has successfully:

- Completed the course requirements at the presently assigned grade.
- Achieved the academic standards established for the present grade level, based on the professional judgment of his/her teachers and the results of assessment.
- Demonstrated the foundational skills required for the next grade level.
- Demonstrated proficiency to move ahead to the educational program of the next level.
- Demonstrated the degree of social, emotional, and physical maturation necessary for a successful learning experience at the next learning level.
- Demonstrated consistent attendance. Students who are chronically absent/truant may be required to repeat their current grade level.

A student who has not substantially achieved one or more of the factors above may be subject to retention. The recommendation of the classroom teacher shall be given significant weight in determining whether a student is promoted or retained. Parents shall be informed well in advance of the possibility of retention of a student. Principals will have the final authority to determine whether each student is promoted or retained.

Homework

Homework at Pan American Academy Charter School reinforces classroom learning, builds strong study habits, and includes a daily quiet reading period to foster a love of books. It is generally assigned on Mondays through Thursdays, with occasional weekend assignments. Homework completion impacts student grades, and parents can track assignments through the PowerSchool Parent Portal. If students fail to complete homework, parents will be notified, and students may stay after school, receive an Incomplete, or work with teachers to create a completion plan.

Academic Honesty

Pan American Academy Charter School expects all students to submit original work and properly credit any sources they reference. Academic honesty applies to all assignments, projects, and digital creations. Students are taught to use MLA-style citations, take accurate notes, and maintain drafts to ensure the authenticity of their work. Through the IB framework, we encourage students to be principled learners who value integrity, celebrate their own work, and use information responsibly.

PowerSchool Parent Portal

PAACS' Parent Portal enables parents to view their child's classroom progress, homework, assignments, and teacher comments. A notification letter containing a school-generated login credential will be sent to parents. Please keep this information in a secure place. [Visit the PowerSchool Parent Portal here.](#)

Technology & Devices

Pan American Academy Charter School (PAACS) provides every student with a school-issued iPad to build 21st-century skills and enhance learning both in school and at home. Students and families share the responsibility of ensuring that devices are well-maintained, charged, and used responsibly for educational purposes.

Charge iPads Daily: Students are responsible for charging their iPads each night to ensure they are at least 75% charged for the next day's learning. Students will use their iPads during the school day to complete assignments, conduct research, access content-based programs and materials, and take assessments. Students who fail to bring a charged iPad are considered unprepared for learning. Please create a home charging station near the bookbag to avoid forgetting the device.

Guidance for Parents

- Communicate with teachers about your child's progress via Class Dojo, email, or phone.
- Talk with your child about safe, responsible technology use (e.g., protecting passwords, avoiding oversharing personal information, and reporting inappropriate content).
- Monitor the websites your child visits and ensure they have a distraction-free learning space at home.
- Report any security or safety issues with school platforms to an administrator immediately.

Guidance for Students

Students are expected to:

- Use devices respectfully by avoiding obscene, profane, or threatening language
- Protect academic integrity by not plagiarizing or copying others' work
- Think before typing or posting (never say or record anything that could lead to disciplinary action)
- Keep passwords secure and never share them

Lost, Stolen, or Damaged Devices: Parents and students should report any damage or technical issues to the school immediately. Do not take school-issued devices to outside repair shops, as this voids school protections and may result in higher costs. Repair or replacement costs are as follows:

Charger replacement (missing or intentional damage)	\$20.00
Screen Repair (display issues)	\$50.00
iPad pen replacement	\$50.00
Case replacement (missing keyboard/intentional damage)	\$140.00
Full iPad replacement (inoperable)	\$299.00

All fees must be handled within the school year.

No Expectation of Privacy

All iPads, computers, and digital accounts provided by PAACS are the property of the school and intended for educational purposes only. Students have no expectation of privacy for any content they create, store, send, or receive on school-owned devices. All online activity is monitored by PAACS, both at school and at home.

Compliance: PAACS adheres to the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). All digital tools used by students are vetted for compliance. Parents/guardians may request a list of approved digital tools and information about how student data is collected, stored, and used by contacting the school’s technology office.

Monitoring Online Activity

To ensure the safety and appropriate use of technology, Pan American Academy Charter School utilizes network monitoring tools, such as Securly, to track online activity and report any instances of misconduct or unsafe behavior on school-issued devices, whether used on or off school grounds. All device usage is monitored, including home and classroom use. School-issued devices are for student use only. Other family members should refrain from using these devices for internet searches, streaming, or personal activities. We encourage students to practice responsible technology use and develop the skills of a positive digital citizen.

STUDENT SERVICES

The Student Services team helps every student succeed by providing the skills, resources, and support they need to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Our team works closely with families, teachers, and community partners to remove barriers to learning. Our team includes School Counselors, School-based therapists & Social Workers, psychologists, behavior support staff, school nurses, and Special Education Teachers. We offer counseling, health, behavioral, and academic support, as well as referrals to community services when needed.

Group & Individual Counseling

Group and Individual counseling are provided to students who need short-term support that goes beyond what can be addressed in the classroom. We don’t provide long-term therapy, but help families find the right community resources. Information shared by a student will only be shared with parents or authorities if the student’s health, safety, or well-being is at risk.

Community and Agency Referrals

Some student challenges are beyond the school's ability to solve. Counselors work with parents to identify community programs and specialists that can provide assistance. We also coordinate with these providers to ensure a smooth support system.

Universal Supports

At our school, we believe that recognizing positive behavior helps every student thrive. That’s why we offer universal supports that celebrate students who show respect, responsibility, and care throughout the day. Our three main reward systems—Classroom Contingency Rewards, the PAACS School Store, and Super Cheetah Rewards—are powered by ClassDojo points. Through ClassDojo, teachers highlight moments when students model our school-wide expectations and IB learner profiles. Every point earned is a way of saying, *“Great job! You’re showing C.A.R.E. in action!”*

Special Education

PAACS is committed to helping every child reach their full potential. Children with disabilities have the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), and families can request an evaluation once per school year to determine if their child needs special services. Our special education teachers provide individualized support in line with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Step 1: Identification

PAACS utilizes a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to identify students who may require additional support. If a student may benefit from special education, we request permission from the parent/guardian before conducting an evaluation. Families can also request an evaluation once a year by contacting the Principal.

Step 2: Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process

If a student qualifies for special education, we create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that outlines the student's learning goals and the support services required to achieve them. Parents are active members of the IEP team and are encouraged to share their ideas and questions.

Step 3: Services and Progress

Once parents approve the IEP, services begin. We track each student's progress toward their goals and send progress reports home every quarter.

Step 4: Transition Planning

When students turn 14, their IEP team begins discussing post-secondary goals and transition plans to prepare them for life after high school.

504 Plan

Some students have disabilities that affect their learning but do not qualify for an IEP. These students may still be eligible for support through a 504 Plan, which provides accommodations such as changes in instruction, facilities, or activities to help them succeed in school.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is a federal law that protects students with disabilities from discrimination. It ensures they have the same educational opportunities as their peers. A student may qualify if they have a physical or mental condition that substantially limits a major life activity (like walking, seeing, learning, or breathing).

At PAACS, we are committed to identifying and supporting students who may need 504 accommodations. If a child qualifies, we work with families to create a 504 Education Plan that lists the specific supports they need to thrive.

English Language Learners (ELL)

PAACS is committed to providing all students, regardless of their first language, with equal access to a high-quality education. Our English Language Learners (ELL) program meets both Pennsylvania and federal requirements, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, ensuring that students receive the support they need to achieve English proficiency and succeed in all academic areas. We follow the Pennsylvania Department of Education's English Language Development Standards (WIDA) to guide instruction and measure student progress. Through targeted instruction and classroom supports, we help students thrive both academically and socially. Families are encouraged to contact studentservices@panamcs.org for more information about our ELL services.

