



# Wissahickon

## CHARTER SCHOOL

### **Student and Family Handbook** **August 2025 – June 2026**

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It is the policy of the Wissahickon Charter School Board of Trustees to promote diversity and equal access to educational opportunity and all categories of employment without regard to age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, social or economic status, parenthood, marital status, handicap or any other protected class.

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## I. Who We Are

### Mission

Wissahickon Charter School was planned around three essential elements:

1. An integrated **environmental focus**, recognizing the importance of service learning
2. **Peace, conflict resolution, and community building** as part of a prioritized social curriculum
3. An emphasis on **family involvement** at all levels of the school organization, with special emphasis on families as partners in the learning experiences of their children.

Our founders wrote that Wissahickon will provide a community of learning with an environmental focus that stimulates the child's intellectual, social, and character development.

### Board of Trustees

**Erich Holland, Chair**, [e.holland@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:e.holland@wissahickoncharter.org)

**Shauna Mace, Vice Chair**, [shauna.mace@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:shauna.mace@wissahickoncharter.org)

**Allora Buckshon, Treasurer**, [a.buckshon@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:a.buckshon@wissahickoncharter.org)

**Rekyiah Abdul-Zahir, Secretary**, [rekyiah.abdul-zahir@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:rekyiah.abdul-zahir@wissahickoncharter.org)

**Michelle Alcaraz**, [m.alcaraz@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:m.alcaraz@wissahickoncharter.org)

**Jason Manning**, [jason.manning@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:jason.manning@wissahickoncharter.org)

**Daniel Pereira**, [daniel.pereira@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:daniel.pereira@wissahickoncharter.org)

**Ohenewaa White-Ra**, [o.white-ra@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:o.white-ra@wissahickoncharter.org)

**Kristi Littell, Ex-Officio**, [littell@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:littell@wissahickoncharter.org)

### Board Meetings

*All meetings begin at 6:00pm and will be held via Zoom Video Conference, unless otherwise noted. For a Zoom log-in and password, please contact Ilana Lipowicz at [i.lipowicz@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:i.lipowicz@wissahickoncharter.org).*

**August 18, 2025 (9:00am-10:00am, followed by private board retreat)**

**September 17, 2025**

**October 15, 2025**

**November 19, 2025**

**January 21, 2026 (In-Person, Awbury Campus)**

**March 18, 2026**

**April 15, 2026**

**May 20, 2026**

**June 10, 2026**

**Administration**

Dustin Vitale

Ishmell Bradley

Jane Walsh

Kate O'Shea

Kimberly Krasnow

Kristi Littell

Lauren Bennett

Lovelee Polite

Matthew Glass

Michele Ferrante

Paul Vande Stouwe

Rebecca Chase

Sarah Wilson

Tasanya Gordon

Tiffany Days

Director of Culture, Fernhill Campus

Director of Technology

Director of Development

Lower School Principal, K-5, Awbury Campus

Director of Human Capital

CEO

Principal, Fernhill Campus

Middle School Principal, 6-8, Awbury Campus

Asst. Principal, Fernhill Campus

Director of Special Education, Fernhill Campus

Assessment and Accountability Manager

Director of Special Education, Awbury Campus

Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Director of Culture, Awbury Campus

Network Director of School Operations

## II. Attendance

### Attendance Policy

Consistent attendance assures that our students will not miss valuable instructional time and opportunities that will enhance their success in school. Students are required to be at school every day except for illness, approved religious holidays, funerals, medical and dental appointments, and court appearances.

### Documentation Required for Parent Excused Absence up to and limited to 10 Absences

- Illness: parent note unless more than 3 consecutive days, then a doctor's note is required
- Approved religious holidays: parent note
- Funerals: parent note; if traveling, 3 days total will be excused (day of arrival, day of return, and day of funeral)
- Medical and dental appointments\*: parent note
- Court appearances: parent note

\*Missing an entire day of school for a single appointment is discouraged.

### Documentation Required for Absence AFTER 10 Parent Excused Absences

- Illness: doctor's note
- Approved religious holidays: evidence that the holiday exists (e.g. calendar, website entry, religious program, etc.)
- Funerals: obituary, announcement card, etc. ; if traveling, 3 days total will be excused (day of arrival, day of return, and day of funeral)
- Medical and dental appointments\*: doctor's note
- Court appearances: official court documents

\*Missing an entire day of school for a single appointment is discouraged.

If a child is absent, please do not call the front office or send in a written note. Please email an explanation of absence email with your child's name to be sent to [fhattendance@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:fhattendance@wissahickoncharter.org) for the Fernhill campus and [awattendance@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:awattendance@wissahickoncharter.org) for the Awbury campus. For each absence, an automated phone call will be sent alerting the family. All absent students are expected to submit an emailed excuse or official documentation explaining the absence within three days of the student's return. The email should include the date of absence, the reason for the absence, and a contact number.

If a student is absent 3 or more consecutive days due to an illness, parents must provide a doctor's note.

We must make every effort to record attendance accurately and if a student misses school, it must be for a valid reason. If no reason is provided or our office is unable to verify an absence as excused, it will be counted as an unexcused absence.

***Students must be in school for a minimum of 30 minutes in order to be marked present for the day.***

Please notify the school's nurse if your child is ill with a communicable disease, e.g., chicken pox, strep throat, Covid-19, etc. and follow all of your Doctor's guidance regarding isolation, severity of symptoms, and follow-up (e.g. masking).

#### **Attendance policy for unexcused absences**

When a student is absent the first time, an automated call and/or email will be sent to the family.

- **3 absences** - Warning letter sent home, generated by the Front Office via Powerschool
- **6 absences** - Student attendance improvement conference with the Front Office Manager to establish/create a Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP). Please be advised that while the school will make every effort to hold a student attendance improvement conference at a time convenient for the student and caregiver and will work to reschedule in the event of unforeseen circumstances, we are required to hold an attendance improvement conference even in the event that the student or caregiver is unable to attend. **A student with six unexcused absences in a year must be reported as habitually truant.**
- **9 absences** - Certified letter sent home stating violation of Student Attendance Improvement Plan, SAIP conferences with the site's administration (Fernhill- Principal or Assistant Principal; Awbury- Lower or Middle School Director) to review policy, provide support, and revisit the Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP).
- **10 or more absences** - Attendance Review Committee (ARC) Meeting with the CEO and/or Director of Operations.

#### **Potential next steps**

Please note that if your child has ten (10) or more unexcused absences, you, as the parent or guardian, will be referred to Project GO at the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office and may be referred to the Department of Human Services (DHS) for truancy. Your child may also be referred by Project GO to Regional Truancy Court if attendance does not improve following a Project GO referral. A DHS or Truancy Court referral can only occur after an attendance improvement conference has occurred. If your child is referred to DHS or to Truancy Court, a DHS agency provider will be assigned to your case and will begin home visits. If the attendance does not improve or you do not participate in the voluntary services offered by the DHS provider, your case may be referred to the District Attorney's office. Please be advised that expulsion, suspension, or transfer will never serve as a consequence for truancy.



### **Lateness**

Being prompt to school is important for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, children who are late miss out on the introduction that sets the tone for the whole day. If your child is late for school, they must come to the office, sign in, and receive a pass to enter the classroom. In addition, Middle School students are responsible for checking in with their teachers to get any missed work. A parental conference will be requested if a student is habitually late to school, and Saturday School may be assigned.

### **Early dismissal**

Whenever possible, appointments should be scheduled after school hours as they can interfere with your child's learning program. When children have appointments that require them to leave early, the following procedure must be followed:

- Send in a note stating reason for early dismissal that morning or come to the office to ask that your child be excused early;
- Notify the office if someone other than you is picking up your child (the person must be on the list of approved pick-up persons you submitted, and must have a photo ID for security reasons);
- You or the designated pick-up person must sign your child out with an office staff member.
- Those picking up students, including parents, **may not** go directly to the child's classroom.

There will be no early dismissals permitted after 2:30 p.m on regular school days, or one hour prior to dismissal time on early dismissal days.

No kindergarten through sixth grade student will be released from school during regular hours without being accompanied by an adult on their pick up list.

## Calendar

### Wissahickon Charter School 2025-2026 Calendar

*Keep this posted for your convenience as our schedule can differ from the School District of Philadelphia (rev. 8/4/25)*

August 11-15, 2025	Professional Development - New staff only
August 20-22 and 25-26, 2025	Professional Development - All staff
August 27, 2025	First Day of School- Grades 1-8 Full Day; Kindergarten Conferences Day
August 28, 2025	Kindergarten Group A Half Day
August 29, 2025	Kindergarten Group B Half Day
<b>September 1, 2025</b>	<b>Labor Day - Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
September 2, 2025	All Kindergarten Students Half Day
September 3, 2025	All Kindergarten Students Half Day
September 4, 2025	First Full Day of Kindergarten
September 19, 2025	12:45 pm Dismissal for Professional Development
<b>September 23, 2025</b>	<b>Rosh Hashanah - Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
<b>October 2, 2025</b>	<b>Yom Kippur - Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
<b>October 10, 2025</b>	<b>School Closed for Professional Development</b>
<b>October 13, 2025</b>	<b>Indigenous Peoples' Day- Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
<b>November 7, 2025</b>	<b>School Closed for Professional Development</b>
November 24, 2025	Last Day of First Trimester - SCHOOL IS OPEN
<b>November 25, 2025</b>	<b>Staff Only for Professional Development - Report Card Writing Day</b>
<b>November 26-28, 2025</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Holiday - Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
December 11, 2025	Report Card Conferences, 12:45 pm Dismissal
<b>December 12, 2025</b>	<b>School Closed for Report Card Conferences</b>
<b>December 22, 2025 - January 1, 2026</b>	<b>Winter Recess - Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
<b>January 2, 2026</b>	<b>School Closed for Professional Development</b>
January 5, 2026	Students Return from Winter Recess
<b>January 19, 2026</b>	<b>Martin Luther King Day - Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
January 20, 2026	Apply Philly Charter Application Deadline for prospective students (including siblings of current students)
February 4, 2026	Apply Philly Charter Common Lottery Date
<b>February 6, 2026</b>	<b>School Closed for Professional Development</b>
<b>February 16, 2026</b>	<b>Presidents' Day - Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
<b>February 17, 2026</b>	<b>Flex Day - School Closed (unless 2 or more snow days before 2/13/26)</b>
March 5, 2026	Last Day of Second Trimester - SCHOOL IS OPEN
<b>March 6, 2026</b>	<b>Staff Only for Professional Development - Report Card Writing Day</b>
<b>March 20, 2026</b>	<b>Eid Al-Fitr - Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
March 26, 2026	Report Card Conferences, 12:45 pm Dismissal
<b>March 27, 2026</b>	<b>School Closed for Report Card Conferences</b>
<b>March 30-April 3, 2026</b>	<b>Spring Break - School Closed</b>
<b>April 6, 2026</b>	<b>School Closed for Professional Development</b>
April 21-23, 2026	12:45 Dismissal: English/Language Arts PSSA, Grades 3-8
April 28-29, 2026	12:45 Dismissal: Mathematics PSSA, Grades 3-8
April 30-May 1, 2026	Science PSSA, Grades 5 and 8; Makeups (all grades)
<b>May 25, 2026</b>	<b>Memorial Day - Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
<b>May 27, 2026</b>	<b>Eid Al-Adha- Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>
June 10, 2026	12:45 pm Dismissal for Professional Development
June 11, 2026	Last Day for Students, 12:45 pm Dismissal for Professional Development
June 12, 2026	Last Day for Staff
<b>June 19, 2026</b>	<b>Juneteenth - Administrative Offices and School Closed</b>

*Any changes to this schedule will be sent home prior to the date listed.*

### **Drop-off & Pick-up of Students**

Arrival and dismissal plans are subject to change, and families should always consult their respective campus' arrival and dismissal plan, the most current version of which will always be posted on our website in the "[Family Resources](#)" section.

#### Changes in Dismissal Plans

A new Dismissal Plan must be submitted EVERY time there is change made. These changes include, adding/ removing an adult, or changing a mode of transportation. The Dismissal Plan can be obtained from the Front Office.

#### Bus Students Drop Off Policy

The School District of Philadelphia provides all bussing for Wissahickon Charter School. Per the district, parents and guardians are responsible for the safety and conduct of their child/ren on the way to and from their bus stop and while waiting at the bus stop. Please note that this means that if the parent/guardian is not present at the stop, the child will still be dropped off.

#### Student Ridership Responsibility

The school will announce a final call before the buses depart at dismissal. If your student is not on the bus following the final announcement, it will be the parent's responsibility to pick up the student from the school. The late fee policy will be enforced.

#### Late Student Pick Up Policy

Late pick up for K-6 students begins at 3:30pm on normal school days and 1pm on early dismissal days. Families and Daycares that are picking up students late MUST report to the Front Office. In the beginning of the school year a few warnings will be given to allow families to solidify their after school arrangements. However, no additional warnings will be given after September 8, 2025.

Below are the steps WCS will follow when ANY student is picked up late:

<b>Number of Minutes Late:</b>	<b>Next Steps:</b>
15 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Parents are notified</li><li>● Fee of \$1 per minute begins</li></ul>
30 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Parents are notified again</li><li>● Emergency contacts notified</li><li>● Fee of \$1 per minute continues</li></ul>
60 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Parents are notified again</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency contacts notified again</li> <li>• Fee of \$1 per minute continues</li> </ul>
90 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All steps listed above in addition to notifying Law Enforcement and DHS</li> </ul>

#### Late Pickup Fee

Unpaid balances will carry over to the 2026-27 school year and will affect your child's ability to participate in school sponsored recreational activities and events. Please reach out to the front office staff with any questions about your balance. **Late fees will be assessed for each individual student.**

#### **Enrollment**

State law mandates that charter school enrollment be governed by lottery. Children who are not selected can be placed on a waiting list. Children who live outside of Philadelphia can apply if every interested child in Philadelphia already has been accepted. Students must be 5 years old by September 1st of the year they enter kindergarten and 6 years old by the time they enter first grade. **Preference is given to applicants who are siblings of current WCS students enrolled as of February 1, 2026 so long as proof of guardianship and residence is confirmed. Preference is also given to children of staff and board members who are in their positions as of February 1, 2026. Parents of students who fall in the categories above SHOULD STILL COMPLETE AN ENROLLMENT APPLICATION BY THE DEADLINE. The deadline for applications for grades K – 7 will be on January 20, 2026. The sole way to apply is through Apply Philly Charter (<https://applyphillycharter.org/> or (800-891-3999)). The lottery will be held on February 04, 2026.** For more information on our lottery and enrollment policies and procedures, see appendix C.

#### **Emergency School Closing**

Most local radio, TV, and cable TV stations broadcast school closing information beginning very early in the morning. In the event of inclement weather, Wissahickon Charter School will be closed any time that the School District of Philadelphia is closed. Further, there may be times when Wissahickon Charter School chooses to close even though the School District of Philadelphia chooses to remain open. Parents should plan ahead with their children for what to do in the event that school is closed for the day.

If it becomes necessary to close school during the school day, information will be forwarded to local media. We will also post information on our website, and have a message on our school voicemail. We will also send out a message using our alert and family communication systems. Please make sure we have the most up to date contact information for you so that you can be assured of receiving the communications.

## **Bus Transportation**

Bus transportation for all eligible students in grades 1-6 only will be provided by the School District of Philadelphia as required by Pennsylvania law. The School District contacts families directly indicating pick-up and drop-off locations and times.

Per the district, parents and guardians are responsible for the safety and conduct of their child/ren on the way to and from their bus stop and while waiting at the bus stop. Please note that this means that if the parent/guardian is not present at the stop, the child will still be dropped off.

Wissahickon Charter School's mission is to support children in their learning experience by providing them with a safe and respectful environment. Many families have chosen WCS even though they live a great distance from the school. Access to the school bus can and will be taken away if behaviors warrant such actions. School buses do not have bus attendants assigned to them; this can make student behavior challenging.

We must work together to foster growth and responsibility among our children for the safety of all students who ride the school buses. Children **must** be on their best behavior so that bus drivers can transport students safely to and from school. **It is imperative that parents support our Code of Conduct and reinforce the School Bus Behavior Policy.**

Students must adhere to the behavior policies or risk losing the privilege of riding the bus for the duration of the school year. Below outlines the expected student conduct on the school bus, the expectations of the School District transportation staff, and disciplinary actions:

### **Expected Student Conduct:**

- Abide by the Wissahickon Charter School Code of Conduct.
- Be respectful of the bus property and the property of others.
- Remain seated for the entire bus ride.
- Follow the bus driver's directions promptly the first time they are given.

### **Expectations of School District Transportation Staff:**

The driver of the bus has the responsibility and authority to maintain order and a safe environment. A bus driver who observes student misconduct or determines an unsafe condition exists has the authority to stop the bus and administer corrective action steps in order to ensure the safety of all passengers. The bus driver will document the misconduct on the Bus Behavior Referral form and submit the form to the School Administration for review. The School Administration will investigate the incident and determine the corrective or disciplinary action based upon the severity of the action.

### **Disciplinary Actions:**

- **First Incident - Warning Letter or Phone Call to Parent** (If actions are violent or unsafe, a warning will NOT be given and the student will be suspended from the bus for one month. Examples of unsafe actions include but are not limited to: hanging body parts out of the bus, throwing objects

out of the bus windows or doors, opening the emergency back door without driver permission. Examples of violence include but are not limited to: fighting, hitting, inappropriate touching/language, or throwing an object at someone.) A meeting with parents/guardians will be required if a suspension occurs.

- **Second Incident – two-week suspension from the school bus and assigned seating upon reinstatement**
- **Third Incident – one-month suspension from the school bus and continued assigned seating upon reinstatement**
- **Fourth Incident - Dismissal from the school bus for the remainder of the school year. The child may not ride the school bus.**

If your student has their bus privileges revoked, it is important to note that a parent must continue to provide a means of transportation to the school for the student. Suspension from the bus does not mean suspension from school. **School attendance is mandatory. Parents are responsible for finding alternate means of transportation.**

Additionally, conduct resulting in a suspension from the bus may also result in disciplinary action at the school. This may include, but is not limited to, Saturday school and community service or out-of-school suspension. Furthermore, you may be liable for property damage or injury caused by your child. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Network Director of School Operations, Tiffany Days via email at [t.days@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:t.days@wissahickoncharter.org).

#### **HELPFUL HINTS FOR A POSITIVE SCHOOL BUS EXPERIENCE...**

1. Remind your child of the school bus rules DAILY.
2. Send your child with a favorite chapter book or “bag of books”. Please write your or your child’s name in the covers.
3. If your child does not have a chance to eat breakfast, please have them save the food and drink until arrival at school.
4. Electronic music devices and other personal electronic devices may be used when traveling on the school bus. We cannot, however, guarantee the security of such items on the bus or in school.
5. If you have questions or concerns about a bus incident for the Awbury Campus please contact **Shonda Robinson, Office Manager** at 267-774-4370 ext. 1527 or via email [shonda@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:shonda@wissahickoncharter.org). For the Fernhill Campus, please contact **Justin Mosley, Office Manager** at 267-338-1020, ext. 4113 or via email at [j.mosley@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:j.mosley@wissahickoncharter.org).

