



Upper St. Clair School District

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK 2023 - 2024 SCHOOL YEAR

Dear USC Elementary Families:

Welcome to the elementary schools in Upper St. Clair! The *Handbook for Parents* is produced to increase communication between home and school by providing information about a variety of programs and activities. As you become involved with the programs and activities of the school, you will gain a better understanding of these policies and procedures. Please take advantage of the opportunities to become involved in school activities, including PTA/PTO, parent-teacher conferences, presentations, and the volunteer program.

We are very enthusiastic about this school year. We hope that you will call upon any of us if we can be of service. Please know that we recognize that you are important partners in shaping the educational goals for your children.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patrick McClintock-Comeaux, Principal
Baker Elementary School
412-833-1600 x4000

Mr. Mark Miller, Principal/
Supervisor of Elementary Education
Eisenhower Elementary School
412-833-1600 x8000

Dr. Lindsay Klousnitzer, Principal
Streams Elementary School
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UPPER ST. CLAIR SCHOOL DISTRICT

MISSION STATEMENT

Developing lifelong learners and responsible citizens for a global society is the mission of the Upper St. Clair School District, served by a responsive and innovative staff who in partnership with the community provides learning experiences that nurture the uniqueness of each child and promotes happiness and success.

Attendance Information	5-8	Curriculum and Instruction	20-30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The School Day School Attendance Tardiness Early Dismissal 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization for Instruction The Curriculum Reading and Language Arts Mathematics Content Areas Special Subjects Computers World Languages International Baccalaureate PYP Standardized Testing Field Trips Recess 	
Student Support Services	9-11	Health Services	31
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Education English as a Second Language Student Support Team Resource Teachers School Counselor Homebound Instruction School-Wide Enrichment Program Extended Day Program Summer Programs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nurse Emergency Illness at School Health Room Medication Policy 	
Home-School Communication	12-15	Student Conduct	32-36
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fall Open House Spring S.T.A.R. Night Student Progress Reports Parent Conferences Homework School Visitation Safety and Security Emergency Delay or Closing of School Back To School Information School Communications Teacher/Student Communications 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expectations Conflict Resolution Discipline Policy Harassment and Bullying Nondiscrimination/Discriminatory Harassment – School and Classroom Practices Harassment/Bullying Guidelines 	
Special Programs	16-17	Additional Policy Information	37
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra-Curricular Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art Club Chorus Intramurals Orchestra Student Activities Offered by the PTA/PTO 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suicide Awareness, Prevention & Response Hazing Admission of Students to Kindergarten and First Grade Transportation-Video-Audio Monitoring Food Services Child/Student Abuse Student Wellness Behavior Support Policy Use of Force – School Police Officers School Building & Grounds Security Monitoring 	
Transportation	18-19	Compliance Notifications	38
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkers Car Riders and Van Riders Busing Bus Discipline Bus Rules for Children Change of Bus Assignment or Stop Parking 		Title IX	39

Other School Information 40

Lost and Found
Photographs
Parties

Food Service 41-42

Breakfast Program
Lunch Program
Menu and Purchasing Guidelines
Nutrition Center Guidelines
Behavior

**School-Related Activities for Parents
and Families** 43

Open Mikes
PTA/PTO
Volunteer Program
The Community Foundation of USC
Together in Parenting (TIP)
Youth Steering Committee

Appendix A 44

2023-2024 Chromebook Information

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

THE SCHOOL DAY

School hours are from 8:35 a.m. to 3:05 p.m.

Morning kindergarten sessions are from 8:35 to 11:15 a.m. Afternoon kindergarten sessions are from 12:25 to 3:05 p.m.

Children who walk to school or who are dropped off by parents should not arrive before 8:20 a.m. (12:10 p.m. for afternoon kindergarten). During inclement weather, there will be a modified kindergarten schedule. The morning session will be from 10:35 to 12:15 p.m., and the afternoon session will be from 1:25 to 3:05 p.m.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance in school is vital to a student's success. **Compulsory school age** in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires that all students between the ages of 6 and 18 attend school regularly. Students who are enrolled in school, but are not within this age range are also bound by the compulsory school attendance law.

Parents/guardians are expected to encourage their children to attend as many school days as possible so long as they are not ill. The local education agency and parents/guardians will work collaboratively to support student school attendance.

As stated in the [Attendance Policy 204](#):

The following conditions constitute reasonable cause for absence from school:

1. Illness, including if a student is dismissed by designated District staff during school hours for health-related reasons.
2. Obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the healing

arts in any state, commonwealth or territory.

3. Quarantine.
4. Family emergency.
5. Recovery from accident.
6. Required court attendance.
7. Death in the family.
8. Participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countywide 4-H, FFA or combined 4-H and FFA group, upon prior written request.
9. Participation in a musical performance in conjunction with a national veterans' organization or incorporated unit, as defined in law, for an event or funeral.
 - a. The national veterans' organization or incorporated unit must provide the student with a signed excuse, which shall include the date, location, and time of the event or funeral.
 - b. The student shall furnish the signed excuse to the District prior to being excused from school.
10. Observance of a religious holiday observed by bona fide religious group, upon prior written parental request. In addition, students may be released from school for a total of not more than 36 hours per year in order to attend classes for religious instruction.
11. Non School-sponsored educational tours or trips/family educational trip if the following conditions are met:
 - a. The parent/guardian submits a written request for excusal prior to the absence per the District's procedures, including use of the appropriate Educational Trip Form
 - b. The student's participation has been approved by the principal. If over five (5) days in

duration, the approval of the Superintendent or Designee is also required.

c. The adult directing and supervising the tour or trip is acceptable to the parents/guardians and the Superintendent.

12. College or postsecondary institution visit, with prior approval.
13. Other urgent reasons. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and do not permit irregular attendance.

An absence for any other reason is considered an unlawful/unexcused absence. When in doubt of the legality of an absence, parents are requested to contact the child's school principal.

After a student's absence from school, parents must send a signed note with the student explaining the reason and date(s) of the absence. The student must present this excuse to the Attendance Office upon returning to school. If the excuse is not provided within three (3) school days, the absence will be labeled **unexcused**.

When a student misses three (3) consecutive days and no communication from the parent/guardian has occurred, the school nurse or counselor will call home to check on the student to determine if the school can take steps to support the student during his/her absence and/or support transition back to school.

When a student misses more than ten (10) cumulative days, parents will receive written notice that an official doctor's excuse will be required for all subsequent absences for the remainder of the school year. Failure to obtain an official doctor's excuse will result in an unexcused absence. Unexcused

absences will be addressed in the manner described under the truancy section of school attendance.

Definitions of Truancy

- A student is considered "truant" after three (3) or more unexcused absences during a single school year by a child subject to the compulsory school attendance law.
- A student is considered "habitually truant" after six (6) or more unexcused absences during a single school year by a child subject to the compulsory school attendance law.

Parents/guardians will be notified following each unexcused absence/occurrence. When a student is considered truant (**three unexcused absences**) the school principal will notify the parents. This notification:

- Will be in writing to the person of parental relation with a child within ten (10) school days.
- Will include a description of the consequences that will follow if the child becomes habitually truant in the future.
- Will include steps to arrange an attendance improvement conference.

If the child, of compulsory school age, continues to be truant and incurs additional unexcused absences that accumulate six (6) unexcused absences/occurrences becoming "**habitually truant**," the procedures to follow are based on the age of the child.

- Habitually truant children **under 15 years of age:**
The school shall:
 - Refer the child to a school-based or

- community-based attendance improvement program
- o Refer the child to the county children and youth agency (CYS) for services or possible disposition as a dependent child under the Juvenile Act

The school may:

- o File a citation against the parent of a habitually truant child under 15 years of age in a magisterial district court.
- Habitually truant children **15 years of age and older:**

The school shall:

- o Refer the child to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program
- o File a citation against the student or parent in a magisterial district court
- o If a habitually truant child aged 15 or older incurs additional absences after a school refers that child to an attendance improvement program or the child refuses to participate in an attendance improvement program, the school may refer the child to the local CYS agency for possible disposition as a dependent child.

School Attendance Improvement Plan Conference (SAIC)

Parents/Guardians will be notified in writing and by phone of the scheduled School Attendance Improvement Plan Conference (SAIC).

Schools must create attendance improvement plans prior to referring truancy

to the courts. A school attendance improvement conference is defined as a conference where the child's absences and reasons for the absences are examined in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services. The conference will include the following individuals:

- The child
- The person in parental relation to the child
- Other individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource (e.g., grandparent, sibling, family friend, advocate, etc.)
- Appropriate school personnel
- Recommended service providers (case managers, behavioral health providers, etc.)

The school must hold the conference even if the parent or guardian declines to participate or fails to attend after the school provides advance written notice and makes attempts to communicate via telephone. A legal requirement does not exist for either the child or parent to attend the conference. The school must document the outcome of any attendance improvement conference in a written attendance improvement plan. Schools may not take further legal action to address unexcused absences until after the date of the scheduled attendance improvement conference has passed.

Magisterial Referral

After all necessary steps have been taken to foster a collaborative relationship between the local education agency and parents/guardians, a citation may be filed in the office of the appropriate judge whose jurisdiction includes the school in which the student is or should be enrolled if a student continues to be habitually truant from school. Judges have considerable discretion

to impose appropriate penalties in individual cases.