Intervention Services: MTSS and SAP

At PAACS, we utilize both the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and the Student Assistance Program (SAP) to provide targeted intervention services and support students in overcoming challenges that may impact their academic success. MTSS is a school-wide framework that identifies and supports students with academic, behavioral, social, or emotional needs. While the MTSS team does not diagnose students, it may, with parental permission, refer students to outside agencies or behavioral health evaluations for additional support.

The SAP team provides another layer of support. Anyone in our school community—teachers, staff, parents, or students—can submit a SAP referral if they believe a student needs help. We work closely with families throughout this process to ensure students receive the resources they need to thrive both in school and beyond.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Introduction & Purpose

At Pan American Academy Charter School (PAACS), we believe that all students deserve a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment. The Student Code of Conduct establishes clear expectations for behavior, enabling every student to reach their full potential. All members of the school community are expected to demonstrate respect, responsibility, and integrity at all times on campus, during school-sponsored events, on transportation, and in any off-campus situations that impact the school community.

Student Expression

All students have the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that align with their gender identity. This right applies in all school interactions—both with staff and peers—as well as in school records, including class rosters, report cards, official correspondence, transfer documents, and photo identification.

Students may dress in accordance with their gender identity or gender expression, including choosing a gender-neutral appearance. Staff and faculty are strictly prohibited from disclosing any information that may reveal a student's transgender identity or gender nonconformity without the student's explicit consent. This includes disclosure to other staff members, students, parents, or the public.

The School is committed to minimizing and, where possible, eliminating gender-based segregation. When gender separation is unavoidable (e.g., for athletics or overnight trips), students will be allowed to participate in accordance with their gender identity.

Gender-neutral language should be used in written and verbal communication whenever possible to foster an inclusive school environment.

Students shall have access to restrooms and locker/dressing rooms that correspond to their gender identity. Any student requesting additional privacy—regardless of the reason—will be provided access to a single-stall restroom or other appropriate accommodations. No student shall be required to use alternative facilities against their will.

The School strictly prohibits the use of derogatory, offensive, or demeaning language when communicating with or referring to transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals. All personnel are required to take reasonable steps to prevent, address, and promptly correct the use of such language in any form of communication. This applies to interactions among students, staff, and the school community at large. Violations will be addressed in accordance with the School's disciplinary policies and procedures.

To ensure compliance with nondiscrimination laws and this policy, the School will provide regular training for all staff on their responsibilities in supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming students.

Student Uniform and Dress Code

School is a place dedicated to learning, and a student's attire can significantly influence their focus and participation in the educational process. To foster a respectful and distraction-free learning environment, all students are required to wear the complete school uniform every day, from the first day of school until the last day of classes. A full uniform must also be worn during all school events unless otherwise specified by the school administration. Outerwear such as non-uniform jackets, hoodies, or accessories is not permitted inside the school building as part of the uniform.

To prevent the loss or misplacement of sweaters and Pan American hoodies, families are strongly encouraged to label these items with the student's name using a permanent marker.

GRADES K-4 UNIFORM	GRADES 5-8 UNIFORM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navy blue pants or a Plaid Jumper • White polo shirts (Spring/Fall) • White button-down shirt with sweater vest, cardigan, or hoodie • Black or Navy Socks • Black Shoes or ALL Black Sneakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navy blue pants or a Plaid Skirt • White polo shirts (Spring/Fall) • White button-down shirt with Pan Am logo sweater vest, Pan Am logo cardigan, or Pan Am logo zip-up hoodie • Black or Navy Socks • Black Shoes or ALL Black Sneakers
GRADES K-8 GYM UNIFORM	
Navy blue sweatpants or navy blue gym shorts with Pan Am logo, green t-shirt with Pan Am logo, and ALL black sneakers. (Gym Uniform may only be worn on Gym Days and Field Trips)	

Uniforms are available for purchase at [Cramer's Uniforms](#).

Personal Appearance Standards: Our dress code is designed to promote a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environment. It ensures that all students can focus on learning without unnecessary distractions while respecting cultural, religious, and personal identities. The following standards outline expectations for student appearance while maintaining fairness and equity for all:

- **Jewelry:** Jewelry should be simple and safe for school activities. The following items are not permitted due to safety or appropriateness: earrings that dangle or are larger than a quarter; jewelry with sharp edges, spikes, or unsafe designs; jewelry featuring profanity, offensive language, inappropriate symbols, or images.
- **Tops:** Shirts with large graphics, logos, slogans, or images that are distracting, inappropriate, or non-school related are not allowed. Sleeveless shirts, crop tops, or tops with low necklines are not permitted. Sheer or see-through tops are not permitted.
- **Pants and Bottoms:** Must be worn at the waist and should fit appropriately, meeting modesty length requirements. Shorts, jeggings, leggings, or tight-fitted pants are not permitted. Bottoms must be free of large logos, designs, or distracting graphics.
- **Head Coverings and Accessories:** Head coverings are allowed for cultural, ethnic, religious, health, or other approved reasons. Scarves may be worn outdoors for warmth, but are not part of the indoor uniform unless for cultural or religious purposes.
- **Outerwear:** Coats, jackets, non-uniform sweaters, or hoodies may not be worn inside the school during the school day. Approved uniform sweaters and Pan American hoodies should be clearly labeled with the student's name to prevent loss.
- **Inclusivity and Enforcement:** These guidelines apply equally to all students, regardless of gender. Students who are not in compliance will be given an opportunity to adjust their attire. Persistent issues will be addressed through the disciplinary process outlined in the Uniform Policy. Our dress code will never be enforced in a way that shames students for their bodies, cultural identity, or personal expression within the uniform guidelines.

Uniform Donations: We collect clean, gently used school uniforms. If you wish to donate your child's uniforms, please send them to the school with your child's name and homeroom listed on the package. For more information, please feel free to email us at information@panamcs.org.

Dress Down Days: These special opportunities allow students to step out of their uniforms and celebrate school spirit. These days may include a specific theme or encourage students to wear school colors, and they will always be announced in advance. Parents/guardians have the final say on whether their child participates in Dress Down Days. If you prefer that your child not participate, we will fully support your decision. Your child should then follow the regular school uniform policy for that day.

Guidelines for Dress Down Day	Footwear Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must continue to follow the personal appearance and dress code standards. Hats, sunglasses, or other accessories are not permitted unless approved by the Principal for the day's theme. The administration reserves the right to enforce guidelines related to style, color, and length to ensure appropriateness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoes must always be safe and school-appropriate. All shoes must cover the entire foot to ensure safety, particularly in stairwells or during emergency evacuations. For this reason, flip-flops, heels, house slippers, slides, sandals, clogs, or Crocs are not allowed, even on Dress Down Days.

NOTE: Failure to comply with the policy will result in loss of dress-down privileges.

Electronic Devices, Games, and Toys

Use of personal electronic devices is not permitted at Pan American Academy Charter School. If a student must bring a personal electronic device to school, they are required to turn it off before entering the school building and keep the item stored in their book bag at all times. If the student has a locker, the bookbag is to be kept in the locker. If a personal device is used or visible at any time in the school building, it will be confiscated from the student.