#### **III. Academics, Extracurriculars & Expression**

##### **After School Program (ASP)**

An after school program will be offered for students for grades Kindergarten through 5th grade on a first come, first served basis pending availability, a completed registration form, and an on-time fee payment. Students in grade K-5 are welcome to enroll either full or part time based on availability. There is a great

need for aftercare in our school, and this will allow us to support as many students as possible every day. For the 2025-26 SY, the After School Program is scheduled to open on Monday, September 8th. Registration forms are available by request via email. For Awbury, email Melissa Pendleton at [m.pendleton@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:m.pendleton@wissahickoncharter.org) and for Fernhill email Tanita Carodine at [t.carodine@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:t.carodine@wissahickoncharter.org). A completed registration form, a registration fee of \$25 and the one-time Activities Fee of \$100 for every child you wish to register is due in order to hold a spot for that child.

See the After School Program Handbook for any policies regarding ASP.

### **Contacting Teachers**

Teachers are eager to speak with you to discuss your child's progress or any concerns you may have about class procedures. To request a meeting, please email, send a note with your child, or leave a message for the teacher at their voice mail. Please include your telephone number and the time of day when you can be reached, and the teacher will contact you within 48 hours. Due to the busy school day, staff will not be able to meet with you immediately if you show up at school or call without scheduling a meeting in advance.

### **Extracurricular Activities**

We offer a variety of extracurricular activities and sports. Most of these activities take place after school, either at the Fernhill or Awbury campus. Sometimes, they take place during the school day. In order to participate in our sports teams, students must meet required academic and behavior standards.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips are planned to enrich and enhance the programs presented in the classrooms. Teachers may ask families to contribute towards admission and/or the cost of transportation and will make every effort to let families know of costs well in advance of the time funds are due. No child shall be excluded from a class trip because of a family's inability to pay. If you cannot afford the cost of a trip, please inform your child's teacher. Occasionally there are funds to cover families in need and the school is always happy to coordinate a payment plan. As a reminder, WCS does not accept cash for trips- please refer to the section [Cash-Free School](#).

The classroom teacher may recruit a specified number of parent/guardian volunteers to ensure that a minimum ratio of one adult for every ten children is maintained. Teachers will inform each volunteer of the specific responsibilities they may have to help facilitate student safety and engagement. Volunteers above the specified need may attend if space is available. **Volunteers must have completed their PA Child Abuse and Criminal Record Checks if they will be the sole adult responsible for a group of students.**

If a student takes the bus with the class, they must return with the class to school on the bus. If a student doesn't come to school, it is considered an unexcused absence even if they meet the class at the trip destination.

Students who do not have their required grade physical and dental exams will not be allowed to participate in non-academic activities including field trips. Students will also be excluded from trips if

there is a safety concern for the student or others based on their previous behavior. Teachers will make a plan in advance for the placement of students who cannot attend the trip.

### **Cash-Free School**

WCS is a cash-free school for transactions over \$5. All payment links for field trips, class dues, and any activity that requires a payment over \$5 will be posted on the Wissahickon website under the Family Payment section and sent to parents via Classtag or ClassDojo. Payments will only be accepted through the Square link. Parents do not need to have the Square app downloaded in order to make payment.

### **Gender Identity and Expression**

1. WCS will use the name and pronouns with which a student identifies in all interactions, as well as in written communication.
2. WCS personnel are required to take reasonable steps to prevent and promptly correct any derogatory or offensive terminologies used in communication with or in reference to a transgender or gender-nonconforming individual.
3. WCS faculty and staff are prohibited from disclosing information that may reveal a student's transgender identity or gender nonconformity to others, including staff, peers, parents, and other members of the public unless the student has authorized such disclosure.
4. WCS will reduce or eliminate the practice of segregating youth by gender.
5. When WCS students must be segregated by gender, students will be assigned and permitted to participate in any such activities consistent with their gender identity.
6. Wherever possible, gender-neutral language will be used in written communication.
7. WCS students shall have access to the restroom that corresponds to their gender identity.
8. Any WCS student who has a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, should be provided access to a single-stall restroom, but no student shall be required to use such a restroom.
9. Students shall have access to the locker/dressing room that corresponds to their gender identity.
10. Any student with a need or desire for heightened privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, should be provided with a reasonable alternative arrangement that is agreeable to the youth.

### **Grading**

#### **ACADEMIC GRADES**

**K-2:** Kindergarten- second grade students are scored on a continuum from beginning to progressing to secure in each foundational skill. They receive 3 report cards, the first two include conferences and the final one is mailed home. Students with IEPs receive modifications to their assessments and report cards if noted in their IEP.



**Third- Eighth Grade:** Students in grades 3-8 receive letter grades (A-F) in each of the main content areas: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Thematic Studies (3-5 only, a combination of Science and Social Studies) and in 6-8 in Science and Social Studies. Letter grades for students in 3rd-8th grades are comprised of a consistent combination of “mastery”, “practice” and “learning habits and skills”. For more information about the grading scales, contact the administration. WCS considers a score of “D” or “F” a failing grade. Students all receive an interim that is mailed home halfway through each trimester. They receive three report cards, the first two are conferences and the final one is mailed home. Students with IEPs receive modifications to their assessments and report cards if noted in their IEP.

### **NO ZERO POLICY**

Research shows that a grade of “zero” does disproportionate damage to a student’s average when using traditional 100 point grading scales. In order to avoid that kind of irreparable damage, the lowest score a WCS student can be given will reflect 50% of the total possible points of the assignment.

### **Graduation**

8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation is a time to celebrate great accomplishments by our students and both families and staff are encouraged to attend. Wissahickon Charter School, however, reserves the right to exclude any student from participating in the graduation ceremony if the student’s behavior doesn’t meet or has not met school expectations due to high level behavioral infractions. High level behavioral infractions include but are not limited to drug use or the possession of drugs and/or drug paraphernalia, possession of a weapon, making a terroristic threat to the school, causing or intending to cause serious bodily harm to a member of the community, etc. Parents will be notified in advance if such a decision is made. Further, Wissahickon reserves the right to require students with failing yearly averages (D or F) to complete a year-end assignment or make up work in the relevant courses in order to participate in graduation.

### **Homework**

Homework should allow the student some successful practice at home; give the parents a chance to see what their child is learning; teach organizational habits and responsibility.

### **Homework guidelines:**

- Homework should be practiced and not feel too hard. Please use **time** as a guideline not amount of work.

K: 10 minutes math or reading  
1: 10 minutes math or reading  
2: 20 minutes math or reading  
3: 10 minutes math, 20 minutes independent reading  
4: 10 minutes math, 30 minutes independent reading  
5: 20 minutes math, 30 minutes independent reading  
6: No more than 60 minutes total (all subjects)  
7: No more than 70 minutes total (all subjects)  
8: No more than 80 minutes total (all subjects)

- Students should put forth good effort to complete homework, whether that means completing some or all of the assigned work. Good effort is most important
- Homework will be assigned by your teacher. You can expect a routine practice assignment each night, but not on weekends. If your child needs to finish an assignment at home, this should be communicated via your teacher's common communication method (planners, google classroom, email list). Homework is never used as a punishment.
- Students should be given homework that is at an appropriate difficulty level. Homework is the student's work—not the work of his/her parents. Please notify your child's teacher if your child is having difficulty completing the homework.
- In some classes throughout the school, parents/guardians will be asked to sign the homework of their child. In some grades, homework completion/effort may be counted toward grades.
- Doing homework on your own is an important step in building responsibility.
- Two notes from the research on homework:
  - 1) too much homework may diminish its effectiveness and turn students off from academic work;
  - 2) Children who are physically active have greater academic achievement. Both parents and teachers must keep in mind the need for a balance between fitness and independent academic work.

### **Make-up Work**

Upon request, we will make every effort to provide assignments for a child who is absent for **three days or more**. When an absence is anticipated, please let your child's teacher know ahead of time so that you and the teacher can work together to provide the necessary work assignments during the period of absence. Middle school students are required to check in with their teachers to ensure they complete all missed work assignments.

### **Parties & Celebrations**

- Classroom celebrations that align with our mission or our curriculum are encouraged. These include celebrations of student work (eg. publishing parties), celebrations of family (eg. Grandparents' Day), and celebrations of nature/seasonal change (eg. harvest celebration, winter celebration).
- Secular (non-religious) holidays may be celebrated in classrooms with the approval of Administrators. These include, but are not limited to: Thanksgiving, Martin Luther King Day, Valentine's Day.

- Religious observances are not permitted in deference to the varied religious beliefs of our students. Students may learn *about* religious holidays in an academic context or in the context of learning about the diversity of our student and family community.
- Halloween is also not celebrated. Halloween costumes, parties, or candy at school on this day are not permitted.
- For a child's birthday, parents may send in an approved snack from the [WCS Smart Snack Approved List](#) that complies with the standards of our WCS Wellness Policy. See more information in the [Health and Wellness](#) section about that policy. The snack must be provided for the entire class with advance permission from the teacher. Please do not send in any additional food, drinks, or goody bags.
- To avoid hurt feelings, invitations to private parties will not be permitted to be given out in school.
- Families who do not wish to have their children participate in such events should notify the teacher. Family wishes should be respected, and such children should be exempted from participation in a way that does not cause embarrassment or distress to the child.

### **Promotion & Retention**

Prior to the end of the school year, teams of teachers and administrators conduct an administrative review to determine if any child should be recommended for retention to increase the likelihood that a student will thrive academically, socially and emotionally in school, short and long term. For each child, these teams take into account reading skills, standardized test scores (if available), achievement grades, effort grades, other assessments and social emotional development. Concerns regarding the possibility of retention will be shared with parents at report card conferences, in report card comments, or through personal outreach.

The Academic Team will meet to make a final decision and will communicate this with the family. While the perspective of the family is one important part of the decision, the school has the final say in these retention decisions. Retention for students with IEPs will be discussed in an IEP meeting and the decision will be made jointly by the whole team.

Please note that once a child is formally recommended for retention, this recommendation becomes part of the child's permanent Wissahickon Charter School records. In the event that the child transfers to another school, the child will still be retained.

### **Recess**

As an environmental school, WCS believes in allowing all students time outdoors each day if weather permits. Please send your child to school with the appropriate clothing to comfortably spend time outdoors. In winter months, students will have outdoor recess if the Real Feel Temperature is 25 degrees or higher. In warmer weather, students will go outside, unless the Real Feel Temperature is 95 degrees or higher.

### **Special Education Services & Programs**

The Wissahickon Charter School is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Act to provide a free, appropriate public school education to school age children with disabilities who need special education

and related services. School age children with disabilities who need special education are identified as eligible for special education if they need specially designed instruction and have one or more of the following disabilities:

- Autism/pervasive developmental disorder
- Serious emotional disturbance
- Neurological impairment
- Deafness/hearing impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple handicap conditions
- Other health impairment
- Physical disability
- Speech and language impairment
- Blindness/visual impairment

In compliance with federal law, WCS will provide each qualified student the related services or accommodations that are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in the school program, without discrimination to the student or family. For further information on evaluation procedures and provision of services parents should contact the school CEO or the Director of Special Education.

When considering the exclusion of a student with a disability that constitutes a change of placement, a process to determine if the behavior in question is a manifestation of the student's disability will be conducted and a decision made accordingly.

Our Annual Public Notice of Special Education Services and Programs and Rights for Students with Disabilities And Notification of Rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act is available here:

<http://wissahickoncharter.org/uploads/attachments/ciuy1f2ny00eu51fabphwlr5l-child-find-poster-090315.pdf>

### **Spiritual Expression**

At WCS, we respect the right of students to appropriately exercise their spiritual expression, and we also recognize the need to prevent material disruptions to the learning environment. To honor these twin aims, WCS provides a private, peaceful location available to students during non-instructional time for spiritual expression, including prayer. For students to take advantage of this time and space, we require a note from a parent indicating that they wish their child to have access. Students presenting such a note will be able to go to the designated space during the last ten minutes of the lunch break. Staff will provide students a daily pass, which they must have with them at all times. As always, students must demonstrate responsibility, including following all school rules in traveling to and from the space and following the school schedule. If a student does not follow school rules or if he/she otherwise causes disruption to the learning environment, WCS shall give notice to a parent of the student regarding the issues. Upon a second violation, that student will temporarily lose access for a period not to exceed one calendar week. If after access is restored the student further violates school rules or otherwise causes a

disruption to the learning environment, additional appropriate sanctions will be imposed, up to, and including, potential loss of use for the remainder of the school year.

### **Teacher Qualifications**

As a parent of a student at Wissahickon Charter School, you have the right to request the professional qualifications of the classroom teachers who instruct your child. Specifically, you have the right to ask for the following information about each of your child's classroom teachers:

1. Whether the Pennsylvania Department of Education has licensed or qualified the teacher for the grades and subjects they teach;
2. Whether the Pennsylvania Department of Education has decided that the teacher can teach in a classroom without being licensed or qualified under state regulations because of special circumstances;
3. The teacher's college major, as well as any advanced degrees that they may have attained;
4. Whether any paraprofessionals provide services to your child, and, if they do, their qualifications.

If you would like to receive any of this information, please deliver a request in writing to the school. In addition to specifying the information which you would like to receive, please be certain to include your name, address and a telephone number at which you can be contacted during the day.

### **Textbooks & Other Materials**

All textbooks, workbooks and other school materials should be protected. Small reading books may be protected by placing them in Ziploc bags when conditions necessitate such care. **Parents are financially responsible for any damage, loss, or theft, including school computers.** Unpaid balances will carry over to the 2025-26 school year and will affect your child's ability to participate in school sponsored recreational activities and events.

### **Tutoring**

Periodically, Wissahickon Charter School will offer tutoring as an educational institution. In those cases, school leadership will identify and invite students who qualify to participate for free in the program with a predetermined WCS employee.

Parents and guardians are welcome to pursue tutoring for their children (who are WCS students) by WCS employees. To aid in this process, the front office will hold a list of employees who are interested in tutoring. Aside from identifying interested parties through this list, WCS is not responsible for any aspect of tutoring (scheduling, compensation negotiations, etc.).

Tutoring by WCS employees can happen on school grounds outside of regular school hours. Employees are not permitted to tutor students during school hours (including lunch breaks and preps). Employees are not permitted to tutor students enrolled in their own classes for compensation. Outside tutors are not allowed to tutor at WCS unless the tutor is contracted by WCS.

## **IV. Code of Conduct & Disciplinary Procedures**

### **Mission Statement**

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Wissahickon Charter School (“Wissahickon”) is committed to creating a safe, positive learning environment for all of our students, staff, parents, and community partners. Wissahickon will work to assure that all students and staff are well motivated, fully aware of their potential and dedicated to lifelong learning as competent and productive human beings. Wissahickon believes that all children can learn in a safe environment.

With everyone’s commitment to this Code, we can all create a proper learning environment at Wissahickon Charter School.

#### **PURPOSE**

Wissahickon has adopted this Code to support the creation of a safe learning environment for all members of the school community. The purpose of this Code is to clearly state our standards for acceptable conduct of students. This Code also explains the consequences of not meeting these standards. This Code is driven by our philosophy that restorative measures, paired with age-appropriate logical consequences, hold students accountable when necessary, while keeping all students safe. Wissahickon does not permit corporal punishment.

This Code also sets forth the discipline procedures for students who have committed violations of the Code. This Code is not meant to be a contract between Wissahickon and the students, and may be amended at any time. It is a place for Wissahickon to explain certain policies applicable to students.

#### **SCOPE**

This Code of Conduct applies to conduct of Wissahickon Charter School students that occurs:

- During such times as they are under the supervision of the school, including the time they are in attendance at Wissahickon Charter School as well as the time necessarily spent in coming to and returning from school;
- Off school grounds at any school-related activity, function or event;
- Off school grounds (including through social media, email, text messages, video chats, etc.) when the conduct may reasonably be expected to (i) endanger the safety of students, teachers, administrators, or any other member of the school community; or (ii) substantially and materially disrupt the school; and
- While traveling to and from school on school buses or vans, regardless of the Charter School or District of ownership, or on public transportation.

#### **Overview**

To foster a positive school culture at Wissahickon Charter School, priority will be placed on modeling and actively teaching positive behaviors such as cooperation, assertion, respect, empathy, challenges, kind and respectful communication, curiosity, self control and commitment to learning, cultivation of a feeling

of connection and community, intellectual rigor, and compassionate responses to those who are upset or in need. Although the active teaching of positive behaviors will be of paramount importance at Wissahickon Charter School, the necessity of explicit prohibition of negative behaviors—with prescribed consequences when a prohibition is violated—is also recognized.

Accordingly, we stipulate that no student may engage in conduct, or encourage any other person to engage in conduct that jeopardizes or threatens the health, safety or welfare of any member of the school community, or that disrupts or undermines the educational mission of Wissahickon Charter School.

None of the consequences listed below will be applied in such a manner as to discriminate against any student based on race, sex, gender identity, color, religion, sexual orientation, national origin or disability. The Administration of Wissahickon Charter School will impose consequences for behavior that falls within the range of consequences for a particular violation of this Code. The severity and/or nature of the consequence imposed will be based on factors including, but not limited to, age of the student, number of prior offenses, disability, and/or severity of the violation.

Wissahickon Charter School has the right to impose consequences for acts or behaviors that are not specifically delineated within this Code if those acts or behaviors threaten the health, safety and/or welfare of other members of the school community, or if those acts or behaviors disrupt the learning environment.

Various means may be used by school personnel to discourage or extinguish undesirable behaviors. Some means will be “restorative” in the sense that they involve “making up for” damage that was done: for example, a student who mistreats another might be required to do something that restores the dignity of the victim (e.g., offer an apology in front of peers), or a student who damages property might be required to repair whatever damage was done. Other means might focus on encouraging greater self-awareness and compunction in the transgressor: for example, a transgressor might be required to write about the transgression, its consequences, and perhaps suggest what s/he would consider an appropriate punishment. Various other means will be used as well and may include counseling the student; conferencing with the parent(s); assigning extra responsibilities at school; assigning community service; or imposing make-up time, Saturday school, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension for up to ten (10) consecutive school days, or referral to the Board of Trustees for an expulsion hearing with a recommendation that the student be expelled for a period of more than ten (10) consecutive school days. Please note that students in grades K-2 will not be suspended for minor offenses.

Corporal punishment is defined as physically punishing a student for an infraction of the discipline policy. Use of corporal punishment is strictly prohibited by law and school policy. Teachers and school authorities may only use reasonable force under the following circumstances:

- (1) To quell a disturbance.
- (2) To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects.
- (3) For the purpose of self-defense.
- (4) For the protection of persons or property.