TARDIES

Any student entering school after the official beginning time (8:15 AM) must report to the attendance office to obtain a class admission slip. Any student who is tardy more than ten (10) days without proper medical documentation may be required to submit a doctor's note for subsequent excused tardiness. The school principal will notify parents when the child has accumulated four unexcused tardies. Disciplinary consequences may be assigned.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Parents are requested to schedule all medical appointments for their children after the regular school day. If it is essential that such appointments be scheduled during the school day, the parents must submit a note requesting an early dismissal. The student should present this note to the school office upon arriving at school for the day. The student will receive a form to present to the homeroom teacher. The child must return the early dismissal form to the school office prior to leaving the building. Students with early dismissals will meet their parents in the office.

Students will be credited with full-day attendance when they:

Arrive before: 9:45 AM

Leave after: 1:30 PM

Students will be credited with half-day absence when they:

Arrive or Leave between: 9:45 AM
and 1:30 PM

Students will be credited with full-day absence when they:

Leave before: 9:45 AM

Arrive after: 1:30 PM

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The District provides a continuum of services for children identified as needing specially designed instruction. Students who qualify for special education receive services in the least restrictive environment as determined by the IEP team. Students are provided as many opportunities as possible to be integrated in the regular classroom with peers. Support for students needing vision, hearing, or speech-language services, and/or occupational or physical therapy is also available through the school for students who meet state requirements. Classes for students identified as academically gifted are offered as part of the School-Wide Enrichment Program (SWEP), which is further explained below. If you think your child may be eligible for special education services, please contact your child's building principal or the Student Support Services Department (x2283) at the School District Central Office. The Student Support Services Department also has information about support groups for parents of gifted or special needs youngsters. Two such groups are *Partners in Education (PIE)* and *Gifted and Talented Education Committee (GATE)*.

Child Find Notice of Special Education Services – Each school district, along with other public agencies in the commonwealth, must establish and implement procedures to identify, locate and evaluate all children who need special education programs and services because of the child's disability. This notice is to help find these children, offer assistance to parents, and describes the parents' rights with regard to confidentiality of information that will be obtained during this process. The content of this notice has

been written in English but can be translated into other languages. If a person does not understand any of this notice, he or she should contact the school district (Dr. Cassandra Doggrell, 412-833-1600 ext. 2064) and request an explanation <https://www.uscsd.k12.pa.us/Page/9647>

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)

The English as a Second Language (ESL) Program provides instruction and support for individuals or small groups of students whose first language is not English. Communication between the ESL instructor and the student's classroom teacher as well as assessment of the student helps determine the amount and level of instruction. The student's family is typically encouraged to visit the school to share information about the family's native country and culture.

Please review the text of Policy 138- Language Instruction Educational Program for English Learners on the District website under School Board Policies on the School Board Webpage at <https://www.uscsd.k12.pa.us/Page/134>

STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

Parents who feel their children are not meeting with success at school are encouraged to request the assistance of the Student Support Services Team. The team will begin a systematic process to find ways the child can be more successful. The School Counselor or your child's teacher(s) serves as contact person(s) in each school.

RESOURCE TEACHERS

The building Resource Teachers work with individuals or small groups for remediation and for reinforcement of skills based on

student needs identified through a variety of assessment data. At times, the Resource Teachers also work with a class or team to assist in providing differentiated instruction at various skill levels.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR

The School Counselor in each building works with classes, small groups, and individuals to address a variety of concerns related to school. The School Counselor consults with teachers and is also available to confer with parents. Please feel free to contact the School Counselor if your child is experiencing difficulties related to such stressors as severe illness, death, and/or divorce, which may impact on success at school.

HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION

When a student is medically unable to attend school for a period of two weeks or more, homebound instruction may be provided if appropriately certified teachers are available. Homebound instruction may be requested by the parents, providing that the physician has certified the need for services and that the student will be absent for two weeks or more. Parents should notify the principal or school counselor of the potential need as soon as possible. Parents should obtain a *Physician's Statement Regarding Student Need for Homebound Instruction* form from the principal's office or the Office of Student Support Services at ext. 2283. Homebound instruction does not replicate in-class instruction and is limited to a total of 5 hours per week.

SCHOOL-WIDE ENRICHMENT PROGRAM (SWEP)

Many opportunities are available for students to explore topics that interest them via the School-Wide Enrichment Program.

The School-Wide Enrichment Program is a three-pronged approach that consists of Type I, Type II and Type III activities.

Type I activities are **Exploratory Activities** and are for all students.

Type II activities consist of **Process Training** skills for students who are identified as academically gifted. The Enrichment Specialist in each school uses Renzulli's *Talents Unlimited* model as the basis for their work with gifted students. In addition, they focus on creative and critical thinking and a menu of advanced course options in which students elect to take part. The regular classroom teacher is a strong contributor to programming for gifted students through the District's continuous progress program in reading and mathematics and extensions of other curriculum areas.

Type III activities are **Investigative Enrichment** projects. Students who are interested in working on an investigative enrichment activity may work individually or in a small group. The students contract with a teacher mentor who will guide their investigation and provide advice on a final project. Investigative Enrichment facilitates students' creative and productive involvement in advanced level study of topics related to student interest, topics presented in the regular curriculum, or topics presented as **Exploratory Activities** (SWEP I). Investigative Enrichment activities require students to demonstrate the ability to leave their regular classes to undertake a special project, and also to have the task persistence to see their project through to completion. The major responsibility for the investigation's execution and completion rests with the student, and some work may need to be completed at home. Some students also

identify an adult in the community whose special interest or expertise makes them especially helpful as a mentor. Students can become involved in a SWEP III project by indicating their interest to their classroom teacher or building librarian.

EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM

The District is fortunate to have a partnership with Extended Day Services (EDS). EDS provides **Before and After School Programs, Kindergarten Plus (K-Plus) Programs** and **Full-Day Summer Camps** for children in kindergarten through sixth grade. All registration in EDS programs is separate from District registration and enrollment.

During the school year, the **Before and After School Programs** are offered from 7:00-8:20 a.m. and 3:05-6:00 p.m. in all three elementary schools. We offer a variety of daily activities including sports, cooking, art, crafts, seasonal projects, tournaments and much more. We also offer daily time for homework with teacher guidance.

The **Kindergarten-Plus (K-Plus) Programs** operate at each elementary school and are designed to provide kindergarten children with a full-day kindergarten experience. The K-Plus Program offers a variety of enrichment activities that correlate with the concepts being taught in kindergarten. Children enrolled in morning kindergarten may attend the K-Plus afternoon program while children enrolled in afternoon kindergarten may attend the K-Plus morning program. Kindergarten children enrolled in either K-Plus program may also attend the Before and After School Programs.

Full-Day Summer Camps are also located within the elementary school buildings and operate each day from 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

throughout the summer months. The children enjoy field trips, swim trips, special party days, and on-site presentations, and an assortment of athletic activities and crafts, in addition to integrating some reading and math games to help keep summer skills sharp.

For additional information, you may visit the EDS website at www.ExtendedDay.com or call them at (412) 221-1980.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

Summer programs are offered by the District each year. Summer programming includes a variety of opportunities both for student support and enrichment. Summer school program information is shared with families beginning in April and online registration is accessed through the District's website.

HOME - SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

FALL OPEN HOUSE

The elementary schools' fall open houses are held in September. Parents are invited **during the evening** to view the school and meet the staff. Brief programs are held in each classroom, which outline our curriculum and programs and classroom procedures. This is an "adults only" night for teachers and parents.

SPRING INFORMATIONAL EVENING

S.T.A.R. NIGHT – Sharing Together And Reflecting

S.T.A.R. night occurs in the spring of each school year and is an event that has been designed to support what we know to be sound and effective instructional and assessment practices. This evening event provides parents and students with time to reflect on academic strengths and growth through a review of key pieces of student work.

The purpose of this educational evening is to involve parents in the academic progress of their children and to celebrate their children's accomplishments. This event also provides the opportunity for:

- engaging parents and students in dialogue regarding the student's progress and learning;
- acknowledging and reinforcing the partnership of parents in the education of their children;
- generating parental and community awareness of our instructional programming.

Research has shown that providing students with descriptive feedback and involving

them in the assessment process can have a significant impact on achievement. To this end, the focus of this event is on learning and reflections related to that learning, rather than exhibition. This is a more natural fit with sound instructional practices and enhances, rather than detracts from, daily instructional time. Providing time for reflective thinking helps the student to actively participate in thinking about what they have learned, what they need to learn, and what they can do to take their learning to this next level.

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS

Students receive report cards every nine weeks. At the elementary level, the report card consists of a criterion-referenced list of skills. The District feels that this reporting gives parents a more comprehensive idea about the particular topics or areas on which students are working in each subject area. Every child is seen as capable of learning at his/her own appropriate skill level and the goal is to teach in ways that allow all children to achieve mastery and to meet standards.

Traditional letter grades based on the bell curve are not congruent with the District's continuous progress philosophy for elementary students.