Students are not allowed to bring toys or games to school. This includes dolls or stuffed animals. If such items are to be brought for show-and-tell, arrangements must be made between the parent and teacher as to the appropriate time to bring the game or toy. The following protocols will take place in the event games, or toys, etc., are confiscated:

- First offense:** Item(s) will be released **ONLY** to the parent. Parents will receive a call from an administrator or designee to arrange pickup.
- Second offense:** Item(s) will be held for **ONE WEEK**. Parents must schedule a meeting with an administrator or designee to retrieve the confiscated item.
- Repeated offenses:** Item(s) will be held for **TWO WEEKS**. Parents must schedule a meeting with an administrator to retrieve the confiscated item. The student may also face disciplinary action for continued violation.

Pan American Academy Charter School will take all the necessary precautions to secure all confiscated items; however, it is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Phones and Wearable Communication Devices

Phones and wearable technology are not permitted for use during school hours. **The school uses Yondr Pouches to store phones and wearable communication devices for students in grades 4 through 8.** Students are provided with a Yondr Pouch each morning during arrival to secure their phones, etc.. Students are required to keep the Yondr Pouch throughout the day and return it before leaving school. It is each student's responsibility to keep the Yondr Pouch in good condition.

Students in kindergarten through third grade will place their phones in a secure phone locker located in their classrooms.

DAILY PROCESS

Kindergarten - Grade 3	Grades 4 - 8
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When entering the classroom, students will place their phones/smartwatches in their assigned slots in the phone locker located in front of their teacher. 2. Before leaving for dismissal, students will retrieve their phones/smartwatches from the phone locker in front of their teacher. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before entering the building, students will turn off/place their phones and smartwatches in airplane mode. 2. Students will be greeted by a staff member and provided with a Yondr Pouch. 3. They will place their phone, smartwatch, and/or wireless earbuds inside the pouch. 4. They will secure their pouch in front of the school staff member. 5. They will remain with the pouch throughout the day. 6. They will return the pouch at the end of the day to release their items before exiting the building.

Students arriving late to school or leaving early will receive/return their Yondr Pouch to the Security Desk in the main lobby or inside the main office.

VIOLATIONS

Pouch Damage / Using Phone During School (Damage): If a student damages or loses their pouch, a replacement fee of \$30 will be charged. Damaging pouches will also result in disciplinary consequences. Examples of Damage: Rips, tears, holes, writing or drawing, stickers, fraying edges, cracks or removal of magnet, bent pins

Damage Violation 1	The device(s) will be collected, held by an administrator, and returned only to students after contact with a parent, guardian, or designated emergency contact. A Replacement Fee of \$30 is due to return to school with a phone. The phone will be collected each morning and held in the main office until this fee is paid.
Damage Violation 2	The device will be collected, held by an administrator, and returned only to a parent, guardian, or designated emergency contact. A Replacement Fee of \$30 is due to return to school with a phone. The phone will be collected each morning and held in the main office until this fee is paid. During this time, students will be restricted from participating in extracurricular school activities and will be subject to after-school detention.
For Repeated Offenses (3 or more)	The device(s) will be confiscated, and additional progressive disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including suspension. It may involve parent involvement at the discretion of the school administration.

Bypassing Check-In at Arrival (Refusal): If a student does not check in upon arrival to secure their devices in their pouch or phone locker and states that they do not have a phone or wearable technology with them, their devices will be collected and stored in the main office.

Refusal Violation 1	Suppose a student does not secure their device in their pouch or phone locker upon arrival. In that case, their phone/wearable technology will be collected and stored in the main office for the day. Additionally, parents will receive notifications and reminders to ensure students follow the policy daily.
Refusal Violation 2	Suppose a student does not secure their device in their pouch or phone locker upon arrival. In that case, their phone/wearable technology will be collected and stored in the main office for the day. Additionally, parents will receive notifications and reminders to ensure students follow the policy daily. The student will receive detention as a consequence of a repeated offense.
For Repeated Offenses (3 or more)	The device will be confiscated, and additional progressive disciplinary action will be taken up to and including suspension.

Acceptable Internet Use Policy

Pan American Academy Charter School provides access to various computer resources and the internet. These Resources are available to enhance the learning process in a supportive school environment, enabling us to achieve high-quality learning outcomes for our students. The school employs technological protections that filter or block all internet traffic containing certain visual depictions deemed obscene, pornographic, or harmful to minors, in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), passed by Congress in October 2000. The school expects students to become familiar with these guidelines for using the computers. Do not allow other household members to use school-issued devices for personal matters not related to the child's education. For the benefit of all users, students are expected to observe the following:

Students may not:

- Use the computer and the internet for anything other than educational purposes.
- Play games, use the internet for entertainment, personal email, or engage in activities unrelated to school.
- Tamper with the computer system. It is strictly forbidden to attempt to access restricted areas of the computer network.
- Swap computer equipment around unless expressly directed by a teacher (i.e., no changing of keyboards, mice, or other equipment from one computer to another).
- Attempt to change or tamper with the computer in any way; this includes modifying screen savers, desktop pictures, internet home pages, and other settings.
- Attempt to view blocked internet pages or bypass security in any way.
- Reveal any private information, such as one's own or another person's address, phone number, etc.
- Attempt to retrieve, view, or distribute any obscene, offensive, pornographic, or illegal material.
- Threaten, abuse, or harass any other user.
- Bring the school into disrespect in any way whatsoever.
- Download or print information without permission from the teacher.
- Access personal email accounts.

School Property & Safety

Locker Use Policy

Students in Grades 6 through 8 will be assigned individual lockers for the school year. Lockers provide students with a secure space to store personal belongings and school materials, helping them stay organized and focused during the school day.

Locker Contract: All students will receive a Locker Contract during back-to-school events, home visits, or on the first day of school. Contracts must be signed and returned by the end of the first week of the school year. Once returned, students will be assigned a locker and receive a combination lock. Teachers will review locker expectations and support students in learning how to use their lockers effectively.

Locker Use Expectations: To ensure safety, respect for school property, and efficient hallway traffic, students are expected to follow these locker guidelines:

Access and Use

- Students will have three (3) designated locker visits per day, determined by their grade-level team.
- Students may not visit their locker outside of these designated times unless they have an approved hall pass.
 - Students found at their lockers outside of the designated times will be addressed by staff and may face consequences.

Behavior and Responsibility

- Students are expected to use their lockers respectfully and responsibly:

- Open and close lockers gently.
- Do not kick, slam, or overload lockers.
- Keep the area around lockers clear of personal belongings.
- Students must remember their combination and should never share it with others.
- Damage to lockers, such as dents, black marks, and broken parts, will result in the student being held financially responsible.

Lost Lock Fee

- Students are responsible for the lock assigned to them.
- A \$10 replacement fee will be charged for any lost or damaged combination lock.

Security and Searches: Lockers are school property and may be searched by administration at any time. Students must store the following items in their lockers upon entering the building:

- Non-uniform apparel (hats, jackets, sunglasses, etc.)
- Backpacks

Malfunctions or Issues: If a locker is not working properly, students should report the issue to a staff member before or after school, or during lunch.

Personal Responsibility: Students are responsible for securing their belongings. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen items if a locker is misused or left unsecured.

Proper locker use is a privilege. Misuse may result in disciplinary action or loss of locker access.

Care for School Property

Students are expected to show respect for all school-owned materials and facilities. Any damage, loss, or vandalism may result in financial responsibility and disciplinary consequences.

Books: All textbooks and library books are owned by the school and loaned to students. Students are responsible for keeping books in good condition. Lost, stolen, or damaged books will require payment of a prorated replacement cost (based on age and condition). To prevent loss, students should write their full name in the designated area inside the front cover.

Equipment and Facilities: Students must treat all school equipment (classroom furniture, sports equipment, lab materials, etc.) with care. Deliberate damage or vandalism will result in full payment for repair or replacement and may lead to disciplinary action.