## **Dress Code**

Wissahickon's Dress Code is designed to allow students and their families the freedom to make choices about student clothing with the goal of them being comfortable and safe at school. WCS's Dress Code aims to be equitable to all genders by its design and it will lack all aspects of gender bias in its implementation. This applies to school days as well as all school sponsored events. Wissahickon Charter School will regularly conduct training for all staff members on their responsibilities under the uniform policy of nondiscrimination set forth in applicable laws and this regulation.

### **Must Wear:**

- Students must wear shirts covering their front and back, as well as their shoulders and sides under their arms.
- Students must wear pants or their equivalent (e.g. shorts, sweatpants, skirts, dresses, leggings) that meet the "fingertip rule". This rule states that a student should be able to stand straight, arms by their side, and not have their fingertips reach past their shorts.
- Closed toed and closed backed shoes are to be worn at all times.
- On PE days, students will wear sneakers along with the proper PE uniform. Gym shorts, t-shirts, or sweats are appropriate for P.E.

### **Students May Wear:**

- Religious headwear
- Fitted pants, including opaque leggings, yoga pants and "skinny jeans"
- Ripped jeans, as long as underwear and buttocks are not exposed
- Athletic attire

### **Students may NOT wear:**

- Undergarments that are visible (underwear/boxers, bras, undershirts).
- Hats or hooded clothing such as sweatshirts.
- Any item with exceedingly large pockets such as kangaroo pockets.
- Piercings that pose a safety risk of any kind are not allowed, including large hoop earrings.
- Dress, accessories, and jewelry which contain obscene symbols, signs, or slogans, and/or which slur or degrade on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, disability, or sexual orientation, contain language or symbols supporting sex, drugs, alcohol or tobacco, and impose a threat of imminent violence or disruption to the orderly operation of the school shall not be worn.
- Any item that obscures the face or ears (except for PPE).

### **Violation of the Dress Code:**

When a student is deemed to be in violation of the dress code, the family will be called to bring the student a change of clothes. If this doesn't happen, the student goes to the Principal/Assistant Principal/Nurse to get appropriate clothing for the day to return by the next day.



- No student should be affected by dress code enforcement because of racial identity, sex assigned at birth, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, cultural or religious identity, household income, body size/type, or body maturity.
- School staff shall not enforce the school's dress code more strictly against transgender and gender nonconforming students than other students.
- Students should not be shamed or required to display their body in front of others (students, parents, or staff) in school.

“Shaming” includes, but is not limited to:

- kneeling or bending over to check attire fit;
- measuring straps or skirt length;
- asking students to account for their attire in the classroom or in hallways in front of others;
- calling out students in spaces, in hallways, or in classrooms about perceived dress code violations in front of others;
- accusing students of “distracting” other students with their clothing

### **Behavior Intervention**

No matter how diligently we work with students to establish goals and commit to agreements about how we need to behave to support those goals; no matter how carefully we set up routines and model and practice them, no trimester will pass without rule-breaking. It's part of the business of all children to test limits, but adolescents especially, are figuring out how power works, and to what extent they can operate independent of the adults who have so much of it. It's part of healthy growth toward adulthood to try things out on their own, and it's part of the job of educators to guide that process so students are safe and respectful to others while they learn to be responsibly independent.

However, from time to time the general program of discipline and management will not work for a student. Research supports that despite consistent efforts, a school-wide behavior model may not always work for 100% of the student population. Therefore, when Responsive Classroom (LS) and Developmental Designs (MS) fails to meet all of the needs of any student other interventions need to be put into place. These interventions are meant to support the student by providing additional structure and a clear plan for improvement. These structures are also meant to communicate more consistently with the parent, to ensure that the home and school are in agreement of the additional supports given to aid in ensuring that said student adheres to policies & procedures set forth by WCS. The Student Accountability Plan (referenced in this document) speaks to the General Program and Behavioral Intervention (BI) as it relates to student discipline and management of student behavior at WCS. The two levels of BI are identified and outlined below:

**Prior** to placing a child on Behavioral Intervention Level 1, any combination of the following systems and supports may be provided to students:

- Daily 30 minute Morning Meetings to reinforce CARES values of Cooperation, Academic Excellence, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, Self-Control & Stewardship

- Explicit teaching of responsive classroom and development designs as embedded in the curriculum and taught daily by all staff.
- Middle School Study Skills & Study Hall to support academic & social growth
- Creation of social guidelines with student input: Guidelines are created each year whereby students provide input to staff as a means to help hold students accountable and live out our daily agreements
- Social guidelines are reviewed consistently with students, posted in classrooms, common spaces and are mailed home to families.
- Assemblies to help reinforce CARES values
- Celebration of positive and consistent student behavior through CARES recognition
- Communication with families via email, telephone & in person meetings to discuss growth both academically and socially
- If a student is displaying disruptive behavior, a teacher may ask that student to TAB (Take A Break) 2-3 minute break away from the group in the designated spot marked The goal is to provide the student with space and time to reflect and quickly repair behavior.
- A student who has not responded to in-class redirections **might** need some time away from their regular environment and the opportunity to debrief with another adult and/or make a written plan to get back on the right track. At an appropriate later time, the teacher may have a short social conference with the student. This can happen at the door or inside the classroom (off to the side, between teacher and student only).

### **Behavior Intervention Level 1**

- Students who consistently struggle to meet the behavioral expectations of WCS will be placed on Behavior Intervention (BI). This may include frequent breaks within and/or outside of the classroom, being sent to ReSet, calls home, meetings with families via phone & in person, make up time and suspension.
- The student, family and school staff meet at the onset of BI1 to go over the goal(s) for the student. Goals are set up to help students in areas where they struggle consistently. The student may have a managed behavior plan that must be signed by teachers and parent/guardian daily. The plan will have a points goal for the week for the student. Each student's plan will be tailored to fit them. While a specific percentage for every student isn't set in stone, each student is expected to show positive results on the behavior plan.
- Alternatives to the plan include regular texts and/or phone calls between school staff and parents/guardians.
- Family/School contact will occur at least **twice a month**, via an in-person meeting or phone call with the Dean of Culture (DoC) and or a designee. The Dean of Culture or the Apprentice Dean of Culture monitors students on BI, so they are the main contact between the school and family.
- Check in meetings with DoC
- Other aspects of BI may include: Make-up Time after school, Saturday Make-up Time, community service, sessions with counselor, peer mediation, mentoring by an adult ally, and other possible interventions that are agreed upon by the school and family. This list is neither

exhaustive, nor necessarily relevant for every student on BI, but presents the most common interventions.

## **Behavior Intervention Level 2**

- Students on BI2 have not met their goals on BI1, and continue to struggle with following the rules and expectations of the school. Even with the interventions on BI1 and a more focused and concentrated support given, the student doesn't progress.
- The formal contact with the parent is still twice a month, but one of these contacts must be in-person.
- Many of the same interventions/supports will be utilized for a student on BI2.
- Checks in with DoC will be more frequent.
- The team will take a look at the supports and interventions and make adjustments where needed; the goals on the behavior plan may be modified, and the points may be adjusted.
- **During BI2 family meetings, it is made clear that failure to show progress may result in a referral for an expulsion hearing, and if suspended while on BI2, the student can be brought up for expulsion.**

## **Rules & Regulations**

### **LEVEL 1 RULES**

Various means may be used by school personnel on a case-by-case basis to discourage violations of Level I Rules (see means described above).

#### **Rule 1**

##### **No student may disrupt the school or the learning environment.**

- Students shall act in a courteous manner at all times and toward all members of the school community, and shall not engage in conduct, which disrupts any school-sponsored or school-related educational program or activity.
- The following, although not exhaustive, shall be considered violations of this Rule:
  - Disobedience
  - Disrespect
  - Dishonesty
  - Failure to follow established school rules
  - Failure to attend class or late arrival to class without a valid excuse
  - Failure to comply with the established dress code
  - Failure to comply with the established attendance policy
  - Loitering and/or failure to provide identification upon request
  - Possession or use of beepers, pagers, cell phones, walkman, iPod, MP3 players, look-alike or toy weapons (those that are capable of inflicting serious bodily injury will be treated as a Level II offense), laser pointers, poppers, sparklers, mace, pepper spray, lighter, or any telephonic, stereophonic or digital device, not including a calculator or digital watch, during school hours or programs
  - Running or making of excessive noise in the school building
  - Lying to school authority

- Failure to follow established classroom rules

**Rule 2**

**No student shall use offensive language.**

- Students shall refrain from using language that may be classified as obscene, offensive or vulgar, or which would violate school policies regarding discrimination and/or harassment of any kind.
- A student will be considered to have violated this Rule if he/she makes libelous or slanderous remarks directed at another member of the school community.
- A student will be considered to have violated this Rule if he/she sends or forwards any offensive, sexually oriented, obscene, vulgar, and/or threatening messages, pictures, or symbols from any source to any member of the school community.
- A student will be considered to have violated this Rule if he/she wears or displays any colors or symbols with the intent to show or indicate allegiance to or affiliation with any gang.

**Rule 3**

**Students shall maintain good records of attendance. (Note: Please be advised that expulsion, suspension, or transfer will never serve as a consequence for truancy.)**

- The following, although not exhaustive, will be considered violations of this Rule:
  - Excessive unexcused absence (i.e. three or more)
  - Excessive unexcused lateness or tardiness (i.e. three or more)
  - Missing a class without a valid excuse
  - Truancy

**Rule 4**

**Students shall maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity.**

- A student will be considered to have violated this Rule if he/she forges any paper, report, test or notes, or engages in any other type of cheating and/or copying of the work of another student.
- A student will be considered to have violated this Rule if he/she plagiarizes any publication or paraphrases any publication without appropriate citation.

**Rule 5**

**Students shall be kind, respectful, self-controlled, non-disruptive and considerate in their relationships with all members of the school community.**

**Rule 6**

**Students shall not engage in gambling, or take or place bets on chance for personal benefit.**

**Rule 7**

**Students shall not engage in improper use of technology.**

- Students shall respect the computer privileges granted to them and shall comply with Wissahickon Charter School's Acceptable Use Policy whenever they use Wissahickon Charter School's computers, equipment, network system or any other technology owned by or licensed through Wissahickon Charter School.
- The following, although not exhaustive, shall be considered violations of this Rule:
  - Giving his/her password to another individual

- Using another's password
- Illegally downloading copyrighted material from the internet
- Purposely or recklessly visiting sites on the internet that contain sexually explicit or otherwise offensive materials
- Harming, damaging or disrupting hardware and/or software
- Harming or destroying the data of another person or student
- Harming or destroying the internet or other school networks
- Purposely or recklessly creating, downloading, or uploading a computer virus
- Breaking into or hacking into other files or systems
- Accessing and/or altering school records, information or files without express permission
- Conducting any business enterprise
- Material that is fraudulent, harassing, sexually explicit, pornographic, violent or advocating of violence, profane, obscene, intimidating, threatening, defamatory, discriminatory, or otherwise unlawful or inappropriate may not be sent by email or other forms of electronic communication (such as bulletin board systems, newsgroups, chat groups) or accessed, reviewed, displayed on or stored in Wissahickon Charter School's Computer Resources.

**Rule 8      Students shall not damage, deface, destroy or steal school property or the personal property of another member of the school community.**

- A student will be considered to have violated this Rule if he/she creates graffiti, carves, tears, cuts or otherwise marks, regardless of whether the marking is permanent, property owned or leased by, or licensed to Wissahickon Charter School.
- A student will be considered to have violated this Rule if he/she steals or attempts to steal school property or any property leased or licensed to Wissahickon Charter School, or the personal property of another member of the school community while on school property or at any school-sponsored or school-related activity or event.
- A student will be considered to have violated this Rule if he/she attempts to pass or solicit counterfeit money or to make counterfeit money.
- A student will be considered to have violated this Rule if he/she attempts to purchase stolen or illegally obtained property at any school-sponsored or school-related activity or event.

**Rule 9      Students shall not cause or attempt to cause physical injury to any member of the school community.**

- Students will be held responsible for their purposeful, reckless and negligent actions and the reasonably foreseeable consequences of their actions.
- The following, although not exhaustive, shall be considered violations of this Rule:
  - Physical contact by pushing, punching, shoving, slapping or hitting
  - Physical contact by kicking
  - Throwing any object that may cause injury to another at any member of the school community

- Biting
- Spitting
- Roughhousing or horseplay

- Rule 10**      **Students shall not recklessly endanger any member of the school community.**
- Students shall not act in any manner, which creates a substantial and unjustifiable risk of harm to others and indicates a conscious indifference to the consequences of the act.
- Rule 11**      **Students shall not falsely activate any fire alarm, security system, smoke detector or any other device, which may cause disruption of the school community, fear or panic.**
- Any student who falsely activates any such device or renders a false report that results in a response by authorities including, but not limited to, the fire department, the police, emergency medical personnel, and/or results in evacuation of Wissahickon Charter School's building(s) will be considered to have violated this Rule and may be subject to sanctions under federal, state and/or local law.
- Rule 12**      **Students may not possess, use, distribute or solicit the use or distribution of any tobacco product or related paraphernalia while on property owned by, leased or licensed to Wissahickon Charter School, or while at any school-sponsored or school-related activity or event.**
- Rule 13**      **Students shall not directly or indirectly communicate any threat to any member of the school community which places that person in fear or apprehension of injury, pain and/or ridicule.**
- Continual threats, harassment, bullying and/or intimidation are considered and treated as Level II offenses.

#### **LEVEL II RULES**

Students who engage in activities that violate any federal, state and/or local law may be subject to criminal charges and punishment in addition to any disciplinary measures undertaken by Wissahickon Charter School. Violations of Level II rules can result in suspension from Wissahickon Charter School. Violations may result in a referral to the Board of Trustees for an expulsion hearing with a recommendation that the student be expelled for a period of more than ten (10) consecutive school days **(except Rule 14)**.

- Rule 14**      **No student shall engage in repeated violations of this Code.**
- A student will not be considered to have engaged in repeated violations of this Code unless the student has previously been warned or disciplined for violations of this Code.
- Rule 15**      **Students may not possess, use, distribute or solicit the use or distribution of any unauthorized prescription or non-prescription medication, drug, narcotic,**

hallucinogen, steroid, growth hormone, amphetamine, barbiturate, opiates, marijuana, inhalants, alcohol or any other intoxicant or related paraphernalia while on property owned by, leased or licensed to Wissahickon Charter School, or while at any school-sponsored or school-related activity or event. No violation of this rule will occur where the student is specifically allowed to possess such drug or inhaler by the student's physician, upon receipt of documentation from the student's physician and approval by the school nurse in accordance with Wissahickon Charter School's Medications Policy.

**Rule 16**      **Students shall not expose or attempt to expose their genitalia or any private body part to any member of the school community, nor shall they touch the genitalia or private body parts of another.**

**Rule 17**      **Students shall not engage in any activity, which can reasonably be expected to have the effect of harassing, threatening or damaging the safety or reputation of any member of the school community.**

- The following, although not exhaustive, shall be considered violations of this Rule:
  - Unwelcome sexual advances
  - Requests for sexual relations and/or favors
  - Sexual comments
  - Offensive sexually-oriented gestures, sounds, remarks or comments
  - Offensive remarks or comments related to a person's race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or presentation, or national origin
  - Efforts to intimidate or bully
- Any of the above actions, or any other conduct which may reasonably be considered as a violation of this Rule, whether in written, oral, electronic or digital form is subject to disciplinary consequences.

**Rule 18**      **Students shall not engage in any consensual sexual acts.**

**Rule 19**      **Students shall not force or attempt to force any other member of the school community to engage in any sexual act.**

**Rule 20**      **Students shall not cause or attempt to cause physical injury or pain to any student, teacher, administrator, staff member or any other employee or agent of Wissahickon Charter School, or any member of the school community.**

**Rule 21**      **Students shall not cause, attempt to cause or threaten to cause serious bodily injury to any member of the school community with a weapon or without regard to the value of human life.**

**Rule 22**      **Students shall not possess on their person, in their clothing or belongings, in their vehicle, or in any storage space or container provided by Wissahickon Charter School**

**any weapon.**

- For the purposes of this Rule, “weapon” shall include any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nunchaku, firearm, shotgun, rifle, and any other tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury.
- The following steps shall be taken by appropriate personnel at Wissahickon Charter School in the event a student violates this Rule:
  - The student will be detained and, where possible, brought to the office of the CEO or designee;
  - The incident will be immediately be reported to Police or any other appropriate authority if deemed necessary by the school;
  - The parent/s or guardian/s of the student will be immediately notified;
  - Expulsion may be recommended in accordance with the law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- A Serious Incident Report will be filed and should contain: Circumstances of possession and discovery of the weapon; Action taken by Police or other authority in response to the call for assistance; Action taken by Wissahickon Charter School, including details of contact with parent/s or guardian/s, filing of the report and notice to Police or other authority; An image of the weapon; A report to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

**Rule 23**

**Students shall not engage in or attempt to engage in any conduct, which endangers the health, safety or welfare of any other member of the school community.**

- The following, although not exhaustive, will be considered violations of this Rule:
  - Setting or attempting to set a fire or explosion on or in property owned by, leased or licensed to Wissahickon Charter School
  - Retaliating against any member of the school community who participated in any investigation or proceeding
  - Activating the fire alarm, security system or other such device when there is no threat of fire or breach of security, and fire personnel, police or other authority is dispatched to Wissahickon Charter School
  - Planting, hiding or locating, or threatening to plant, hide or locate, any bomb or explosive device on property owned by, leased or licensed to Wissahickon Charter School

**Disciplinary Actions**

**Make-Up Time**

**Retaining the student after school hours with the parent and/or student being responsible for transportation of the student at the end of the detention period.**

**Sat. Make-up Time**

**Student attends make-up time for 3 hours on Saturday morning. Parents/students are responsible for transportation to and from Saturday school.**



**Exclusion****Exclusion from school may take the form of suspension or expulsion.**

1. Suspension is exclusion from school for a period of from 1 to 10 consecutive school days.
  - a. Suspensions may be given by the Administration or person in charge of Wissahickon Charter School.
  - b. A student may not be suspended until the student has been informed of the reasons for the suspension and given an opportunity to respond. Prior notice of the intended suspension need not be given when it is clear that the health, safety or welfare of the school community is threatened.
  - c. The parents or guardians shall be notified immediately in writing when the student is suspended.
  - d. When the suspension exceeds 3 school days, the student and parent shall be given the opportunity for an informal hearing consistent with the requirements of the Pennsylvania Code.
  - e. Suspensions may not be made to run consecutively beyond the 10 school day period.
  - f. Students shall have the responsibility to make up exams and work missed while being disciplined by suspension and shall be permitted to complete these assignments within guidelines established by the governing board.
  - g. Students in grades K-2 shall not be suspended for minor offenses.
2. Expulsion is exclusion from school by the governing board for a period exceeding 10 school days and may be permanent expulsion from Wissahickon Charter School rolls. Expulsions require a prior formal hearing pursuant to the Pennsylvania Code.
  - a. During the period prior to the hearing and decision of the board in an expulsion case, the student shall be placed in their normal class except as set forth below.
  - b. If it is determined after an informal hearing that a student's presence in his/her normal class would constitute a threat to the health, safety or welfare of others and it is not possible to hold a formal hearing within the period of a suspension, the student may be excluded from school for more than 10 school days. A student may not be excluded from school for longer than 15 school days without a formal hearing unless mutually agreed upon by both parties. Any student so excluded shall be provided with alternative education, which may include home study.
  - c. Students who are under 17 years of age are still subject to the compulsory school attendance law even though expelled and shall be provided an education.
    - i. The initial responsibility for providing the required education rests with the student's parents or guardian, through placement in another school, tutorial or correspondence study, or another educational program approved by the district's superintendent.
    - ii. Within 30 days of action by the board, the parents or guardians shall submit to Wissahickon Charter School written evidence that the required education is being provided as described in paragraph (1) or that they are unable to do so. If the parents or guardians are unable to provide the required education, Wissahickon Charter School entity shall, within 10 days of receipt of the notification, make provision for the student's education. A student with a disability shall be provided educational services as required by the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.