Teachers are always available to discuss student progress at any point in the school year. Teachers often use telephone updates and emails as a way of keeping parents informed about individual issues or concerns. Parents are welcome and encouraged to phone the school at any time with questions or concerns regarding student progress.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Parents are welcome and encouraged to call the school at any time in order to arrange a parent-teacher conference. The school secretary will assist in scheduling these at a time that is mutually convenient for you and the teacher. Parents are asked to refrain from impromptu conferences at such times as PTA/PTO meetings and/or class trips. Our experience indicates that a conference is more productive when the teacher has an opportunity to prepare by reviewing records and recent performance, and collecting samples of typical work. Two full days are set aside for parent conferences during October and/or November. Please consult the District calendar for the specific dates.

HOMEWORK

Homework refers to school assignments that aid the educational program during periods of supervised study in the class or outside of the classroom and may necessitate independent work in the home. At designated grade levels, these assignments are given regularly and regulated in length of time. Homework assignments are not given at kindergarten, Grade 1 or Grade 2. Homework assignments may be given in Grade 3 and Grade 4, ranging from 20 to 30 minutes each school night. Weekends and holidays are usually left free to provide opportunities for children to participate in family and recreational activities. All homework assignments are meaningful and aid the reinforcement of concepts developed in class. Homework is not assigned as busy work or punishment. As students move into the upper elementary grade levels they may occasionally need to utilize the services of public libraries.

SCHOOL VISITATION

Parents are welcome to visit school. Using the Raptor Visitor Management System, all visitors will be required to sign in and secure a visitor badge before going to any part of the building. This procedure has been created to avoid unnecessary interruption of classes and to assist in providing a safe and secure learning environment. A visit to your child's classroom must be arranged in advance with your child's teacher or principal.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety and security of the Upper St. Clair School District's students, staff, visitors and facilities is a high priority. The District is committed to following best practices in the area of school safety. The Chief of School Police leads the security function and is the school safety and security coordinator. Experienced, armed school police officers who are all Act 120 certified are located in every elementary and middle school building. In addition, two assigned school police officers and two Act 235 certified school security officers are located at the high school. School police contact information can be found on the District website under the Safety & Wellness tab. Chief of School Police Sean Bryson can be reached at 412-833-1600 ext. 2560.

EMERGENCY DELAY OR CLOSING OF SCHOOL

If Upper St. Clair School District is closed due to inclement weather or other types of emergency situations, the District will communicate through the following means:

- Automated emails and phone calls
- USCSD website:
www.uscsd.k12.pa.us

- USCSD social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter): @uscschools
- Local television stations: KDKA, WTAE, WPXI

On days when a two-hour delay is necessitated, kindergarten classes will operate on the following “modified” schedule.

- morning session: 10:35 to 12:15 a.m.
- afternoon session: 1:25 to 3:05 p.m.

Elementary students will not be dismissed early unless their parents have been contacted. Heavy traffic, inclement weather conditions, and other unexpected problems may cause delays in the arrival of school buses at assigned stops. When arrival delays occur, students may return to their homes after waiting 20 minutes. However, parents are urged to arrange transportation for their children to school, if at all possible. A student’s absence from school because of lack of available transportation will be considered excused under the urgent reasons clause of the Pennsylvania School Code.

BACK TO SCHOOL INFORMATION

As part of our paperless initiative, parents/guardians will be able to confirm their child’s demographic data through a secure online process. Families will receive **Back to School Online** instructions in August. Upon completing the online forms in Focus/Parent Portal, families will gain access to the student’s class assignment, bus information and other pertinent information needed for the start of school.

SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

The School District sends a Weekly Recap email to all USCSD families and staff members every Friday. The School District and USC Township partner to produce a

quarterly magazine - USC Today - which is mailed to all homes and businesses in the township. In addition, the District celebrates achievements on its social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) - follow the District @uscschools.

Each school regularly updates families on school events/news through regular email and automated calls. Teachers also communicate regularly with families through their classroom Canvas pages, weekly newsletters, phone calls, and emails.

TEACHER/STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS

Technology has provided many ways to enhance communication between home and school. The Student Communication Policy outlines the District’s expectations for USCSD employees’ use of technology to communicate with students in K-12 inclusive. The policy can be found by clicking the link below or by accessing School Board Policies on the School Board webpage of the District’s website.
<http://www.uscsd.k12.pa.us/Page/134>

Employees are encouraged to use communication tools such as social networking websites, e-mail, and other emerging technologies only to extend teaching and learning opportunities. Any communication tool approved by the School District or provided via its systems may be utilized freely inside or outside of the school setting for teaching and learning related issues. However, communication with students outside of school via any communication tools that are not approved by the District or provided via its systems (e.g. social networking sites, texting, personal email, and/or blogs) requires written notification to the students’ parent(s) or guardian(s) in advance. Inappropriate communications of any kind with students,

regardless of the setting, are strictly prohibited. All ethical expectations described in Pennsylvania's Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators apply to any communication with a student. This applies to communications using the School District's systems as well as privately owned systems.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

EXTRA-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

Fourth grade students may participate in several extra-curricular offerings.

Attendance is voluntary, and students must arrange for their own transportation to morning activities or home following afternoon activities. The schedules for these programs may be obtained through the school office. Extra-curricular programs include:

- **ART CLUB**

Art Club is offered to fourth grade students after school. The students enjoy exploring a variety of media and art materials that are more in-depth explorations of the disciplines and concepts taught in the regular art classroom. All 3 of our Elementary Buildings offer unique Art Clubs where the art teacher and fourth grade students work collectively to design art experiences based on the current interests of the students. Art club students may also have the opportunity to create art for either school or community wide art initiatives.

- **CHORUS**

Fourth grade students are also offered the opportunity to participate in chorus. The chorus meets once each week and presents two performances per school year, under the direction of the Vocal Music Teacher. The winter program is presented in concert form and the spring performance is in the form of a musical with modest sets and costumes.

- **INTRAMURALS**

The intramurals program for students in fourth grade meets weekly in the gym under the direction of the Physical Education Teacher. The intramurals program is designated to develop skills in a variety of sports and games. Proper gym shoes are required for participation.

- **ORCHESTRA**

Fourth grade students may participate in the District's orchestra program. Students receive weekly instruction on the string instrument of their choice and participate in the school orchestra. Students entering during the year may receive this information through the school office or by contacting Dr. John Seybert, Performing Arts Curriculum Leader at 412-833-1600 x3220.

Music lessons take place during the school day, and every attempt is made to schedule the lessons so that students will not miss other special subjects such as Library or Art. Students should check with their teachers about work missed during their instrumental lessons.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES OFFERED BY PTA/PTO

In each school, a dedicated group of PTA/PTO volunteers will often offer a variety of quality enrichment activities for all students. Information will be provided throughout the school year on the PTA/PTO websites for each school.

TRANSPORTATION

WALKERS

All kindergarten and elementary school children are eligible for school bus transportation to and from school. Many students, however, choose to walk to school because of the close proximity between home and school. Students who have parent permission to walk to or from school should bring a note from home that will be kept on file. Students who walk to school should not arrive before 8:20 a.m. (12:20 p.m. for afternoon kindergarten).

CAR RIDERS AND VAN RIDERS

Private vehicles and daycare vans must pull to designated locations at each school for children to load and unload safely. Please check with your school's office regarding the procedure for arriving or departing by private car or van.

BUSING

Parents will receive a bus assignment prior to the opening of school through the parent online portal. Information will include the bus number and the bus stop location, as well as pick-up and drop-off times. Students are to ride their assigned buses and changing buses for social reasons is discouraged. The children's safety is of prime importance to everyone. School bus regulations are established to ensure safe transportation to and from school. Bus conduct regulations will be adhered to as specified in the District's Discipline Policy that is available in its entirety in the Principal's office for your review. A summary is included in the next section of this handbook. As a safety feature all buses are equipped with two-way radios. Programs and lessons dealing with bus safety are presented to the children frequently, and bus evacuation drills are

conducted. Our bus drivers have been trained to handle the buses in a safe manner, but they need student cooperation to avoid dangerous distractions. If you have any concerns or questions about bus transportation, please phone the Principal.

BUS DISCIPLINE

The driver is responsible for maintaining order on the bus. A "Bus Conduct Form" is available for the driver to use to report misbehavior to the principal. The principal may confer with the student or contact the student's parents, depending on the nature and frequency of the misbehavior. In the case of repeated offenses or serious misconduct, students may lose their riding privilege for 1-5 days or permanently. The District discipline policy also applies to bus misbehavior. See the Student Conduct section of the handbook.

BUS RULES FOR CHILDREN

Please read the following guidelines with your children.

AT YOUR BUS STOP

1. Children should not be involved in games that will place them in danger while waiting for the bus. They should not run or play in the center of the street, or in the neighbors' yards.
2. Line up single file to board the bus when it comes.
3. Use both your eyes and ears to check for traffic when it comes time to board the bus. Enter the bus promptly.
4. Children should go directly home from bus stops at the end of the school day.

INSIDE YOUR SCHOOL BUS

1. Please observe the same conduct as you would in the classroom.
2. Please be courteous; use no profane or unacceptable language.

3. Please do not eat or drink on the bus.
4. Please keep the bus clean.
5. Please cooperate with the driver at all times.
6. Please do not use tobacco of any kind.
7. Please do not damage school property.
8. Please stay in your seat at all times.
9. Please keep your head, hands, and feet inside the bus at all times.

The bus driver is responsible for your safety. If necessary, the bus driver is authorized to assign seats. Please cooperate with the driver at all times.