Computers and Technology: The use of school-issued computers, tablets, and Internet access is a privilege. Students are responsible for maintaining all devices, chargers, cases, and accessories in good condition. Any damage or loss will incur a fine for repair or replacement. Repeated misuse may result in restricted access to technology.

Personal Property and Well-being: Students may be held financially responsible for any physical injury they cause to others or for damage to another person's personal property due to negligence or misconduct.

Search and Seizure Policy

To maintain order and discipline at PAACS, and to protect the safety and welfare of students and staff members, PAACS administrators reserve the right to conduct a search of a student's property, person, or personal effects (including without limitation, purse, bookbags, athletic bag, lockers, desks, computers, cell phones, other electronic devices, etc.).

Administrators may conduct such a search if they have a reasonable suspicion that a student has violated or is violating state or federal laws, state laws, city codes, or school policies. Administrators may seize any illegal, unauthorized, or contraband materials discovered. Students do not have an expectation of privacy in their lockers, the items they bring to school, or the items they bring to school-sponsored events.

Law enforcement may be contacted in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding between PAACS and the Philadelphia Police Department, as well as applicable laws and regulations.

Restraint and Seclusion Policy

PAACS does not use seclusion. Physical restraint is used only in emergency situations to protect students or others, in compliance with IDEA and Pennsylvania Chapter 14. Parents will be notified promptly if a restraint occurs.

Weapons Policy

In accordance with Act 26 of 1995 and Article XIII-A of the Pennsylvania Public School Code, the school prohibits the possession of weapons and may be required to expel, for a minimum of one year, any student who is determined to have brought onto or is in possession of a weapon on any school property as required under Act 26. The school will also report all incidents involving the possession of a weapon to local law enforcement officials and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, as well as all incidents relating to expulsions for possession of a weapon on school grounds.

Attendance & Behavioral Expectations

Attendance Expectations & Responsibilities

Students enrolled at Pan American Academy Charter School are required to attend school daily in accordance with the compulsory attendance laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Under this law, parents and guardians are required to make sure their children attend school every day that school is in session and arrive at school on time.

Absences: An absence refers to a student's non-attendance on days and half days when school is in session. Attendance does not always need to be within school facilities. A student will be considered in attendance if present at any place where school is in session, receiving approved instruction, or health or therapeutic services, or receiving approved homebound instruction.

What is an excused absence? The school understands that there are days when a student is unable to attend school due to medical or other urgent reasons. An absence will be considered excused if the absence was due to one or more of the following reasons:

- Illness and injury (if longer than two days, a note from a doctor is **REQUIRED**)
- Death of a family member
- Medical or dental appointments that could not be scheduled outside of school hours
- Religious holidays observed by the student's immediate family – prior written notice to the school is required
- Religious instruction, not to exceed 36 hours per school year
- Required court attendance
- Other urgent reasons approved by the CEO or Principal

What is an unexcused absence? All absences are considered unexcused until the school receives the required documentation, which must detail a valid reason for the absence, as outlined above. Some examples of unexcused absences are:

- Absence due to parental neglect
- Missing the bus
- Oversleeping
- Parent personal appointments
- Inclement weather when the school is open
- Family vacation trips: *Family vacations during the school year will be coded as unexcused absences. Please schedule family vacations to occur outside of our regularly scheduled school year. Please do not schedule doctor's appointments during standardized testing periods. Excessive absences and tardiness can negatively impact your child's ability to be accepted into a special admission high school.*

Tardiness: Being on time is essential for academic success and to avoid classroom disruptions. School begins at 8:00 a.m. Students arriving after 8:15 a.m. will be marked as late. Lateness may be excused with a doctor's note for medical appointments or in the event of an emergency. Frequent lateness will be addressed as excessive absences.

Early Dismissal: Whenever possible, schedule appointments outside school hours. If an early dismissal is necessary, it should occur between 11:30 am and 2:30 pm. Parents should provide notes stating the reason for early dismissal.. For safety, students must be picked up from the office and checked out by a parent/guardian, or an emergency contact with identification. Phone call requests are not accepted. Early dismissals are strongly discouraged on half days and during state testing. Frequent early dismissals can negatively impact learning and may be recorded as partial-day absences. Excessive unexcused early dismissals will be addressed in accordance with Pennsylvania attendance and truancy laws.

Reporting an Absence: If your child will be absent, please contact the school before the start of the school day. A voicemail option is available to leave the reason for the absence. Parents/guardians will also receive an automated call to confirm the absence—this is part of our safety procedures to ensure every student is accounted for.

Excuse Notes: A written note explaining the reason for the absence must be provided within 3 school days of the student's return. Notes can also be submitted via the school website. Absences without a note after 3 days will be permanently marked unexcused.

- After 3 consecutive absences, only a doctor's note or official documentation will be accepted.
- Parents/guardians can excuse up to 10 absences per year with their own written notes; beyond this, a physician's note is required.

Makeup Work: Students are responsible for completing all work missed during an absence. Upon returning, they should speak with their teachers to receive assignments and arrange to make up any missed tests, homework, or other work. Teachers will provide a reasonable amount of time and support for completing missed coursework.

Truancy: In Pennsylvania, truancy is defined as having three (3) or more unexcused absences in the current school year by a child of compulsory age. Pan American Academy Charter School will notify the parent/guardian within ten (10) school days of the child's third unexcused absence that the child has been "truant". The notice may include the offer of a school attendance improvement conference, and shall be in the mode and language of communication preferred by the parent/guardian.

Habitual Truancy: Habitual truancy is defined as a child subject to compulsory school laws "having six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year." Therefore, a child is habitually truant once he or she accumulates six unexcused absences during the course of the school year. These absences do not need to run consecutively. If a child is habitually truant, the school must either: (1) Refer the child to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, or the Philadelphia Department of Human Services for services or possible disposition as a dependent child, or (2) file a citation against the parent in a magisterial district court. Habitual truancy has a direct impact on student success. Students who are classified as habitually truant may be required to repeat the grade level.

Consequences and Interventions for Truancy

# of total unexcused absences	# of total lateness and/or early dismissals	Consequences & Interventions [Suspension from school is not a permissible consequence for truancy.]
0-2	X	Automated phone call home. This will be repeated for each additional absence.
3-5	10	School support will consist of the following: ➤ An A-31 letter will be sent home to notify the parent/guardian of the truancy, detailing the unexcused days. ➤ Generating an attendance contract, ➤ The school will schedule a school-family attendance conference to discuss attendance concerns and outline next steps/actions.

6-7	X	<p>The student is considered “habitually truant” by the state. The following will occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷A Student Attendance Improvement Plan is created, detailing supports and strategies to assist the family. ▷1st District Attorney Referral for Project Go <p>Not applicable for lateness or early dismissal. The school may also file a citation against the parent in magisterial district court.</p>
8+	X	<p>The student continues to be “habitually truant”. The following will occur:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷Student Attendance Improvement Plan Review ▷PAACS administration/parent conference ▷2nd District Attorney Referral for a Project Go-Family Conference Meeting ▷Possible grade-level retention <p>Not applicable for lateness or early dismissal. The school may also file a citation against the parent in magisterial district court.</p>

**A Student Attendance Improvement Plan conference is a meeting where the child's absences and reasons for the absences are reviewed with the goal of improving attendance. There is no legal requirement that the child or parent/guardian attend the conference; however, the conference will still occur even if the parent/guardian declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference after receiving advance written notice and attempts to communicate by telephone.*

Students will not be disciplined for being truant. However, if a student has 10 consecutive unexcused absences, they will be withdrawn from the school roster, and the case will be referred to the School District of Philadelphia. For students with an IEP or Section 504 Plan, PAACS will follow all required procedures under IDEA or Section 504, including holding a Manifestation Determination meeting to determine if the absences are related to the student’s disability.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS)

PBIS is a school-wide framework that promotes positive behavior and academic success through proactive strategies and consistent expectations. At Pan American, PBIS focuses on our four key behavioral expectations: **Compassionate, Accountable, Respectful, and Engaged (C.A.R.E.)**.