- iii. If the approved educational program is not complied with, Wissahickon Charter School may take action in accordance with 42 Pa.C.S. Chapter 63 (relating to the Juvenile Act) to ensure that the child will receive a proper education. See § 12.1(b) (relating to free education and attendance).
- 3. Exclusion from classes—in-school suspension
  - a. A student may not receive an in-school suspension unless the student has been informed of the reasons for the suspension and has been given an opportunity to respond before the suspension becomes effective.
  - b. Communication to the parents or guardian shall follow the suspension action taken by Wissahickon Charter School.
  - c. When the in-school suspension exceeds 10 consecutive school days, an informal hearing with the head of school shall be offered to the student and the student's parent or guardian prior to the 11th school day in accordance with the procedures in the Pennsylvania Code.
  - d. The student's school entity has the responsibility to make provision for the student's education during the period of the in-school suspension.

### **Hearings**

- 1. *General.* Education is a statutory right, and students shall be afforded due process if they are to be excluded from school. In a case involving a possible expulsion, the student is entitled to a formal hearing.
- 2. *Formal hearings.* A formal hearing is required in all expulsion actions. This hearing may be held before the board or an authorized committee of the board, or a qualified hearing examiner appointed by the board. When a committee of the board or a hearing examiner conducts the hearing, a majority vote of the entire board is required to expel a student. The following due process requirements shall be observed with regard to the formal hearing:
  - a. Notification of the charges shall be sent to the student's parents or guardians by certified mail.
  - b. At least 3 days notice of the time and place of the hearing shall be given. A copy of the expulsion policy, notice that legal counsel may represent the student and hearing procedures shall be included with the hearing notice. A student may request the rescheduling of the hearing when the student demonstrates good cause for an extension.
  - c. The hearing shall be held in private unless the student or parent requests a public hearing.
  - d. The student may be represented by counsel, at the expense of the parents or guardians, and may have a parent or guardian attend the hearing.
  - e. The student has the right to be presented with the names of witnesses against the student, and copies of the statements and affidavits of those witnesses.
  - f. The student has the right to request that the witnesses appear in person and answer questions or be cross-examined.
  - g. The student has the right to testify and present witnesses on their own behalf.
  - h. A written or audio record shall be kept of the hearing. The student is entitled, at the student's expense, to a copy. A copy shall be provided at no cost to a student who is indigent.

- i. The proceeding shall be held within 15 school days of the notification of charges, unless mutually agreed to by both parties. A hearing may be delayed for any of the following reasons, in which case the hearing shall be held as soon as reasonably possible:
    - i. Laboratory reports are needed from law enforcement agencies.
    - ii. Evaluations or other court or administrative proceedings are pending due to a student invoking their rights under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act 2004 (20 U.S.C.A. § § 1400—1482).
    - iii. In cases in juvenile or criminal court involving sexual assault or serious bodily injury, delay is necessary due to the condition or best interests of the victim.
  - j. Notice of a right to appeal the results of the hearing shall be provided to the student with the expulsion decision.
3. *Informal hearings.* The purpose of the informal hearing is to enable the student to meet with the appropriate school official to explain the circumstances surrounding the event for which the student is being suspended or to show why the student should not be suspended.
- a. The informal hearing is held to bring forth all relevant information regarding the event for which the student may be suspended and for students, their parents or guardians and school officials to discuss ways by which future offenses might be avoided.
  - b. The following due process requirements shall be observed in regard to the informal hearing:
    - i. Notification of the reasons for the suspension shall be given in writing to the parents or guardians and to the student.
    - ii. Sufficient notice of the time and place of the informal hearing shall be given.
    - iii. A student has the right to question any witnesses present at the hearing.
    - iv. A student has the right to speak and produce witnesses on their own behalf.
    - v. The school entity shall offer to hold the informal hearing within the first 5 days of the suspension.

### **Discipline of Students with Disabilities**

Wissahickon Charter School shall comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and any applicable federal and state statutes or regulations when disciplining students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who engage in inappropriate behavior, disruptive or prohibited activities, and/or conduct injurious to themselves or others shall be disciplined in accordance with their Individualized Education Programs (IEP), behavioral intervention plan, Title 22 Chapter 711 and relevant portions of Chapter 12 of the State Board of Education Regulations, IDEA 2004, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and any other applicable federal or state law.

### **Manifestation Determination**

A manifestation determination must be conducted when a disciplinary change of placement occurs. Disciplinary change of placement occurs when a student with a disability, because of a violation of the school code of conduct, is removed from his/her current educational setting for: more than 10 school days consecutively; more than 15 school days cumulatively in a school year; when school days 11-15 constitute a pattern of exclusion; or an exclusion of even one school day for a student with an intellectual disability.

Within 10 school days of any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct (except for a removal that does not constitute a change in educational placement i.e., is for 10 consecutive school days or less and not a change of placement), Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP Team (as determined by the parent and Charter School) must review all relevant information in the student's file, including the child's IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents to determine:

- A. If the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability; or
- B. If the conduct in question was the direct result of Charter School's failure to implement the child's IEP.

If Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the child's IEP Team determine that either of those conditions were met, the conduct must be determined to be a manifestation of the child's disability. If the IEP team answers "yes" to either question, and therefore determines that the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability, the proposed disciplinary action is voided.

If Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the child's IEP Team determine that the conduct in question was the direct result of Charter School's failure to implement the IEP, Charter School must take immediate action to remedy those deficiencies.

## **Anti-Bullying**

### **Statement of intent**

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a TELLING school. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a staff member.

### **What is bullying?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the core elements of bullying include: unwanted aggressive behavior; observed or perceived power imbalance; and repetition of behaviors. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

### **Examples of Bullying can include but are not limited to:**

- Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist: racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Gendered: because of, or focusing on an individual's gender identity and/or expression
- Sexuality-based: because of, or focusing on the issue of sexual orientation
- Religious: on the basis of someone's religious beliefs and/or practices

- Body Image-Based: taunting based on someone's body's size and/or stature
- Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, teasing
- Cyber and Mobile

### **Why is it important to respond to bullying?**

Bullying hurts and no one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who bully need to learn different ways of behaving and interacting with their peers. Schools have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

### **Objectives of this policy**

- All administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All administrators, teaching, and non-teaching staff should know what the school policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All pupils and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if a bullying issue arises.
- As a school we take bullying seriously and our students and parents should be assured that they will be supported and protected when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

### **Signs and symptoms**

A child may indicate by signs or behavior that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- Is frightened of walking to or from school
- Doesn't want to go on the school / public bus
- Begs to be driven to school
- Changes their usual routine
- Is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- Begins to be truant
- Becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill in the morning
- Begins to do poorly in school work
- Comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- Has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- Has lunch or other monies continually "lost"
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)

- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Stops eating
- Is frightened to say what's wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviors could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

### **Prevention**

We will use WCS methods for helping children to prevent bullying. As and when appropriate, these may include:

- Signing a behavior contract
- Writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying which shows how bullying can hurt people
- Reading stories about bullying, having group, class, and all school meetings and presentations that talk about and deal with bullying
- Role plays that demonstrate bullying, and how to combat it, if one is the victim, or bystander
- Discussions about bullying and how it not only impacts the individual but the whole school community
- Working with students who display bullying tendencies, and helping them understand how they hurt people and why they must stop.

### **Outcomes**

- The bully (bullies) will be asked to genuinely apologize and to fix the situation. Other interventions may be used and/or consequences may take place.
- In serious cases, suspension or even expulsion will be considered.
- If possible, the pupils will be reconciled.
- After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

### **Procedures**

- Students or staff should report bullying to correct person: Students to any staff members whom they feel comfortable talking to – staff members to administrators (Directors and CEO).
- All verified cases of bullying will be recorded by staff.
- The bullying behavior or threats of bullying must be investigated with appropriate interventions used to deal with bullying behaviors.
- In serious cases or cases where there seems to be a pattern, parents will be informed and will be asked to come in for a meeting to discuss the problem.

- An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behavior through peer mediation, meetings with the counselor, self reflection, parent meetings, and or/outside counseling, and if necessary school discipline, including suspension and as a last measure, expulsion.
- If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.

### **Anti-Harassment Policy**

The Administration of Wissahickon Charter School is committed to maintaining an academic and work environment that is free of discrimination. In keeping with this commitment, the WCS will not tolerate harassment of any of its employees and/or students by anyone, including any administrator, supervisor, co-worker, student, teacher, vendor, or visitor of WCS.

Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based upon a person's protected status, such as sex, gender identity, color, race, ancestry, religion, national origin, age, physical or mental handicap/disability, medical condition, marital status, veteran status, citizenship status, or other characteristic protected by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or other applicable federal and state laws and regulations. WCS will not tolerate harassing conduct that affects tangible job benefits, interferes unreasonably with a person's work performance or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment or academic environment.

Sexual harassment deserves special mention. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other physical, verbal, or visual conduct based on sex constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to the conduct is an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment or academic performance, (2) submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as the basis for an employment or academic decision, or (3) the conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a person's work performance or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment or academic environment. Sexual harassment may include explicit sexual propositions, sexual innuendo, suggestive comments, sexually oriented "kidding" or "teasing," "practical jokes," jokes about gender-specific traits, foul or obscene language or gestures, displays of foul or obscene printed or visual material, and physical contact such as patting, pinching, or brushing against another's body.

All WCS employees and students are responsible to help assure that harassment is avoided. If you feel that you have experienced, witnessed or have information regarding possible harassment, you should notify the CEO. Wissahickon Charter School prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports possible harassment, makes a harassment complaint, cooperates in a harassment complaint investigation or any related proceeding.

WCS's policy is to investigate all harassment complaints promptly and thoroughly and in compliance with Title IX. All Code of Conduct rules along with local, state, and federal laws apply. If an investigation confirms that harassment has occurred, the CEO will take corrective action, including, but not limited to,

appropriate disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may include disciplinary proceedings and/or termination of employment. When the harassment is student to student, the school will use its Code of Conduct as a guide for punitive measures after a Title IX process has been followed. This holds true for student to adult community member harassment as well. To the fullest extent practicable, WCS will keep complaints and the terms of their resolution confidential. Law enforcement will be contacted if there is an allegation of criminal misconduct.

For cases that specifically focus solely on issues of sex, gender, sexual preference, or gender identity, please refer below to our Appendix section of the Handbook.

### **Rights and Responsibilities: Parent & School Compact**

The school and community of Wissahickon Charter School believe that it is only through the cooperation of the parents and school that children develop their full potential. In light of this, the school and parents will work cooperatively to provide for the successful education of their children as follows:

#### **The PARENT/GUARDIAN agrees to:**

- Become involved in developing, implementing, evaluating and revising the school/parent-involvement policy.
- Use or ask for assistance that Wissahickon provides on child development and teaching and learning methods as needed.
- Work with our child/children on their school assignments and to:
  - Ask them what they learned about that day
  - Encourage them to share their successes and their frustration
  - Provide assistance if necessary
  - Encourage them to read, write, and practice their work daily
- Monitor our child/children's:
  - Attendance at school
  - Homework
  - Television watching
  - Computer and video game usage
- Share the responsibility for improved student achievement by:
  - Documenting daily reading with their child
  - Providing a quiet place for homework
  - Setting aside a specific time for homework
  - Assisting with homework as necessary
  - Encouraging positive attitudes toward school
  - Requiring regular school attendance
  - Giving the child the necessary supplies to do school work
- Communicate with our child/children's teachers about their educational needs.
- Ask parents and parent groups to provide information from the school on what type of training or assistance they would like and/or need to help them be more effective with their child/children in the educational process.
- Provide a healthy and safe environment.



- Volunteer in school and to attend school meetings.
- Encourage students to find activities that promote citizenship, work ethic and healthy lifestyles.
- Respect cultural, racial and ethnic differences.

**The STUDENT agrees to:**

- Encourage parents to become a part of the student's educational experience.
- Question, in the appropriate way and at the appropriate time, those parts of learning that are not understood.
- Take home materials and information needed to complete all assignments.
- Complete homework in a thorough, legible and timely manner.
- Return homework on time.
- Respect the personal rights and property of others.
- Respect cultural, racial and ethnic differences.
- Be aware of all rules and regulations for student behavior and conduct themselves in accordance with them. Students should assume that, until a rule is waived, altered or repealed in writing, it is in effect.
- Volunteer information in matters relating to the health, safety and welfare of the school community and the protection of school property.
- Dress and groom to meet standards of safety and health, and not to cause substantial disruption to the educational processes.
- Assist Wissahickon Charter School staff in operating a safe school for the students enrolled therein.
- Comply with federal, state and local laws.
- Exercise proper care when using public facilities and equipment.
- Attend school daily and be on time at all classes and other school functions.
- Make up work when absent from school.
- Report accurately in student media.
- Not use obscene language in student media or on school premises.

**Parent Rights & Responsibilities**

**1. Enrollment**

**a. *Right***

Parents have the right to enroll their children in Wissahickon Charter School, regardless of their district of residence, within the enrollment guidelines established by the Board of Trustees. Enrollment may not be denied on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap or marital status.

**b. *Responsibility***

Parents have the responsibility to ensure that their children who are enrolled at Wissahickon Charter School attend school regularly, on time, and for the entire school day in accordance with state law and the policies set forth by the Board of Trustees.

**2. Progress**

**a. *Right***

Parents have the right to receive regular official reports of their children's academic

progress, through both written and oral communication.

**b. Responsibility**

Parents have the responsibility to assist Wissahickon Charter School and their children in achieving their academic potential, including planning a time and place for completing homework, ensuring the completion of assignments that are missed, and providing the necessary supervision while their children complete assignments. In addition, parents have the responsibility to attend and participate in all parent-teacher conferences.

**3. Language Preference**

**a. Right**

Parents have the right to receive any oral and written communication Wissahickon Charter School in the language used by the family in the home. This right includes the right to have a translator present at any disciplinary proceedings commenced against their child.

**b. Responsibility**

Parents have the responsibility to inform Wissahickon Charter School when they need to receive oral and written communication in a language other than English. This responsibility includes the responsibility to notify Wissahickon Charter School if a translator will be necessary at any disciplinary proceedings commenced against their child.

**4. Enforcement**

**a. Right**

Parents have the right to ensure that the provisions of this Code of Conduct are applied reasonably and fairly with respect to their children.

**b. Responsibility**

Parents have a responsibility to understand the rules set forth in this Code of Conduct and to discuss expected behavior with their children, as well as to inform the Administration and/or Board of Trustees of their concerns regarding the application of this Code of Conduct to their children in a calm and reasoned manner.

**1. Education**

**a. Right**

Students have the right to a public education, unimpaired on account of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, ancestry, physical handicap or marital status.

**b. Responsibility**

Students have the responsibility to avoid actions or activities that interfere with other students' rights to an unimpaired public education.

**2. Learning Environment**

**a. Right**

Students have the right to an orderly school and classroom environment that will promote learning for all students.

**b. Responsibility**

Students have the responsibility to ensure that their actions do not disrupt the school or classroom environment or school activities.

### **3. Expression**

#### ***a. Right***

Students have the right to express themselves in speech, writing and/or expression within the boundaries defined by federal and state law, and the policies established by Wissahickon Charter School. The right of public school students to freedom of speech is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Students have the right to express themselves unless the expression materially and substantially interferes with the educational process, threatens serious harm to the school or community, encourages unlawful activity or interferes with another individual's rights.

#### ***b. Responsibility***

Students have the responsibility to ensure that their expression does not disrupt the educational process, present health or safety hazards, damage public property, infringe on the rights of others, or violate federal or state law, or the policies established by Wissahickon Charter School.

### **4. Possession and Distribution of Literature**

#### ***a. Right***

Students may use publications, handbills, announcements, assemblies, group meetings, buttons, armbands, and any other means of common communication, provided that the use of public school communications facilities shall be in accordance with the regulations of the Wissahickon Charter School.

#### ***b. Responsibility***

Students have the responsibility to be aware of the feelings and opinions of others and to give others a fair opportunity to express their views. Students have the responsibility to obey laws governing libel and obscenity and to be aware of the full meaning of their expression. Students have the responsibility to ensure that the literature they possess or distribute does not infringe upon the rights of others, and does not contain offensive language of a religious, racial or ethnic nature, or language that may be construed as harassing or obscene. Identification of the individual student or at least one responsible person in a student group is required on posted or distributed materials. Students must submit to the Administration for prior approval a copy of materials to be displayed, posted or distributed on school property. School officials may require students to submit for prior approval a copy of materials to be displayed, posted or distributed on school property.

##### ***i. Bulletin boards must conform to the following:***

1. The Administration may restrict the use of certain bulletin boards.
2. Designated bulletin board space will be provided for the use of students or student organizations.
3. The Administration requires that notices or other communications be

officially dated before posting, and that the materials be removed after a prescribed reasonable time to assure full access to the bulletin boards.

- ii. School newspapers and publications must conform to the following:
  - 1. Students have a right and are as free as editors of other newspapers to report the news and to editorialize within the provisions in paragraphs (4) and (5).
  - 2. School officials shall supervise student newspapers published with school equipment, remove obscene or libelous material and edit other material that would cause a substantial disruption or interference with school activities.
  - 3. School officials may not censor or restrict material simply because it is critical of the school or its administration.
  - 4. Prior approval procedures regarding copy for school newspapers must identify the individual to whom the material is to be submitted and establish a limitation on the time required to make a decision. If the prescribed time for approval lapses without a decision, the material shall be considered authorized for distribution.
  - 5. Students who are not members of the newspaper staff shall have access to its pages. Written criteria for submission of material by non-staff members shall be developed and distributed to all students.
- iii. The wearing of buttons, badges or armbands shall be permitted as another form of expression within the restrictions of federal and state laws.
- iv. School officials may set forth the time and place of distribution of materials so that distribution would not materially or substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school.
- v. A proper time and place set for distribution is one that would give the students the opportunity to reach fellow students. The place of the activity may be restricted to permit the normal flow of traffic within the school and exterior doors.