CHANGE OF BUS ASSIGNMENT OR STOP

Requests for permanent change of bus assignment or stop should be made on form #6015 which is available in the school office. Changes can also be made on a day-by-day basis (providing seats are available) to accommodate babysitting arrangements or emergencies that may arise.

PARKING

Regular designated parking spaces are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Parking is not permitted in the fire lanes and Township police may ticket those who fail to observe the fire lane signs. When parking along streets that are adjacent to school property, please park on one side only and be considerate of the lawns and driveway access areas belonging to our neighbors. This courtesy is especially necessary on the evenings of Open Houses or other occasions when the entire school family returns for a special event. Shuttle buses are also available on occasions when large attendance at school is expected so that parking facilities at another school may also be utilized. Watch for individual notices from your child's school.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

ORGANIZATION FOR INSTRUCTION

Elementary classrooms use a combination of self-contained classroom instruction and flexible grouping to meet the academic needs of all students.

Within each self-contained classroom students are grouped heterogeneously. That is, there are students of varying ability and achievement levels in every class. It is our strong belief that such an arrangement assists all the children in becoming competent learners.

Flexible grouping is utilized to customize the learning experience for each child by grouping students with similar instructional needs. Teachers continually review student progress and growth to adjust instructional groups.

In assigning students for the year, principals take into consideration strengths and needs of individual youngsters, achievement levels, and learning/teaching styles. Parents who would like to have input into their child's placement are encouraged to write to the principal, describing their child's learning characteristics rather than making requests for specific teachers.

THE CURRICULUM

A continuous review process is in place that allows annual review and refinement of each area of the curriculum. Curriculum development recommendations may be initiated by staff members, students, parents or citizens. The curriculum is reviewed and discussed at department meetings

throughout the year and recommendations are presented to a review panel that meets twice yearly. Parents who wish to give input may contact their child's building principal or the Director of Curriculum & Professional Development who can direct their concern to the appropriate curriculum committee. Feedback about the instructional program is always welcome.

READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS

The reading and language arts program at the elementary level is the Upper St. Clair *Balanced Literacy Approach*. It is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment framework aimed at developing the individual literacy needs of each student. The curriculum has been designed according to the Upper St. Clair School District's continuous progress philosophy where each student is taught according to the individual's rate and level of achievement. The framework consists of four modules, each of which is informed by assessment of the individual student. These modules include the **reading module, word work module, language arts module, and writing module**.

The Reading Module

Comprehension lessons, guided reading, and independent reading are the main components of the reading module.

Comprehension lessons focus on the instruction of strategies good readers use to make sense of all text, both fiction and non-fiction, in ways that enhance understanding. With fiction text, primary students learn to make inferences, and connect text to themselves, other texts and the world. They ask questions and look for answers in a variety of ways as they read, as well as visualizing and synthesizing information into a meaningful whole. Intermediate students additionally examine

literary themes and apply them to texts they have read. With nonfiction text, all students learn how to navigate the text structure to extract pertinent information and then apply new knowledge in a variety of settings. The strategies are repeatedly modeled by the teacher and practiced by the students as they read books at their reading level.

During guided reading, the teacher meets several times a week with small, flexible groups of students with similar reading skills and needs. Students use pieces of leveled text at their instructional reading level as the teacher guides them through explicit reading strategies to enhance thinking within the text, about the text, and beyond the text. The instructional reading level indicates the level at which the student can read accurately, fluently, and with comprehension. The structure and content may vary, depending on the guided reading level and grade of the student, and assessment is ongoing to ensure proper group placement. Guided Reading goals include:

- Monitoring and correcting
- Solving words
- Searching for and using information
- Summarizing
- Maintaining fluency
- Using reading strategies and literary themes
- Analyzing and critiquing text
- Developing vocabulary
- Responding in writing
- Reading a variety of text genres

The Word Work Module

The word work module provides students with the opportunity to learn the system for reading or “decoding” words. Students are exposed to a systematic and explicit approach for learning the alphabetic system that allows them to read and decode words

through their ever-increasing knowledge of common phonics patterns. Students are taught to apply this alphabetic code to reading and decoding words in the context of text. The premise on which these strategies are based is that working through a word (decoding, sounding it out) is a self-teaching system. That is, the process of decoding words helps those words to eventually be recognized automatically by the student.

Students are also expected to master sight words, words which are not phonetically regular but which occur often in the texts they read. The goal is for the students to eventually be able to recognize many words automatically, both words that are phonetically regular and those that are not, so that mental resources can be freed for the act of comprehension.

Language Arts Module

Spelling, handwriting, and grammar skills are the components of the language arts module. Spelling instruction consists of teaching students how to spell common phonetic patterns in words and the methods for making spelling changes to these words to create other word forms. Students are also introduced to high frequency and frequently misspelled words. The words are organized into spelling lists that are assessed each week.

Students learn to print and write in cursive using Handwriting Without Tears, a developmentally appropriate program developed by an occupational therapist. HWT encourages correct pencil grip, letter formation, sizing and spacing.

Grammar skills are explicitly taught and practiced through editing activities and written application. Assessment of grammar skills happens throughout the year.

Writing Module

Students are asked to write daily, across all curricular areas at the elementary setting, and instruction and practice of writing skills is a crucial element of the elementary program. The elementary writing curriculum incorporates mentor texts, discernment/sorting activities, teacher modeling, guided practice, and written application. Writing instruction focuses on developing the writer's ability to maintain focus on a topic, develop relevant content, organize and format writing based on the genre, develop voice through word choice and sentence formation, and apply grade-level spelling and grammar skills. Students create narrative, informational, persuasive/opinion, and research writing pieces.

Phases of Reading Development

As students progress through the reading curriculum in the Upper St. Clair elementary schools, they gain mastery of skills and strategies that enable them to read increasingly more difficult texts. The following information explains the typical reading behaviors that students exhibit as they progress and grow as readers.

Emergent Readers (grade range: K)

Emergent Readers are just becoming aware of print. They enjoy listening to stories and begin to understand the differences in syntax and vocabulary that are likely to appear in written (versus oral) language. They read orally and are learning to match word by word and to read left to right. At first, they point with their fingers, but their eyes will start to take over the process. They use information from pictures and rely on meaning and language to interpret simple texts. They use word matching, spaces, and some visual information to check themselves while reading. They are learning to hear sounds in words and connect them

with letters; they recognize a few frequently encountered words.

Early Readers (grade range: K-1)

Early Readers read orally, mostly without finger pointing, and are beginning to read very softly or silently some of the time. They are familiar with most easy, frequently encountered words and quickly recognize them while reading. They know many letter-sound relationships, and use letter-sound information to decode words while reading. On easy texts they read fluently and with phrasing, using punctuation. They are beginning to use several sources of information (meaning, syntax, and visual aspects of print) in combination as they process longer pieces of information. They still rely on pictures as an important source of information, but they are beginning to process print with less picture support.

Transitional Readers (grade range: 1-3)

Transitional Readers read silently most of the time; when reading aloud, they read with fluency and phrasing on appropriate levels of text. They have a large core of known words that they recognize automatically while reading continuous text. They use multiple sources of information (letter-sound relationships, word structure, syntax, and meaning) to check their reading and solve problems. They do not rely on illustrations but use them to enhance understanding, and they can draw information from graphic illustrations in informational texts. They analyze words in flexible ways and make attempts at new, multisyllabic words. They are beginning to expand their range in reading genres. They are also learning to sustain their reading over longer texts, including chapter books.

Fluent Readers (grade range: 4+)

Fluent Readers read silently; when asked to read aloud, they exhibit fluency and phrasing. They effectively use their understanding of how words work, employ a wide range of word-solving strategies, including making analogies to know words and using root words, base words, and affixes. They constantly acquire new vocabulary through reading and use reading as a tool for learning in content areas. As they read a wide variety of texts, they constantly develop new strategies and knowledge. They consistently go beyond the text to form interpretations and apply understanding to other areas. They are able to sustain interest and understanding over long texts; they read for extended periods of time. They notice and comment on aspects of writer's craft and read to explore their world, including philosophical, ethical, and social issues. They actively work to connect texts. They develop favorite topics, genres, and authors that form the basis of life-long reading preferences.

Kindergarten Literacy

The kindergarten program involves activities that includes auditory, visual, and kinesthetic experiences throughout the day. The kindergarten literacy program focuses on three main components of literacy learning:

- Comprehension – understanding, making connections and retaining what is read
- Phonemic Awareness – process of hearing sounds that letters make
- Phonics – the addition of visual letters with the letter sounds

Students additionally learn concepts about print, and nonfiction text structure, as they learn about how print is organized. Writing is a daily part of the kindergarten curriculum as students write in journals and respond to

text. Explicit writing lessons meet students at their instructional level as they develop emerging writing skills. Learning centers allow the kindergarten teacher to meet with small groups of students to address individual literacy needs. While the teacher works with a group, other students are engaged in a variety of independent activities that reinforce and extend prior learning. Ongoing assessment, formal and informal “kid watching,” allows the teacher to provide a learning environment that is both developmentally appropriate and instructionally challenging for each student.