Teachers use **Classroom Dojo points** to recognize students who demonstrate C.A.R.E. Students can use their points to “shop” at the PanAmazon school store. Additional rewards include **Super Cheetah tickets** for weekly prize drawings and the **C.A.R.E. Champion** recognition for students who consistently model these attributes.

For more information on PBIS, visit www.pbis.org or www.papbs.org.

Behavioral Expectations & Responsibilities

At Pan American Academy, we **C.A.R.E.** As an IB World School, we have adopted a school-wide essential agreement built on the foundation of the IB learner profile. Our essential agreement defines the expectations for positive social interaction in our school. The elements of our essential agreement are as follows:

Compassionate - At Pan American, we are compassionate by...

- Caring for others through our positive acts that make a difference in the lives of others
- Communicating with each other using appropriate language
- Being open-minded and accepting the values and traditions of others
- Balancing different aspects of our lives to achieve well-being for ourselves and others

Accountable - At Pan American, we are accountable by...

- Showing our knowledge of conceptual understandings through a range of disciplines
- Developing skills for inquiry independently and with others
- Communicating effectively with individuals and groups
- Reflecting on strengths and weaknesses to support learning and personal development
- Balancing our interdependence with other people and the world we live in
- Being principled and taking responsibility for our actions and their consequences

Respectful - At Pan American, we are respectful by...

- Caring about others through service and positive acts that help to make a difference
- Communicating effectively and listening carefully to others' perspectives

- Being principled in our approach to the dignity and rights of people everywhere
- Being open-minded as we critically appreciate our own cultures and the traditions of others
- Balancing the different aspects of our lives to achieve well-being for ourselves and others

Engaged - At Pan American, we are engaged by...

- Displaying our knowledge of conceptual understandings and exploring a range of disciplines
- Thinking critically and creatively to analyze and take responsible action
- Nurturing curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research
- Communicating with others confidently and creatively in more than one language
- Being risk-takers who work to explore new ideas and innovative strategies

The school-wide expectations are behaviors that every member of the school community is expected to display.

Expectations for Students

- Be principled by acting with integrity and honesty.
- Approach problems with reason and use ethical decision-making strategies.
- Show empathy, compassion, and respect to care for others.
- Reflect on choices and decisions.
- Communicate with parents and staff in a respectful manner.
- Comply with the Student Code of Conduct.

Expectations for Parents

- Treat all members of the school community with dignity and respect. All school personnel have been carefully selected and directed to act in the best interest of all of our students at all times.
- Understand and uphold all policies and procedures at Pan American Academy, setting a good example for your child
- Use respectful and appropriate language when attending school meetings or events and communicating with Pan American staff
- Approach school staff in a positive manner if you need assistance or have a concern.
- Comply with Parent Code of Conduct.

Failure to comply with these expectations may result in exclusion from our school campus.

Expectations for staff

- Understand and uphold all policies and procedures at Pan American Academy.
- Model and employ consistent, respectful, and equitable treatment of all members of the school community.
- Maintain open communication and collaboration with parents/guardians.

Bullying, Cyberbullying & Harassment Policy

At Pan American Academy Charter School, we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment for all students and staff. The Board of Directors, school staff, and broader community expect every member of our school to treat others with dignity and to take a firm stance against all forms of bullying, cyberbullying, and harassment.

Bullying & Cyberbullying: Bullying creates an environment of fear and intimidation, interferes with student learning, and can lead to more serious acts of violence. Our school does not tolerate any form of bullying.

Definition: Bullying is defined as any intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act, or series of acts, directed at a student or group of students, that:

- Occurs in a school setting or significantly impacts the school environment (e.g., cyberbullying), **and**
- Is **severe, persistent, or pervasive**, and has the effect of:
 - Substantially interfering with a student's education,
 - Creating a threatening or hostile environment, or
 - Substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

Key Characteristics of Bullying

Bullying is typically characterized by:

1. Intentional aggression or harm
2. Repeated behaviors occurring over time
3. An imbalance of power, such as differences in physical strength, mental capacity, popularity, or social skills.

Harassment: Pan American Academy maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy for all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination, and acts of bias.

Definition: Harassment is defined as verbal, nonverbal, written, graphic or physical conduct relating to an individual's sex, age, race, color, sexual orientation (known or perceived), gender identity or expression (known or perceived), national origin/ethnicity, religion, disability, English language proficiency, socioeconomic status and/or political beliefs. Harassment does not require an intent to harm, repetition, or a specific target to be considered a violation of this policy.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, such as sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, nonverbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Reporting Procedures & Disciplinary Actions

Students who believe they have been bullied or harassed should report the incident promptly to the principal or their designated representative. All reports will be handled with confidentiality and urgency, in accordance with legal and investigative guidelines. Retaliation or reprisal against students who report incidents in good faith is strictly prohibited.

Violations of this policy will result in appropriate disciplinary measures, as outlined in the school's Code of Conduct. Possible consequences may include, but are not limited to:

1. Counseling within the school
2. Parental conference
3. Loss of school privileges
4. Exclusion from school-sponsored activities
6. Detention
7. Suspension
8. Expulsion
9. Referral to law enforcement authorities

Discipline Framework

Behavioral Infractions & Consequences

Positive Classroom Management Approach: At Pan American Academy Charter School (PAACS), we utilize a Multi-Tiered approach focused on building a positive classroom culture to prevent problem behaviors. The **STOIC** framework empowers general educators, special educators, and related services professionals with behavior improvement strategies for the whole school. The focus of the STOIC framework is on establishing effective classroom management to set students up for success while preventing problematic behaviors.

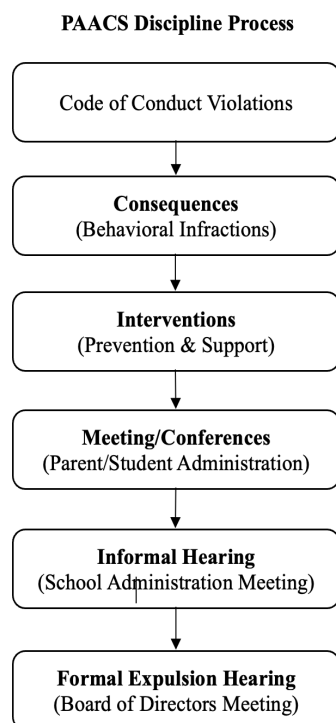
Structure for Success | Teach Expectations | Observe | Interact Positively | Correct Fluently

Dealing with Problem Behavior: Our staff is committed to fostering positive interactions with students across all settings. Our approach emphasizes recognizing and reinforcing desired behaviors, which supports the development of a respectful, safe, and engaging learning environment. While students will be provided with frequent opportunities to learn, practice, and be acknowledged for demonstrating expected behaviors, staff must also be equipped to respond appropriately when problem behaviors arise. The most effective response to problem behavior is one that is proactive, calm, measured, strategic, and reflective.

To ensure that behavior interventions are both effective and equitable, staff adhere to the following principles when implementing corrective consequences:

1. *They are immediate.* Consequences are most effective when administered as soon as possible after the behavior occurs.
1. *They are fair.* Consequences should be reasonable and appropriate, taking into account the severity of the behavior, the context in which it occurred, and the student's developmental level and needs.
2. *They are consistent.* Consequences should be applied consistently across staff, settings, and students to build trust and promote accountability.