## **5. Religion**

### ***a. Right***

Students have the right to their own beliefs and the exercise of those beliefs to the extent that the exercise of those beliefs is consistent with state and federal laws.

### ***b. Responsibility***

Students have the responsibility to ensure that the exercise of religious freedom does not infringe upon the Constitutional rights and freedom of religious expression of others.

## **6. Search and Seizure**

### ***a. Right***

Students have the right to be free from unlawful searches and seizures of their personal property and possessions.

- i. The Administration will adopt reasonable procedures regarding student searches. The School shall notify students and their parents/guardians of the

procedures regarding student searches.

- ii. Illegal or prohibited materials seized during a student search may be used as evidence against the student in a school disciplinary proceeding.
- iii. Prior to a locker search, students shall be notified and given an opportunity to be present. When school authorities have a reasonable suspicion that the locker contains material that pose a threat to the health, welfare or safety of the students in the school, student lockers may be searched without prior warning.
- iv. When school authorities have reasonable suspicion that materials that pose a threat to the health, welfare or safety of students or the school community are in the possession of a student or contained within a student's belongings, school authorities may search the student's person and/or belongings to the extent that such a search is permitted by applicable state and federal laws.

**b. Responsibility**

Students have the responsibility to not possess materials, objects, implements and/or instruments that are prohibited by federal, state and/or local law or that may be disruptive or otherwise in violation of Wissahickon Charter School's Rules.

**7. Peaceful Assembly**

**a. Right**

Students have the right to peaceful assembly.

**b. Responsibility**

Students have the responsibility to secure approval for use of school facilities for assembly; to discuss with an administrator the appropriateness of the facility for the function; and to ensure that assembly does not disrupt the educational process. Lack of adequate supervision shall be grounds for disapproval of the assembly.

**8. Transportation**

**a. Right**

Students who live outside of 1.5 miles of each campus and are in first through sixth grades have a right to safe and orderly transportation to and from school on a school bus. Seventh and eighth graders have the right to receive passes for public transportation to travel to and from school.

**b. Responsibility**

Students have the responsibility to ensure that their conduct contributes to a safe and orderly atmosphere; to refrain from conduct which may cause a hazard to themselves, their fellow students, or to the public; and to refrain from violating federal, state and/or local laws, or school policy regarding transportation. Students who fail to fulfill their responsibility may relinquish their right to transportation.

## **Grievance Policy**

At WCS we are proud of the positive relationships that we have with families and caregivers. Throughout the year there may be times where parents feel like they have concerns that need to be addressed. The school also has an obligation to protect its personnel from unnecessary harassment. It is the intent of this policy to provide an impartial means of seeking appropriate remedies.

When the issue is academic in nature, the parent **must** speak with the teacher first (school leadership will always direct families back to the teacher), if there is no success between the teacher and parent, the parent should request, **in writing**, a meeting with the Principal. They will have one week's time to address the concerns presented by the parent. The parent has the right to ask to meet with the **CEO** if the parent still feels like the concerns weren't addressed. CEO must **receive** the concern in writing, and will respond within **10 school days** to the parent, and determine next steps.

Parents also have the right to address the Board of Trustees about concerns that they have, if they have exhausted other options. Concerns **must** be submitted in writing and addressed to the Board Chair. The Board Chair will respond to the concerns in writing after having time to review the issue. Please allow at least **1 week** for the Chair to respond. In order to speak at Board meetings a request must be submitted in writing to the Board Chair at least one week prior to Board Meetings. Please note that Board Meeting dates are highlighted at the front of this document. Parents may also email the concern to [BoardChair@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:BoardChair@wissahickoncharter.org) The response time from the Board Chair will be the same as noted earlier.

## **V. Health & Wellness**

### **Crisis Intervention**

Any suggestion, demonstration or communication of an intention to commit suicide or to kill someone must be taken seriously. The school recognizes that self-destructive behavior and suicide occur among children and adolescents. Students that experience depression, and other mental health issues associated with depression, pose a serious threat to themselves and others. If a student threatens to harm, kill, maim themselves or to inflict similar harm on others, we will suggest that the child be taken to a crisis center. When a student makes comments that they are considering or planning to harm themselves, another community member, or the school in general, WCS will contact outside agencies such as a crisis team or local police. If there is immediate danger, Wissahickon reserves the right to call a crisis center to come to the school to intervene or to call local law enforcement for support.

### **Food & Beverages**

WCS believes that a healthy diet can help students in all aspects of life (physical, mental, social, emotional, academic, behavioral, and more). We serve a free healthy breakfast and lunch daily. Students

are also welcome to bring lunch to school. Candy and soda are not allowed at school. The Front Office does not accept lunches dropped off by parents. If your child does not come into the cafeteria with their lunch already, then a nutritional free lunch will be provided to them.

Breakfast and lunch are provided daily by Whitsons Culinary Group. The program fits with the school's environmental mission, offering whole fruits, whole grains, less processed foods, and less wasteful packaging. Breakfast and lunch are offered to all students free of charge. We encourage families to take advantage of the breakfast and lunch menu. If you need any assistance, contact the Food Services Coordinator/Operations Assistant.

If your child has food allergies, please send the medical letter to the school nurse. Due to such allergies, WCS has a no sharing food policy. Students are not allowed to share their food or snacks with anyone.

### **Nutrition Guidelines for Sold Smart Snacks (Fundraising)**

Competitive foods (Smart Snacks) available for sale during the school day will meet or exceed the established federal nutrition standards (USDA Smart Snacks in School). These standards will apply in all locations and through all services where foods and beverages are sold to students.

Competitive foods are defined as foods and beverages offered or sold to students on school campus during the school day, which are not part of the reimbursable school breakfast or lunch. Sold refers to the exchange of money/voucher to purchase food/beverage items from the school store or during fundraisers. For the purpose of this definition, school campus will include all areas of the property under jurisdiction of the school that are accessible to students during the school day. School day means the period from midnight before school begins until thirty (30) minutes after the end of the official school day.

Foods and beverages sold at school-sponsored events outside the school day, such as athletic events and dances, shall offer healthy alternatives in addition to more traditional fare.

Fundraising activities held during the school day involving the sale of competitive foods shall be limited to foods that meet the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards, unless an exemption is approved by the Director of Operations or Food Service Coordinator. Wissahickon Charter School may allow a limited number of exempt fundraisers as permitted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education each school year, up to five (5) exempt fundraisers in elementary and middle school buildings. Exempt fundraisers are fundraisers in which foods are available for sale to students that do not meet the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. Exempt fundraisers are not allowed to be held in areas whilst meals are being served, fundraisers cannot exceed 5 consecutive school days, and can raise money for only one fund per fundraiser. All exempt fundraising records must be kept on file for four (4) years and be available upon request.

Fundraisers selling foods that are intended to be consumed outside the school day are not limited under the Federal policy. Such as the sale of frozen pizza, cookie dough and other items pre-ordered and distributed in a precooked state or in bulk quantities (multiple servings in a package) for consumption at home.

### **Nutrition Guidelines for Non-Sold Smart Snacks (Classroom Parties & Celebrations)**

Non-sold competitive foods available to students, which may include but are not limited to foods and beverages offered at classroom parties and celebrations, or as shared classroom snacks, shall meet or exceed the standards established by Wissahickon Charter School.

Foods and beverages will not be used as a reward for classroom academic performance or good behavior unless the reward is an activity that promotes a positive nutrition message (e.g., guest chef, field trip to a farm or farmers market, etc.).

Classroom parties/celebrations with food/beverages will be limited to no more than one (1) per month per classroom. Parties/celebrations shall include foods or beverages that meet established nutrition standards. Parents/Guardians will be informed through newsletters or other efficient classroom communication methods what foods/beverages should be brought in when requested for scheduled parties.

Wissahickon Charter School will provide a [WCS Smart Snack approved list](#) of suggested ideas for healthy food and beverage alternatives to parents/guardians and staff, which will be available via classroom newsletters, posted notices and/or other efficient communication methods.

### **Illness**

It is the responsibility of the parent and/or guardian to ensure that a child attends school in good health and prepared to learn. Lingering illnesses should be treated by a doctor.

If a child becomes ill during the school day, he/she will report to the nurse's office and be given attention. ***Please advise your children that they should not personally call home if they feel ill but should go to the main office or the nurse's office.***

If the child must be sent home, the parent or guardian will be called and is expected to come to school to pick up the sick child. ***It is imperative that emergency contacts are kept up-to-date so that a responsible adult can be reached at all times.***

Please contact the school nurse at 267-338-1020 (Fernhill) or 267-774-4370 (Awbury) if there are any changes in your child's health that must be addressed.



## Immunizations

All pupils must be completely immunized or exempted before admission to any public, parochial, or private school in Pennsylvania. This is required by the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Philadelphia County Board of Health, and the Wissahickon Charter School.

The purpose of requiring immunization is to protect pupils from preventable communicable diseases and their medical and educational complications.

## Required Physical & Dental Exams

Students in Kindergarten, 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 7th grades must undergo Physical and Dental Exams as mandated by PA State Health Laws. If your child's exams are not on record, the School Nurse contacted you via letter. Prompt submission of these exams is crucial. If required grade physical and dental exams are not submitted to the school immediately students will not be allowed to participate in any non-academic activities. This includes, but not limited to, recess, school dances, assemblies and field trips.

**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
DIVISION OF DISEASE CONTROL  
SUMMARY: PHILADELPHIA IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS  
FOR SCHOOL ENTRY**

Grade	Vaccines	Requirements
<b>All</b>	Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Acellular Pertussis** .... Polio.....  Measles, Mumps, Rubella..... Hepatitis B..... Varicella*** .....	4 Doses: at least 1 on/after 4 <sup>th</sup> birthday (DTaP/DTP/DT/Td) 4 Doses: (4th dose on or after 4th birthday and at least 6 months after previous dose given) 2 Doses: usually given as MMR 3 Doses 2 Doses: on/after 1 <sup>st</sup> birthday (Varicella or MMRV) <b>or</b> documentation of chickenpox immunity proven by laboratory testing <b>or</b> a written statement of prior chickenpox disease from a healthcare provider
<b>7****</b>	Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Acellular Pertussis..... Meningococcal conjugate...	1 dose of TDAP on the first day of 7 <sup>th</sup> grade  1 dose of MCV on the first day of 7 <sup>th</sup> grade

## References

Requirements from The Pennsylvania Code- Subchapter C. IMMUNIZATION 23.81, amended May 28, 2010, effective August 1, 2011, and from the Philadelphia Board of Health Regulations Governing the Health of Newborns, Children and Adolescents, published 2009.

\*Or documentation of a history of chickenpox immunity proven by laboratory testing or a written statement of history of chickenpox disease from a parent, guardian or physician.

\*On the first day of school, unless the child has a medical or religious/philosophical exemption, a child must have had at least one dose of the above vaccinations or risk exclusion. If a child does not have all of the doses listed above, needs additional doses, and the next dose is medically appropriate, the child must receive the dose within the first five days of school or risk exclusion. If the next dose is not the final dose of the series, the child must provide a medical plan (red and white card) within the first five days of school for obtaining the required immunizations or risk exclusion.

If a child does not have all of the doses listed above, needs additional doses, and the next dose is not medically appropriate, the parent/guardian must provide a medical plan (red and white card) within the first five days of school for obtaining the required immunizations or risk exclusion.

\*\*Only 3 doses of Td-containing vaccine are necessary if series is started on/after 7<sup>th</sup> birthday, if at least one dose is given as Tdap.

\*\*\*Or documentation of a history of chickenpox immunity proven by laboratory testing or a written statement of history of chickenpox disease from a parent, guardian or physician.

\*\*\*\*On the first day of 7<sup>th</sup> grade, unless the child has a medical or religious/philosophical exemption, a child must have had the above vaccines or risk exclusion.

**There are two exemptions:**

1. Religious Exemption – Pupils need not be immunized if the parent or guardian objects in writing to the immunization on religious/ethical grounds.
2. Medical Exemption – Pupils need not be immunized if a physician or their designee provides a written statement that immunization may be detrimental to the health of the child. When the physician determines that immunization is no longer detrimental to the health of the child, the medical exemption ceases to be valid and the child must be immunized.

In the event of an outbreak of a disease for which the child is exempt from the requirement to be immunized, that child will be excluded from school until a competent medical authority determines that the child may return, or until the child is appropriately immunized.

**Disposition of Immunization Records**

When transferring from one school to another, parents should request the Certificate of Immunization from the current school and take it to the new school. No pupil will be admitted to a new school without the certificate. The Certificate of Immunization shall follow the pupil when he/she transfers, graduates, withdraws, or otherwise leaves WCS.

## Medications

Children are not permitted to bring any medication to school or to self-administer any kind of medication. Should the occasion arise that a student must take medication during the school day, the medication must be prescribed by a physician and arrangements must be made through the nurse's office. The physician must send [written orders](#) that include the diagnosis, dosage, and the time to administer the medication during the school day. All medications and prescriptions are to be brought to the nurse in their original bottles and kept in the health office. Over-the-counter drugs – including cough medicine, aspirin, etc.—must also be accompanied by a physician's note.

## Nurse's Office

The school nurse handles a variety of student concerns each day and maintains medical records on each student. Please inform the nurse of any special health problems. When the nurse is not in school, the Director of School Operations (or their designee), who has received proper training by the Student Health Services provider (MACCS), may administer emergency medication under the guidelines established by the Pennsylvania Health Services Commission.

## Covid-19 Mitigation

### Priorities and Approach

Wissahickon has updated our approach to managing Covid-19 in accordance with the CDC's recommendations released on March 1, 2024.

## VI. Safety

### Building Security & Visitors Policy

Our school building is equipped with security cameras to ensure the safety of all.

In order to maintain a safe and secure environment for all children and to protect valuable instructional time, all visitors must report directly to the office. **Parents can only come into the building if they have an appointment or if they have business in the building. All parents must be escorted at all times by a WCS staff member.** All parents, guardians, visitors and volunteers are required to sign in and out at the office. All visitors or non-school personnel must wear a badge or name tag visible to others.

WCS will ban parents, guardians, visitors and volunteers from campus for limited periods of time for violence, aggression, inappropriate language, etc.

No one is permitted in the halls, in the lunchroom, in classrooms, or in the playground without prior authorization from the office or a staff member. **The school does not offer a public bathroom. Parents will no longer be allowed to drop off lunch for their students.** If a student does not come to school with their lunch, a free nutritious lunch will be provided by the school.

***As of January of 2016, all parent volunteers who volunteer repeatedly and are solely responsible for a group of students must have PA Child Abuse and Criminal Record Checks on file at the school.*** These clearances will be held in the school's main office and as otherwise required by law.

### **Emergency Drills**

Students will participate in one fire drill per month. By law, fire drills are required, and are important to ensure the safety of students and staff.

- It is essential that when the signal is given, everyone responds promptly and clears the building as quickly as possible by the prescribed route which is posted in each classroom and office.
- Silence is always observed during the fire drill.
- Classes assemble at the predetermined location.
- Students who are not in the classroom when the alarm is sounded will leave by the nearest exit and be checked in by the staff member they're with.
- Noncompliance with these regulations is a serious infraction and will result in disciplinary action.

Unannounced drills are to prepare students and staff for any emergency that may arise that would require the building to be evacuated.

There will also be two Violent Critical Incident drills per year. WCS uses [ALICE](#) to prepare for Violent Critical Incidents such as active shooters. The mission of ALICE is to prepare individuals for violent critical incidents such that they are empowered to make decisions that will improve the chance of survival.

### **Lockers**

Each middle school student may be assigned a locker and if so, will be responsible for that locker only. Such lockers, shelves or cabinets remain the property of Wissahickon Charter School at all times. Any student tampering with a locker other than his/her own is subject to serious disciplinary action. A student is never permitted to trade lockers with another student, nor are they permitted to occupy an unused locker. Lockers may be used before class in the morning, at the teachers' discretion and after the students' last class. Unfortunately, lockers are not absolutely safe and the following suggestions should be heeded:

- Valuable items should not be stored in them.
- Make sure the locker doors are completely shut.
- Jackets and coats should be marked discreetly so they can be identified.

### **Mandated Reporting**

It is the policy of the Wissahickon Charter School that all of its employees are to be aware of, and comply with, the Child Protective Services Law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This law makes it mandatory for WCS school employees to report suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect and must file a report with the Department of Human Services. Compliance with the laws of Pennsylvania and the policies of WCS will serve to protect everyone concerned.

## Personal Property

Parents are requested to place the name of their child clearly on all personal items such as coats, jackets, book bags, lunch boxes, etc. Please encourage your child to be responsible for looking for and finding lost items. The Lost and Found Box is located across from the main office. If a student's property is damaged by another student, it is left to the families to resolve the issue. WCS assumes no responsibility for damage to personal property.

Care should be taken when you approve of your child bringing valuable or irreplaceable items to school. The school cannot be responsible for items that are lost, damaged, or otherwise missing. Also, please review the dress code located in this handbook.

## Items not permitted

- Electronic games, pagers, walkman, radios, CD players, I-pods, and MP3 players are not permitted in the school. We recognize that many of these items are used by students as they ride the school bus to and from school. **Please make sure your child understands that the device must be put away as soon as they walk through the school doors and the device can't be seen or heard.** *If the device is seen or heard, it will be confiscated by the adult present and locked in a secure place. Once confiscated, it may only be retrieved by a parent or adult designated representative, and make-up time will be required by the student.*
- Dangerous items/weapons are not permitted in school such as: razors, pen knives, hunting knives, matches, pointed objects, guns, mace, pepper spray, etc. (Knives should not be sent in school lunch containers.)
- Students may not bring items to school for the purpose of selling to students or teachers. Trading of pogs, baseball cards, slime, candy or similar materials on school property is not permitted. No fundraising or product sales are permitted in school unless authorized by the CEO.
- Any item not permitted in school will be confiscated and only returned to a parent. If the item is deemed dangerous, and the authorities are called, the item will be turned over to the authorities. Items that are not permitted in school, and are confiscated on more than one occasion, will not be returned until the end of the trimester.

## Search & Seizure

The Board of Trustees acknowledges the need for safe in-school storage of books, clothing, school materials and other personal property. Lockers, shelves or cabinets may be provided. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to authorize the Administration or designee to inspect a student's storage space when such has a reasonable suspicion to believe that the storage space is improperly used for the storage of contraband, a substance or object the possession of which is illegal or any material which poses a hazard to the safety, sanitation and good order of the school.

A student's person and possessions may be searched by the Administration provided that the individual has reasonable grounds to suspect that the search will turn up evidence that the student had violated or is violating either the law or the rules of the school.

Any illegal or prohibited materials seized during a student search may be used as evidence against the student in a school disciplinary hearing or proceeding and may be turned over to law enforcement authorities.

§ 12.14. Searches.