MATHEMATICS

The elementary mathematics program is guided by the belief that all students can learn and succeed in mathematics. On the path to becoming competent mathematicians, whether it is for future study and career or for functioning in everyday life, there are certain critical learning experiences in which all students will take part. These include learning that is related to **concept development**, **procedural fluency**, **problem solving** with real-life application, **communication** of mathematical processes and understanding, and **fact fluency** in the four basic operations. Concurrently, students will be immersed in mathematical process skills that deepen understanding and elevate cognitive demand. These include, but are not limited to, reasoning abstractly and quantitatively, critiquing the reasoning of others, modeling mathematics, looking for structure and pattern, and attending to precision.

Classroom lessons and assessments reflect instruction in each of these five areas. Achievement in each area is measured through a variety of assessment tools, problem-solving experiences, daily work,

math projects, homework, and teacher observations.

The development of a sound understanding of mathematical **concepts** and relationships often takes place in physical contexts through the use of manipulative and concrete examples. These experiences are used to enable the student to make abstractions and to develop related skills. Instruction links concepts with the procedures they represent. Fully developed conceptual knowledge leads to increasing proficiency in problem solving.

Through **procedural fluency** instruction, students are taught various strategies and algorithms for written computation, mental computation, and for using a calculator. Students also learn how to decide if an exact calculation is needed or if an estimate is adequate. Estimation skills also assist students in determining whether answers are reasonable. While the math program often begins with exploring skills conceptually, lessons then move towards introducing more traditional, procedural methods.

The role of **problem solving** is vital to assist students in connecting mathematics with its application in the world, and to develop students' understanding of mathematics as a discipline. Students experience specific strategies and are strongly encouraged to explore mathematical thinking in ways that make sense to them. With time, students tend to gravitate towards more efficient strategies as their exposure to various types of math problems expands. The ultimate goal is for students to reason through problems and think mathematically.

As recommended by the standards set forth by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, **communication** is a critical component of the math program. Math

instruction does not stop when students figure out the right answer. Rather, students are required to communicate – first orally and later in writing – the process which was used or the reasoning used to arrive at the correct answer. Students are also asked to critique and compare other students' methods. Lessons are rich with “math talk” and group discourse.

Fact Fluency is defined as using efficient and accurate methods when computing numbers. Paul Riccomini, a Clemson University mathematics researcher, best articulates why fact fluency in young students is important. He equates computational fluency in math to understanding letter-sound connections in reading. These connections are the foundational blocks from which reading knowledge grows and develops. A fluent knowledge of the basic facts in all four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) can help move students from the concrete to more abstract math processes. Fact fluency instruction centers around strategies, rather than memorization. Daily practice occurs in a variety of ways depending on grade level and teacher preference. Weekly, timed quizzes are utilized to monitor growth in an operation over a semester.

The **kindergarten mathematics** program is designed to allow engaging, hands-on experiences with early numeracy and number sense skills. Kindergarten teachers may determine eligibility for support and enrichment opportunities dependent upon resource scheduling. Assessment of concept mastery is determined through observations and other tools, rather than through posttests.

Flexible grouping in mathematics in first through fourth grade allows for more

responsive customization of the math program. For each topic rotation, students are placed by grade level teachers into flexible groups based on pretest scores, rates of acquisition, learner traits, and teacher observations of performance. This structure allows for class size variations, slight pacing adjustments, targeted instructional strategies, and focused assistance of building resource teachers for support and/or enrichment. All students are held accountable for mastering the PA Core Standards and all students are assessed with the same end of topic assessment.

At the elementary level, a small percentage of students qualify for **math acceleration**. The process guidelines and criteria for qualification are outlined within the Board policy on math acceleration.

CONTENT AREAS

The social studies, science and health curriculums emphasize projects, activities, discussion and the use of technology to enhance the skills, processes and content students need in these areas. Inquiry strategies, which assist youngsters in becoming critical observers of the world around them, are also an important part of content area instruction.

Science and Health

The Upper St. Clair Elementary Science program makes use of units or modules acquired from the Smithsonian Science Program. USC utilizes the Smithsonian Science Program to offer outstanding professional development for teachers and provide national and state aligned research-based science curriculum concepts and skills to all elementary students in grades K-4.

The students also work with their teachers, health professionals, local police, Children's Hospital and St. Clair Hospital on current health topics of drug awareness (appropriate to the grade level), proper nutrition, heart health, the body systems and personal safety. Health lessons are presented at times coinciding with seasonal importance (e.g., bus safety in September), national observances (e.g., Dental Health Month or Heart Health Awareness), or as units of instruction which take place for several weeks throughout the school year.

Social Studies

In Upper St. Clair at the elementary level, the social studies curriculum encompasses five strands. At each grade level, units are designed around these five strands and analyzed for match to Upper St. Clair School District targets and the Pennsylvania State Standards. Each year, units are reviewed and may be further developed based on this analysis. Some units overlap in their focus and meet several strands at once as students progress through the unit content.

The five strands of social studies at the elementary level include:

- History
- Geography
- Cultural Geography
- Economics
- Civics & Government (Political Science)

All strands are emphasized at each grade level.

In addition, field site experiences for the children and exciting topical presentations brought to the school complement classroom instruction.

SPECIAL SUBJECTS

Art

The Visual Art curriculum is based on the Pennsylvania State Art Standards and interdisciplinary cross-curricular connections.

During the 50 minute class period, students in grades 1-4 learn about the art techniques and mediums used in creating their masterpieces. Kindergarten students participate in fine motor skills and activities during a 30-minute class period.

Pennsylvania State Art Standards have four components: Production, Performance and Exhibitions, Historical and Cultural Context, Critical Response and Aesthetic Response.

Production, Performance and Exhibitions:

The students will know the elements and principles of Art. They will be able to recognize the use of the appropriate mediums, vocabulary and learn the processes need to create the artwork.

Historical and Cultural Context:

The students will learn about artists from Pennsylvania to other global countries. They will be able to identify their work and emulate their art style.

Critical Response:

The students will learn the process of examination of an artwork in order to analyze, interpret and discuss the meaning behind the artist's work. Each masterpiece discussion will include the elements and principles of art and the students' personal reflection.

Aesthetic Response:

The student will learn how to respond to an artwork by giving an opinion and a

personal reflection. The students will recognize the artist's choices in the masterpiece and the influences that surround the artwork.

The interdisciplinary connections between the Arts and the other subject areas include a variety of artists and art techniques. In each grade level, the students will learn about an artist, their artwork and emulate their style and how it connects with the other subject areas.

The art teachers save many pieces of student work for display around the school building for the annual STAR Night and for an annual exhibit at the District Administration Building.

Vocal Music

Students in grades one through four have two 30-minute music periods each week. The elementary music curriculum provides enriching experiences that become integrated into students' lifelong appreciation of music. Curriculum objectives use singing, movement, and instrument playing to build the children's skills in the musical elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, form, dynamics, and timbre. In addition, the children learn to appreciate and discriminate among the works of composers from a variety of periods and styles.

Physical Education

Rhythmic activities, games, relays, stunts and tumbling, skill development, and athletic games are part of the physical education curriculum for all students in grades K through 4. Adaptive activities, as well as modifications of regular physical education class activities, are provided on an individual basis for students who need such accommodations. Kindergarten classes include rhythm and movement activities as

an important part of the core curriculum. Kindergarten students participate in one 30-minute class period per week during which time the kindergarten teacher and the physical education teacher team together. Kindergarten children engage in gross motor activities beyond those that are practiced in the kindergarten classroom. Students in grades 1-4 have two 30-minute periods of physical education each week. The physical education program in grades one through three uses six units to progressively develop students' skills. The units include: rhythmical activities, primary developmental games, relays, primary sports and recreational activities, and athletic games.

Library

The elementary library program is an integral part of the total school curriculum. The goals of the library curriculum are two-fold: (1) to foster an interest in books and reading that will grow and develop into a life-long practice that is enjoyed, and (2) to provide sequential skill development which assists students' growing abilities to find, generate and apply information and become effective and efficient library users. In addition, the library serves as a resource for students and teachers. Librarians work in cooperation with teachers and curriculum study committees to select library materials that support and enhance other areas of the elementary curriculum.

Each classroom is scheduled for a weekly book exchange and story or skill lesson. Librarians are able to collaborate with classroom teachers in the teaching of a variety of information processing skills related to curriculum units of study such as literature studies and use of on-line resources. Librarians also make use of the computer labs in order to familiarize

students with a variety of electronic programs and resources.

Each elementary library has an on-line catalog and circulation system. All students have a thirty-minute library period each week. This is used for book exchange, story-sharing and/or library skills instruction. Parents wishing to know about literature development or circulation procedures are encouraged to contact the librarian at their child's school. Parent volunteers in the libraries are welcome!

COMPUTERS

The District's approach to technology is that applications of new technology need to be guided by curriculum requirements as well as student needs. In each elementary school there is a full-time technology aide who has a high level of proficiency in technology as well as a full-time librarian who is skilled in the use of electronic resources. The nature of the work directed by the classroom teacher is personalized and instruction is tailored to students' needs and curriculum related applications. Laptops are used by students in each school.

Acceptable Use/Internet Safety:

The District complies with CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act) and monitors student usage of district-issue devices. However, parents/guardians should monitor their child's technology usage to ensure safety and consistency with your family's technology rules/expectations.

A student's acceptance and use of a District device and/or the District information systems/internet is an acceptance and agreement to comply with the District's acceptable use policies linked below.

Please see Appendix A for information related to Chromebook insurance for the 2023-2024 school year.