Disciplinary Process & Definitions



At Pan American Academy Charter School (PAACS), we believe in prevention-based strategies that are focused on student success. The discipline process below describes the overall steps we take to provide success and opportunities for learning when behavioral infractions occur.

Level I Violations

Level I school violations can often be remediated with simple redirection to prevent the behavior from escalating to a Level II offense and/or the teacher submitting an office disciplinary referral. It is expected that students respond to the remediation efforts of the adult and cease the inappropriate behavior. Disregarding these directions or becoming disrespectful will result in the escalation of the behavior to a higher level with more severe consequences. Possible consequences: teacher conference with the student, teacher-directed consequence, parent contacted by the teacher, office discipline referral (ODR), after-school detention, lunch detention, and/or time outside the classroom with administration.

Level II Violations

Level II school violations are behaviors whose frequency or seriousness disrupts the learning climate or safety of the school. Students engaging in Level II behaviors are typically beyond the scope of redirection from teachers and/or staff and require an office disciplinary referral for possible investigation by the Administration. Repeated **level II school violations will be escalated to a level III offense.** Possible consequences: Consequences listed under Level I, reinstatement parent meeting, in-school suspension, and/or out-of-school suspension.

Level III Violations

Level III school violations are behaviors that may pose a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of a member of the school community. Students engaging in level III behaviors are beyond the scope of redirection from teachers and staff and require an office disciplinary referral and investigation by the Administration. Repeated Level III school violations **will trigger a review by the expulsion committee.** Possible consequences: Consequences listed under Level I and/or Level II and/or expulsion hearing with the Board of Trustees or designated hearing examiner.

Consequences

Disruptive Behaviors	Possible Consequence Levels*		
	Level I: In-school interventions (including In-school suspension)	Level II: Out-of-School Suspension	Level III: Possible Expulsion Hearing/Committee Review
Defiance	X		
Disrespect	X		
Disruption	X		
Dress Code Violation	X		

Inappropriate Language or Gesture	X		
Truancy	X		
Tardy	X		
Property Misuse	X		
Repeated Violations (Minor)	X	X	
Abusive and/or Threatening Language	X	X	
Physical Contact/Aggression – (Property/Person)	X	X	
Plagiarism	X	X	
Forgery	X	X	
Inappropriate Displays of Affection	X	X	
Skip Class	X	X	
Technology Violation	X	X	
Other Behavior-Minor (not listed above)	X	X	
Arson	X	X	X
Physical Aggression-(Assault)	X	X	X
Bomb Threat/False Alarm	X	X	X
Bullying/Harassment	X	X	X
Gang Affiliation Display	X	X	X
Fighting	X	X	X
Property Damage/Vandalism	X	X	X
Theft	X	X	X
Other Behavior-Major (not listed above)	X	X	X
Use/Possession of Alcohol		X	X
Use/Possession of Combustible		X	X
Use/Possession of Drug		X	X
Use/Possession of Tobacco		X	X
Use/Possession of Weapon		X	X

Note:

1. Consequence Levels are not mutually exclusive. If a student is referred for a possible expulsion hearing/review, that student may also be suspended from school for a period of between 1 and 10 days.
2. Repeated school violations will result in an escalation to the next consequence level.
3. Repeated Level III School Violations will result in an Expulsion Committee Review.

*The possible consequences above are suggestions, and school administration, at their discretion, has the right to escalate or deescalate the level of an offense based on circumstance.

Office Discipline Referral (ODR) Definitions: The following chart defines disruptive behaviors and is used by Pan American Academy Charter School (PAACS) to determine the appropriate level of consequences for behavior infractions.

Minor Infraction (problem behavior)	Offense Level	Definition	Examples
Defiance	1	Student engages in refusal to follow directions or talks back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refusal to do work ● Doing the opposite of what is being asked ● Argue with the teacher about tasks/homework/directions
Disrespect	1	Student acts in a manner that is rude, impolite, and/or offensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student insults a teacher's appearance ● Walks away from a teacher
Disruption	1	Student engages in a behavior that causes an interruption in a class or activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loud talking ● Yelling ● Screaming ● Noise with materials ● Horseplay, roughhousing & play fighting ● Out of seat behavior, walking around the room

Dress Code Violation	1	Student fails to comply with the established dress code policy as stated in the Parent and Student Handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wearing Sandals Ripped Jeans (During dress down) Wearing boots/heels
Derogatory Language, Profanity, and/or Inappropriate Language	1	Verbal or written statements intended to offend or insult someone or something	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curse words Name calling Words intended to demean a group of people (Race, Gender, Ethnicity, Sexuality...)
Physical Contact/Aggression-(Property/Person)	1 / 2	Student uses inappropriate physical contact due to a negative reaction with or against property. Student engages in physical contact using one's body or an object where physical, emotional, or psychological harm MAY occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kick/hitting an object due to anger or frustration Flipping furniture Breaking clocks, soap dispensers Breaking walls, fountains, doors Misuse of others' property Inappropriate physical gestures/contact Pushing Gestures to harm (e.g., finger across the neck)
Property Misuse	1	Student uses an object inappropriately in a way that disrupts learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using an iPad to disrupt the teacher's lesson Throwing the iPad back and forth Throwing school books
Tardy	1	Student arrives late (within 5 minutes) to the assigned area or activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Returning to class on their own Arriving at the destination 5 minutes late
Truancy	1	A child of compulsory age has three (3) or more unexcused absences in the current school year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Returning from an absence without an excuse note Vacation without school notice
Technology Violation-(Minor)	1	The use of technology in a manner that can cause damage or does not follow the guidelines given by teachers and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watching YouTube or other inappropriate videos Watching movies Filming or taking pictures in school for fun Playing games instead of working
Other Behavior	1 / 2	Behavior that is not categorized by any of the other minor infractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climbing trees in the school yard Student playing on the stairwell banister Repeated minor violations
Major Infraction (problem behavior)	Offense Level	Definition	Examples
Abusive and/or Threatening Language	2	Student(s) make verbal, written, physical, or gestural threats that include swearing, name-calling, or using words in an inappropriate way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intimidation - To induce fear or a sense of inferiority in another student and/or school community member. Gun or knife hand signal Aggressive posturing Threatening to use a weapon Intimidating in order to receive items Writing inappropriate language
Arson	3	Attempting to start or starting a fire in or around school property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting a Fire Using a combustible to start a fire (a lighter)
Bomb Threat/False Alarm	3	Student(s) deliver a message of possible explosive materials being in school, near school, and/or pending explosions. Pulling or tampering with fire alarms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calling in a bomb threat Pulling fire alarms Threats of having a weapon