(a) The governing board of every school entity shall adopt reasonable policies and procedures regarding student searches. The local education agency shall notify students and their parents or guardians of the policies and procedures regarding student searches.

(b) Illegal or prohibited materials seized during a student search may be used as evidence against the student in a school disciplinary proceeding.

(c) Prior to a locker search, students shall be notified and given an opportunity to be present. When school authorities have a reasonable suspicion that the locker contains materials that pose a threat to the health, welfare or safety of students in the school, student lockers may be searched without prior warning.

## **VII. Student Information**

### **Contact & Custody Information**

Parent information forms were collected at registration before the beginning of the school year. These forms are our primary source of emergency information. For the well being of the students, it is important that the forms have been completed and returned to the school. Please notify the school office if you have changed your address, home or work telephone numbers, emergency contact persons, or any other pertinent information. It is important to have current information should an emergency arise. Please be sure to inform the person(s) you have selected as your emergency contact(s).

**In addition, a copy of any Court order or agreement affecting the custodial rights of a parent should be filed with the school.**

Failure to keep your child's school informed about your current address and telephone number may result in your not receiving notices of important academic, disciplinary and/or health information, and can result in the loss of your right to participate in important decisions.

### **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

#### **Access To and Release of Pupil Records**

The WCS will provide parent access to the educational records of their child. The access rights of parents consist of:

- The right to inspect and review the contents of education records.
- The right to obtain one copy of the education records at no charge and additional copies, if requested, at a charge.
- The right to receive from school personnel an explanation and interpretation of the education records.
- The right to a hearing to challenge the contents of the education records.

- The right to bring an attorney or parent advocate to the review of education records.

A parent seeking access to education records may make a request by telephone, in writing or in person to the CEO or designee. However, prior to reviewing and inspecting education records, a parent must sign an official request form. Every attempt will be made to expedite delivery of records to parents as soon as possible, but in every case access to education records will be granted within forty-five days of the receipt of the written request as required by law.

After examining their child's educational record, parents may request a hearing to challenge the contents of the record. The purpose of the hearing is to establish the accuracy of the record. At an informal meeting between the parents and the CEO or designee, an attempt will be made to answer any questions raised by the parents. If the questions are not resolved, a formal meeting is conducted in the office of the CEO.

No education record may be released to a third party without the consent of the parents. However, education records may be released, without the consent of the parent, to other school personnel in the school, or to another school system to which a student transfers. Also, in compliance with a judicial order or subpoena, education records may be released without the consent of parents, provided the parents are notified in advance.

Pupil directory information, which includes: the pupil's name; address; telephone number; date; and place of birth; grade level; photographic likeness; major field of study; dates of attendance; degrees and awards received; participation in officially recognized activities and sports; the most recent school attended by the student; and the weight and height of members of the athletic teams, may be released without the consent of parents unless the school is notified annually by the parents not to release the information without their prior consent.

State law provides that the following additional conditions will apply regarding the educational records of special needs students:

- If you ask to see your child's records you must be allowed to do so prior to a conference regarding an individualized education program and prior to a hearing regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child.
- You may name another person to look at your child's records if you wish to have their advice.
- You may ask for a list of the types and locations of the records kept about your child.
- The school will keep Special Education records for five years. You will be sent a notice by mail shortly before the records would be destroyed and advised of your right to obtain them for your own or the student's use. It is your responsibility to provide the school with your current address so that you will receive this notification.

## **McKinney-Vento Homelessness Education Assistance Act Information**

- a. Homeless Liaison

A designated member of the counseling team from either campus will serve as the designated homeless liaison for Wissahickon Charter School as an LEA. In addition, a counselor at the campus not served by the designated homeless liaison for the LEA will serve as the homeless liaison for that specific campus. The duties of the Homeless Liaison are as follows:

- Coordinates and collaborates with ECYEH regional and site coordinators.
- Collaborates with appropriate staff to determine eligibility for McKinney-Vento mandated services.
- Identifies students experiencing homelessness including children under age 5 and school-age children.
- Collaborates with school staff to develop interventions for students identified as homeless and develops individualized service plans as appropriate.
- Maintains necessary records and prepares related reports while ensuring confidentiality for the purpose of documenting students experiencing homelessness.
- Ensures the complete and accurate collection and submission of LEA homeless data to PIMS and ECYEH.
- Acts as a resource to school-based administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, and health services personnel regarding students experiencing homelessness, interpretation of homeless/school attendance policies and laws, and record-keeping requirements.
- Models nondiscriminatory practices in all activities.
- Obtains resources necessary to promote students' educational readiness, regular attendance and academic success.
- Attends state and regional meetings and conferences to ensure full knowledge of McKinney-Vento requirements.
- Collaborates with all levels of school and district administration and staff (e.g. building liaisons, human resources, special education, transportation, principals, psychologists, registrars, nurses, secretaries, etc.) for the purpose of ensuring the development and implementation of students' individualized service plans.
- Conducts orientation/training for school staff regarding school policy/procedure as it relates to students experiencing homelessness and/or facilitates related orientation/training provided by the ECYEH regional/site coordinator/s.
- Interprets laws relating to homeless students for the purpose of advising administration, staff and parents regarding the rights of homeless students.
- Provides support and information (e.g. to parents, guardians, etc.) for the purpose of communicating the availability of services and activities.
- Serves as a liaison (e.g. with schools, homeless shelters/ facilities, social service agencies, court related services, police departments, etc.) to coordinate appropriate assistance for students experiencing homelessness.
- Meets with families and students experiencing homelessness to assess and prioritize needs and make linkages with district and community resources as appropriate.
- Coordinates with a variety of outside service providers and community agencies to meet students' needs and avoid duplication of services.
- Connects students experiencing homelessness with available tutoring, afterschool and



summer programming to support academic success.

- Ensures that families, and children and youths experiencing homelessness receive early childhood educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Early Intervention, and preschool.
- Ensures that families, and children and youths experiencing homelessness are referred to health care services, dental services, and other appropriate medical services.
- Ensures that public notice of the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness is displayed in every school building, and in community locations as appropriate.

a. **Homeless Liaison Contact Information**

- LEA (and Fernhill Campus): Aitiya Hobson ([a.hobson@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:a.hobson@wissahickoncharter.org); 267-338-1020 ext. 3905)
- Awbury Campus: Ally Rasp ([a.rasp@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:a.rasp@wissahickoncharter.org); 267-774-4370)

a. **The McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless**

- Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (per Title IX, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act) defines *homeless* as follows:
- The term “homeless children and youths”–

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and

(B) includes–

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;\*

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;and

(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

a. **Unaccompanied Youth**

- An *unaccompanied youth* is defined in the McKinney-Vento Act as “a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.” (42 U.S.C. § 11434a(6)). This

definition can be used to describe youth who are residing with a caregiver who is not a parent or guardian as well as youth who are living without the care of an adult.

- An unaccompanied youth must fit the definitions of both homeless and unaccompanied in the McKinney-Vento Act to receive assistance under the provisions in the law. That is, an unaccompanied youth is a child or youth who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian *and* lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

a. Rights of Students Experiencing Homelessness

The McKinney-Vento Act requires schools to ensure students receive a free and suitable public education by removing barriers to school enrollment and full, basic, daily participation in school activities. This includes:

- Immediate enrollment
- Free school meals
- Help from school with any necessary enrollment documents
- Help from school setting up transportation service (if the student qualifies)
- Help from school with getting basic uniform clothing
- Help from school with basic school supplies
- Help from school with any basic clothing needs
- Help from school with basic school graduation needs and expenses

a. Dispute Resolution Process

In the event of a dispute regarding the educational placement of homeless children and youths, Wissahickon Charter School follows procedures developed but the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

- Level 1- Dispute may be raised with the school, preferably by contacting the homeless liaison directly. While the dispute is pending, the student shall be admitted and allowed to attend school without delay.
- Level 2- If the student or family is dissatisfied with the school's handling of the dispute, they may file a complaint with regional McKinney-Vento coordinators at Intermediate Unit 26 (School District of Philadelphia). In the event a dispute cannot be resolved at the regional level, the dispute will be forwarded to the state coordinator for resolution.

Those procedures can be found in detail here:

<https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/education/programs-and-services/instruction/elementary-and-secondary-education/homeless-education/dispute-resolution-process.html>

a. Links for Further Information

- Basic Education Circular- Education for Homeless Youth:  
<https://www.pa.gov/en/agencies/education/resources/policies-acts-and-laws/basic-education-circulars-becs/us-code/education-for-homeless-youth.html>
- Board Policy 251:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sEmt2hND0XH21laUptWOgDi8QwcLFvN-/view?usp=sh>

aring

### **Use of Student Images**

Throughout the school year, students will be involved in activities or projects that may be newsworthy. We enjoy publicizing the good things that happen at our school. In these cases, the children's work and/or pictures and names may be published in one of the local papers. In addition, children's work and/or pictures may also appear on the Internet along with their first names. If you would not like your child seen in WCS publications or on WCS social media, please make your child's teacher and the main office aware.

## **VIII. Technology**

### **Student Equipment Policy**

Subject to the terms of this Agreement, Wissahickon Charter School (hereinafter referred to as WCS) will allow its students to use a WCS-owned iPad (grades K-8), (which, together with installed software, peripherals and attachments make up the "Equipment") at the student's home for purposes of participating in learning at school and at home through the WCS's learning management system as required by the WCS Education Plan.

1. WCS owns the Equipment and through this Agreement shall permit its use by all of the students listed below.
2. Students agree to read, comply, and accept the terms and conditions of the WCS's Acceptable Use of Internet, Computers and Network Resources (AUP), and the AUP's Administrative Regulations.
3. Students' parents agree to read, comply and accept the terms and conditions of WCS's Standards for Proper iPad Care & 1:1 Device Program Policy & Guidelines.
4. The Student agrees to participate in all assigned learning activities both in school and at home via the WCS Learning Management System as directed by the WCS Educational Plan, and agrees that this is the sole purpose for which the WCS gives Student the use of this Equipment.
5. Students and Student's parents/guardians (collectively "Student's family") agree that they shall each and together be responsible for the security, care, custody, and control of the Equipment at all times. Lost/stolen or damaged Equipment must be reported to directly to the Technology Department immediately via email at [helpis@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:helpis@wissahickoncharter.org).

A. Where Student claims theft of Equipment, Student shall also report the theft to the police or if the theft took place on school property, to the appropriate Principal who will

report to the police. Students shall cooperate with the police in any subsequent investigation.

B. The cost of Equipment stolen, damaged or lost through Student's misuse, neglect or negligence may be paid by Student and Student's family, up to replacement cost for the stolen, damaged or lost Equipment. Where appropriate, Student or Student's family may choose to file a claim with the family's homeowner's/renter's insurance and pay only the applicable deductibles.

6. Any Student who violates this Agreement or utilizes the Equipment for a purpose that violates the AUP or any other WCS policy will be subject to discipline, where applicable.

7. Users shall have no expectation of privacy when using WCS's resources and devices such as the Equipment, and the Equipment is subject to search upon a reasonable belief that evidence of a crime or violation of any WCS policy may be found there. Further, the Technology Department will monitor and enforce the AUP regarding the following:

A. Applications and other software ("Apps") installed on WCS owned devices are subject to review, and the Technology Department will remove any unauthorized Apps.

B. Internet access on the Equipment will utilize WCS's filtering software. Any attempt by Student to circumvent the WCS's internet filters will be a violation of this Agreement and the WCS AUP.

C. Authorized Apps on the Equipment are the property of or licensed to WCS and shall not be transferred to personally owned devices under any circumstances.

D. The WCS's Technology Department shall be solely responsible for the installation of permitted Apps and the repair of damaged or malfunctioning Equipment. Students shall not install or permit the installation of unauthorized Apps on WCS owned devices or attempt to repair any damaged or malfunctioning Equipment.

E. The WCS assumes no liability for the preservation of unauthorized Apps installed or data stored on the Equipment. If a device is lost or stolen, or if the WCS's Technology Department finds unauthorized or modified Apps on the Equipment, WCS may wipe/erase all data, Apps, and settings on the Equipment without regard for the loss of data.

8. Upon WCS's demand for the return of the Equipment or at the point that Student is no longer enrolled in WCS, whichever is earlier, Student shall surrender the Equipment together with all peripherals and attachments to WCS technology department. If the Student fails to return all the Equipment, peripherals and attachments as required, the Student's family agrees to pay the fair market value of the unreturned items. Upon surrender of the Equipment for re-issue to another user, the Technology Department will fully erase the Equipment and restore it to all factory settings which will destroy all data on the Equipment.

9. Disclaimer: WCS makes no warranties of any kind, either expressed or implied, that the functions of the Equipment, Apps, or other programs provided will be error-free or without defect; WCS will not be responsible for any damage users may suffer, including, but not limited to, loss of data or interruptions of service; WCS is not responsible for the accuracy or quality of the information or data stored on the Equipment; and WCS will not be responsible for any financial obligations arising through the unauthorized use of the device or resource.

### **Cell Phone & Smart Watch Policy**

#### ***Updated June 2019***

Cell phones have become a way of life, a technological convenience that has impacted all of our lives in one way or another. However, in the school environment, cell phones have become a distraction, interruption, and a method of illegal exchange of information. The ringing of cell phones during class and constant text-messaging takes away from the valuable time needed for instruction and most importantly, student learning.

**No student** will be allowed to use a cell phone during school hours, on school grounds or school-sponsored activities. This includes lunch, recess, transitions, entry, and field trips. Students in grades K-4 must keep their phones off and secured in their backpack stored safely in the classroom. Students in grades 5-8 will turn them in to the designated staff member to be secured and locked upon arrival to homeroom. Wissahickon Charter School does not assume responsibility or financial liability for cell phones while they are in our possession. If a student is using a cell phone during the school day or if a 5th-8th grade student did not turn it in, WCS will take the following actions:

- **Collect phone and lock it up**

If a student refuses to give her/his cell phone, cell phone will be held in Dean of Culture's office until a parent picks up the phone.

Our goal is to help students develop more responsibility for gathering the necessary materials required daily prior to coming to school. Emergencies do not include a forgotten lunch, or torn or wet clothing.

**Students will not be interrupted in their classrooms to receive telephone calls. In the event of a family emergency or urgent issue to communicate with your child, please call the school office.**

### **WCS Computer Acceptable Use Policy**

#### **Purpose**

The Wissahickon Charter School (WCS) is providing its employees and students with access to computing equipment, systems and local network functions such as WCS e-mail and the Internet. This access has a limited educational purpose for students and is to facilitate employees' work productivity.

#### **Access rights and privileges.**

Wissahickon Charter has the right to place reasonable restrictions on the use of equipment, resources and material students and employees access or post through the system. Students and employees are also expected to follow the rules set forth in the WCS rules and regulations governing conduct, disciplinary code, and the law in their use of WCS's equipment and network. This access has not been established as a public access service or a public forum. All access and rights are privileges granted by WCS, and users should expect no privacy rights.

All WCS employees and students will have access to the Internet through the WCS private network. Parents may specifically request that their children not be provided such access by notifying WCS in writing.

Students in Kindergarten through second grade may be given a WCS email address, and third grade or higher will be given a WCS email address. WCS reserves the right to read the contents of the email account if there is cause for concern around the contents of an email communication. WCS reserves the right to revoke the email account if a student is not using this tool responsibly.

### **Unacceptable Uses**

Users may not use WCS's private network to access material that is profane or obscene (pornography of any kind), that advocates illegal acts, or that advocates violence or discrimination towards other people (hate literature).

Users may not post personal information on the Internet about themselves or other people. Personal contact information includes address, telephone, school address, work address, pictures or video bites, clips, etc. Students may not agree to meet with someone they have met on the Internet without their parent's approval and participation.

Users may not attempt to gain unauthorized access to any other computer system. This includes attempting to log in through another person's account or access another person's files. These actions are illegal, even if only for the purposes of "browsing", "snooping", or "electronic discovery".

Users may not deliberately disrupt or harm hardware or systems, interfere with computer or network performance, interfere with another's ability to use equipment and systems, or destroy data.

Users may not use the WCS private network to engage in illegal acts, such as arranging for a drug sale or the purchase of alcohol, engaging in criminal gang activity, threatening the safety of person, accessing or sharing unauthorized copyrighted music, movies, and other intellectual property, etc.

Users may not utilize peer-to-peer file-sharing applications or execute programs to facilitate the downloading or exchange of copyrighted or unauthorized music, movies, and other materials.

Users may not use the WCS private network to solicit information with the intent of using such information to cause personal harm or bodily injury to another or others.

Users may not post information that could endanger an individual, cause personal damage or a danger of

service disruption.

Users may not knowingly or recklessly post false or defamatory information about a person or organization.

Users may not intentionally seek information on, obtain copies of, or modify files, other data, or passwords belonging to other users.

Users may not indirectly or directly make connections that create “backdoors” to WCS, other organizations, community groups, etc. that allow unauthorized access to the WCS network.

Users may not use obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude, inflammatory, hateful, threatening, or disrespectful language.

Users may not engage in personal attacks, including prejudicial or discriminatory attacks.

Users may not harass another person. Harassment is persistently acting in a manner that distresses or annoys another person.

Users may not re-post a message that was sent to them privately without permission of the person who sent them the message.

Users may not forward or post chain letters or engage in "spamming". Spamming is sending an annoying or unnecessary message to a large number of people.

Users will not install or reproduce unauthorized or unlicensed software on WCS resources.

Users may not plagiarize works that they find on the Internet or other resources.

Users may not use technology resources and Internet for private business activities or unreasonable personal use.

Users may not use the WCS private network for political lobbying. Students will not download files unless approved by their teacher.

### **System Security Obligations**

Users are responsible for the use of their individual access account(s) and should take all reasonable precautions to prevent others from being able to use their account(s), including coworkers, friends, or family. Under no conditions should a user provide his/her password to another person.

Attempts to log on to the WCS private network or any other network as a system administrator is prohibited. Any user identified as a security risk or having a history of violating this or any other Acceptable Use Policy may be denied access to the WCS private network.

Users will avoid the inadvertent spread of computer viruses by following the WCS virus protection procedures if they download software or share common file directory.

Users should immediately notify a teacher or system administrator of any possible security problem.

Students will promptly disclose to their teacher or other appropriate school employee any message received that is inappropriate.

### **Filtering**

As required by law and in recognition of the need to establish a safe and appropriate computing environment, WCS will use filtering technology to prohibit access, to the degree possible, to objectionable or unsuitable content that might otherwise be accessible via the Internet.

### **Due Process**

Wissahickon Charter School will cooperate fully with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation concerning or relating to any illegal activities conducted through WCS's private network.

In the event there is an allegation that a student has violated WCS's Acceptable Use Policy, the student will be provided with a written notice of the alleged violation and will be provided with notice and opportunity to be heard in the manner set forth in the Student Hearing Process Policy. Disciplinary actions may be taken.