WORLD LANGUAGES

In recognition of the research which states that early language learning is beneficial for all students, the Upper St. Clair elementary schools began a proficiency-based elementary Spanish program during the 1998-1999 school year. In the 2012-2013 school year, the district moved to a FLEX Program (which stands for Foreign Language Exploratory). The goal of our FLEX program is to provide high quality Spanish-language exposure to our elementary students in grades 1-4.

Spanish was selected because it is a language that is used prevalently throughout the United States and in twenty-two countries around the world. The benefits of total school focus on a single language and culture contributed to our decision to offer Spanish for all students. It was also the overwhelming choice of parents who completed a survey prior to implementation. As the Spanish program at the elementary level has evolved, modifications to the middle school programs have been made. All students have the opportunity to experience three foreign languages during their K - 5 school careers. This strong foundation has made it possible for students to excel at the high school level in one or more languages.

Students at all levels learn basic vocabulary ranging from greetings to simple sentences. They learn how to say their names, ages, and body parts, express likes and dislikes, and talk about their favorite sports, their health and foods. Content specific topics are introduced in Spanish to reinforce curriculum taught in the regular classrooms at each grade level where possible.

In addition to speaking Spanish in a variety of contexts, students hear stories and sing songs. The children also see their Spanish being applied to numerous interdisciplinary activities in social studies, science, health and literature.

Students in first through third grades receive one 30-minute period of Spanish instruction each week. Additionally, Spanish teachers create one in-class technology supported lesson for third grade students to complete under the supervision of their classroom teacher. Fourth grade students receive two 30-minute periods of instruction by the Spanish teacher per week.

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE – PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAM

Upper St. Clair School District offers the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) as a magnet for students in grades K through 4 to students from all of the District's elementary schools. Children who participate become full-time students at Streams Elementary School, where the magnet program is located. International Baccalaureate (IB) is a world-renowned network of international schools located in more than 80 countries. Boyce Middle School and Ft. Couch Middle School are

authorized to offer the IB Middle Years Program (MYP) and the Upper St. Clair High School is authorized to offer the IB Diploma Program (DP).

The Primary Years Program curriculum framework includes the following key elements, built upon the foundation of the USC elementary curriculum:

I. Learner Profile – PYP schools develop students who are inquirers, thinkers, communicators, courageous, knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, balanced, and reflective.

II. Planned Inquiry – The USC core curriculum is extended through planned inquiry. The USC-PYP instructional approach is guided by a series of questions that have relevance within and across all subjects.

III. International Mindedness – Students in USC-PYP strive to become more aware of the world around them. A second language study is a requirement. PYP students will acquire skills important to living and working with others internationally.

IV. Inquiry Leading to Action – Upon completion of each unit of study, students actively reflect upon their learning, choosing an action that would be of service to a community, and then carrying out that action. Even our youngest learners discover that their actions can make a difference in the world around them.

While not a program requirement of IB, the magnet program at Streams is structured to provide multi-age teams for certain projects. Younger and older students work together to accomplish instructional goals. The multi-age teams are an important way to

recognize and enhance the potential for student contributions to their own and others' learning: younger students have the opportunity to benefit from the leadership example and experience of older classmates, while the oldest members of the team are presented with many occasions for exercising authentic leadership and demonstrating what they have learned.

For more information about the Upper St. Clair Primary Years Program, contact Mrs. Lauren Bogus, Primary Years Program Coordinator at Streams School (412-833-1600 x 6040) or Dr. Lindsay Klousnitzer, Principal of Streams School (412-833-1600 x 6000).

STANDARDIZED TESTING

The standardized testing program provides data about the progress of individual children, but also informs us about relative areas of need in the curriculum. These are taken into account as we plan systemic school improvement efforts.

During the spring, students in grades 1 and 2 will participate in standardized ability testing, and Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams are given to students in grades 3 and 4. Parents will receive additional information regarding the exams prior to their administration.

Because of the importance of students' participation in these assessments, permission for educational trips will not be granted during the time that testing is scheduled. Please consult the principal to obtain details regarding the dates for administration of these tests prior to scheduling trips in the spring.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are considered a “tool” of instruction and are planned around specific educational objectives. Teachers select field trips from a list of approved field trips, in accordance with School Board Policy. Parents may be invited to accompany a field trip in order to increase the number of adult supervisors on the trip. This is especially helpful in the early grades. The nutrition center will be happy to provide a packed lunch for any student or parent who is going on a field trip. Requests for packed lunches may be directed to the teacher.

RECCESS

A twenty-minute daily recess period for free play is provided. The teacher(s) in charge of supervising the playground each day will decide whether to go outside. It is important that the children be dressed warmly in cold weather. Students who bring equipment from home should check with the supervising teacher to get permission to bring those items to the playground. Since recess operates a little differently in each school, please contact your child’s Principal with specific questions you may have.

HEALTH SERVICES

NURSE

The Health Room is staffed at all times by the Certified School Nurse (CSN) or Health Room Aide, who is a licensed health professional. Please feel free to phone the school and ask to be connected to the Health Room if your child is experiencing a health-related issue or to inquire about the school's medication policy.

EMERGENCY ILLNESS AT SCHOOL

Each year school year parents are asked to provide current information through the **Back To School Online** process that will assist school personnel in dealing with an emergency regarding their child(ren). The sections titled "Emergency Contact Information" and "Medical Information" are particularly important. If changes need to be made to this information after the on-line information has been gathered, please contact the school office to provide the updates.

HEALTH ROOM

Teachers may send students to the health room when they are not feeling well. If the CSN is not in the building, students are seen by the health room aide. The CSN is phoned for advice, if necessary, or called to come to the school if there is an emergency situation. Many children feel well enough to return to class after a brief rest, application of ice to a bump, a band-aide or some "tender loving care." Typically, students who have vomited or who have a fever are sent home. The information you provide for the "Emergency Contact Information" in **Back To School Online** will be used to contact you or, if you are not able to be contacted, a person that you have designated. Please contact the

school office any time this information needs to be updated throughout the year.

MEDICATION POLICY

There are times when students must receive medication during school hours. A medication, whether prescription or over-the-counter (OTC), may be administered only with written permission from the physician and parent. In either case, the medication must be in a properly labeled container from the pharmacy or in the original commercial packaging in the case of OTC medication, and given to the school nurse. Parent and physician permission forms may be obtained from the health room or online at the District's website. It is recommended that when medication is ordered three times a day, it not be given at school. The student may take medication right before he/she leaves for school, when he/she comes home from school, and at night before he/she goes to bed.

STUDENT CONDUCT

EXPECTATIONS

Since an accepted standard of classroom discipline is a prerequisite for learning, all students are expected to conduct themselves in a positive fashion. Common courtesy, good manners and appropriate behavior have been characteristic of our students, and this is a credit to the teachers and parents who have played an important and mutually supportive role in achieving this end. Your child's teacher will be happy to review his/her expectations and explain the classroom management system at Open House or in a parent conference.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

It is the responsibility of each student to:

- Be honest and ethical: Respect, Responsibility, Honesty.
- Put forth his/her best efforts in the classroom to develop and improve his/her learning.
- Contribute to making the school a better place in which to learn.
- Exercise proper care when using school equipment.
- Assist in protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the school community.
- Be aware of the rules and policies of the school and follow them.
- Attend school daily and report to all classes on time.
- Make-up work when absent from school.
- Respect school property.
- Follow the dress code.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

It is, perhaps, inevitable that children in school will experience conflict with one another. Adults assist the children in appropriate conflict resolution as needed. If

a child has a need, adult presence is there, but the children are also given the opportunity to "stretch" and learn a new interaction skill. If the challenge is too great, at times, adults intervene in ways that seek to maintain the child's dignity. Conflict management is addressed by the guidance counselor through the use of expressive art projects, friendship groups, problem solving activities, and various role-play techniques.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

All students have the right to attend school in a safe environment. School policies have been created to assist with the orderly operation of school. Policies that address behavior expectations and safety include:

- 103 – Nondiscrimination and Title IX Sexual Harassment
- 218- Student Discipline
- 218.1 – Weapons
- 218.2 – Terroristic Threats
- 247- Hazing
- 249 – Bullying & Cyberbullying

These policies apply to students in kindergarten through grade 12 and can be reviewed in their entirety by accessing School Board Policies on the School Board webpage of the District's website, or by clicking on the following link: [Welcome - School Board Policy Manual BoardDocs® PL](#)

Student discipline is very good in the Upper St. Clair elementary schools. Infractions of the discipline policy, when they do occur, are typically minor ones. Parents can assist the school in promoting expectations of good conduct and communicating any concerns to school personnel.