Bullying/ Cyber-bullying	3	<p>Student(s) are involved in unwanted aggressive, hostile behavior that involves a power imbalance, and the aggressive behavior is repeated over time.</p> <p><u>Bullying</u>: Bullying occurs within an interpersonal relationship where there is an imbalance of power (e.g., one person is physically larger, stronger, mentally quicker, or socially more powerful). The conduct may be physical, psychological, verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic in nature.</p> <p><u>Cyber-bullying</u>: Bullying that occurs through electronic communication devices messages, tweets, blogs, photo and video sharing, chat rooms, dashboards, or websites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A student(s) forces another student to give up his/her own lunch • Making fun of a student's weight, looks/appearance to cause harm or belittle that student • Using social media to make threats or harass a student. • Creating images or videos of a student(s) to make fun of them • Creating a fake social media account about someone
Harassment	3	<p>Student(s) are involved in behavior that creates intense environments for students. Instances of harassment can occur through intimidation or abuse between students. Much like bullying, tension arises from the display of power between individuals or groups. However, harassment is assigned to a specific category, including but not limited to: race, religion, sexuality, etc., and does not require intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents.</p> <p><u>Harassment</u> - Unwelcome verbal, written, graphic, or physical conduct relating to a student or school community member's gender, age, race, color, sexual orientation (known or perceived), gender identity expression (known or perceived), national origin, religion, disability, English language proficiency, socioeconomic status, and/or political beliefs.</p> <p><u>Sexual Harassment</u> - Unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that can include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unwanted, unwelcome physical contact, such as touching, bumping, grabbing, or patting • Sexually insulting remarks about race, gender, ability, or class • Bragging about sexual prowess for others to hear • Intimidating hallway behavior, which can include demeaning nicknames, homophobic name-calling, cat-calls, rating, or embarrassing whistles • Graffiti with names written on walls or desks; a common example is: "for a good time, call..." • Being followed around by another student / being stalked
Fighting	3	Two or more students engaged in a physical confrontation that may cause harm or injury, regardless of who started the fight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fist fights • Multiple students fighting
Forgery	2	Producing a copy of a document or signature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing a permission slip • Creating an excuse note • Using fake hall passes
Gang Affiliation Display	3	Any verbal, nonverbal, written, physical, or gestural threats or insignia that could be associated with a gang or group from inside or outside of the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wearing specific known gang colors/paraphernalia • Bringing members from a gang on school grounds
Inappropriate Displays of Affection	2	<p>Wanted or unwanted verbal or non-verbal gestures that are intended to promote affection or feelings toward a person or thing</p> <p>Student engages in inappropriate, consensual verbal and/or physical gestures/contact of a sexual nature to another student/adult</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kissing • Fondling • Sexual contact of any kind

Physical Aggression (Assault)	2 / 3	Student engages in physical contact using one's body or an object where physical, emotional, or psychological harm HAS occurred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inappropriate physical gestures/contact that is sexual in nature ● Slapping ● Punching another student ● Pushing another student to the ground, causing harm
Property Damage/Vandalism	3	Student engages or attempts to engage in destruction, disfigurement, or permanent damage to property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Writing/drawing or attempting to write/draw words or images in a bathroom ● Throwing or attempting to throw wet paper products on walls/ceilings ● Breaking walls by either kicking or punching them ● Breaking bathroom stall doors ● Breaking a door or window ● Breaking/damaging iPads/technology
Skip Class	2	Student arrives late (more than 5 minutes) to the assigned area or activity, leaves, or misses class without permission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The student must be escorted to the assigned area or activity ● Student misses the lesson in its entirety ● The student was in the bathroom for longer than 10 minutes
Technology Violation-(Major)	2 / 3	The use of technology in a manner that can cause damage or is not following the guidelines given by teachers and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recording a fight ● Looking at or uploading pornographic images ● Watching pornographic videos ● Viewing inappropriate online videos during instructional time
Theft	3	Student is in possession of, having passed on, or being responsible for removing someone else's property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taking teachers' belongings (ex., money, phone, iPad, purse/wallet, etc.) ● Taking another student's property (ex., phone, money, lunch, etc.) ● Taking school property (ex., soap dispenser, etc.)
Plagiarism	2 / 3	Taking and/or using intellectual property and presenting it as your own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cheating ● Copying homework from a peer or a source ● Claiming another student's work as their own
Use/Possession of Alcohol	3	Student(s) are in possession, use, or distribution of any substance that is alcoholic. Whether on their person, among their belongings, or in any storage space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bringing in beer or liquor
Use/Possession of Combustible	3	Student(s) are in possession, use, or distribution of a substance that is able to catch fire and burn easily on their person, among their belongings, or in any storage space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lighter ● Gasoline ● Matches ● Lighter fluid ● Firecrackers
Use/Possession of Drugs	3	<p>Student(s) are in possession, use, or distribution of any drug, drug paraphernalia, or imitation on their person, among their belongings, or in any storage space.</p> <p>Controlled substances and illegal substances, as well as "look-alikes", which are defined as any substance that, by appearance, representation, or manner of distribution, would lead a reasonable person to believe that the substance is an illegal drug or other controlled substance, are drugs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prescription drugs ● Smoking pipes ● E-pipe ● Rolling papers ● Needles ● Marajuana ● Flour/Sugar in a sandwich bag

Use/Possession of Tobacco	3	Student(s) are in possession, use, or distribution of any tobacco products on their person, among their belongings, or in any storage space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cigarettes ● Chewing tobacco ● Lighters ● E-cigarette ● Matches ● Vape Pens
Use/Possession of Weapon	3	Student(s) are in possession of, use, or distribution of any tool, instrument, implement, ammunition, or weapon capable of causing injury or death by students on their person, among their belongings, or in any storage space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bullets / Blunt object / Bat ● any firearms, whether loaded or unloaded / cap guns ● simulated guns/pellet guns or BB guns ● Knives / box cutters / cutting instruments ● nunchaku ● mace ● simulated weapons ● laser pointers
Other Behavior	2 / 3	Behavior that is not categorized by any of the other major infractions but may cause harm to self, students, or adults.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jumping from a flight of steps ● Climbing on or over gates ● Repeated major violations

Suspensions

Suspension is considered a last resort, used only when other interventions have been unsuccessful or when a student commits a serious violation of the Code of Conduct. A suspension is an exclusion from school for 1 to 10 consecutive school days and cannot exceed 10 days consecutively.

Procedures for Out-of-School Suspensions:

- When a potential suspension is warranted, PAACS will conduct an **investigation**. Students involved are expected to provide an **accurate and truthful account** of the incident.
- Following the investigation, parents/guardians will be notified of the incident and any consequences.
- Suspensions may be issued by the Principal, Assistant Principal, Dean, or other school leaders.
- Students will be given an opportunity to respond to the allegations.
- **Immediate suspensions** may occur without prior notice if the **health, safety, or welfare** of the school community is at risk.

Suspensions for 1 to 3 days

A student may be suspended for a maximum of three days without a hearing. After an incident occurs, the student will be given an opportunity to discuss the incident with the School Administration. A written notice of suspension will be prepared for the parents and given to the student. The notice will contain reasons for the suspension. A conference with the parent will be scheduled before the student's return to school. A parent **MUST** attend the reinstatement meeting to determine an action plan to prevent such behavior from continuing in the future.

Suspensions for 4 to 10 days

For suspensions of 4 to 10 days, the student and parent will have the right to an informal hearing with the School Administration. The following requirements will govern the informal hearing:

- The informal hearing is intended to encourage the student's parents/guardians to meet with the school administration to discuss ways to prevent future offenses.
- The steps below will be followed to ensure due process:
 1. The student and the parent/guardian will be notified in writing of the reasons for the suspension.
 2. They will be provided with sufficient notice of the time and place of the informal hearing.
 3. A student will have the right to question any witnesses present at the informal hearing and has the right to speak and present witnesses on their own behalf.
 4. An informal hearing will be held within the first 5 days of the suspension.

For all suspensions, students shall be responsible for making up any missed exams and completing any work that was missed during the suspension period, and shall be permitted to do so within the guidelines established by the Code of Conduct.

Interventions

At PAACS, we employ various interventions to provide both prevention and correction, supporting our students who have violated the Code of Conduct. We utilize a tiered approach, which includes a variety of supports such as School-Wide PBIS, Conflict Resolution, Check-In/Check-Out, Restorative Practices, Token economy, Peer Mediation, and Behavioral planning.