### **Administration**

The Director of Technology has the responsibility and authority for the development, publication, implementation and ongoing administration and enforcement of the processes and techniques required to protect Wissahickon Charter Schools technology systems and services from unauthorized access, loss or misuse.

The Information Technology Manager and school administrators have the responsibility to establish a plan to ensure adequate supervision of students. They are also responsible for interpreting and enforcing this policy at the local level.

Local management has the responsibility to interpret and enforce this policy.



## **VIV. Appendix**

### **Appendix A: Title IX Policy**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §1681 *et seq.*, protects students from discrimination based on sex in educational programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. Title IX states that:

No person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any academic, extracurricular, research, occupational training, or other education program or activity operated by a recipient, which receives Federal financial assistance.

This policy reaffirms the commitment of the Wissahickon Charter School (“Charter School”) to comply with Title IX. This policy covers student on student as well as employee on student sexual harassment.

#### **When Does Title IX Apply?**

Title IX covers sexual harassment that happens in a school’s “education program or activity.” This includes locations, events, and circumstances where a school exercises substantial control over the context of the alleged harassment and the person accused of committing the sexual harassment.

#### **Sexual Harassment**

Title IX prohibits the following conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the school’s education program or activity.
- School employee conditioning educational benefits on participation in unwelcome sexual conduct, otherwise known as “Quid pro Quo” harassment.
- “Sexual assault,” as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v) “dating violence,” as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10) “domestic violence,” as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), or “stalking” as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30)

#### **Charter School’s Response to Allegations/Knowledge of Sexual Harassment**

Once the Charter School has actual knowledge of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment, the Charter school must respond or take action.

The Charter School has “actual knowledge” when it has been given notice that a person may have been victimized by sexual harassment. Any person, whether the alleged victim or a parent, friend, or bystander, has the right to report sexual harassment to put the Charter school on notice. A report to any school employee will result in the Charter School having “actual knowledge.” Further, Charter School

personnel who personally witness sexual harassment can mean that the Charter School has “actual knowledge.”

The Charter School cannot be “deliberately indifferent” in responding to a complaint of sexual harassment. That means that it cannot be “clearly unreasonable” in light of the known circumstances. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Title IX Coordinator must act promptly, and must provide the following information to the complainant:

- The availability of supportive measures
- The right to file a complaint
- How to file a complaint

### **Supportive Measures:**

Supportive measures are free, individualized services designed to restore or preserve equal access to education, protect or preserve equal access to education, protect safety, or deter sexual harassment. A complainant does not need to file a formal complaint for him/her to receive supportive measures. Supportive measures are intended to support a student and are not punitive or disciplinary with respect to another student. These measures do not unreasonably burden any other person. Each student, the complainant and respondent, must have equal access to education prior to any determination of responsibility.

Examples of supportive measures include:

- Counseling
- Extension of deadlines
- Modification of work or class schedules
- Escort services
- Mutual restrictions on contact between individuals

The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for implementing these supportive measures and must consider the alleged victim’s wishes when it comes to requests for supportive measures. Generally, these measures must remain confidential.

### **Title IX Coordinator:**

Per Title IX federal funding mandates, the Charter School shall designate a Title IX Coordinator whose duties will include:

- (a) receiving reports from victims and third parties of sexual discrimination or sexual harassment in person or by mail, telephone, email, or any other means that results in the Title IX Coordinator receiving the report at any time, including nonbusiness hours;
- (b) oversee mandated (seven-year) recordkeeping regarding investigations, appeals, informal resolutions, and training for Coordinator, investigators and decision-makers on the definition of sexual harassment in the Final Rule, the application of the Title IX policy, how to

- make relevancy determinations (including how to apply rape shield protections for complainants), the Charter School's education program or activity, and the grievance process, including how to conduct investigations, hearings (including technology for live hearings), appeals, informal resolution processes, how to serve impartially, including by avoiding prejudgment of the facts at issue, conflicts of interest, and bias;
- (c) maintaining current contact information in Charter School's nondiscrimination notices and website;
- (d) ensuring Charter School is compliant with Title IX, coordinating the investigation and disciplinary process and looking for patterns or systematic problems with compliance to ensure Charter School fulfills federal obligations;
- (e) signing formal complaints alleging sexual harassment;
- (f) receiving notice of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment (or authorized Charter School representative authorized to institute corrective measures), triggering actual knowledge designation;
- (g) upon receipt of a complaint, providing prompt info to complainants about availability of supportive measures, the right to file a complaint and how to file a complaint and consideration of complainant's wishes regarding supportive measures;
- (h) ensuring the Charter School grievance process and the Title IX Coordinator, investigator, decision-maker and facilitator of an informal resolution process is free of conflicts of interest or bias against a party;
- (i) dismissing a complaint (1) when complainant provides written notice to the Title IX Coordinator to do so, (2) when allegations do not constitute sexual harassment, (3) if the allegations did not occur in the Charter School's educational program or activity, (4) if the allegations did not occur in the United States, (5) if respondent is no longer enrolled or employed by the Charter School, or (6) when specific circumstances prevent the gathering of evidence sufficient to reach a determination;
- (j) coordinating Charter School efforts to comply with Title IX; and
- (k) respecting a complainant's wishes regarding whether the Charter School investigates, unless the Title IX Coordinator determines that signing a formal complaint to initiate an investigation over the wishes of the complainant is not clearly unreasonable in light of the known circumstances;

The Charter School's Title IX Coordinator's duties do not include:

- (a) the ability to be named the decision-maker tasked with issuing a written determination regarding responsibility with findings of fact, conclusion about whether the alleged conduct occurred, rationale for the result as to each allegation, any disciplinary sanctions imposed on the respondent and whether remedies will be provided to the complainant (Title IX Coordinator or the investigator cannot be named decision-maker);
- (b) the ability to be named as the decision-maker on any appeal (cannot be the same person as the initial decision-maker on the formal complaint, the investigator, or the Title IX Coordinator);
- (c) any other job responsibility that creates a conflict of interest with responsibilities under Title IX;

- (d) becoming a complainant or a party during the grievance process upon the signing of a formal complaint; and
- (e) a requirement that the Title IX Coordinator file a formal complaint any time the Charter School receives notice of multiple reports against a particular respondent and corresponding safe harbor.

### **Grievance Procedures**

Procedures outlining the Title IX Grievance Process that are consistent with this policy and final rules from the United States Department of Education are attached to this policy.

The Charter School will follow a grievance process that complies with the Final Rule before the imposition of any disciplinary sanctions or other actions that are not supportive measures against a respondent.

The Charter School will not restrict rights protected under the U.S. Constitution, including the First Amendment, Fifth Amendment, and Fourteenth Amendment, when complying with Title IX. The Charter School will investigate sexual harassment allegations in any formal complaint, which can be filed by a complainant, or signed by a Title IX Coordinator.

It is the policy of the Charter School during the grievance process to treat complainants and respondents equitably. That includes providing remedies to a complainant if a respondent is found responsible, and by following these policies in imposing discipline on the respondent.

The Title IX Coordinator shall be capable of conducting a thorough and complete investigation and shall seek advice and assistance from the Board of Trustees if the Title IX Coordinator believes that he or she lacks the capacity to conduct a thorough and complete investigation of the alleged misconduct. If the Title IX Coordinator or the CEO is the one accused of sexual harassment, or the Title IX Coordinator has bias or a conflict of interest, the Board will appoint a qualified individual who is not employed by the Charter School to conduct the investigation.

If the Title IX Coordinator submits the complaint, the Title IX Coordinator must recuse him/herself from the investigation and allow the Board to appoint a qualified individual who is not employed by the Charter School to conduct the investigation.

Once the Title IX Coordinator completes his/her investigatory report, the case will be turned over to a neutral decision maker for the hearing process. A neutral decision maker must be a person(s) who is free from all conflicts of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents and must receive special training about how to be impartial and how to decide what evidence is relevant.

A school can remove a respondent from the Charter school's educational programs or activities on an emergency basis if the respondent poses an immediate threat to anyone's physical health or safety. If

the respondent is an employee, the Charter school may place the employee on administrative leave pending the investigation.

No one will be forced, threatened, coerced, or discriminated against for choosing not to be a part of this grievance process.

Both complainant and respondent have equal rights throughout the entire investigation and hearing process, including, but not limited to, the opportunity to present witnesses and evidence, including expert witnesses, as well as inculpatory and exculpatory evidence. The Charter School will further comply with all disability laws to ensure that all participants are appropriately accommodated.

#### **Publishing Requirements of this Policy:**

The Charter School will disseminate a notice of nondiscrimination, which the U.S. Department of Education recommends should specify that sexual harassment and violence are prohibited. Such notice shall appear in the Charter School's student handbook and/or code of conduct, on the Charter School's website, and be available in print on campus so that school members may understand its purpose and utility and include enough detail in the policy so that members of the community realize that sexual harassment and sexual violence are prohibited forms of sex discrimination.

The Charter School will adopt and publish a grievance procedure outlining the complaint, investigation, and disciplinary process for addressing sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence occurring within educational programs. This process should address discrimination perpetrated by students, employees, or third parties. Additionally, school security and/or law enforcement personnel must notify victims of their rights to use the Charter school's grievance procedure in addition to being able to file a criminal complaint.

This grievance procedure requires the Charter school's process be "prompt and equitable," meaning it must be a timely response to discrimination and provide both parties equivalent rights during the disciplinary process rather than having one-sided due process. For example, if the accused student is given a right to have an attorney present, so may the accusing student.

While sexual misconduct complaints may be resolved through informal mechanisms, such as mediation, students are not required to use informal methods of grievance resolution and should not be pressured into such a process.

The Charter School will provide educational and awareness programming on sexual harassment and discrimination. The Charter School must address hostile educational environments created by sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence school-wide. Addressing a hostile environment means remedying a current situation, addressing its effects, and preventing its recurrence in the future.

The Charter School will maintain and make publicly available on its website all materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, and any person who facilitates an informal

resolution process (or available in response to a request from the public if it does not maintain a website).

The Charter School shall designate an individual as its Title IX Coordinator and publish the Coordinator's name, title, office address, email address and phone number on its website, notifying applicants for admission or employment, students, parents, legal guardians, employees, and unions of this designation. Designating one employee as the Title IX Coordinator ensures that students and employees know that notifying the Title IX Coordinator triggers the Charter School's legal obligations to respond to sexual harassment under the regulations.

### **Training**

Title IX mandates that Charter School employees that address sexual violence complaints have appropriate training. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) recommends that teachers, campus security, administrators, counselors, nurses, cleaning staff, coaches, and others likely to receive reports be trained on how to identify and report sexual harassment and violence.

Per the Department of Education, the Charter School will:

- 1) Ensure that responsible employees with the authority to address sexual violence know how to respond appropriately to reports of sexual violence;
- 2) That other responsible employees know that they are obligated to report sexual violence to appropriate school officials; and
- 3) That all other employees understand how to respond to reports of sexual violence.

The Charter School will ensure that counselors and advocates understand the extent to which they may and will keep a report confidential.

The Charter School will provide training to all employees likely to witness or receive reports of sexual violence, including teachers, campus security, school administrators, school counselors, general counsels, athletic coaches, and nurses.

The Charter School will train responsible employees to inform students of:

- 1) The reporting obligations of responsible employees;
- 2) Students' option to request confidentiality and available confidential advocacy, counseling, or other support services; and
- 3) Their right to file a Title IX complaint with the Charter School and to report a crime to campus security or local law enforcement.

The Charter School will ensure that the Title IX Coordinator, investigator, decision-maker, and/or facilitator of an informal resolution process be free of conflicts of interest or bias against a party and that such Charter School Title IX personnel be trained on the application of the Title IX Policy, the definition of sexual harassment in the Final Rule, the scope of the Charter School's education program or activity, how to conduct an investigation and grievance process, including hearings (and technology to be used at a live hearing), appeals, and informal resolution processes, as applicable, and how to make relevancy determinations (and applying rape shield protections for complainants) and how to serve impartially, including by avoiding prejudgment of the facts at issue, conflicts of interest, and bias.

The Charter School shall maintain and make publicly available on its website all materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process (or available in response to a request from the public if it does not maintain a website).

The training materials must be impartial and not rely on sex stereotypes.

Additionally, the Charter School will ensure that staff members are capable of providing culturally competent counseling to all complainants. It will ensure that its counselors and other staff who are responsible for receiving and responding to complaints of sexual violence, including investigators and hearing board members, receive appropriate training about working with Lesbian/Gay/Bi-sexual/Transgender and gender-nonconforming students and same-sex sexual violence.

The Charter School will also ensure that any reporting forms, information, or training about sexual violence be provided in a manner that is accessible to students and employees with disabilities, for example, by providing electronically-accessible versions of paper forms to individuals with print disabilities, or by providing a sign language interpreter to a deaf individual attending a training.

To ensure that students understand their rights under the laws cited herein, the Charter School will provide age-appropriate training to its students regarding Title IX and sexual violence. Training may be provided separately or as part of the Charter School's broader training on sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

The Charter School may include these education programs in its orientation programs for new students, faculty, staff, and employees, training for student athletes and coaches, and assemblies and "back to school nights." These programs will include a discussion of what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence, the Charter School's policies and disciplinary procedures, and the consequences of violating these policies.

The Charter School also will include such information in their employee handbook and any handbooks that student athletes and members of student activity groups receive. These materials will include where and to whom students should go if they are victims of sexual violence. These materials also will tell students and Charter School employees what to do if they learn of an incident of sexual violence.

**Other Reporting Requirements in Compliance with Local and State Laws:**

If the complaint involves sexual assault, rape or conduct of a criminal nature, the local Police Department shall be contacted and a report of the incident made by the Charter School, in accordance with law enforcement. A report must also be made by the mandatory reporter to ChildLine and the Department of Public Welfare in accordance with the Charter School's Board approved Mandatory Reporter Policy. If there is any question of whether the conduct complained of constituted criminal activity, the Charter School's Board Solicitor should be contacted immediately. Knowledge of a law enforcement investigation does not relieve the Charter School of its independent obligation to investigate the misconduct.

Documents regarding substantiated charges of sexual harassment shall be placed in the accused student's file. Documents regarding unsubstantiated charges shall not be placed in student files, but shall be maintained by the Board of Trustees in a confidential file established expressly for retaining Title IX complaints against students.

**Retaliation:**

Charging an individual with code of conduct violations that do not involve sexual harassment, but arise out of the same facts or circumstances as a report or formal complaint of sexual harassment, for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by Title IX constitutes retaliation.

The Charter School will keep confidential the identity of complainants, respondents, and witnesses, except as may be permitted by FERPA, as required by law, or as necessary to carry out a Title IX proceeding.

Complaints alleging retaliation may be filed according to the Charter school's prompt and equitable grievance procedures. The exercise of rights protected under the First Amendment does not constitute retaliation.

Charging an individual with a code of conduct violation for making a materially false statement in bad faith in the course of a Title IX grievance proceeding does not constitute retaliation; however, a determination regarding responsibility, alone, is not sufficient to conclude that any party made a bad faith materially false statement.

**CONCLUSION**

If any section of this procedure is declared invalid, the remaining sections shall remain valid and unaffected.

**Title IX Complaint Procedures**



Once a formal complaint is filed, the student may seek either an informal or formal resolution of his or her complaint:

#### **A. Informal**

When a Title IX Coordinator receives a complaint, the Title IX Coordinator may offer an informal resolution process. An informal resolution process is only appropriate if each party enters the process voluntarily and the respondent is a student. The Charter School will not force, threaten, or require any party, complainant or respondent, into participating in informal resolution.

The Charter School will provide a facilitator to oversee the informal resolution process who is free from conflicts of interest or bias, and who has received special training.

The Charter School will provide both complainants and respondents with notice of the allegations, notice of their rights, information about whether an informal process is confidential, and about withdrawing from the process.

Any party, at any time, can decide to stop participating in an informal resolution process and instead go to a formal process.

#### **B. Formal**

A formal complaint is an official document alleging sexual harassment. Any student (or any parent of a student) who believes that his or her Title IX rights have been violated may file a complaint requesting a formal investigation into the allegations. Formal complaints shall be taken in writing by the Title IX Coordinator and signed by the complainant. A formal complaint may be filed with the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, or by electronic mail at the Title IX Coordinator's posted contact information on the Charter School's website.

In cases where an alleged victim does not file a formal complaint, a Title IX Coordinator might file a complaint and initiate grievance procedures where discipline is appropriate.

A thorough and complete investigation shall be conducted by the Title IX Coordinator.

This investigation shall determine: (1) whether or not the conduct occurred; (2) whether the conduct constitutes a violation of this policy, and, (3) if the conduct was a violation, what actions the Charter School will take to end the violation.

To the extent possible and allowed by law, confidentiality shall be maintained within the confines of the investigation of the alleged prohibited behavior. All parties will be treated with dignity and due process. The Charter School is not allowed to access a party's personal records if they are maintained by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other professional for the purpose of treatment to the party, without consent.

### **C. Dismissals:**

The Charter School **must** dismiss a complaint:

- That does not describe conduct that meets the definition of sexual harassment;
- That alleges sexual harassment that did not occur in the Charter school's educational program or activity;
- That alleges sexual harassment that did not occur in the United States.

The Charter School **may** dismiss a complaint:

- If the complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing that the complainant wishes to withdraw the formal complaint or some of its allegations;
- If the respondent is no longer enrolled or employed by the Charter school;
- If specific circumstances prevent the Charter school from gathering specific evidence sufficient to reach a determination about the allegation.

When the Charter School dismisses a formal complaint, or any allegations in it, the Charter School must promptly send written notice of the dismissal to the parties. That notice must also clearly state the reasons. The Charter School can still address dismissed Title IX complaints under the Student Code of Conduct, even if the misconduct is not sexual harassment under Title IX.

### **D. Conducting Investigations**

The Title IX Coordinator receiving a complaint, including a Title IX complaint, shall take the details of the complaint in writing and have the complainant sign it. All Title IX complaints against a student shall be received, investigated and disposed of in accordance with the procedures set forth in this Policy.

- Upon receipt of the complaint, the Title IX Coordinator must provide the parties with written notice including the names of the parties, the date and location of the alleged misconduct, and a description of the alleged misconduct. The notice must further:
  - o Provide the allegations and facts that would constitute sexual harassment
  - o State the presumption of innocence
  - o A statement that the parties are entitled to an advisor of their choice
  - o A statement that the parties can request to inspect and review certain evidence
  - o Provide information regarding the Charter School's Code of Conduct and penalties for false statements.
  - o If additional allegations come to light, notice must be supplemented.
- The Title IX Coordinator shall meet with every complainant and respondent. The complainant may have his or her Parent(s) present during any such meeting. The respondent, if

he or she is a student, shall also have the right to have his or her parent(s) present at any meetings with the Title IX Coordinator as well.