Discipline pertaining to elementary students that describes Minor and Major Violations is as follows:

- **Minor Violations** - Minor misbehaviors which impede orderly classroom procedures or interfere with the operation of the school, including but not limited to the following:

Minor Violations:

- a. Unexcused lateness
- b. Offensive language
- c. Defiance or disrespect
- d. Smoking
- e. Cutting class
- f. Truancy
- g. Disruptive behavior
- h. Fighting
- i. Violation of District bus policy
- j. Defacing school property
- k. Extortion
- l. Theft
- m. Other minor infractions of unacceptable behavior in or on school property

Administrative Action for Minor Violations:

Any one or more of the following:

- Verbal reprimand
 - Counseling
 - Restrictions
 - Parent notification
 - In-school suspension
- **Major Violations** - Misbehavior directed against persons or property or continued misbehaviors which defy remediation, including but not limited to the following:

Major Violations:

- a. Vandalism
- b. Violation of District drug abuse
- c. Endangering the safety of others
- d. Bullying
- e. Harassment
- f. Hazing
- g. Arson
- h. Bomb threats
- i. False fire alarms
- j. Commission of any other act punishable under the Pennsylvania crimes code

Administrative Action for Major Violations:

Any one or more of the following:

- Parent notification by phone, if possible, and in writing and made part of student's record
- Notification of local law enforcement agency
- Parent conference
- 1 to 10 day external suspension; the second offense shall result in a 10-day external suspension and a board hearing. (The administrator may use discretion in requesting a hearing for excluding the student from school upon the first offense.)

HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

According to the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Association of School Psychologists, it is estimated that thousands of students miss school each day due to incidents related to harassment or bullying. It is the responsibility of the Upper St. Clair School District to create a school environment that is safe for children both physically and psychologically. As part of the school counseling core curriculum, an effort is made to differentiate between tattling (in which the motive is to get some

else in trouble) and reporting (the purpose of which is to alert the adults in the environment to verbal or physical actions which may be hurtful and/or create dangerous situations). Children are encouraged to be responsible reporters when they or others are being harassed or bullied. We are committed to respect the dignity of each person and to safeguard the students' right to an educational environment in which harassment in any form is not tolerated. Each school has created a set of expected behavior that is reviewed with all students. In addition, bullying prevention efforts based on the work of Daniel Olweus are integrated into the school program.

Nondiscrimination and Title IX – School and Classroom Practices

The School District strives to provide a safe, positive learning climate for students in our schools. The District maintains an educational environment in which discrimination and harassment in any form are not tolerated.

Nondiscrimination and Title IX Sexual Harassment (Policy 103)

The District provides an equal opportunity for all students to achieve their maximum potential through the programs and activities offered in the schools without discrimination on the basis of race, color, age, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, nation origin, marital status, pregnancy, or disability. The district specifically prohibits discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment.

HARASSMENT / BULLYING GUIDELINES

Bullying-Cyberbullying (Policy 249)

The District is committed to providing a safe, positive learning environment for students. The District recognizes that bullying creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, detracts from the safe environment necessary for student learning, and may lead to more serious violence. Therefore, the Upper St. Clair School District prohibits bullying by all students.

Bullying is defined as intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act or series of acts directed at another student or students, that is severe, persistent or pervasive and has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education. Creating an environment that a reasonable person in the complainant's situation would find threatening, intimidating or abusive, or causing a substantial disruption of the orderly operation of school. Cyberbullying is included within the definition of bullying.

Students are encouraged to use the district's report form, available from the building principal, or to put the complaint in writing; however, oral complaints shall be accepted and documented. The person accepting the complaint shall handle the report objectively, neutrally and professionally, setting aside personal biases that might favor or disfavor the student filing the complaint or those accused of a violation of this policy.

A student who violates this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the Code of Student Conduct.

Goals

The purpose of the *USC Elementary Bullying Guidelines* is as follows:

- To define harassment/bullying and the consequences of such behavior through clearly stated guidelines
- To insure fair and consistent enforcement of the policy following the established procedures

Definition

Bullying is any **deliberate and repetitive** act in which an imbalance of power is used in a willful manner to hurt, threaten, or frighten an individual(s). Bullying manifests itself in three forms: physical, verbal, and social.

Physical Bullying includes, but is not limited to:

- Hitting, pushing, spitting, or kicking
- Damaging, stealing, or hiding another person's property
- Restraining or intimidating an individual
- Threatening an individual
- Unwelcome touching

Verbal Bullying includes, but is not limited to:

- Name calling, teasing or belittling
- Spreading rumors in written or oral form
- Verbal threats of aggression or violence against a person or property
- Encouraging the harassment of others

Social Bullying includes, but is not limited to:

- Pressuring people to do things against their will
- Unwelcome gestures such as staring, whistling, or showing inappropriate material
- Making people feel different because of their physical or intellectual appearance

Disciplinary Action

Whenever a student engages in any of the above forms of bullying, disciplinary action will be taken. All incidents will be handled consistently through the outlined *Procedures for Reporting Bullying*.

When determining disciplinary action, the following will be considered:

- Students' age
- Prior incidents
- Severity of incident

Disciplinary action may take the form of, but is not limited to:

- Free time restrictions (recess and/or morning time)
- Counseling within the school,
- Parental conference,
- Loss of school privileges,
- Transfer to another school building, classroom or school bus.
- Exclusion from school-sponsored activities,
- Detention,
- Suspension,
- Expulsion,
- Counseling/Therapy outside of school.

Responsibilities

Students and staff members are responsible for safeguarding an educational environment in which harassment/bullying is not tolerated.

Student Responsibilities:

- Commit to not engage in any form of harassment/bullying
- Immediately report any incident of bullying
- Provide an accurate account of any incidents that have been witnessed

Teacher Responsibilities:

- Immediately intervene when harassment/bullying incidents occur
- Immediately report any incidents using *Elementary Harassment/Bullying Report* form
- Use “teachable moments” to educate about harassment/bullying
- Maintain classroom as harassment/bullying free environment

Principal Responsibilities:

- Assist teachers in implementation of the guidelines
- Advocate for all teachers and students
- Follow-up on reports within five school days
- Issue consequences for infractions when needed

Counselor Responsibilities:

- Present guidelines to all students
- Advocate for all teachers and students
- Investigate reported incidents immediately
- Communicate with parents
- Support students in planning for behavior change and skill building

HAZING

Hazing ([Policy 247](#))**Administrative Action:**

May include, but not limited to

- Counseling within the school,
- Parental conference,
- Loss of school privileges,
- Transfer to another school building, classroom or school bus,
- Exclusion from school-sponsored activities,
- Detention,
- Suspension,
- Expulsion,
- Counseling/Therapy outside of school.

ADDITIONAL POLICY INFORMATION

Please note that a District Handbook is also available and provides you with district-wide information, required policy notifications, and compliance notices. In the case of a conflict between this supplemental handbook and the District Handbook, the District Handbook will govern.

Listed below are adopted USC School Board policies that are relevant to students and their families.

Series 200 Pupils

- 200 - Enrollment of New Students
- 201 - Admission of Students
- 202 - Eligibility of Nonresidents
- 203 - Immunizations and Communicable Diseases
- 203.1 - HIV Infection
- 204 - Attendance
- 206 - Assignment Within District
- 207 - Confidential Communications with Students
- 208 - Withdrawal from School
- 209 - Health Examinations-Screenings
- 209.1 - Food Allergy Management
- 209.2 - Diabetes Management
- 210 - Medications
 - o 210 - Attachment - Medication Administration Consent And Licensed Prescriber Order
- 210.1 - Possession-Administration of Asthma Inhalers-Epinephrine Auto-Injectors
 - o 210.1 AR - Carry and Self-Administration of Emergency Medications Form
- 212 - Reporting Student Progress
- 215 - Promotion and Retention
- 216 - Student Records
- 217 - Graduation
- 218 - Student Discipline
- 218.1 - Weapons
- 218.2 - Terroristic Threats
- 220 - Student Expression/Distribution and Posting of Materials
 - o 220 - Attachment
- 221 - Dress and Grooming
- 222 - Tobacco and Vaping Products
 - o 222-AR-0 - Tobacco and Vaping Products
 - o 222-AR-1 - Tobacco and Vaping Product Violation Parental Notification
- 223 - Use of Bicycles and Motor Vehicles
- 224 - Care of School Property
- 226 - Searches
- 227 - Controlled Substances-Paraphernalia
- 229 - Student Fundraising
- 230 - Public Performances by Students
- 231 - Student Events and Class Trips
- 233 - Suspension and Expulsion
- 234 - Pregnant-Parenting-Married Students
- 235 - Student Rights and Responsibilities
- 235.1 - Surveys
- 236 - Student Assistance Program
- 237 - Electronic Devices
- 239 - Foreign Exchange Students
- 246 - School Wellness
- 247 - Hazing
- 249 - Bullying-Cyberbullying
- 250 - Student Recruitment
- 251 - Homeless Students
- 252 - Dating Violence
- 255 - Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care

Please review the text of these policies on the District website under School Board Policies on the School Board webpage at [Welcome - School Board Policy Manual BoardDocs® PL](#).

The listing of Board policies is not all inclusive and other Board policies may be applicable. Visit the District's website at [Welcome - School Board Policy Manual BoardDocs® PL](#) to review all of the policies.

ANNUAL COMPLIANCE NOTIFICATIONS

Annual Compliance Notifications include the following and additional notifications that can be found at [Compliance Notifications](#).

Child Find Notice of Special Education Services & Program – Each school district, along with other public agencies in the commonwealth, must establish and implement procedures to identify, locate and evaluate all children who need special education programs and services because of the child's disability. This notice is to help find these children, offer assistance to parents, and describes the parents' rights with regard to confidentiality of information that will be obtained during this process. The content of this notice has been written in English but can be translated into other languages. If a person does not understand any of this notice, he or she should contact the school district (Dr. Cassandra Doggrell, 412-833-1600 ext. 2064) and request an explanation
<https://www.uscsd.k12.pa.us/Page/9647>

McKinney Vento-

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act program is designed to address situations that students in housing transitions have faced in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. Homeless children and youth should have access to the education and other services that they need to enable them to meet the same student academic achievement standards in Pennsylvania to which all students are held.