Meetings/Conferences/Reinstatements

At PAACS, we believe in a partnership between home and school that involves open lines of communication. To include families, PAACS utilizes various methods, including student conferences, parent conferences, administrative meetings, reinstatement meetings, and formal hearings, to communicate concerns about problematic student behaviors. During these meetings, action plans are created with a focus on supporting students to address these behaviors.

When the consequence of the behavioral infraction results in an out-of-school suspension, a restatement meeting **MUST** occur. The reinstatement will serve as a warning that the student has seriously violated PAACS's Code of Conduct. It is our hope that the student and their family will recognize the impact their behavior has had on their learning and our school community, and therefore make all necessary changes to their behavior while in school. A reinstatement meeting must occur after each incident of suspension. The date and time of the meeting will be detailed in the suspension letter.

Informal Expulsion Hearing

In some cases, students who are not responsive to consequences, interventions, or meetings/conferences may proceed to an Information Expulsion Hearing, which is conducted with School Administrators. The review is conducted to determine if the behavioral infraction warrants a Formal Expulsion Hearing with a Hearing Officer assigned by the Board of Trustees or if an additional action plan needs to be established. Families will receive notification of such review along with steps for participation.

Formal Expulsion Hearing

The following constitutes PAACS's proposed policies for the expulsion of students:

1. Only the Board of Trustees has the authority to expel a student. Expulsion is exclusion from school for more than 10 days. All expulsions require a prior formal hearing in conformity with 22 Pa. Code § 12.8.
2. During the period prior to the hearing and decision of the Board of Trustees in an expulsion case, the student, unless serving a suspension, shall be placed in their normal class unless it is determined after an informal hearing that a student's presence in their normal class would constitute a threat to the health, safety, morals or welfare of others.

The hearing process and Board decision will be governed by the requirements of 22 Pa. Code § 12.8, including the following:

- Notification of the charges will be sent to the student's parents/guardian by certified mail.
- Parents will be provided with three days' notice of the time/place of the hearing. The hearing shall be held within fifteen (15) days of the incident giving rise to the hearing unless otherwise agreed to by the parties.
- The hearing notice shall advise the Parent/guardian of the following:
 - The hearing will be held in private unless the student or parent requests a public hearing.
 - The student will have the right to be represented by counsel.
 - The student will have the right to be notified of the names of witnesses against them, as well as copies of any statements and affidavits from those witnesses.
 - The student will have the right to request that any such witnesses appear in person and answer questions or be cross-examined.
 - The student will have the right to testify and present witnesses on his/her own behalf.
 - A record will be kept of the hearing, either by a stenographer or by a tape recorder.

- In the event the student is dissatisfied with the hearing results, an appeal may be filed in accordance with the Local Agency Law to the Court of Common Pleas within thirty (30) days of receiving the Adjudication. Students and their parents/guardians will be apprised of these rights.

Disciplinary Guidelines for Students with Disabilities

As detailed above, PAACS does not, as a first resort, seek to exclude from school students who have violated the Code of Conduct, especially students with disabilities. In the rare event that a student receiving specialized services pursuant to an IEP or Section 504 Service Plan is to be excluded from school for a duration that constitutes a change of placement, a Manifestation Determination meeting will be held.

A change of placement occurs when a student receiving Specialized Services is excluded from the school.

- For more than 10 school days in a row; **OR**
- For more than 15 school days in any one school year; **OR**
- When days 11-15 constitute a “pattern” of exclusion; **OR**
- For even one school day, for a student with an intellectual disability.

PAACS complies with applicable laws governing students with disabilities and does not discipline students with disabilities for behaviors that are substantially related to or manifestations of their disabilities. During a Manifestation Determination meeting, a child’s IEP team must answer the following questions:

1. Was the student’s behavior in question caused by, or directly and substantially related to, his/her disability?
2. Was the behavior a direct result of the LEA’s failure to implement the IEP?

If the IEP team answers “yes” to either question, the IEP team has determined that the behavior is a manifestation of the student’s disability, and the proposed disciplinary action is voided; the team must immediately take steps to remedy any deficiencies in the IEP, if any. The LEA will conduct a functional behavioral assessment (“FBA”) and develop and implement a positive behavior support plan (“PBSP”). If an FBA and PBSP have already been developed, the IEP team will review and modify them as necessary.

If the IEP team determines that the behavior is NOT a manifestation of the student’s disability, the disciplinary action may be applied in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

If the parent/guardian disagrees with the decision that is made at the Manifestation Determination Meeting, they can request an expedited Special Education Hearing, and the Commonwealth-appointed hearing officer will review the manifestation determination. Directions on requesting a hearing can be found in the NOREP and must be completed within ten (10) days.

In addition to the above, PAACS personnel may remove a student to an interim alternative educational setting for no more than 45 school days without regard to whether the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the child’s disability if the child:

- Carries a dangerous weapon* to or possesses a dangerous weapon* at school, on school premises, or to or at a school function; **or**
- Knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance, while at school, on school premises, or at a school function; **or**
- Has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function.

*A “dangerous weapon” is a weapon, device, instrument, material, or substance that is used for, or is readily capable of, causing death or serious bodily injury.

Rights and Legal Protections

Due Process

Education is a statutory right, and the Board of Trustees shall establish fair and reasonable rules – including this Code of Conduct – regarding the conduct of all students at the charter school, and those offenses which may lead to exclusion from school (suspension and expulsion). The jurisdiction of these rules extends to students at all times, including when they are on school property, present at school-sponsored activities, and traveling to or from school and school-sponsored activities. Students will be required to adhere to the Code of Conduct during these times.

If a student violates the Code of Conduct and such violation requires a disciplinary response that involves exclusion from school (i.e., in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion), PAACS will comply with the due process requirements set forth in Chapter 12 of the State Board of Education regulations.

Additional protections and due process measures, including Manifestation Determination Meetings, will be implemented for students who are eligible or thought to be eligible for specialized services under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. Discipline measures for such students will comply with the IDEA and its implementing regulations, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its implementing regulations, and Chapter 711 of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education regulations.

Legal Recourse for School-related Offenses

If you believe that you or your child has been the victim of a crime committed by a school student, staff member, or visitor, you have the right to pursue criminal charges by contacting the Criminal Justice or Juvenile Court systems. The principal, their designee, or a parent/guardian may also contact the Philadelphia Police Department to respond to any type of allegation.

In cases where the offense is directed at a specific individual, the police will determine whether to file criminal charges if the victim wishes to prosecute. Such offenses may include assault, threats, sexual abuse, or theft of personal property. If it is determined that criminal conduct has occurred, the principal or their designee will initiate an internal school investigation to determine appropriate disciplinary action and will notify the Philadelphia Police Department. The assistant principal or designee will cooperate and provide relevant information to law enforcement as needed.

If you and school staff disagree on whether a crime has been committed, you may contact the Philadelphia Police directly by calling 911. Depending on the nature of the alleged offense, you may be referred to the private criminal complaint process.

- If the alleged offender is an adult:
A private criminal complaint is filed through the District Attorney's Office.
Telephone: 215-686-9863 / 9864 / 9865
- If the alleged offender is a juvenile (under 18):
A private criminal complaint is filed through the Juvenile Court.
Telephone: 215-686-7430

If you have been the victim of an assault and are not satisfied with the school's response, or if you require assistance when dealing with the school, you may contact the Office of Safe Schools Advocate from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Telephone: 215-644-1277.

Note: Internal school disciplinary actions do not prevent the school or individual victims from pursuing legal remedies through Criminal, Civil, or Juvenile Courts within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or the United States.