- The Charter School shall provide written notice of the date, time, location, participants, and purpose of all interviews, or other meetings, with sufficient time for the party to prepare.
- The Respondent is presumed not responsible during the investigation.
- From these meetings, the Title IX Coordinator will conduct an adequate, reliable, and impartial investigation of complaint(s), which includes interviewing and obtaining statements from any witnesses of both the complainant and alleged perpetrator, and the review of all evidence presented. Parties will be provided updates until a determination is made in writing.
- No information protected by a legal privilege, such as the attorney-client privilege, or the doctor-patient privilege, can be used during an investigation unless the person holding that privilege has waived it.
- After gathering evidence, the Charter School must prepare an investigative report on the allegations of the formal complaint. The report, along with physical evidence (including written witness statements), must be provided to the parties. The Charter School will give each party ten (10) days to respond to the evidence in writing. The Charter School will review and consider the response of any party before making a final determination. After allowing time for a response, the Charter School will then finalize the report and submit it to the parties at least ten (10) days prior to any determination of responsibility or a hearing.

#### **E. Hearings/Final Determination of Responsibility**

- Final Determinations of Responsibility will only be provided after a hearing.
- The Charter School has the option to hold a live hearing. If a live hearing is held, the complainant can request that he/she be in a separate room from the respondent, with technology allowing everyone to see/hear each other. A court reporter will be present at a live hearing and a transcript will be provided to all parties at the conclusion of the hearing.
- The Charter School shall provide written notice of the date, time, location, participants, and purpose of the hearing, with sufficient time for the party to prepare.
- If a live hearing is held, the Charter School must provide each party with an advisor, of the Charter school's own choosing, free of charge, solely for the purpose of conducting cross examination on that party's behalf. **No party is ever allowed to personally cross examine anyone.** Live cross examination must only be done through an attorney or advisor provided by the Charter School.

- In the absence of a live hearing, the Charter School will provide the parties equal opportunity to submit relevant, written questions to each other, before the Charter School reaches a determination of responsibility. If a party refuses to answer any questions, the party must state the reasons why.
  - o Questions and evidence about the complainant's prior sexual history are not relevant, except:
    - § Where such information is offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed sexual harassment
    - § Where it relates to sexual behavior between the complainant and respondent and if offered to prove consent.
- If a party or witness chooses not to appear at a live hearing, or not to answer cross examination questions, the decision-maker excludes that party or witness's statements and evaluates any evidence that does not include those statements.
- A neutral decision maker, who did not prepare the investigatory report, will preside over the hearing and make the final determination of responsibility.
- The neutral decision maker will not make inferences about the determination regarding responsibility based on the fact that a party or witness did not come to the hearing or submit answers to cross examination.
- The neutral decision maker will make a determination on whether the respondent is responsible within sixty (60) days of the receipt of a complaint unless good cause is shown. Good cause can include law enforcement activities, the absence of a party or witness, the absence of a party's advisor of choice, or the need to provide language assistance or accommodation of a disability. [JM1]
- The complaint will be decided using a clear and convincing standard (*i.e.*, it is more likely than not that sexual harassment or violence occurred). [JM2]
- The determination will be in writing, and include:
  - o The Charter School Policies that were violated
  - o Standard of proof used
  - o A description of the procedural steps that were taken by the Charter school
  - o A findings of fact section
  - o A section that draws conclusions after applying the facts to the applicable portions of the Charter school's policies
  - o A statement and rationale for the ultimate determination of responsibility
  - o Disciplinary sanctions that the Charter school will impose on the respondent
  - o Possible remedies for the complainant (see supportive measures above)

- o A statement of the remedies provided to the complainant and rationale, addressing how those remedies will restore or preserve equal access
  - o The right and procedure for each party to file an appeal.
- The determination will be provided to both parties simultaneously.
- Both parties have ten (10) days to file an appeal.
- Discipline for a respondent found responsible for sexual harassment can include but not be limited to in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion. If the Title IX Coordinator or the CEO believes that expulsion against an accused student may be appropriate, then a formal hearing shall be held pursuant to the Pennsylvania Code of Regulations, 22 Pa.Code §12.6 and §12.8. The formal disciplinary procedures contained in the Charter School's Code of Conduct shall be followed for such hearings to assure due process protection for the respondent.
- Even though FERPA limits disclosure of certain information in disciplinary proceedings, the Charter School will disclose information to the complainant about the sanction imposed on the perpetrator when the sanction directly relates to the complainant. This could include an order that the perpetrator stay away from the complainant, or that the perpetrator is prohibited from attending the Charter School for a period of time, or is transferred to other homeroom/classes in the Charter School building.
- The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for carrying out the remedies contained in the written decision.

## **F. Appeals**

- Both the complainant and respondent are permitted to appeal a determination of responsibility.
- Appeals can be taken:
  - o After a dismissal before the grievance process, whether mandatory or discretionary
  - o At the end of the grievance process
- Grounds for Appeal
  - o A procedural irregularity affected the outcome of the matter
  - o New evidence has been discovered that was not reasonably available at the time of the determination on responsibility or dismissal
  - o A conflict of interest on the part of a Title IX Coordinator, an investigator who compiled evidence, or a decision maker, and the conflict of interest affected the outcome

- Appeals will be referred to the Charter School Board of Trustees, unless the Board has or is scheduled to preside over a formal disciplinary hearing pursuant to 22 Pa.Code §12.6 and §12.8. In those cases, the Charter School Board of Trustees will appoint a neutral hearing officer to hear appeals of a determination of responsibility who is 1) not an employee of the Charter school, 2) not the investigator of the complaint, and 3) not the neutral decision-maker who made the initial determination.
- Both parties will have equal opportunities to submit a written statement supporting or challenging the outcome to the Board of Trustees or neutral hearing officer
- After considering the parties' written statements, the Board of Trustees or neutral hearing officer must issue a written decision and send it to the parties simultaneously. This decision is final.

## **Appendix B: USDA Nondiscrimination Statement**

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

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax:  
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. email:  
Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## **Appendix C: Lottery and Enrollment Policies and Procedures**

### **Lottery and Enrollment Policies and Procedures**

State law mandates that charter school enrollment be governed by lottery. Children who are not selected can be placed on a waiting list. Children who live outside of Philadelphia can apply if every interested child in Philadelphia already has been accepted. **Preference is given to applicants who are siblings of current WCS students enrolled as of February 1, 2026 so long as proof of guardianship and residence is confirmed. Preference is also given to children of staff and board members who are in their positions as of February 1, 2026. Parents of students who fall in the categories above SHOULD STILL COMPLETE AN ENROLLMENT APPLICATION BY THE DEADLINE. See the preference section below for additional details about our preference policies. The deadline for applications for grades K – 7 will be January 20, 2026. The sole way to apply is through Apply Philly Charter (<https://applyphillycharter.org/> or (800-891-3999). The lottery will be held on February 4, 2026.**

Applicants must meet the minimum age requirements for admission to Kindergarten (beginner admission) and 1st Grade (compulsory admission).

- Kindergarten: Applicant must be 5 years old by September 1st of the year in which they are entering kindergarten
- 1st Grade: Applicant must be 6 years old by September 1st of the year in which they are entering 1st grade

### **A. Applying for Admission**

- Families can obtain and submit an application for admission online at ApplyPhillyCharter.org or apply via the Apply Philly Charter toll-free number, 1-800-891-3999. Families are welcome to visit the School for assistance, and families will be provided with information on how to apply and, subject to availability, a computer or tablet to access ApplyPhillyCharter.org. The online application is available for translation into nine different languages. The toll-free number has customer service representatives who can assist families in multiple languages and includes after-hours support. Wissahickon Charter School will provide reasonable accommodations in the event that an individual requests to submit an application in person. Paper applications are not available and Wissahickon Charter School will not accept or enroll any applicant whose application is not recorded through the Apply Philly Charter system.

- The application process only involves submitting the application form by the deadline. No interview, school tour, information session, or fee is required.
- Once the application is submitted, the applicant will receive an email or text message confirmation from Apply Philly Charter. Applicants who are unable to provide an email address will receive a confirmation of their application submission via postal mail to the address recorded on the application.

### **How is Application Data Stored?**

- In accordance with applicable laws (FERPA, PPRA, COPPA), applicant data is maintained through the Apply Philly Charter system. Applicant data will not be shared with any schools to which the applicant did not apply.

### **Application intake:**

- As applications are received via the Apply Philly Charter application, they will be monitored in the system's interface throughout the open application period. The Assessment and Accountability Manager or designee will monitor the system to review claims of preference and audit for duplicate and ineligible applications. Applications must be submitted via the Apply Philly Charter application. Applicants must indicate if they are applying to our Awbury or Fernhill campus. Individuals wishing to apply to both campuses will need to indicate both campuses on their Apply Philly Charter Application.
- Parents will receive an email confirmation that their application was received along with notification of the date that the lottery will occur.
- Advertisement- On our website we will advertise the deadline for applications and the date for the actual lottery.
- If parents have questions about the lottery, they will be directed to the Director of School Operations or CEO to have all of their questions/concerns answered.

When the deadline has passed, we will post on our website that all applications from that point forward for the following school year will only be considered after all pre-lottery applications have been offered seats. Any applications that come in after the deadline are stored in the Apply Philly Charter system with a "post-deadline application" designation. If parents call, we will let them know that it was received after the deadline and was not placed in the lottery. We will maintain records of all pre- and post-deadline applications in the Apply Philly Charter system.

### **Preference**

Preference will apply equally for each of the preferences listed below. In the event that there are more students earning preference than available slots for a given grade, a lottery will be held to determine the order slots available slots are offered to students in the preference group. This lottery will only be needed if there are not enough available slots and will follow all procedures outlined in this document. Please note that the Charter Schools Basic Education Circular states that, "First preference shall be given to students who reside in the district or districts." As a result, the preferences described below are only available to applicants who are Philadelphia



residents. All applications for students residing elsewhere in Pennsylvania, regardless of their qualifications for other types of preference, are placed at a non-Philadelphia resident priority level in our lottery and would only be considered for admission after the entire waitlist of Philadelphia residents has been exhausted.

- **Sibling preference:** Siblings of currently enrolled students who are currently enrolled at WCS given enrollment preference in our lottery for the following year (as long as their sibling is noted in the Apply Philly Charter application), as well as in applying for any current year open seats. **Sibling preference only applies for the site at which the enrolled sibling attends.** An application is still required and must be submitted before the deadline to receive preference in the lottery. Eligible in-coming kindergarten siblings will be enrolled and 1st–7th grade siblings will be added to a sibling waiting list. Siblings for whom applications are received after the application deadline but meet all other criteria for preference will still receive preference. If there are pre-deadline preference applications on the waiting list, the late-applying sibling moves to the rear of the preference section of the waiting list behind all pre-deadline applicants with preference. If there are no remaining pre-deadline applicants with preference, the post-deadline applicant with preference is placed at the beginning of the waiting list. All post-deadline applications are ordered on a first come, first served basis.
- **Founder preference:** Children of members of the founding coalition of Wissahickon Charter School (as identified on our original charter application), children of members of the Board of Trustees as of February 1 of the current school year, and children of current permanent employees employed as of February 1 of the current school year are also given enrollment preference. For the purpose of founder preference, a current permanent employee is any permanent staff member directly employed by Wissahickon Charter School. This preference is only applicable to children for whom the founder or permanent employee is a parent or legal guardian and living in the same household (including instances where the permanent employee has shared legal custody of a child). As with siblings receiving preference, an application is still required and must be submitted before the deadline for preference in our lottery. Children of parents with founder preference for whom applications are received after the deadline but meet all other criteria for preference as of February 1 of the school year prior to the year they wish to enroll (e.g.: a founder child applying for the 2021-2022 school year whose parent was a permanent employee or board member at WCS by February 1, 2021 during the 2020-2021 school year) will still receive preference. If there are pre-deadline preference applications on the waiting list, the late-applying founder child moves to the rear of the preference section of the waiting list behind all pre-deadline applicants with preference. If there are no remaining pre-deadline applicants with preference, the post-deadline applicant with preference is placed at the beginning of the waiting list. All post-deadline applications are ordered on a first come, first served basis.

**Lottery process:**

Wissahickon Charter School participates in Apply Philly Charter's application and lottery process. When a school receives more applications to a grade or grades than the number of seats available in that grade or grades, a randomized lottery will determine which applicants are offered a seat for enrollment. All eligible applications submitted within the application window will be referred into the lottery. Reasons that an application may be determined ineligible include if it is a duplicate application, the applicant already attends the school, or if the applicant is out of catchment for a Renaissance School. The application window for enrollment for the following school year will open in September and close in January of the current school year.

Families interested in attending Wissahickon Charter School must rank the school on their Apply Philly Charter application within the application window. Priority will be given to applicants in the following order: applicants eligible for founder or sibling preference (as described above); applicants with residency in the City of Philadelphia (or qualifying as experiencing homelessness per McKinney-Vento guidelines); residents of Pennsylvania outside of Philadelphia.

Apply Philly Charter will run a single, unified lottery for all participating charter schools that run a lottery in February. All eligible applicants are first assigned a random lottery number. Once an applicant is assigned a random lottery number, that number does not change. When the lottery is run, applicants are sorted in order of a school's priority structure, and then in order of their random lottery number. The lottery software seeks to assign every applicant to the applicant's highest ranked school that has a seat available to accept them, based on the applicant's priority group and random lottery number.

If an applicant receives an offer to the school the applicant ranked number one on the application, the applicant will receive no other offers, or be placed on any waitlists, to other schools ranked lower.

If an applicant receives an offer to a school the applicant ranked number two or below on the application, the applicant will be placed on the waiting list for the higher-ranked school(s). Applicants who are unable to be assigned to a school ranked on their application will be on the waitlist for all of the schools on their application.

Applicants will receive notification of lottery results two days after the lottery via email through Apply Philly Charter on a Common Notification date. Applicants will also be able to log in to their Apply Philly Charter accounts on the Common Notification date to view their lottery results.

Applicants who were offered a seat through the lottery will have 14 days until the Common Acceptance Date to accept their seat offer on Apply Philly Charter by clicking "accept" in their Apply Philly Charter accounts, or by calling the APC helpline. Applicants will then be required to submit enrollment paperwork to the school by 4 weeks from the date the applicant has received the online enrollment packet from Wissahickon Charter School. Enrollment paperwork will not be collected through Apply Philly Charter. See the section "Enrollment Process" for additional

information.

Families can receive support through the Apply Philly Charter helpline by calling 1-800-891-3999, emailing the infobox at [apc@applyphillycharter.org](mailto:apc@applyphillycharter.org) or by contacting the school directly.

**Wait List Procedure:**

If a child is on the waiting list, they will be notified in Apply Philly Charter, as well as called and emailed, in order as spots become available. The child that is number one will be called first to ask if they want the spot. Per our agreement with Apply Philly Charter, applicants receiving an offer prior to July 1 of each year will be given seven days to accept or decline the offer in the Apply Philly Charter system before their offer is automatically dropped. As of July of each year, the 7 day response window is reduced to three days. If a family accepts, we remove them from the list, admit them to the school, and move all others up one spot. If they decline the spot, we will move on to the next person on the waiting list. This process will be continued until the space is filled. As a best practice, in addition to the Apply Philly Charter Notification, we reach out directly to families who have received an offer from the wait list.

**Enrollment Process:**

Our enrollment process is a two-step process. As described above, families selected through the lottery must affirmatively accept their position by the deadline determined each year four weeks after the common lottery date. However, separate from this deadline, it should also be noted that per our charter agreement, all families selected through the lottery process will have no fewer than four weeks to return their enrollment paperwork, and that the four-week period does not begin until the family has received its registration forms (either paper or via email).

The family of a student selected from the waitlist (post-lottery) will receive an automated email message where they can electronically complete the first of two steps to confirm their child's enrollment offer. The email message will state that once they have accepted through the email link, the second step is that administrative staff will reach out directly by telephone and email within 1 business day of their acceptance electronically to confirm their acceptance, and that their acceptance cannot be confirmed unless they respond to that outreach (by phone or direct email to the administrative staff member) within 24 hours. After the student's acceptance is confirmed, the family will be given 2 weeks after receiving their registration forms to begin the process. Families will be informed that if they have any hindrances to completing an online form, they can be given the option of completing a hard copy enrollment packet and submitting it in-person or by mail. After 1 week, the family will be contacted by phone and email to confirm their continued interest in enrolling at WCS. If the family has not responded to one or more phone calls and emails (at all numbers and email addresses listed in their application) within 2 weeks and has not begun the registration process online, then WCS will consider the acceptance rescinded and move on to the next spot on the waitlist.

Our registration forms can be completed and submitted by families (accepted through the lottery or the waiting list) online via our PowerSchool registration system, or families can complete paper registration forms and submit them to be entered by our administrative support staff at each campus. Forms and any requested enrollment documentation can be submitted in-person, by email, or by fax to each campus directly:

**Fernhill Campus**

4700G Wissahickon Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19144

Email: [t.sumner@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:t.sumner@wissahickoncharter.org)

Fax: 267-338-1030

**Awbury Campus**

815 East Washington Lane

Philadelphia, PA 19138

Email: [t.bailey@wissahickoncharter.org](mailto:t.bailey@wissahickoncharter.org)

Fax: 215-438-2708

Our requested enrollment documentation is as follows.

- Proof of Child's Age (Birth Certificate, valid passport, notarized copy of birth certificate, baptismal cert., copy of the record of baptism-notarized or duty cert. and showing the date, notarized statement from the parents or another relative indicating the date of birth, a prior record indicating the date birth) **(Required)**
- Immunizations required by law (acceptable forms include child's immunization record, a written statement from the former school district or from a medical office that the required immunizations have been administered, or that a required series is in progress, or verbal assurances from the former school district or a medical office that the required immunizations have been completed, with records to follow) **(Required)**
- 1 Proof of residency (a deed, a lease, current utility bill, current credit card bill, property tax bill, vehicle registration, driver's license, DOT identification card) **(Required)**
- Home Language Survey **(Required)**
- Admissions Affidavit **(Required)**
- A copy of the student's Special Education IEP **(optional)**
- Government issued ID **(requested and not required for enrollment)**
- A copy of the student's medical card **(optional)**
- A copy of recent dental records **(not required for acceptance)**
- A copy of recent medical/Physical records **(not required for acceptance)**
- Wissahickon Charter School paperwork **(not required for acceptance)**

**McKinney-Vento Act Considerations for Students Experiencing Homelessness**

The McKinney-Vento Act defines "homeless children and youths" as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and requires all local education agencies to

ensure that each student experiencing homelessness has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other students. [CHARTER SCHOOL NAME] will comply with all requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act as outlined in the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Basic Education Circular (“BEC”) regarding Education for Homeless Youth.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Enrollment Process</b>
September 19, 2025	Apply Philly Charter application window opens
January 20, 2026	Apply Philly Charter application window closes
February 4, 2026	Apply Philly Charter Admissions lottery held
February 6, 2026	Families notified of lottery results via Apply Philly Charter Notification System, as well as ongoing email and telephone follow-up if families do not accept or decline their offer in Apply Philly Charter.