Please contact Lauren Madia

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. The rights are identified in the annual compliance notification section at [Compliance Notifications / Family Education Rights and Privacy Act](#).

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed without a parent's prior written consent. Directory information is defined in the notice linked above. If you do not want the School District to disclose information designated as directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify Student Support Services in writing by September 15. Please note, the opt-out for the PTA directory is separate from the directory information opt-out and is not collected or monitored by the School District.

If a person does not understand any of the FERPA notice, he or she should contact the school district (Dr. Lauren Madia, 412-833-1600 ext. 2113) and request an explanation.

TITLE IX

The Upper St. Clair School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

Inquiries concerning Title IX should be directed to:

Dr. Lauren Madia (students/families)
Asst. Superintendent/Deputy Superintendent

Mr. Ray Carson (employees/third parties)
Senior Director of Operations and
Administrative Services

Upper St. Clair School District
1775 McLaughlin Run Road
Upper St. Clair, PA 15241

OTHER SCHOOL INFORMATION

LOST AND FOUND

A lost and found area is maintained in each school. Valuable items are kept in the office to be reclaimed. Items lost on the bus are returned to the bus garage or kept in a lost and found box aboard the bus.

PHOTOGRAPHS

School photographs are taken in the fall of each year. Each child is photographed, since photos are used to make class composite pictures. Parents, who wish to do so, may pay to receive an individual packet of pictures in various sizes. Several options for picture packets are available. The composite pictures – with individual photos of each child in the class – are also made available.

PARTIES

There are several times during the year when students celebrate with classroom parties.

- **Birthday**

Students may celebrate their birthday with classmates. Please contact your child's principal for specific guidelines about birthday celebrations. Due to concerns regarding food allergies and sensitivities, as well as housekeeping issues, food is not permitted for birthday treats. If a student wishes to share a birthday treat with classmates, non-food items such as a book, game, or supplies for the classroom are recommended.

- **Harvest**

Harvest parties are celebrated on October 31 or the school day prior to October 31, when it falls on a weekend or in-service day. The last one and one-half hours of school are used for a costume parade and classroom party planned by the Room Parents.

- **Winter Holiday**

On the last day of school prior to the winter recess in December, the last one and one-half hours of school are used for a holiday party planned by the Room Parents.

- **Valentine**

Valentine Celebrations are held on February 14 or the last school day prior to February 14. The final hour of the day is used for the exchanging of Valentines.

- **Kindergarten**

The kindergarten Room Parents usually plan one or two other parties during the course of this very special year.

FOOD SERVICE

BREAKFAST PROGRAM

A breakfast program is available at each School. Students may visit the Nutrition Center to have breakfast upon their arrival at school. Breakfast menus are published monthly for students to take home.

LUNCH PROGRAM

Lunch is available every day when school is in session. At the beginning of each day, students indicate to their homeroom teachers what they plan to have for lunch so that a count for each selection can be sent to the Nutrition Center. Beverages are included for students who buy lunch; however, students who bring their lunches to school may also purchase beverages. A la carte items and snacks are also available for purchase. Students with special dietary needs are accommodated. Please contact the Nutrition Center Manager and/or the School Nurse.

MENU AND PURCHASING GUIDELINES

Nutrition Center Menus are published monthly on the District's website. Students may pay the cashier in cash, on a day-by-day basis, or use the point of sale system that offers the convenience and information you need to manage your student's meal account. Students may purchase "extras" or snacks if they are available, and provided they have first finished their lunches.

The School District participates in the National School Lunch Program. Information about this program is available in the **Back to School Online** information on the District website. Your child may

qualify for free meals or reduced price meals at any time. If interested, please complete the Free and Reduced Priced School Meals Family Application which can be found on the District website, and return it to your child's school when finished. Families with more than one child need to complete only one application for the family.

NUTRITION CENTER GUIDELINES

Nutrition Center rules have been set up so that the children may eat in an orderly, relaxed climate. Please review these basic guidelines with your child. (The teachers will review the Nutrition Center guidelines in detail and explain them from time to time.)

1. Each class is assigned a table. Students may sit, 3 or 4 to a bench, anywhere at the assigned table, but, once seated, may not leave their seats. No seat saving is permitted.
2. All students should visit the lavatory and wash hands prior to going to the lunch room. Students may be excused from lunch to visit the lavatory, if necessary and should raise their hand in order to be excused.
3. Students may not leave their seats without permission to be excused, except in cases of emergency such as becoming ill, and/or urgent lavatory needs.
4. Students may not share food. This is done so that parents may be reasonably assured that children have eaten the lunch that was packed or purchased for them.

5. Students may not take food out of the Nutrition Center unless it is in a sealed wrapper (for example, an unopened bag of chips.) This helps decrease the problem of ants and other insects in lockers and classrooms.
6. Glass containers are not permitted because of the danger they pose for young children.
7. So that students in the serving line and nutrition center workers may hear each other, students are asked to talk in a low voice with those nearby. No shouting to other tables is permitted.
8. Students are asked to pick up all dropped wrappers, napkins, and/or food before leaving the table area, place trays and silverware in proper areas, and put waste paper in the trash. (The custodian takes care of mopping spills and cleaning tables.)

BEHAVIOR

Shouting, changing seats and other minor infractions are handled by the adults who supervise the Nutrition Center. When students are having difficulty with behavior they may also be asked to move their seats or visit with the principal. Students who throw things or fight are sent to the office. If an entire class has had difficulty with proper behavior, the teacher is notified so that he/she can discuss corrective measures/consequences. We want lunchtime to be a pleasant and relaxing time when students may socialize and enjoy the company of their classmates.

SCHOOL-RELATED ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

PTA/PTO

Each elementary school has an active PTA/PTO organization that supports the schools in countless ways. All parents are encouraged to join and be active in PTA/PTO. A PTA/PTO business meeting is held monthly in each school. Meetings typically consist of reports from various standing committees, reviews of recent school activities, and opportunities for parents to socialize. See the school's website calendar for dates of PTA/PTO meetings. A combination of daytime and evening meetings helps accommodate most schedules.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

In each elementary school there are opportunities to become involved as a volunteer. The many hours of volunteer assistance that are provided by parents and other helpers adds a valuable dimension to the instructional program. Volunteers provide help in roles such as library assistants, computer lab assistants, and writing workshop conference partners. Contact your building principal if you are interested in volunteering at your child's school. All volunteers are required to have clearances. Information regarding volunteer clearances is available on the District's website homepage at www.uscsd.k12.pa.us. Volunteers must sign in at the office upon arrival to obtain a volunteer badge.

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF UPPER ST. CLAIR

The Community Foundation was formed to enhance the quality of life for all residents of Upper St. Clair. The Foundation is funded through contributions from residents and friends of the Foundation, through major fundraising events in the community and through grants and partnerships. Foundation Committees focus on the areas of sports and leisure, fine and performing arts, technology, and education. For more information about the goals and efforts of the Community Foundation of Upper St. Clair, contact the School District Central Office at 412-833-1600 x2202.

TIP

TIP (Together in Parenting) is the program arm of the Upper St. Clair Parent Teacher Council. Watch the websites for announcements of programs presented throughout the year by TIP or contact your school's PTA/PTO.

The information in this Parent Handbook is accurate and in accordance with the existing policies of the Upper St. Clair School District at the time of its printing. If you have any questions regarding the information in this Parent Handbook, please contact school administration for assistance.

APPENDIX A

Upper St. Clair School District Student Chromebooks (2023-24)

The Upper St. Clair School District provides every student with a Chromebook. Starting this school year there will no longer be an option to purchase a Technology Protection Plan (TPP).

The School District will be financially responsible for:

- Defective equipment
- Hardware issues
- Non functioning components
- All physical components of the 1:1 device due to accidental damage
- Theft of a device (must provide a copy of the police report)

Students/Parents will be financially responsible for:

- Intentional damage, abuse, vandalism, or improper use/care, which results in structural damage including, but not limited to: bending, missing parts/components, dents, scratches, cracks, modifications, or disassembly of the device, etc.
- Excessive wear and tear
- Missing or damaged charger, charging/power cable and/or stylus
- Loss of a Chromebook

***The Upper St. Clair School District will determine if damages were accidental or the*

result of intentional damage, abuse, or improper use/care.

Students are responsible for any and all damage to their Chromebook unless determined otherwise by the Upper St. Clair School District administration. If it is determined through an investigation that the student's device was damaged by another student, all students involved will be financially responsible for the damage incurred.

Estimated repair costs for Chromebook*:

- A damaged or broken display typically costs \$215 or more
- A damaged keyboard or hinge typically costs \$100 or more
- A damaged port typically costs \$200 or more
- Replacement for a lost, stolen, or unrepairable Chromebook costs \$400 or more

**1:1 devices are owned by the Upper St. Clair School District and all repairs must be completed by the district. Students must use the help desk procedures to request a repair. Parents/Students are not authorized to repair or have third parties repair any 1:1 device.*

As per [Board Policy 815 - Acceptable Use of Internet, Computers and Network Resources](#), any outstanding technology invoices must be paid in full by the end of the school year.